

The U.S. And UK's Submarine Deal Crosses Nuclear Red Lines With Australia



Prabir Purkayastha – Photo: YouTube

The recent Australia, U.S., and UK \$368 billion deal on buying nuclear submarines has been termed by Paul Keating, a former Australian prime minister, as [the “worst deal in all history.”](#) It commits Australia to buy conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines that will be delivered *in the early 2040s*. These will be based on new nuclear reactor designs yet to be developed by the UK. Meanwhile, starting from the 2030s, “*pending approval from the U.S. Congress*, the United States intends to sell Australia three Virginia class submarines, with the potential to sell up to two more if needed” ([Trilateral Australia-UK-U.S. Partnership on Nuclear-Powered Submarines, March 13, 2023](#); emphasis mine). According to the details, it appears that this agreement commits Australia to buy from the U.S. eight new nuclear submarines, to be delivered from the 2040s through the end of the 2050s. If nuclear submarines were so crucial for Australia’s security, for which it [broke its existing diesel-powered submarine deal with France](#), this agreement provides no credible answers.

For those who have been following the nuclear proliferation issues, the deal raises a different red flag. If submarine nuclear reactor technology and weapons-grade (highly enriched) uranium are shared with Australia, [it is a breach of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty \(NPT\)](#) to which Australia is a signatory *as a non-nuclear power*. Even the supplying of such nuclear reactors by the U.S. and the UK would constitute a breach of the NPT. This is even if such submarines do not

carry nuclear but conventional weapons as stated in this agreement.

So why did Australia renege on its contract with France, which was to buy 12 diesel submarines from [France at a cost of \\$67 billion](#), a small fraction of its gargantuan \$368 billion deal with the U.S.? What does it gain, and what does the U.S. gain by annoying France, one of its close NATO allies?

To understand, we have to see how the U.S. looks at the geostrategy, and how the Five Eyes—the U.S., the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand—fit into this larger picture. Clearly, the U.S. believes that the core of the NATO alliance is the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada for the Atlantic and the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia for the Indo-Pacific. The rest of its allies, NATO allies in Europe and Japan and South Korea in East and South Asia, are around this Five Eyes core. That is why the United States was willing to offend France to broker a deal with Australia.

What does the U.S. get out of this deal? On the promise of eight nuclear submarines that will be given to Australia two to four decades down the line, the U.S. gets access to Australia to be used as a base for supporting its naval fleet, air force, and even U.S. soldiers. The [words used by the White House are](#), “As early as 2027, the United Kingdom and the United States plan to establish a rotational presence of one UK Astute class submarine and up to four U.S. Virginia class submarines at HMAS *Stirling* near Perth, Western Australia.” The use of the phrase “rotational presence” is to provide Australia the fig leaf that it is not offering the U.S. a naval base, as that would violate Australia’s long-standing position of no foreign bases on its soil. Clearly, all the support structures required for such rotations are what a foreign military base has, therefore they will function as U.S. bases.

Who is the target of the AUKUS alliance? This is explicit in all the writing on the subject and what all the leaders of AUKUS have said: it is China. In other words, this is a containment of China policy with the South China Sea and the Taiwanese Strait as the key contested oceanic regions. Positioning U.S. naval ships including its nuclear submarines armed with nuclear weapons makes Australia a front-line state in the current U.S. plans for the containment of China. Additionally, it creates pressure on most Southeast Asian countries who would like to stay out of such a U.S. versus China contest being carried out in the South China Sea.

While the U.S. motivation to draft Australia as a front-line state against China is understandable, what is difficult to understand is [Australia's gain from such an alignment](#). China is not only the biggest importer of Australian goods, but also its biggest supplier. In other words, if Australia is worried about the safety of its trade through the South China Sea from Chinese attacks, *the bulk of this trade is with China*. So why would China be mad enough to attack its own trade with Australia? For the U.S. it makes eminent sense to get a whole continent, Australia, to host its forces much closer to China than 8,000-9,000 miles away in the U.S. Though it already has bases in Hawaii and Guam in the Pacific Ocean, Australia and Japan provide two anchor points, one to the north and one to the south in the eastern Pacific Ocean region. The game is an old-fashioned game of containment, the one that the U.S. played with its NATO, Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), and Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) military alliances after World War II.

The problem that the U.S. has today is that even countries like India, who have their issues with China, are not signing up with the U.S. in a military alliance. Particularly, as the U.S. is now in an economic war with a [number of countries](#), not just Russia and China, such as Cuba, Iran, Venezuela, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and Somalia. While India was willing to join the Quad—the U.S., Australia, Japan, and India—and participate in military exercises, it backed off from the Quad becoming a military alliance. This explains the pressure on Australia to partner with the U.S. militarily, particularly in Southeast Asia.

It still fails to explain what is in it for Australia. Even the five Virginia class nuclear submarines that Australia may get second hand are subject to U.S. congressional approval. Those who follow U.S. politics know that the U.S. is currently treaty incapable; it has not ratified a single treaty on issues from global warming to the law of the seas in recent years. The other eight are a good 20-40 years away; who knows what the world would look like that far down the line.

Why, if naval security was its objective, did Australia choose an [iffy nuclear submarine agreement](#) with the U.S. over a sure-shot supply of French submarines? This is a [question that Malcolm Turnbull](#) and Paul Keating, the Australian Labor Party's former PMs, asked. It makes sense only if we understand that Australia now sees itself as a cog in the U.S. wheel for this region. And it is a vision of U.S. naval power projection in the region that today Australia shares. The vision is that settler colonial and ex-colonial powers—the G7-AUKUS—should

be the ones making the rules of the current international order. And behind the talk of international order is the mailed fist of the U.S., NATO, and AUKUS. This is what Australia's nuclear submarine deal really means.

Author Bio:

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Prabir Purkayastha is the founding editor of Newsclick.in, a digital media platform. He is an activist for science and the free software movement.

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Why China's Actions Toward Ukraine And Russia Could Shape The Course Of Future Geopolitics



John P. Ruehl

China has sought to portray itself as a neutral party in the Russia-Ukraine War. But Beijing's balancing act masks its support for the Kremlin that enables it to continue its campaign.

[Days before](#) the one-year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2023, U.S. [officials](#) claimed that China was considering providing Russia with lethal weaponry to support its military campaign. [China denied the accusations](#), and on the anniversary of the invasion instead [put forth its 12-point peace plan](#) to end the conflict. These events followed after tensions between Beijing and Washington flared [during the Chinese spy balloon scandal](#) that began [in early February 2023](#).

Since the war's inception, the U.S. has cautioned China not to support Russia. Following reports that Russia had asked China for military assistance in March 2022, [Washington warned that countries](#) providing “material, economic, financial [or] rhetorical” support to Russia would face “consequences.” The Biden administration also [confronted China in January 2023](#) with “evidence that [suggested] some Chinese state-owned companies may be providing assistance” to the Russian military.

[China has largely adhered to Western sanctions](#) restricting business with Russia. Nonetheless, it has been essential to Russia's economic resilience and its war campaign since February 2022. China substantially increased its [coal, oil, and natural gas imports](#) from Russia in 2022, for example, which alongside India's increased imports, [have helped the Kremlin negate some of the effects](#) of declining energy sales to Europe. The underlying motive for increased Chinese and Indian purchases of Russian energy, however, remains the [steep discounts](#) they have been offered by Russia, which is desperate to replace its former customers in Europe.

[China has also increased its technology exports to Russia](#) for use by its defense industry after many Russian companies were denied access to technology from Europe and the U.S. because of the imposition of sanctions. [According](#) to the think tank Silverado Policy Accelerator, “Russia continues to have access to crucial dual-use technologies such as semiconductors, thanks in part to China and Hong Kong.” Additionally, China has helped Russia undermine Western economic sanctions by [developing international payment systems](#) outside of Western control and has advocated for [building an “international alliance of businesses”](#) comprising non-Western companies.

Beijing has also been essential in undermining Western efforts to portray Russia as an international pariah. China has repeatedly [abstained from UN votes](#) condemning the Russian invasion and voted [against](#) an April 2022 resolution to suspend Russia from the Human Rights Council. Beijing also seems to have vacillated between calling the situation in Ukraine a conflict and calling out the breaking of UN rules regarding borders. In addition, China, alongside Russia, declined to endorse the [G-20 communique](#) that featured language critical of the war in Ukraine at the end of the meeting on March 2, 2023. Chinese state media has also been [largely favorable or neutral](#) to Russia since the invasion began.

Russian and Chinese forces have [held several bilateral military exercises](#) and patrols since February 2022. The last exercise took place in the East China Sea in December 2022, and the “main purpose of the exercise [was] to strengthen naval cooperation between the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China and to maintain peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region,” the Russian Ministry [statement](#) said. Meanwhile, both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping met and posed for photos at the September 2022 [Shanghai Cooperation Organization](#) summit. And in the coming months, Xi Jinping [is expected to travel to Russia](#) after top Chinese diplomat Wang Yi [visited Moscow in February 2023](#).

While China has shown it is willing to assist Russia, it has been careful to avoid perceptions of overt support. China has cited the need to respect and safeguard “[the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries](#),” without denouncing Russia or calling for it to end the conflict. But after China’s top drone maker, Da Jiang Innovations (DJI), [banned exports of its drones to Ukraine and Russia](#) in April 2022, Russia has [continued to](#) freely operate DJI surveillance technology [to target Ukrainian drone operators](#), demonstrating the limits of Chinese neutrality.

Alongside the suspected impending Chinese military supplies to Russia, that were [referred](#) to by the Biden administration, Beijing is clearly more invested in a Russian victory than a Ukrainian one, even if it won’t admit it publicly.

So why is China so invested in supporting Russia while refusing to do so openly? There is no doubt a calculus in Beijing that the greater and longer the West focuses on Ukraine, the fewer resources Western countries can afford to give to Taiwan and the Asia-Pacific region. Prolonging the conflict would also weaken Russia, which in some Chinese nationalist circles is [still viewed as a competitor](#) and as having unjustly seized Chinese territory in the 19th century.

Still, there are clear benefits for China if the conflict ends sooner rather than later, and on Russian terms. Just weeks before the invasion in February 2022, Russia and China had [signed their “no limits” partnership](#), while both Xi and Putin have called the other their “[best friend](#).” Giving support to allies will help increase trust toward Beijing while also growing its leverage over a strained Russia.

China also desires a stable, friendly neighbor. A Russian defeat could lead to the

country's collapse, [potentially destabilizing much of Eurasia](#). Russian leadership change, in case of a defeat, could also usher in a pro-Western Russian government on China's doorstep, something Beijing is keen to avoid.

The war has in turn [destabilized global energy and food markets](#) and caused extreme instability in the global economy, at a time when China's national economy is [still fragile as it recovers from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic](#). Russia is a vital economic partner to China, largely in the energy industry, but also owing to [the Kremlin's role in China's Belt and Road Initiative to increase trade across Eurasia](#).

While Russia's importance in this regard has diminished since the invasion, Moscow retains [significant leverage among the former Soviet countries](#) that form the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), as well as across the [energy industries of Central Asia](#).

A Ukrainian military defeat would also have negative effects on the U.S.' standing in global affairs by proving Western military assistance was unable to turn the tide of a major conflict. Contrastingly, a Ukrainian victory would solidify Western support for Taiwan, embolden Western-style democracy advocates around the world, and reverse perceptions in China of [Western decline in global affairs](#).

But an open supply of lethal weaponry could destroy China's economic relations with the West when China is still studying the effects of sanctions on a major economy like Russia. This has not prevented Beijing from pointing out the [U.S.' double standard](#) in supplying the Taiwanese military with weapons, most recently in [March 2023](#), when Foreign Minister Qin Gang [asked](#) "Why, while asking China not to provide arms to Russia, has the United States sold arms to Taiwan in violation of a [1982] joint communique?"

While relations between the U.S. and China are increasingly tense, there is fear in Beijing that overt support for Russia could damage Beijing's relations with the EU. The EU is now China's [largest export market](#), and China still [hopes to drive a wedge](#) between the EU and the U.S. and prevent the development of a joint trans-Atlantic policy toward China. Meanwhile, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on March 5, 2023, said that China [will not supply Russia with lethal military aid](#) "suggesting that Berlin has received bilateral assurances from Beijing on the issue." Together with Xi Jinping's [comments in November 2022](#) stressing the need

to avoid the threat or use of nuclear weapons, China seeks to highlight [its mediating position](#) and prove it is a responsible actor in world affairs that promotes peace. The Chinese-brokered deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia to [re-establish official relations](#) on March 10, 2023, was further evidence of this initiative.

Contrastingly, [China](#) views the U.S. as a rogue superpower, and sees “[confrontation and conflict](#)” with the U.S. as inevitable unless Washington changes course, according to Qin Gang. And while China continues to be [suspicious of U.S. attempts to contain it](#), such policies have become [increasingly acknowledged](#) even in U.S. political circles in recent years.

Nonetheless, both lethal and non-lethal military aid to Russia from China will likely increase, funneled indirectly through willing third countries. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko’s arrival for a [state visit to Beijing](#) on February 28 caused [alarm in the U.S. precisely because of this reason](#). Ultimately, China sees the Ukraine war as part of a wider conflict with the U.S.-led Western world. Aiding Russia is seen as a strategic decision for China, meaning its “[pro-Russian neutrality](#)” will continue to be cautiously tested in Beijing.

While China did not cause the Ukraine crisis, it seeks to navigate it effectively. The [Sino-Soviet split](#) in the early 1960s allowed Beijing to rapidly expand its ties with the West, and the Ukraine crisis will help China benefit from its relationship with Russia amid global economic uncertainty. China will take the necessary steps to avoid spooking the EU, while recognizing that tension with Washington may be inescapable.

Author Bio:

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John P. Ruehl is an Australian-American journalist living in Washington, D.C. He is a contributing editor to Strategic Policy and a contributor to several other foreign affairs publications. His book, [Budget Superpower: How Russia Challenges the West With an Economy Smaller Than Texas](#), was published in December 2022.

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Pushing For Regime Change In Russia Implies An Embrace Of War In Ukraine To The End



Is it Russian imperialism or great-power politics that explains Putin's invasion of Ukraine? And how likely is it that we could see regime change in Moscow? Moreover, do ideological labels matter in today's political climate? C. J. Polychroniou tackles these questions in an interview with the

French-Greek journalist Alexandra Boutri. He contends that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a major war crime but that the ongoing war is rooted in NATO's eastward expansion and associated with the game of great-power politics. As for those who compare Putin to Hitler and call for regime change in Russia, Polychroniou argues that such claims and demands are both absurd and dangerous.

Alexandra Boutri: Let me start by asking you to share with me your views about an international relations topic that has dominated headlines for the past year, namely, the Russia-Ukraine war. Does it have its roots on Russian imperialistic aggression, which is the general view among most mainstream pundits, including many on the Left, or is it something more complicated than that?

C. J. Polychroniou: I think the best way to address your question is by putting this unnecessary tragedy, which, incidentally, could very well drag on for years to come, in historical context and thus realizing how easily it could have been avoided. Indeed, Putin's decision to launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, may have taken everyone by surprise but the seeds of this war had been sown long before. Now, Ukrainians tend to emphasize Russia's seizure of Crimea in 2014 as the origin of the conflict between the two countries. This is not an accurate description because the great-power rivalry between the United

States and Russia is left out of the equation.

But let's start with Crimea. For whatever reason, Crimea was gifted from Soviet Russia to Soviet Ukraine in 1954. Interestingly enough, the overwhelming majority of the population of Crimea in the 1950s was ethnic Russian and there was still an ethnic Russian majority of over 60 percent in 2014. It should also be pointed out that the Crimean Peninsula has always been a strategically vital location on the Black Sea. Indeed, Crimea's position in the Black Sea holds such strategic importance that Zbigniew Brzezinski, the hawkish national security adviser to President Jimmy Carter, made strong hints in a 1997 book titled *The Grand Chessboard* that the Crimean Peninsula could become a major source of instability in the territories of the former Soviet Union. Putting aside for now the legality of the Russian operation to annex Crimea, what is often ignored in the Ukrainian and western narrative is that it took place in the aftermath of NATO's enlargement following the collapse of the Soviet Union. And it wasn't just Putin who was wary of NATO's eastward expansion. Gorbachev was also suspicious of the perpetuation of NATO following the end of the Cold War while Boris Yeltsin, in a letter sent to President Clinton in 1993, had strongly opposed NATO's expansion to the east.

It seems appropriate here to recall that Putin did not mince words when it came to giving his opinion about the eastward expansion of NATO at the [Security Conference in Munich on February 2007](#):

I think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation with the modernisation of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended? And what happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? Where are those declarations today? No one even remembers them. But I will allow myself to remind this audience what was said. I would like to quote the speech of NATO General Secretary Mr Woerner in Brussels on 17 May 1990. He said at the time that: "the fact that we are ready not to place a NATO army outside of German territory gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee". Where are these guarantees?

Each round of NATO expansion since the fall of the Berlin Wall (NATO grew from 16 countries at the peak of the Cold War to 30 today, several of which were part

of the Warsaw Pact) was followed by loud complaints from Russia that such moves posed a threat to Russia's national security. Moreover, the prospect of Georgia and Ukraine becoming members of the trans-Atlantic military alliance constituted a red line for Moscow. Yet pledges were made by NATO leaders at the Budapest Summit in April 2008 that Georgia and Ukraine would eventually become NATO member states. In fact, relations between NATO and Ukraine go back to the early 1990s and, after 2014, the level of military cooperation between the two intensified in critical areas.

From the perspective of the Kremlin, what NATO (i.e., the US) was up to amounted to an "encirclement" of Russia. Indeed, it shouldn't be difficult to understand why Russian leaders felt this way, and there is no doubt that US officials knew all along that they were crossing Russia's red lines on NATO expansion.

In this context, Russia's invasion of the territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia in 2008, Crimea's annexation in 2014, and the disastrous invasion of Ukraine in 2022 are all part of the game of great-power politics and have little to do with Putin's alleged push for a new Russian empire.

Alexandra Boutri: So, according to the analysis you just provided, the idea that Putin might want to invade countries in Europe is utter hogwash. But what about the suggestion that Putin is a tyrant, this generation's Adolf Hitler, and therefore his regime must be overthrown?

C. J. Polychroniou: The idea that Putin has plans to invade countries in Europe is so absurd and ridiculous as to be laughable. Indeed, the only serious question here is why so many refuse to acknowledge that NATO and the US bear responsibility for Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine and are now failing to pursue a diplomatic path in order to put an end to this great tragedy, which is going to get much worse in the months to come as Ukraine keeps receiving more and more weapons from the west and Russia is preparing for a bigger fight. The losses on both sides are already staggering and Ukraine's economy and infrastructure are on the verge of collapse. This is a completely senseless war that could have easily been avoided if U.S. and NATO had paid proper attention to Russia's red lines. In fact, [many top-level diplomats and academic experts had predicted that NATO's provocative actions would lead to war.](#)

Having said that, it goes without saying of course that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is wrong, violates the UN Charter and cannot be justified under international law. Moreover, Russia could easily be charged with war crimes for the Ukraine invasion. Yet isn't it interesting that the Kremlin's legal justification for the invasion is based on the "pre-emptive principle" first argued by the US when it invaded Iraq in 2003? Of equal interest is to see how the western community has reacted to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in comparison to the way it reacted to the US invasion of Iraq. Most Americans still have no idea of the level of destruction that the invasion unleashed. The prestigious medical journal [The Lancet](#) estimated in a 2006 study that more than 600,000 Iraqis were killed during the first 40 months of war and occupation in Iraq. But the western community is king of the double standard.

To address your question about Putin, he is no doubt a ruthless autocrat. Manipulation and repression are integral components of his regime. They have been so from the day he was sworn in as president of Russia, more than 20 years ago. Now he is also a war criminal, but we must be careful with crazy comparisons with Hitler. If Putin is the new Hitler because of his decision to invade Ukraine, why shouldn't the same be said about George W. Bush when he invaded Iraq? However, such analogies are not only ludicrous but extremely offensive because they cheapen the memory of millions of innocent people killed by the Nazis. Hitler's monstrous regime carried out various major genocides and countless of mass murders. This may run counter to how major segments of the media are portraying Putin these days, but he is a rational and strategic actor, though he badly miscalculated his military strength when he decided to launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine as well as Ukrainian resistance. Furthermore, he has always been very popular with the Russian people and is even more popular today. In September 2022, his popularity level stood at 77 percent. After the invasion of Ukraine, the approval rating increased. In February 2023, [Putin's approval rating](#) at home jumped up to 82 percent.

So, when pundits and experts alike in the US and elsewhere speak of regime change in Russia, one really wonders what they may have in mind. Is regime change going to come from the inside, through a coup or revolution, or from the outside, through a foreign invasion? The security forces, which are the core and backbone of Putin's regime, answer directly to Putin and they will surely protect him from any possible coup. On the other hand, his popularity is so great that

simply precludes the possibility that he can be overthrown by his own people. A foreign invasion of Russia to overthrow Putin's regime is sheer madness and totally out of the question, so all this talk about regime change in Moscow amounts to nothing more than dangerous political posturing. Why so? Because regime change seekers suspect, and they are probably right, that the most likely scenario for Putin to be removed from power is through the weakening of Russia. This means either Putin losing the war in Ukraine or witnessing the collapse of his own economy. In either case, achieving the goal of Putin's removal from power mandates an indefinite continuation of the war regardless of what happens to Ukraine itself. But even so, what guarantee is there that Putin won't be replaced by someone even more ruthless? A weakened and humiliated Russia will most likely lead to the emergence of an even more ruthless leader. After all, it was the economic collapse and humiliation of the 1990s that made Putin such a popular figure with the Russian people.

Alexandra Boutri: The far-right seems to have sided with Putin in Russia's war against Ukraine, while many of the left are defending Ukraine and even going so far as to support a stronger NATO. Do political labels matter in today's world? Indeed, is the left-right political spectrum still valid today?

C. J. Polychroniou: The situation with far-right groups and individuals supporting Putin in Russia's war against Ukraine is a bit complicated. Some on the far-right in both the US and Europe seem to have sided with Putin simply because they see him as a white supremacist and the "savior" of western culture. But my own impression is that this is the case far more so with America's far-right than it is with Europe's far-right. Indeed, there has been a marked shift in the rhetoric of many extreme right-wingers in Europe since the war started. For instance, both Marine Le Pen in France and Matteo Salvini in Italy, both of them long-time admirers of Vladimir Putin, have condemned "Russian aggression." They may have done so purely out of political opportunism, but there you have it. Anyway, ideological consistency is not the forte of the far-right. However, the same can be said nowadays about certain segments of the Left. Indeed, who would have thought 10 or even 5 years ago that the Left might one day be defending the enlargement of NATO? But we live in a time of interminable crises and perhaps political identity plight comes with the territory. Today, more than any other time in recent history, the traditional political terms "left" and "right" have become a bit redundant, though I am not suggesting by any stretch of the imagination of

doing away with the distinction. But consider this: Some of today's conservative governments in Europe are pursuing policies, such as trying to tame the market and using the state to support vulnerable populations, that are hardly representative of neoliberalism or even traditional conservatism. Greece and Poland come to mind, both countries governed by right-wing political parties. By the same token, so-called "left" parties have moved ever so closer to the right, pursuing even neoliberal policies when they are in power, to the point that blue collar workers have switched allegiances. And the Green parties of today bear no resemblance whatsoever to the Green Movement of the seventies. The German Green party, for instance, is now advocating for stronger U.S. militarism.

In the United States, of course, the situation is in some ways quite different. The Republican party has moved so far to the right that it has developed a serious extremism problem while the Democratic party has drifted towards its progressive faction. However, both "left" and "right" in the US are involved in a growing "culture war" and both practice cancel culture. The mania over political correctness and identity politics, which are the last things that the Left should be embracing given its historical commitment to free speech and universality, is terrible business. It is in fact helping today to give shape and form to the reactionary politics and policies of Ron DeSantis, the rising star of America's hard- right.

Source: [*Originally published by Z. Feel free to share widely.*](#)

The Path To A Green New Deal Must Involve A Series Of Separate Bills



*Kaniela Ing - Photo:
Twitter*

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act are two landmark bills with the potential to carry significant economic and environmental benefits. They also speak volumes of the role that progressive voices and organizations can play in helping to create sustainable and equitable economic growth and in powering a safer future. Of course, they are imperfect bills, points out National Director of the Green New Deal Network Kaniela Ing in this exclusive interview for *Truthout*, but they are important stepping stones toward a Green New Deal and advancing justice for frontline and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color) communities. For now, however, the most immediate concern, Ing says, is making sure that “the full benefits of the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act reach communities across the country and have a positive impact on the planet and its people.”

Ing was a founding member of the Green New Deal Network (GNDN) as the climate justice director for People’s Action, where he led campaigns to combat climate change. While at People’s Action, Ing co-created and led mass mobilizations around the People’s Bailout and THRIVE Agenda, which largely shaped the suite of federal legislation.

C.J. Polychroniou: Last year, the United States Congress passed the largest federal investment to tackle climate change, the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. This was preceded by Congress passing the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, another bill breaking spending records to restore and modernize our infrastructure. What role did the Green New Deal Network and other movement organizations have in passing these bills?

Kaniela Ing: The historic levels of investments passed in the last two years is a

direct result of communities across the country fighting for climate, care, jobs and justice. Coalitions like mine have built on the decades of work by leaders and activists, advocating that everyone have access to essential goods and services, be protected from crises, and have the opportunity to thrive.

Since 2020, organizations and activists within the Green New Deal Network (GNDN) have fought for Congress to pass a package that tackles the overlapping crises facing our nation: climate chaos, economic instability, racial injustice, outdated infrastructure and corporate influence over our government. The Green New Deal Network — and its 15 national organizations and 24 state coalitions — crafted the [THRIVE Act](#), a \$10 trillion climate, care, jobs and justice bill that would create enough jobs to end unemployment; build modern, reliable infrastructure; and invest in community resources while ensuring labor and justice protections.

What we secured was nearly \$3 trillion in infrastructure, transportation, climate and health care over two bills, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. By [turning people out in the streets](#), [supporting progressive leaders in Congress](#), advocating for [much-needed and popular policies](#), and [pressuring politicians](#) that were pandering to corporate influence, we have started charting a path to a Green New Deal.

Our network's multisectoral coalition was crucial in ensuring that the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and Inflation Reduction Act create millions of local, family sustaining jobs, target funding to communities that are often left behind, and begin taking on the climate crisis. By having a coalition of labor, climate, racial justice and political organizations moving together as a united front, GNDN was able to ensure that the policies in the two bills extended beyond simply reducing climate change-causing emissions, but also began to act on jobs, justice and health care.

Now that these historic bills have passed, how much closer are we to securing a true Green New Deal?

The Green New Deal was always meant to be a series of legislation, an all-of-government approach to climate justice that cuts across issues, geographies and sectors. The climate investments we have thus far secured are a down payment on the bolder bills we know we need Congress, state and local governments to

pass in order to reach the vision of a thriving future.

A [recent study by Evergreen and the Natural Resources Defense Council](#) found that the Inflation Reduction Act's investments will result in 66 percent of the U.S. being powered by clean energy by 2030. However, if we plan to mitigate the climate crisis once and for all, we need to meet President Biden's goal of 100 percent clean energy by 2035 and 80 percent by 2030.

In addition to falling short of our full climate goals, the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act also neglect investing at scale (or entirely) in other key sectors where Americans are facing immense challenges. From the housing crisis exacerbated by high utility bills, to inaccessible care services where caregivers are expected to work without paid or sick leave, people all across the country need our government to take a holistic approach to tackle the overlapping challenges our communities experience. At its foundation, the Green New Deal should simultaneously be investing in modernizing all sectors of the economy because our families do not simply experience one crisis at a time.

Finally, a true Green New Deal does not pander to fossil fuel corporations and throw lifelines to the fossil fuel industry. In order to tackle the climate crisis, we can't continue to toss tax dollars and create government-mandated pathways for the development of dirty energy when the science is clear: our overreliance on fossil fuels led us to the climate and environmental justice crisis we are facing and the reality is that the clock is rapidly running out on mitigating catastrophe.

What is the role of organizations like your own and our government in implementing the provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act for real world benefits?

For years, our fight was to attain passage of federal legislation that met the scope of the climate crisis. In the end, we accomplished some, not all, but some very important gains in the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Now, it has to be the role of leaders and climate champions to ensure these gains are implemented into tangible wins. If we stop our campaign to secure transformative change in climate and environmental justice at its signing into law, then we fail. At this moment, there is an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of families and communities across the country. It's important that we don't

miss it.

This means that it is our responsibility to ensure that the public funding we fought so hard to win is allocated correctly, and reaches the communities it is meant for: those most impacted.

It is a necessity that we begin by building public awareness around these investments and working together with grassroots organizations, BIPOC communities, and tribal governments to provide the resources needed to track and apply for funds being doled out by federal agencies. It also means holding state legislators accountable in the equitable use of these funds to outfit their states, and most importantly, [implementing Justice40](#) to direct 40 percent of the benefits of federal investments into communities facing disproportionately high and detrimental health and environmental impacts. In doing so, we ensure that communities that have historically been divested from have access to a future that is just and healthy for everyone.

What are the biggest challenges that you anticipate to face as you forge ahead and how can they be overcome?

The fight for climate justice in the U.S. is at a crossroads.

The Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act contain the most significant climate investments in our nation's history, and it is the role of organizations, community leaders, local governments and members of Congress to now ensure that the hard-won federal funds become real benefits for our communities.

If implemented at the behest of climate polluters, the compromised provisions in these acts could worsen injustice, disillusion our base and jeopardize our governing power by putting climate-friendly politicians at risk of losing their elections. For instance, we need to ensure that the utilities don't use funding in these bills to continue operating fossil fuel plants that are costly and dirty.

We already know that utilities and corporations have a vested interest in preventing a transition to clean energy. Despite [solar being the cheapest source of power in the U.S.](#), the majority of our energy is from coal and fracked gas, with a measly [1.3 percent](#) from solar. Between 2020 and 2021, while Americans were grappling with the COVID-19 crisis, fossil fuel corporations were profiting off of

price hikes on already costly dirty energy. For instance, Southern Power Company — the [third largest investor-owned utility in the country](#) — increased its operating revenue by [12.5 percent](#) largely due to higher fuel costs. Meanwhile, [28 percent](#) of Americans were unable to buy basics like food and medicine so that they could afford to pay their utility bills. It is safe to assume that these same utilities that have been hampering the transition to renewable energy will seek ways to keep profiting off their dirty fossil fuel infrastructure through climate destructive provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

In the Inflation Reduction Act, we see the direct influence of fossil fuel corporations through mandates that support the growth of oil and gas, despite the climate and environmental harms caused by dirty energy. These Inflation Reduction Act provisions require that all new solar and wind energy development on federal lands and waters must have a prerequisite oil and gas lease sale, thus choking the growth of renewables to fossil fuel development. Additionally, the Inflation Reduction Act mandates oil and gas lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico and Cook Inlet, Alaska — despite the recent [history of failed fossil fuel leasing attempts](#) in both places.

The influence of corporations on the policies in the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is likely to extend into the implementation of these bills, making it crucial for communities and leaders to champion true climate solutions rooted in a just transition to a 100 percent clean energy economy.

When will working families and communities across the country expect to start feeling the benefits of these bills? What role do everyday people have to play in ensuring that Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act implementation is a success?

If implemented with respect to our communities, the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will serve as a down payment on a Green New Deal, advance justice for frontline and BIPOC communities, and incentivize members of Congress to fund additional federal climate justice investments that science and the future of our communities demands.

More specifically, the Inflation Reduction Act's \$370 billion in climate

investments includes almost \$270 billion in tax credits and another \$100 billion in the form of loans and grants to governments and nonprofit organizations, of which roughly \$45-60 billion is set aside for environmental justice [in] communities. Working families, corporations and local governments will be able to access most of the funds between 2023-2028.

Among the [impacts of this bill](#) will be:

- Millions of new, local, family sustaining jobs, including [9 million jobs over the next decade](#) through the Inflation Reduction Act.
- Reduced utility costs for every family by [\\$500](#) by increasing renewably generated energy.
- Tax rebates of \$1,000-\$4,000 per household when upgrading to clean, modern electric appliances.
- Tax credits covering 30 percent of the costs to install solar panels and battery storage systems at homes as well as community solar.
- Up to \$7,500 in tax credits to buy new electric vehicles (EVs) as well as \$4,000 tax credits for the purchase of used EVs.
- Full and permanent funding for the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund to ensure coal miners suffering from Black Lung disease have access to medical care.
- Provisions that would tax corporate polluters, the wealthy and tax evaders, reducing the national deficit by nearly [\\$300 billion](#) and protect frontline communities from pollution.

With the majority of the climate investments going toward tax credits, it is crucial for working families, landlords, small businesses and manufacturers to take advantage of the reduced cost of electrification. Because many of these tax provisions are uncapped, the more people use them, the more money the federal government will put toward providing tax credits. Just as importantly, the more successful the implementation of the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act are, the more likely Green New Deal champions will win elections and put forth bolder climate, care, jobs and justice bills. But we will only see the full impacts of these bills if community and government leaders take the time to educate and activate everyday people to invest in cleaner and safer infrastructure.

If you had to describe what a win for this campaign would look like, how would you do so? Is there a cost to not succeeding in implementing the policies being

fought for?

We are already on the pathway to having a Green New Deal by 2030 with the passage of the biggest climate investment in our nation's history. Beginning this year, we will also be making sure that the full benefits of the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act reach communities across the country and have a positive impact on the planet and its people.

Let's be clear, the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act are imperfect bills. They fall short on 100 percent emissions reductions and investing in key sectors like public transportation and housing — gaps that need to be addressed in order to stop the climate crisis and deliver environmental justice to BIPOC and frontline communities. There is no denying that these bills continue to prop up the fossil fuel industry, despite the affordability and sustainability of clean energy solutions. While we defend the wins in the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, we also need to prevent exacerbating the climate crisis and environmental injustices.

For our coalition, winning this campaign is winning a full Green New Deal by the end of the decade. Winning for us is when we have created enough jobs so that anyone who wants to work can do so and expect fair and dignified working conditions; when natural disasters stop creating refugees among our poorest BIPOC community members; and when working families don't have to pick between paying for food versus keeping the lights on. It is about laying the foundation for a sustainable and modern future where everyone is thriving, and our children are given the opportunity to lead healthy lives, with the guarantee of pollutant-free and lead-free drinking water, toxin-free air and unburdened access to all essential services. This future, rooted in restoring a regenerative economy, ensuring climate resiliency, and delivering environmental justice is not only just a win for our campaign, but a win for all of us.

The cost to not do so is too large to quantify.

This interview has been lightly edited for clarity.

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

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

What Google Street View Can Say About The Quality Of Life In Your Neighborhood



In a remarkable new study, the broad-brush patterns between how we use and mark public space and our collective well-being were investigated in 2022 by Quynh C. Yue and colleagues [who analyzed](#) 164 million Google Street View images from locations across the United States. The study extracted information on the built environment with a focus on the directionality of traffic, the incidence of crosswalks and sidewalks, and the presence or absence of street signs, which foster way-finding. The information collected on the built environment was then

compared with census-tract, health information for those neighborhoods that were included in the Google Street Views.

The researchers found that legible, accessible paths that eased movement and communication had positive health impacts. Traffic restrictions, like an abundance of single-lane roads, indicative of lower levels of urban connectivity, were correlated with chronic health conditions and lower levels of mental health. Walkability indicators such as crosswalks and sidewalks were associated with better health, including reductions in depression, obesity, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol. Street signs and streetlights were also found to be associated with decreased chronic conditions. Overall, living in neighborhoods with a built environment that supports social interaction and physical activity leads to positive health outcomes.

But what factors or social mechanisms underpin these correlations? For this contemporary study, that question is not easy to answer as we neither can pinpoint the history of town/urban planning for each street view, nor do we know the governmental or individual decisions and actions that created each different community-scape. Here, turning to archives of history and ground plans of past cities may hold some clues.

Humans interact, cooperate, and form social configurations at many different scales with the sizes of our social networks highly variable. Many of us are part of household units. Members of different households often join forces or get together to form sports teams, or block associations, or work groups. Some of us live in small communities, others live in neighborhoods of variable extents, and most of us are affiliated with metropolitan areas or cities, states, nations, along professional associations, and market networks. In general, human affiliations and groupings have systems of governance that encompass the rules of the game, the norms, institutions, and modes of leadership. For humans, past and present, institutions and governance to a degree set the different parameters in which we live, work, cooperate, and interact.

Archaeologists faced with the challenge of defining the nature of, as well as variation and change in, governance over time rely on the material remains and residues of past human behaviors and actions to extract clues about politics in the past. Monumental architecture, statues of rulers, written texts, material symbols of office or the markers of royal position all can provide essential glimpses of

individual aggrandizement, the personalization of clout, or alternative political forms in which power was more shared and distributed. But of late, archaeologists also have begun to examine the spatial layouts and allocations that are visible through the plans of ancient cities, arrangements of urban architectural components, and other indicators of socio-spatial behaviors to compare the variation in governance across human institutions.

In their writings, which draw on a comparative, quantitative study of 30 premodern states and empires from across the globe, [Richard Blanton and Lane Fargher](#) have [made a strong case](#) that legible and open urban plans that afford widespread access to services and power tend to be associated with more collective, less autocratic forms of governance. Urban forms, like grid systems that facilitate way-finding, allow travel and access to be more open and equal. Broad public spaces afford opportunities for the exchange of both information and material. Blanton and Fargher opine that less transparent, less efficient uses of space tend to degrade participation, voice, and economic efficacy, thereby underpinning and indicating less equal political relations and consolidations of power.

Blanton and Fargher also link variation in governance to degrees of inequality with more collective political forms fostering broader well-being and economic equity, while more autocratic regimes tend to associate with higher amounts of inequality and more disparate outcomes in regard to health and well-being. In large part, these differences correlate with the greater provisioning of public goods and services by more collective governments, which contribute to biological, material, and emotional well-being. Additionally, more autocratic regimes were found to be more prone to social disruptions and unrest, which degrade well-being. Blanton and Fargher find statistical support for these relations in their sample. Their findings, in conjunction with recent studies in other historical regions, provide strong cross-cultural indications that governance, construction and uses of social space, and well-being are all behaviorally linked.

While caution is in order, the findings from the Google Street Map study do show clearly that socio-spatial arrangements have clear and direct impacts on human health and well-being, and that the built environments that we collectively construct can signal broader values and differences in governance. In a [specific recent example in the news](#), the shift toward autocracy in Turkey coincides with

restrictions in public access to what was the largest civic space in the nation's biggest metropolis. Human cooperation and the institutions through which we implement it take different forms. These social ties and arrangements leave discreet on-the-ground signatures. How closely do these urban signatures and patterns correspond with equity, well-being, health, and sustainability? And, how much can we learn by examining these relationships in the past? The next era of archaeological research, aiming to document the relationship between shifts in governance and changes in urban layouts and access, should provide us with important answers.

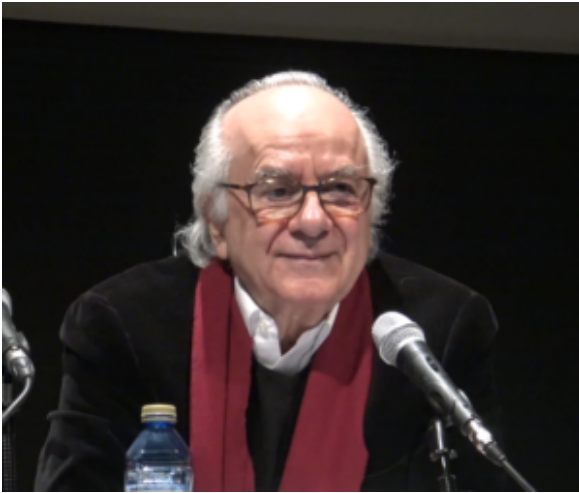
Author Bio:

Gary M. Feinman is a MacArthur Curator of Anthropology at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, Illinois.

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The Deafening Silence Of Intellectuals In The Face Of Growing Global Conflicts



Boaventura de Sousa Santos

Intellectuals do not have a monopoly on culture, on values, or on truth, much less on the meanings attributed to any one of these “domains of the spirit,” as they used to be termed. But intellectuals should also not shrink from denouncing what they see as destructive of culture, values, and truth, notably when such destruction claims to be carried out in the name of these “domains of spirit.” Intellectuals are not to refrain from saluting the sun before daybreak, but neither should they refrain from warning against the clouds ominously gathering in the sky before nightfall, preventing daylight from being enjoyed.

Europe is witnessing an alarming (re)emergence of two realities that are destructive of the “domains of the spirit”: the destruction of democracy, brought about by the growth of political forces of the far right; and the destruction of peace, brought about by the naturalization of war. Both destructions are legitimized by the very values each of them aims to destroy: fascism is promoted in the name of democracy; war is promoted in the name of peace. All of this has become possible because the political initiative and presence in the media are being relinquished to conservative forces on the right and far right. Social protection measures aimed at making people feel both in their pockets and their daily existence that democracy is better than dictatorship are becoming ever more rare precisely because of the costs of the war in Ukraine and because the economic sanctions against the “enemy,” which supposedly should be hurting their intended target, are in fact hurting above all the European people whose governments have [allied](#) themselves with the U.S. The destruction of peace and democracy is mostly affected by the unequal and parallel drawing of two circles of warranted freedoms, i.e., freedoms of expression and freedoms of action endorsed by the political and media powers that be. The circle of freedoms warranted in the

case of progressive positions advocating for just and durable peace and more inclusive democracy is getting smaller and smaller, while the circle of freedoms warranted in the case of conservative positions advocating for war and fascist polarization together with neoliberal economic inequality does not cease to grow. Progressive commentators are increasingly absent from the major media outlets, while every week conservative ones present us with page after page of staggering mediocrity.

Let us look at some of the main symptoms of this vast process currently underway:

1) The information war over the Russia-Ukraine conflict has so taken hold of published opinion that even commentators with a modicum of conservative common sense have submitted to it with sickening subservience. Here's one example among many from the European corporate media: during his weekly appearance on a Portuguese TV channel (SIC, January 29, 2023), Luís Marques Mendes, a well-known commentator, usually a voice of common sense within the conservative camp, [said](#) something to this effect: "Ukraine has to win the war, because if it doesn't, Russia will invade other European countries." This is pretty much what American television viewers hear from MSNBC's Rachel Maddow on a daily basis. Where does such an absurd idea come from, if not from an overdose of misinformation? Have they forgotten that post-Soviet Russia sought to join NATO and the EU but was rebuffed, and that, contrary to what had been promised to the former Soviet Union leader Mikhail Gorbachev, NATO expansion on Russia's borders may constitute a legitimate defense concern on the part of Russia, even if the invasion of Ukraine is indeed illegal, as I myself repeatedly denounced from day one? Don't they know that it was the U.S. and the United Kingdom who boycotted the first peace negotiations shortly after the war broke out? Have the commentators not considered, even for a moment, that a nuclear power that finds itself faced with the possibility of defeat in a conventional conflict might resort to using its nuclear weapons, which in turn could lead to nuclear catastrophe? Don't they see that two nationalisms, one Ukrainian, and the other Russian, are being exploited in the war in Ukraine to force Europe into total dependence on the U.S. and to stop the expansion of China, the country with which the U.S. is really at war? Don't the commentators realize that today's Ukraine is tomorrow's Taiwan? Curiously enough, no details are ever offered, in the midst of all this ventriloquistic propaganda fever, regarding what a defeat of Russia will mean;

will it lead to the ousting of Russian President Vladimir Putin or to the balkanizing of Russia?

2) The anti-communist ideology that dominated the Western world until the 1990s is being surreptitiously recycled to promote anti-Russian hatred to the point of hysteria, even though it is a known fact that Putin is an autocratic leader, a friend of the European right and far right. Russian artists, musicians, and athletes are being [banned](#) from events, even as courses on Russian [culture](#) and literature—which are no less European than French literature and culture—are being terminated. In the wake of the Treaty of Versailles of 1919, with its strategy of humiliating Germany after its loss during World War I, German writers were barred from attending the first meeting of the annual PEN Congress, held in May 1923. The only dissenting voice was that of Romain Rolland, who won the 1915 Nobel Prize for Literature. Despite everything he had written against the war and German war crimes in particular, Rolland had the courage to say, “in the name of intellectual universalism”: “I will not subject my thinking to the tyrannical and demented fluctuations of politics.”

3) Democracy is being so emptied of meaning that it can be instrumentally defended by those who use it in order to destroy it. At the same time, those who serve democracy to strengthen it against fascism are labeled radical leftists. At the international level, the West unanimously applauded the 2014 events of Kyiv’s Maidan square, which is where the [current war truly began](#). Despite the fact that the flags of Nazi organizations were in plain sight during the protests; despite the fact that popular rage was [directed](#) against a democratically elected President Viktor Yanukovych then; and despite the fact that, according to wiretaps, Victoria Nuland, the U.S. neoconservative and then-assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, had explicitly named the people who were to wield power in case of victory, including an American citizen, Natalie Jaresko, who later served as Ukraine’s new minister of finance from 2014 to 2016; despite all this, these events, which amounted to a well-orchestrated coup aimed at removing a pro-Russian president and turning Ukraine into a U.S. protectorate, were celebrated throughout the West as a vibrant victory for democracy. In fact, none of this was quite as absurd as the fact that when Juan Guaidó, a Venezuelan opposition figure, proclaimed himself interim president of Venezuela in a public square in Caracas in 2019, it was enough for the U.S., along with many EU countries, to recognize him as such. In December 2022, the Venezuelan

opposition itself put an [end](#) to this farce.

4) The double standard for assessing what happens in the world is taking on aberrant proportions and is being used in a quasi-automatic fashion to strengthen the war apologists, stigmatize the parties of the left, and normalize fascists. Examples are legion, so the difficulty lies in choosing among them. Let me offer just a couple of illustrations from the national and international contexts. In Portugal, the raucous and offensive behavior of the members of Chega, the [far-right party](#), is very similar to the behavior of the deputies of Germany's Nazi party from the moment they entered the Reichstag in the early 1920s. Attempts were made to stop them, but the political initiative belonged to the Nazi party and the economic situation was on their side. As early as May 1933, the Nazi party [held](#) its first book burning, in Berlin. How long will it be until it happens in Portugal? Largely backed by U.S. counterinsurgency institutions, the position of today's global right vis-à-vis leftist governments is that, whenever the latter cannot be overthrown by soft coups, they must be worn down by accusations of corruption and forced to grapple with issues of governability so that they are prevented from governing strategically. It would appear that corruption in Portugal is confined to the Socialist Party, which secured an outright majority in the last election in 2022. In the eyes of the hegemonic conservative media, every minister in the Socialist Party government is presumed corrupt until proven otherwise. It shouldn't be hard to find similar examples in other countries.

From the international context, I will mention two glaring examples. There is now a [general consensus](#) that the September 2022 explosion of the Nord Stream gas pipelines was the work of the U.S. (and was allegedly "[overseen](#)" by President Joe Biden, a claim he denied), which was possibly assisted by allies. An incident of this magnitude should have been immediately investigated by an independent international commission. What seems obvious is that the aggrieved party—Russia—had no interest in destroying an infrastructure that they could make useless by just turning off the tap. On February 8, Seymour Hersh, a respected American journalist, [used](#) conclusive information to show that the sabotage of Nord Stream 1 and 2 had in fact been planned by the U.S. since December 2021. If that was indeed the case, we have before us a heinous crime that is also an act of state terrorism. The U.S., which claims to be the champion of global democracy, should be supremely interested in finding out what happened. Was this the only way to force Germany to join the war against Russia? Was the

sabotaging of the gas pipelines intended to put an end to Europe's policy, [initiated](#) by former Chancellor of Germany Willy Brandt, of being less energy-dependent on the U.S.? In the context of expensive energy and closed-down businesses, was this not an effective way of putting the brakes on the EU's economic engine? Who benefits from the situation? Heavy silence hangs over this act of state terrorism.

The other example of glaring double standards is the violence of the Israeli colonial occupation of Palestine which is intensifying. Israel killed [35 Palestinians](#) in January 2023 alone; in a raid [carried out on January 26](#) in the Jenin refugee camp, in the West Bank, Israel killed 10 people. One day later, a Palestinian youth killed seven people outside the synagogue of a Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem, an area illegally occupied by Israel. There is violence on both sides of the conflict, but the disproportion is overwhelming, and many acts of terrorism by the State of Israel (sometimes committed with impunity by the settlers or by soldiers at checkpoints) do not even make the news. There are no Western media correspondents to report on what is happening in the occupied territories, which is where most of the violence takes place. Except for furtive cellphone footage, we do not have gut-wrenching images of suffering and death on the Palestinian side. The international community and the Arab world have kept quiet on this matter. Despite the hugely disproportionate means of warfare, there is no movement to send effective military equipment to Palestine, as is currently the case with Ukraine. Why is Ukraine's a just resistance, but Palestinian resistance is not? Europe, the continent where the Holocaust that killed millions of Jews took place, is ultimately at the root of the crimes committed against Palestine, but nowadays it shares an odious complicity with Israel. The EU is currently hurrying to create a court to try war crimes, but—and herein lies the hypocrisy—only those committed by Russia. Just as in the years leading up to World War I, the appeals to Europeanism (pan-Europe, as it was called back then) are increasingly becoming calls to war and leading to rhetoric aimed at concealing the unjust suffering and the loss of well-being now being imposed on the European people without them having been consulted on the need for, or advantages of, the Russia-Ukraine war.

5) Today, we witness a confrontation between U.S., Russian, and Chinese imperialism. There is also the pathological case of the United Kingdom, which, notwithstanding its abysmal social and political decline, has not yet realized that the British Empire has long ended. I am against all imperialism, and I admit that

Russian or Chinese imperialism may prove to be the most dangerous ones in the future, but there is no doubt in my mind that, with its military and financial superiority, U.S. imperialism is at the moment the most dangerous of all. Of course, none of this is enough to guarantee its longevity. In fact, I have been arguing, based on sources from North American institutions (such as the [National Intelligence Council](#)), that it is an empire in decline, but it may be that its very decline is one of the factors that help explain why it is especially dangerous these days.

I have condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine from the start, but since that moment I have also pointed out that the U.S. had actively provoked Russia into this conflict, with the purpose of [weakening](#) Russia and containing China. The dynamics of U.S. imperialism seem unstoppable, fueled by the perpetual belief that the destruction it causes, furthers, or incites will take place [far](#) from its borders, protected as the country is by two vast oceans. The U.S. claims that its interventions are invariably for the good of democracy, but the truth is that it ends up leaving in its wake a path of destruction, dictatorship, or chaos. The most recent and probably most extreme manifestation of this ideology can be found in the latest book by the neoconservative Robert Kagan (Victoria Nuland's husband), titled [*The Ghost at the Feast: America and the Collapse of World Order, 1900-1941*](#) (Alfred Knopf, 2023). The book's central idea is that the U.S.—in its desire to bring greater happiness, freedom, and wealth to other nations, fighting corruption and tyranny wherever they exist—is a unique country. The U.S. is so prodigiously powerful that it would have avoided World War II if only it had had the chance to intervene militarily and financially in time to force Germany, Italy, Japan, France, and Great Britain to follow the new U.S.-led world order. Every U.S. intervention overseas has been driven by altruistic motives, for the good of the people at whom the intervention is directed. According to Kagan, U.S. military interventions overseas—from the time of the Spanish-American War of 1898 (fought with the purpose, still felt to this day, of dominating Cuba) and the Philippine-American War of 1899-1902 (fought to prevent the self-determination of the Philippines, which resulted in [more than 200,000](#) Filipino deaths)—have always been inspired by unselfish notions and for the desire to help people.

This hypocrisy and erasure of inconvenient truths does not even consider the tragic reality of the Indigenous peoples and the Black population of the U.S., who were subjected to ferocious extermination and discrimination during those times

of supposedly liberating interventions abroad. The historical record exposes the cruelty of such mendacity. U.S. interventions have invariably been dictated by the country's geopolitical and economic interests. In fact, the U.S. is no exception to the rule. On the contrary, this has always been the case with every empire (see, for example, the invasions of Russia by Napoleon and Adolf Hitler). The historical record shows that the precedence of imperial interests has often led to the suppression of aspirations for self-determination, freedom, and democracy and the extension of support to murderous dictators, with the ensuing devastation and death, from the Banana Wars in Nicaragua (1912), the support to Cuban dictator Fulgêncio Batista, or the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion to the coup against former Chilean President Salvador Allende (1973); from the coup against Mohammad Mossadegh, the former democratically elected president of Iran (1953) to the coup against Jacobo Árbenz, the former democratically elected president of Guatemala (1954); from the invasion of Vietnam to fight the communist threat (1965) to the invasion of Afghanistan (2001), allegedly as a defensive move against the terrorists who attacked New York's twin towers (none of whom was from Afghanistan)—following 20 years of U.S. support to the Mujahideen against the Soviet Union-backed communist government in Kabul; from the 2003 invasion of Iraq to take down Saddam Hussein and destroy his (nonexistent) weapons of mass destruction to the intervention in Syria to defend rebels who, for the most part, were (and are) radical Islamists; from the 1995 intervention in the Balkans, carried out through NATO without UN authorization, to the 2011 destruction of Libya. There have always been "benevolent reasons" for such interventions, which always relied on accomplices and allies at the local level. What will remain of martyred Ukraine when the war ends (because all wars end eventually)? What will be the situation in the other European countries, notably Germany and France, which remain dominated by the false notion that the Marshall Plan was the manifestation of self-sacrificing philanthropy on the part of the U.S., to whom they owe infinite gratitude and unconditional solidarity? And what about Russia? What will a final assessment look like, beyond all the death and destruction that come with every war? Why don't we witness the emergence, in Europe, of a strong movement in favor of a just and lasting peace? Could it be that, despite the fact that the war is being fought in Europe, Europeans are waiting for some anti-war movement to emerge in the U.S., so they can join it with good conscience and without the risk of being viewed as friends of Putin, or even as communists?

Why so much silence about all this?

Perhaps the most incomprehensible silence is that of the intellectuals. It is incomprehensible because intellectuals frequently claim to be more percipient than ordinary mortals. History has taught us that, in the periods immediately before the outbreak of wars, all politicians declare themselves against the war while contributing to it by virtue of their actions. Silence is nothing short of complicity with the masters of war. Contrary to what happened at the beginning of the 20th century, there are now no well-known intellectuals making resounding declarations for peace, “independence of spirit,” and democracy. Three imperialisms coexisted when World War I broke out: Russian, English, and Prussian imperialism. No one doubted that Prussian imperialism was the most aggressive of the three.

Intriguingly, no major German intellectuals were heard speaking out against the war at that time. The case of Thomas Mann is worthy of reflection. In November 1914, he published an article in *Neue Rundschau* titled “*Gedanken im Kriege*” (Thoughts in Wartime), in which he defended war as an act of “*Kultur*” (i.e., Germany, as he himself clarified) against civilization. In his view, *Kultur* was the sublimation of the demonic (“*die Sublimierung des Dämonischen*”) and was above morality, reason, and science. Mann concluded by writing that “Law is the friend of the weak; it would reduce the world to a level. War brings out strength” (“[*Das Gesetz ist der Freund des Schwachen, möchte gern die Welt verflachen, aber der Krieg läßt die Kraft erscheinen*](#)”). Mann viewed *Kultur* and militarism as brothers. In 1918-1920, he published [*Reflections of a Non-Political Man*](#), a book in which he defended the Kaiser’s policies and claimed that democracy was an anti-German idea. Fortunately for humanity, Thomas Mann would later change his mind and become one of the most vocal critics of Nazism. In contrast, from Peter Kropotkin to Leo Tolstoy and from Fyodor Dostoyevsky to Maxim Gorky, the voices of Russian intellectuals raised against Russian imperialism never failed to make themselves heard.

There are many questions intellectuals have an obligation to address. Why have they stayed silent? Are there still intellectuals, or have they become weak shadows of what they once stood for?

Author Bio:

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Boaventura de Sousa Santos is the emeritus professor of sociology at the University of Coimbra in Portugal. His most recent book is [*Decolonizing the University: The Challenge of Deep Cognitive Justice*](#)

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