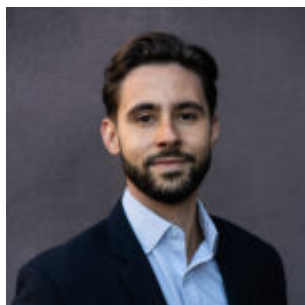


International Pressure Is The Only Way To Halt Israel's Devastation Of Gaza



Tariq Kenney-Shawa of Al-Shabaka warns Palestinians are being deemed “subhuman” by Israel and the U.S.

Israel's ground invasion of northern Gaza [has in effect begun](#), following the Israeli military's announcement on Friday of its plan to “expand” its ground attacks.

“Explosions from continuous airstrikes lit up the sky over Gaza City for hours after nightfall,” according to the [Associated Press](#), and families with loved ones in Gaza were terrified to learn on Friday that Israel has taken down internet and communications throughout the region, largely cutting off contact between the 2.3 million people who live there and the outside world, and making it difficult for journalists to track the scale of ground attacks. According to the [Washington Post](#), “The Hamas media center reported heavy nighttime clashes with Israeli forces at several places, including what it said was an Israeli incursion east of Bureij. Asked about the report, the Israeli military reiterated early Saturday that it had been carrying out targeted raids and expanding strikes with the aim of ‘preparing the ground for future stages of the operation.’”

This is an escalation of the massive retaliatory strikes that Israel has been taking against the population of Gaza since October 7, when an attack led by the militant group Hamas killed roughly 1,400 people inside Israeli territory, including many civilians. The collective punishment that Israel has wreaked in response has destroyed much of Gaza's infrastructure and has already killed [more than 7,000 Palestinians](#), including [3,000 children](#).

In the exclusive interview for *Truthout* that follows, Tariq Kenney-Shawa, policy fellow at the independent transnational think tank Al-Shabaka, the Palestinian

Policy Network evaluates the prospects for a shift in United States foreign policy toward Israel and explains why Palestinian resistance will never die as long as Israel fails to recognize Palestinian rights under international law.

C.J. Polychroniou: Gaza, home to 2.3 million Palestinians, has been under direct Israeli occupation for nearly 40 years and has been under blockade for the last 16 years while Israel has retained exclusive control over Gaza's airspace and territorial waters. Since 2006, which is when Hamas won the last legislative election, Gaza has also been subjected to numerous deadly Israeli assaults. The latest round of massive bombardments, which is taking place in the context of an Israeli plan for the "complete siege" of Gaza and has already resulted in the death of [more than 7,000 Palestinians](#), including [3,000 children](#), are in response to the unprecedented October 7 Hamas attacks on Israeli territory. Hamas fighters killed as many as 1,400 people and seized perhaps as many as 200 hostages. What do you think Hamas hoped to gain with its attacks on Israeli civilians, which, unsurprisingly, have triggered a massive retaliation with the stated goal of destroying Hamas while employing collective punishment as a method of war?

Tariq Kenney-Shawa: To be honest, I think Hamas was as surprised as many of us in the sheer success and scope of their operation. I don't believe even Hamas's leaders and those closest to the operational planning expected that they would get as deep into Israel as they did, and perhaps more importantly, that other rival groups were also able to participate at the level they did. This means that Hamas exercised little operational control on the ground once the scope of the operation exceeded the expected parameters. A lot of the killing of civilians took place in the chaos of the unexpected advance in which fighters found themselves in places they never imagined they would, and [reports continue to emerge](#) that the indiscriminate response by Israeli forces also contributed to the civilian death toll.

Again, the October 7 operation was unprecedented in just about every sense of the term, especially in terms of overturning the idea that the Israeli military is inherently invincible. Of course, the power asymmetry between the Israeli military and even the most capable Palestinian resistance groups is immense. Israel is a nuclear-backed force that fields the most advanced weapons (like F-35 fighter jets, Merkava battle tanks, advanced spyware, etc.) on the market and an army that is widely recognized as one of the most capable in the world. But the al-Qassam Brigades were able to take Israeli forces by surprise. So, it's very clear that what happened on the ground on October 7 likely exceeded what Hamas

even intended in the first place.

In terms of the wider strategy, we can speculate on what Hamas hoped to achieve, even if what happened went a lot further. Hamas has come to understand that Israel only communicates, understands and responds to the language of force and violence. Palestinians in Gaza have watched as they become increasingly isolated from the rest of Palestine and the world within the open-air prison that the Gaza Strip is. They have watched political tracks dissolve, they have seen peaceful protesters get sniped by Israeli regime forces, and they have also seen growing international solidarity with the Palestinians translate into nothing but tighter blockade and occupation.

It's pretty clear that Hamas no longer cares about winning the hearts and minds of the international community, because after more than 75 years of occupation and 16 years of suffocating blockade, those public opinion victories have brought the people of Gaza nothing tangible. To Hamas, disrupting the Israel-imposed status quo is the only thing that gives them leverage, and what that looks like is armed resistance. The truth is that armed resistance played an integral role in forcing Israel to withdraw settlers from Gaza in 2005 and can be argued to have even forced Israel's hand over recent years in easing aspects of the blockade of Gaza when it comes to expanded fishing zones and the entry of goods.

Hamas knows that Israel will respond with disproportionate force to any act of resistance, but it seems that their goal was to break the status quo at whatever the cost because to them, it is a matter of dying on their feet rather than silently on their knees. People outside of Gaza may disagree with their tactics, but it is critical to understand their reasoning.

Since the late 1990s, Hamas has gained widespread popularity among Palestinians for its stance toward Israel, though it doesn't represent all Palestinians, and there are conflicting accounts about the support that Hamas actually enjoys among Gazans in particular. In fact, nearly half of Gazans today were not even alive when Hamas won the 2006 legislative election, so it's not easy to get a handle on the matter. What is your assessment of the state of Palestinian support for Hamas?

It's extremely difficult to accurately gauge the level of support Hamas has in Gaza and even within the wider Palestinian political environment. Reliable polling is

hard to come by right now, and it's always tough to get accurate polling numbers from people who fear being surveilled.

It's also extremely important to recognize that when people say that Hamas was democratically elected, this refers to a parliamentary election that took place over 18 years ago. More than half of Gaza's population is [under the age of 14](#), which means the vast majority of Palestinians in Gaza today either were not even alive or were not old enough to vote for Hamas (or anyone else, for that matter) the last time elections were held. With that in mind, Hamas has been ruling Gaza against the democratic will of Gazans simply because there have been no elections. It's also well known that Hamas has violently suppressed opposition to its rule and policies repeatedly over the last decade.

Palestinian public opinion is also known to be extremely diverse, in part due to the fractured nature of the Palestinian polity as a result of decades of Israeli settler colonialism and divide-and-conquer rule. What this means is that a Palestinian in Nablus might ascribe to different tactics and strategy than a Palestinian in Gaza or in the global diaspora. But what unites most Palestinians is a shared support for resistance or *sumud* (steadfastness) in the face of Israeli occupation and apartheid.

A lot of the support that Hamas does receive is because of its perceived commitment to resistance as opposed to the alternative, which is the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, widely viewed by Palestinians across the spectrum as corrupt subcontractors of the Israeli occupation. To many Palestinians, at least Hamas and other resistance groups continue to fight back against their occupiers, as opposed to alternative parties like Fatah, which is widely seen as having sold out the Palestinian people. This is where Hamas continues to receive support.

Israel has vowed to destroy Hamas. Isn't this a fantasy of sorts given that Israel has no intention of recognizing Palestinian rights? I mean, even if Hamas is destroyed militarily, wouldn't something else take its place? Peace requires justice, and the current Israeli regime, unfortunately, doesn't care about justice.

What Israel wants to destroy, to wipe off the face of the map, is Palestinian resistance in whatever form it may come in. Israel has spent decades doing its best to suppress any and all forms of Palestinian resistance. When Palestinians attempt nonviolent tactics — such as boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS)

campaigns aimed at making occupation economically unsustainable for Israel — we are rebuked, smeared as antisemites and suppressed by lawsuits and lawfare.

Nonviolent protests are crushed. During the Great March of Return in 2018, for example, Israeli forces killed at least 223 protesters and maimed thousands as they marched to the border of Gaza to demand their right of return and an end to the blockade. Thousands of Palestinian administrative detainees and political prisoners — prisoners held without charge, trial, or access to lawyers — are tortured and killed. Even piecemeal efforts to bring our case to the International Criminal Court, the supposedly internationally accepted path in our “rules-based-international-order,” are met with accusations of “diplomatic terrorism.”

Israel’s crushing response to each of these efforts is proof that the issue has never been the method of resistance but rather the fact that Palestinians dare to resist their oppression at all.

Israel may kill off thousands of Hamas fighters and leaders by the end of their campaign, but they cannot defeat the resistance of which Hamas is just one component. As long as Palestinians live under blockade, occupation and apartheid, wherever they are, resistance will continue in all its forms. If you need further proof for this, just remember that Israel has carried out devastating assaults on the Gaza Strip in 2008, 2012, 2014 and 2021 all with the stated aim of defeating resistance groups. What each of these onslaughts, which they call “mowing the grass,” has achieved is a further deepening of the Palestinian will to resist as they’ve been forced to witness family and friends killed and futures destroyed under endless siege.

The U.S. and other Western nations have given Israel the green light for the leveling of Gaza in retribution for the Hamas attack — a decision that has made many conclude that they value Israeli lives more than Palestinian ones. Does that seem like an accurate assessment to you? Could you talk about efforts within these nations that are trying to challenge this greenlighting of a massive assault against Palestinians? Is there anything that gives you hope that U.S. policy could be swayed in a different direction?

The U.S. and the West at large have, since day one, always valued Israeli lives over Palestinians. That’s because Israelis are seen as brethren, both in terms of ethnic/racial backgrounds and religious affiliation, while Palestinians are

considered subhuman and lumped into wider hatred of Arabs and deeply rooted Islamophobia. Just days ago, National Security Council Spokesman John Kirby cried on national television for the Israeli civilians killed on October 7. Days later, he stood in front of cameras during a press briefing and shrugged off the deaths of Palestinian civilians as unfortunate but inevitable collateral damage.

I have little hope right now that official U.S. policy can be swayed in a different direction. Even before the current crisis, official U.S. policy was far removed from the demands of public opinion. Over the last few years, the narrative has been shifting around Israel-Palestine, and that has led to substantial shifts in public opinion. Recent polling found that, for the first time in history, [Democrats sympathized more with Palestinians](#) than with Israelis. More importantly, younger generations across the political spectrum are not only more supportive of the Palestinian struggle, but are actively calling for Israel to be held accountable for the war crimes and human rights violations it routinely commits. But you wouldn't be able to tell by just looking at Biden administration policy, which is arguably the most anti-Palestinian out of any administration in recent U.S. history.

Remember, during the 2020 campaign, Joe Biden made all sorts of lofty promises about centering human rights, promoting democracy and so on, only to, as president, abandon those objectives in favor of embracing autocrats and pursuing the Trump administration-brokered Abraham Accords with absolutely no regard for holding Israel accountable for occupation and apartheid. So basically, Biden's assumption — and this was shared by both Israeli and Arab governments — was that Palestinians could effectively be swept under the rug, maybe offered some crumbs here and there to keep quiet while these security deals were made without the support of the masses across the region.

What we saw on October 7 shattered that assumption — the assumption that we could just forget about Palestinians, forget about the occupation, forget about holding Israel accountable for the conditions it keeps Palestinians under.

So now here we are, two weeks into what has become a total massacre, and it's clear the Biden administration isn't learning its lesson. President Biden wasted no time in basically grinding into gear to ratchet up unconditional support of Israel to new levels. He deployed the *USS Gerald Ford* to the coast of Gaza to provide combat support if Israel faced a second front against Hezbollah in Lebanon, and reportedly has marines and advisers on the ground with the Israeli military to

participate in their offensive if need be. Biden is replenishing the artillery shells, missiles, and other lethal munitions that Israel is using to massacre Gazans as we speak, and is seeking at least \$14 billion of our taxpayer dollars (on top of the \$3.8 billion we give them every year) in humanitarian and military aid to Israel. If all that wasn't enough, he has continued to explicitly discourage calls for a ceasefire and is even entertaining plans to facilitate the mass displacement of Palestinians from Gaza.

Some analysts seem to think that Biden is somehow playing 3D chess by publicly supporting Israel unconditionally while working backchannel diplomacy to supposedly temper their assault, but it's hard to buy that when more than 6,000 Palestinians have been massacred across Gaza and the West Bank in just over two weeks. Couple that with everything I just listed, and it's pretty obvious that Biden is giving Israel carte blanche.

Israel's latest assault on Gaza is already going down as a major war crime. But what happens next? Is there really an alternative to the vicious cycle of violence?

It is extremely difficult to predict what will come next for Palestinians. But we can be sure that Palestinians are facing an ongoing *Nakba* (catastrophe), a repeat of 1948 and worse as we speak.

The Israeli regime has given every indication that it intends to drastically alter the status quo in Gaza, and that is going to look like genocide and ethnic cleansing.

Israel's order to evacuate northern Gaza is an indication of what they have planned. Israel's ground invasion will likely focus on northern Gaza, where the bulk of Hamas's tunnel infrastructure is. Israel recently warned that it would consider any civilians remaining in the area to be "accomplices" of Hamas — which, apart from being a blatant war crime, indicates Israel intends to all but flatten the entire area and turn it into a demilitarized zone at the expense of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians. More than 2 million Gazans, who were already confined to one of the most densely populated slivers of land on this planet, will now be forced into a space half the size or will be pushed out entirely in a process of ethnic cleansing that will surpass what happened in 1948.

Keep in mind, this has always been Israel's goal — full control of the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea with as few Palestinians as

possible. The only thing that has stopped them from wiping out every last Palestinian in one fell swoop in the past has been the international community, but considering the West's unconditional support of Israel over the last couple weeks, can we depend on them anymore?

There absolutely is an alternative to all of this — but it involves international pressure aimed at bringing an end to the conditions that led to October 7 in the first place, namely Israel's occupation of Palestine and its suffocating blockade of Gaza. As long as those conditions remain in place, as long as Palestinians are oppressed, resistance will continue. That is the plain reality of the situation. You want to end the cycle of violence? End Israel's occupation, end Israeli apartheid, lift the blockade and give Palestinians the rights and freedom we are entitled to.

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Elections In Argentina: A Working Class Perspective



Taroa Zúñiga Silva

A few days before the October 22 elections in Argentina, [almost 90 percent of the polls](#) indicated that the winner would be Javier Milei, the “insane” candidate of the right—as [described by](#) Estela de Carlotto, president of the legendary human rights group [Abuelas de Plaza Mayo \(Grandmothers of Plaza Mayo\)](#). As it turned out, Sergio Massa (of the coalition [Unión por la Patria - UP](#)) prevailed over Milei by [almost seven points](#). Massa and Milei will face off on November 19 in the run-off for the presidency of the country with South America’s second-largest economy.

On August 13, Milei prevailed over all the other candidates in Argentina’s primary. In the months between that election and the one in October, Massa—who is the Minister of the Economy in the current government—added three million votes to his tally.

[Georgina Orellano](#), National General Secretary of [AMMAR](#) (Asociación de Mujeres Meretrices de Argentina) told me how this phenomenon was experienced in Constitución, the area of Buenos Aires where the main headquarters of her organization is located. Sex workers organized themselves to monitor both electoral processes in the schools where it was their turn to vote. “In the PASO [primary elections],” she told me, “the worrying result was that the UP force

came in third and Milei in first place.” However, this time, “we won in almost all the schools in the Constitución neighborhood.” In fact, “in all the polling stations where sex workers supervised the elections, Massa won.”

The Practical and the Theoretical

Elsa Yanaje, marketing director of the [Instituto Nacional de Agricultura Familiar, Campesina e Indígena](#) (National Institute of Family, Peasant, and Indigenous Agriculture) and member of the [Federación Rural para la Producción y el Arraigo](#) (Rural Federation for Production and Rooting) believes that the result of the PASO (primary election) was linked to two things: on the one hand, Milei’s communications success in being the only candidate who reflected underlying anger or weariness with the country’s economic situation. “It was about saying what is not said,” Yanaje said. That is, “what a citizen angry with the management [of the central government] could think.”

Yanaje said that in the PASO a vote to warn (more than to punish) was given to the current government. A vote that asked: “What kind of methodology are you going to use to reverse the situation or somehow guarantee some basic services?” Argentina is currently facing a strong [economic contraction and high inflation rates](#), which have especially affected “those who were already below the poverty line,” says Yanaje.

In this context, Milei’s proposals “were somehow charming,” but in practice, Yanaje adds, “we knew that [they were] difficult to maintain.” Between the two choices, the leader explains, “What was reversed [with the new election results was]... a decision between the practical and the theoretical.” The theoretical “was what Milei promised with his proposal of dollarization, privatization, etc.” When these promises were analyzed by communities, it was evident that they were impossible to execute. This exercise of analysis, reflection, and debate was what led people to take their votes towards the practical: the candidate who was linked to the popular sectors was Massa, with more egalitarian proposals that appealed to more sectors of the population.

On the other hand, Orellano considers the results of October 22 to also reflect a popular rejection of Milei’s proposal to “take away rights.” “Many of us were born with a basic right to public health, to public education and we cannot conceive of living without them,” Orellano said.

During the last weeks of campaigning, Milei [railed against these fundamental rights](#), including [state subsidies](#) to public [transportation](#). “We learned that if the subsidy is removed,” Orellano told me, “we workers could go from paying 70 pesos to more than 1,000.” This type of data generated an awareness that was reflected in recent electoral results.

The Ballot

The second round of elections in Argentina will be held on November 19. Milei, in [his first statements](#) after the last elections, declared that his objective is “to put an end to Kirchnerism.” For Orellano, this call seeks to summon the votes of Juntos por el Cambio (Together for Change), the extreme right-wing coalition whose candidate, Patricia Bullrich, took third place in the elections. Milei’s campaign, Orellano explains, was built against Kirchnerism and “against [the] working class and trade unionists.”

Both Orellano and Yanaje are proud of the political work carried out during these elections. In the family, peasant, and indigenous agriculture sector, of which Yanaje is a member, there is no political campaigning, out of respect for the diversity of thought of the people it brings together. However, constant debate, collective analysis, and organization bear fruit. “There was a reflection on what was coming,” she tells me. “We are defining the course of the country, so we had to stand firm. There was a lot of militancy.”

For AMMAR’s women, they campaigned in their neighborhoods, talking to everyone in their neighborhood. “For the second round, we are going to be active in all the provinces where we are organized,” says Orellano. They plan to increase the number of election observers in the schools of the municipalities where AMMAR has a presence. Sex workers are aware of what is at stake with these two antagonistic proposals for the country. “We know what this denialist, fascist, violent, xenophobic, racist discourse represents being against diversity, against women, against feminism, and against the victories of the working class,” Orellano tells me. “So we sex workers are going to do everything in our power to make sure that the next president of Argentina is Sergio Massa.”

By Taroa Zúñiga Silva

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This article was produced by [Globetrotter](#).

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Source: Globetrotter

Why Capitalism Cannot Finally Repress Socialism



Richard D. Wolff

Socialism is capitalism's critical shadow. When lights shift, a shadow may seem to disappear, but sooner or later, with further shifts of light, it comes back. Capitalism's ideologues have long fantasized that capitalism would finally outwit, outperform, and thereby overcome socialism: make the shadow vanish permanently. Like children, they bemoan their failure when, in the light of new social circumstances, the shadow reappears clear and sharp. Recent efforts to dispel the shadow having failed again, the contest of capitalism versus socialism resumes. In the United States, young people especially applaud socialism so much recently that think tanks like PragerU and the Hoover Institute at Stanford University urgently recycle the old anti-socialist tropes.

In fact, the capitalism-versus-socialism contest does not really resume because it

never really stopped. As changing social conditions changed socialism—a process that took time—it sometimes seemed to wishful thinkers that the systems struggle had ended with capitalism’s victory. Thus the 1920s saw anti-socialist witch hunts (especially the Palmer raids by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Sacco and Vanzetti persecution) that many believed at the time would extinguish U.S. socialism. What had happened in Russia in 1917 would not be allowed to sneak into the United States with all those European immigrants. The grossly unfair Sacco and Vanzetti trial (recognized as such even [by the state of Massachusetts](#)) did little to prevent—and much to prepare for—subsequent similar anti-socialist efforts by government officials in the United States.

With the 1929 crash, socialism revived to become a powerful movement in the United States and beyond during the 1930s and 1940s. After World War II ended, the political right and most major capitalist employers tried once again to squash capitalism’s socialist shadow. They fostered McCarthy’s “anti-communist” crusades. They executed [the Rosenbergs](#). By the end of the 1950s, once again, many in the United States could indulge the thought that capitalism had vanquished socialism. Then the 1960s upset that indulgence as millions—especially young people—enthusiastically rediscovered Marx, Marxism, and socialism. Shortly after that, the Reagan and Thatcher reaction tried a bit differently to resume anti-socialism. They simply asserted and reasserted to a receptive mass media that “there is no alternative” (TINA) to capitalism any longer. Socialism, where it survived, they insisted, had proved so inferior to capitalism that it was fading in the present and possessed no future. With the 1989 collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe, many again believed that the old capitalism versus socialism struggle had finally been resolved.

But of course, the shadow returned. Nothing more surely secures the future of socialism than the persistence of capitalism. In the United States, it returned with Occupy Wall Street, then Bernie Sanders’s campaigns, and now the moderate socialists bubbling up inside U.S. politics. Each time Trump and the far right equate liberals and Democrats with socialism, communism, Marxism, and anarchism, they help recruit new socialists. Socialism’s enemies understandably exhibit their frustration. With so little exposure to Hegel, the idea that modern society might be a unity of opposites—capitalism and socialism both reproducing and undermining one another—is not available to help them understand their world.

Handling life's contradictions has always, for many, entailed pretending they are not there. Very young children do something like that when they encounter a scary dog, cover their eyes with their hands, and believe so doing makes the dog vanish. With time, the children mature and grasp that the dog is still there despite hand-covered eyes. With time, too, adults will grasp that making the socialist other/shadow vanish is a capitalist project sure to fail. One effect of that failed project over the last 75 years is widespread ignorance of how socialism was continuing to change.

Over the last two centuries, as socialism spread from Western Europe across the globe, it interacted with very diverse economic, political, and cultural conditions. Those interactions yielded multiple, different interpretations of socialism. For some, it was an evolving critique of capitalism, especially its injustices, inequalities, and cyclical instability. For others, it became the ongoing construction of an alternative economic system. More broadly, millions were brought to socialisms that aimed to change basic social institutions (family, city, government) that capitalism had subordinated to its needs. The different, multiple socialisms debated and influenced one another, accelerating change within them all.

One kind of socialism that became prominent in the 19th and 20th centuries (and still exists) focuses on economics and government. It criticizes how governments are captured by the capitalist class and serve its social hegemony. It strategizes that using mass struggle (and eventually universal suffrage) can free the state from its subordination to capitalism and use it instead for transition beyond capitalism to socialism. In the 20th century, this kind of socialism offered a framework for constructing a socialist economic system alternative to capitalism. Such a socialist system entails the continuance of traditional capitalism: enterprises owned and operated mostly by private capitalists, individuals, or corporate groups. What it adds that makes it socialist is a government (often but not necessarily run by a socialist party) that closely regulates and supervises markets and enterprises.

Such socialist governments aim to moderate key effects of private capitalism including its very unequal distributions of income and wealth, extreme business cycles, and unaffordable access by the general population to healthcare, education, and much else. Progressive taxation typifies socialist governments' means of intervening in otherwise private capitalism. Moderate socialisms of this

sort are found in many European nations, in the programs of many socialist parties around the world, and in the statements and writings of socialist individuals.

Another kind of socialism shares moderate socialism's focus on government and economics but differs from it by transforming many or all privately owned and operated enterprises into state-owned-and-operated ones. Often referred to as Soviet socialism—because the Soviet Union adopted it a decade after the 1917 revolution—this kind assigned greater powers to the state: to set prices, wages, interest rates, and foreign trade parameters according to a state plan for the economy.

Because socialists around the world split over World War I and the Russian Revolution, one side (more aligned with the USSR) took the name “communist” while the other retained “socialist.” Soviet socialism was thus organized and operated by a state apparatus governed by the communist party of the USSR. Variations of soviet socialism in other countries (Eastern Europe and beyond) were established and operated similarly by communist parties there. The Soviet and other communist parties always referred to the Soviet Union as a socialist system. It was mostly the enemies of socialism—or those simply uninformed—that persisted in referring to the USSR as an example of “communism.”

A third kind of socialism, comprising a hybrid form of the first two, is how the People's Republic of China organizes its economy. There the Chinese Communist Party oversees a strong state apparatus that supervises a mixed economy of both state-owned-and-operated enterprises (on the Soviet model) and private capitalist enterprises (on the moderate socialism model). It is [roughly a 50-50 split](#) between state- and privately owned-and-operated enterprises in China. China had experimented with both moderate and Soviet socialisms since the 1949 revolution brought its Communist Party to power. Based on its critiques of both prior socialist models and the stunningly rapid economic growth achieved by the hybrid, a focus on fine-tuning the hybrid model seems settled policy in China today. The criticisms and opposition from both the Trump and Biden administrations have not changed that.

A fourth model is newly important in and for this century even though examples of its way of organizing the production and distribution of goods and services exist throughout human history. People have often organized their collaborative

production and distribution of goods and services as self-conscious communities within larger societies. Sometimes such productive communities were organized hierarchically with governing groups (councils of elders, chiefs, kings, lords, and masters) paralleling how they organized residential communities. At other times, they organized productive communities more horizontally as democratic cooperatives. A rapidly rising concept of socialism in the 21st century differs from the three basic models discussed above in its focus on and advocacy for the organization of workplaces as democratic, productive communities functioning within society.

This fourth model emerges from a socialist critique of the other three. Socialists have acknowledged the lesser inequalities and greater economic growth achieved by the other models. However, socialists have also faced and considered when excessive powers were accorded to and abused by states and parties. Among critical socialists' analyses, some eventually reached the conclusion that previous socialisms focused too much on the macro-level of capitalist society and too little on the micro-level. Socialism cannot only be about the balance between private and state enterprises, about "free" versus state-regulated markets, and about market versus state-planned distributions of resources and products. That limitation can and should be broken. Failures at the macro level had causes at a micro level that socialists had too often neglected.

When socialisms left the internal organizations of production and distribution enterprises inherited from capitalism largely unchanged, they made a major error. They left in place human relationships that undermined chances for enterprises in socialist economies to reach socialism's goals. A truly democratic society cannot be built on a foundation of productive enterprises whose internal structure is the opposite of democratic. The employer-employee capitalist model is that foundational opposite. Capitalist employers are neither chosen by nor genuinely accountable to their employees. In worker cooperatives, by contrast, the employer-employee division is ended and replaced by a democratic community. The employees are likewise and collectively the employer. Their one-person-one-vote decisions, by the majority, govern what gets produced: how, where, and when. They likewise decide democratically what to do with the fruits of their collective labor, how enterprise revenues will be distributed among individual workers, and as investment funds and reserve funds.

This fourth kind of socialism repairs the other three kinds' relative neglect of the

micro-level transformation of capitalism into socialism. It does not reject or refuse those other kinds; it rather adds something crucial to them. It represents an important stage reached by prior forms of and social experiments with socialism. Previous socialisms changed because of their results, good and bad. Those results provoked self-awareness, self-criticism, and determination to improve the emerging, new forms of socialism. Capitalism's critical shadow returns again to challenge capitalism by inspiring a powerful new alliance of its victims with its critics. That has been, after all, the goal all along: to empower and inform social change beyond capitalism, to realize the slogan, "We can do better than capitalism."

By Richard D. Wolff

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Source: Independent Media Institute

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Insecurity Is A Feature, Not A Bug, Of Capitalism. But It Can Spark Resistance



*Astra Taylor - Photo:
en.wikipedia.org*

Debt abolitionist Astra Taylor discusses how capitalism's manufactured insecurity can feed movements for radical change.

Capitalism is a socioeconomic system that depends upon exploitation and generates inequality. In a recently published book titled, *The Age of Insecurity: Coming Together as Things Fall Apart*, filmmaker, writer and political organizer Astra Taylor also describes capitalism as an inherently insecurity-producing machine.

From education and home ownership to workplace surveillance, capitalism manufactures insecurity, argues Taylor, a co-founder of the [Debt Collective](#). This insecurity makes us increasingly vulnerable to economic uncertainty, which the system weaponizes in turn against us.

Yet, Taylor argues in the exclusive interview for *Truthout*, the system's manufactured insecurity can also band people together to demand radical

reforms, although insecurity in today's world seems to be drawing people increasingly toward authoritarian political leaders.

*C. J. Polychroniou: It is often said we live in strange and dangerous times. Indeed, there are crises in place which threaten human survival; there is continuous growth in economic inequality since the 1980s and authoritarianism is on the move as democracy weakens. In this context, in your recently published book aptly titled, *The Age of Insecurity: Coming Together as Things Fall Apart*, you have described insecurity as a “defining feature of our time” and an essential feature of the capitalist system. Now, capital reigns, to be sure, and capitalism exploits insecurities, but isn't occasional insecurity also a natural part of life? Why make insecurity a driving force behind today's economy and politics? Why not resentment, or protest actions, which are growing throughout the world, although some studies indicate that the same thing is happening with political apathy?*

Astra Taylor: Insecurity relates to the many intensifying and intersecting crises we face today — unaffordable housing, rising debt, toxic media, worsening mental health, an emboldened far right, climate catastrophe, Artificial Intelligence and Big Tech, the list goes on.

I wouldn't say that I “make” insecurity a driving force behind today's politics. I'd argue that it just is one. That's because, as I show in the book, insecurity is a defining component of capitalism — one as essential as the profit motive. To paraphrase your question, capitalism not only *exploits* insecurities; more fundamentally, it generates them.

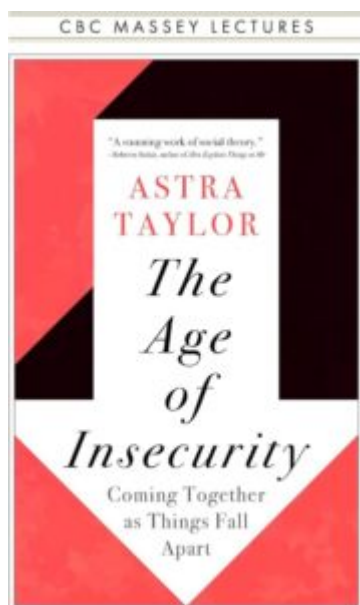
Insecurity, in other words, isn't just an unfortunate byproduct of our current competitive economic order. It's a core product. If you aren't insecure, you don't keep buying, hustling, accumulating. Insecurity is the stick that keeps us scrambling and striving.

And yet, as you note, insecurity is also a natural part of life.

In the book, I distinguish between two kinds of insecurity. First there is *existential insecurity*, or the kind of insecurity that is inherent to human life and that stems from the fact we are mortal creatures who can't survive without the care of others. Then there is what I call *manufactured insecurity*, and this is the kind of insecurity that is essential to the functioning of a market society.

Looking back over the centuries to the dawn of the industrial era, I show how capitalism began by making people insecure in this modern sense — by severing people from their communities and traditional livelihoods so they had nothing to sell but their labor. We see this dynamic playing out today, as officials pursue monetary policies explicitly designed to weaken the hand of workers. That's the manufactured insecurity at work.

This might all sound rather heavy, but I really tried to write the book with a light touch — drawing on history and economics while also incorporating myth, psychology and even some humorous memoir elements. And there's hope. Right now, our society is structured to worsen rather than tend to our insecurities and vulnerabilities. But we can always arrange things differently.



The notion of insecurity as a feature in today's world might lead people to assume that it leads to despair and inaction. Yet, you argue that insecurity can indeed be a step toward creating solidarity for the purpose of challenging and eventually transforming the system. Is this a theoretical statement behind the purported symbiotic relationship between capitalism and insecurity, or one based on actual empirical evidence? In other words, can you describe how insecurity translates into collective action and what form, in your own view, collective action needs to take for the system to be transformed?

In the book, I argue that insecurity can cut both ways. It can spur defensive and destructive compulsions, or it can be a conduit to empathy, humility, belonging and solidarity. We see this all the time. The right wing knows this and is dedicated to inflaming people's insecurities, encouraging them to misdirect their rage toward the even-more-vulnerable — rather than toward the economic system and the elites who profit from the status quo.

One example I give is how workers and the unemployed organized during the Great Depression. We forget it today, but "insecurity" was actually a critical concept in the battle for the New Deal. Franklin Roosevelt called insecurity "one of the most fearsome evils of our economic system" and made the concept of security a cornerstone of the welfare state. I certainly see insecurity — shame,

fear, anxiety about the future — transformed into solidarity in my work with the Debt Collective, the union for debtors that I helped found.

In today's economic climate, the rental housing crisis has become particularly acute in thoroughly neoliberal societies like the United States, but rents have also exploded across Europe and more and more people are facing precarious living conditions. Are there innovative solutions for the rental housing crisis? For example, can [Vienna's social housing policy](#) be duplicated in countries like the United States?

Absolutely. I spend some time on the example of Austrian social housing in the second chapter of the book. It's a fantastic example of how to eradicate a form of material insecurity that is now depressingly endemic across North America.

In the book, I return again and again to a core paradox. As I write, "Today, many of the ways we try to make ourselves and our societies more secure — money, property, possessions, police, the military — have paradoxical effects, undermining the very security we seek and accelerating harm done to the economy, the climate, and people's lives, including our own."

Housing really is a prime example. In the U.S., a paltry 1 percent of housing is provided on a non-market basis. The commodification of housing ensures that huge numbers of people will be priced out and perpetually insecure and also unhoused. The very thing that we are told will finally guarantee us security — a mortgage on a one-family unit — also helps drive the destabilization of our communities. Ever-appreciating values and rents push working-class people out of their towns and neighborhoods. Single-family, car-dependent fiefdoms are ecologically wasteful. Not to mention the way the financial sector and the rise of Wall Street landlords are further enriched by this model, further contributing to volatility. Social housing is the only way out of this conundrum, and the only way to ensure real housing security for all.

The Biden administration has made inroads on student debt, but student debt cancellation is still far from becoming a reality, largely because of the Supreme Court's ultraconservative majority. First, I would like you to explain to readers why the Debt Collective, which you co-founded in 2014 and which happens to be the first union for debtors, talks about "debt cancellation" and rejects the term "debt forgiveness," and then whether you remain optimistic that an ultimate

victory for student-loan borrowers is going to happen at some point down the road.

We reject the idea of “debt forgiveness” because debtors did nothing wrong. People don’t need to be forgiven for pursuing an education — for wanting to learn or to better their lives. This is why the Debt Collective prefers to speak of debt “cancellation,” “relief” or “abolition.”

Our small-but-mighty movement has come a long way in a decade. I believe that we will win — if people get off the sidelines and join us. One easy way people reading can do that is by taking 10 minutes to submit a dispute to the Department of Education using our new [Student Debt Release Tool](#). Anyone with federal loans can do so. The tool will send a former letter demanding relief to the top brass at the Department of Education. The more applications they receive, the more pressure we can apply.

We’ve had victories, we’ve had setbacks, and then more victories and setbacks. I’ve been in the trenches long enough to know that’s how movements go. The arc of justice is, sadly, rather crooked and sometimes loops back on itself. But this is not a moment to throw up our hands — it’s one to keep holding the president’s feet to the fire. The movement for debt abolition is just getting started.

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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).

“Capitalism Is an Insecurity Machine”: Astra Taylor on Student Debt & Our Radically Unequal World

As the COVID-19 era pause on federal student debt payments comes to an end and some 40 million Americans will resume payments next month, we speak with Debt Collective organizer Astra Taylor about Biden’s new Saving on a Valuable Education, or SAVE, plan and her organization’s new tool that helps people apply to the Department of Education to cancel the borrower’s debt. Taylor also discusses her new book, *The Age of Insecurity: Coming Together as Things Fall Apart*, in which she writes, “How we understand and respond to insecurity is one of the most urgent questions of our moment, for nothing less than the future security of our species hangs in the balance.” She notes organizing is about “the alchemy of turning our vulnerabilities, turning our oppression, turning our insecurities into solidarity so that we can change the structures that are undermining our self-esteem and well-being.”

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The Case For Protecting The Tongass National Forest, America's 'Last Climate Sanctuary'



Tongass National Forest. - Photo: en.wikipedia.org

The “lungs of North America,” the Tongass National Forest is the Earth’s largest intact temperate rainforest. Protecting it means protecting the entire planet.

Spanning [16.7 million acres](#) that stretch across most of southeast Alaska, the Tongass National Forest is the largest national forest in the United States by far and [part of](#) the world’s largest temperate rainforest. Humans barely inhabit it: About the size of West Virginia, the Tongass has around [70,000 residents spread across 32 communities](#).

A vast coastal terrain replete with ancient trees and waterways, the Tongass is a haven of biodiversity, providing [critical habitat](#) for around [400 species](#), including [black bears](#), [brown bears](#), [wolves](#), [bald eagles](#), [Sitka black-tailed deer](#), [trout](#), and

[five species of Pacific salmon.](#)

The Tongass is a pristine region that supports a vast array of stunning ecosystems, including old-growth forests, imposing mountains, granite cliffs, deep fjords, remnants of ancient glaciers that carved much of the North American landscape, and more than 1,000 named islands facing the open Pacific Ocean—a unique feature in America’s national forest system.

The Tongass “is the crown jewel of America’s natural forests,” [declared](#) then-Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) during Senate deliberations of Interior Department budget appropriations in 2003. “When I was up there, I saw glaciers, mountains, growths of hemlock and cedar that grow to be over 200 feet tall. The trees can live as long as a thousand years.”

The National Forest Foundation calls the Tongass National Forest “[an incredible testament to conservation and nature.](#)” But since the 1950s, the logging industry has prized the forest, and the region has been threatened by companies that seek to extract its resources—and the [politicians who support these destructive activities.](#)

America’s Largest Carbon Sink

[Carbon sinks](#) absorb more carbon from the atmosphere than they release, making them essential to maintaining natural ecosystems and an invaluable [nature-based solution to the climate crisis.](#) Between 2001 and 2019, the Earth’s forests safely stored about twice as much carbon dioxide as they emitted, according to [research published in 2021](#) in the journal *Nature Climate Change* and available on [Global Forest Watch.](#)

The planet’s forests absorb 1.5 times more carbon than the United States emits annually—around [7.6 billion metric tons.](#) Consequently, maintaining the health of the world’s forests is central to humanity’s fight against climate change. But rampant deforestation and land degradation are not only [removing this invaluable climate-regulating ecosystem service](#) and supporter of biodiversity but also disturbing a healthy, natural planetary system that has existed for millennia.

“There is a natural carbon cycle on our planet,” [said](#) Vlad Macovei, a postdoctoral researcher at the Helmholtz-Zentrum Hereon in Germany. “Every year, some atmospheric carbon gets taken up by land biosphere, some by the ocean, and then cycled back out. These processes had been in balance for the last 10,000 years.”

Carbon sinks like the Tongass are vital environmental protectors by sequestering carbon dioxide and preventing this greenhouse gas from entering the atmosphere, where it can fuel global warming. And because “it contains the [\[Earth’s\] largest intact stands of coastal temperate rainforest](#),” the Tongass acts as one of the world’s most effective carbon sinks. In this way, the Tongass provides a key “[ecosystem service](#)”—a benefit humans receive from nature that helps sustain life—not just for the U.S. but also for the entire planet.

“Basically, when you go through an old-growth forest, you’re walking through a stick of carbon that has been built up into the forest for many, many decades, [even] centuries,” [said](#) Dominick DellaSala, chief scientist at Wild Heritage, a project of [Earth Island Institute](#), a nonprofit environmental organization based in Berkeley, California. DellaSala was part of a research team that found that the Tongass holds approximately [44 percent](#) of all carbon stored by U.S. national forests. The team’s research was published in 2021 by the [Woodwell Climate Research Center](#), based in Falmouth, Massachusetts.

“[T]he largest trees in those forests store about 50 percent of the above-ground carbon, so they are enormously important from a carbon standpoint,” said DellaSala.

These undisturbed forest lands are increasingly scarce and, therefore, [increasingly valuable ecosystems](#). “While tropical rainforests are the lungs of the planet, the Tongass... [acts as] the lungs of North America,” DellaSala [told](#) PBS in 2020. He calls the Tongass “America’s last climate sanctuary.”

“The Tongass National Forest provides us with the greatest opportunity in the nation, if not the world, for protecting temperate rainforest at the ecosystem scale, in the face of climate change,” [according to](#) Audubon Alaska, a nonprofit conservation organization. “It sequesters more carbon than any other type of forest on Earth, providing a much-needed opportunity for climate solutions that can simultaneously bolster regional economies.”

Unfortunately, as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency points out, “ecosystem services are important to environmental and human health and well-being... [but they are] [often taken for granted](#).”

Impact of Logging

Jerry Melillo, a scientist at the [Ecosystems Center](#) of the [Marine Biological](#)

[Laboratory](#) at the University of Chicago, [noted](#), “[o]ver the past 8,000 years, humans have cleared up to half of the forests on our planet, mostly to make room for agriculture.” This has hampered the Earth’s natural ability to regulate the climate, allowing more greenhouse gases to escape into the atmosphere, thus exacerbating global warming.

“Cutting down or burning forests releases the carbon stored in their trees and soil and prevents them from absorbing more CO₂ in the future,” he wrote. “Since 1850, about 30 percent of all CO₂ emissions have come from deforestation. Deforestation can also have more local climate impacts. Because trees release moisture that cools the air around them, scientists have found that deforestation has led to more intense heat waves in North America and Eurasia.”

In the 1950s, the Forest Service contracted with two U.S. timber companies to build pulp mills near Ketchikan and Sitka. As part of the agreements, the agency promised to sell the firms a total of [13.5 billion board feet of Tongass timber over a 55-year period](#). These contracts massively accelerated logging in the region.

Since these contracts were signed, “[more than 1 million acres](#) of the Tongass have been clearcut,” according to the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council. Adding economic insult to ecological injury, the federal government consistently loses money from logging contracts in the Tongass. According to a 2020 [report](#) by Taxpayers for Common Sense, an independent, nonpartisan advocacy group, the Forest Service has lost more than \$1.7 billion on Tongass timber sales since 1980. “It actually costs taxpayers millions to ‘sell’ timber that we collectively own, which makes no sense,” [said](#) Autumn Hanna, the group’s vice president.

“Scientists have long understood that logging old-growth forests triggers a cascade of negative effects on wildlife, eroding the biodiversity of places like the Tongass,” [wrote](#) Rebecca Bove of Earthjustice, a nonprofit environmental organization headquartered in San Francisco, in 2021. “Clear-cutting old-growth... transforms ancient forests into carbon emitters.”

[Women’s Earth and Climate Action Network, International](#) (WECAN International) is a climate activist group that works with Earthjustice to end the destruction of old-growth logging in the Tongass. “The Tongass has been called ‘America’s Climate Forest’ due to its unsurpassed ability to mitigate climate impacts,” [said](#) Osprey Orielle Lake, WECAN’s executive director, in 2021. “For decades,

however, industrial-scale logging has been destroying this precious ecosystem and disrupting the traditional lifeways, medicine, and food systems of the region's Indigenous communities."

World's Largest Wild Salmon Population

The Tongass ecosystem supports some of the world's [largest remaining wild salmon populations](#). The lakes, rivers, and streams of the Tongass produce some [50 million salmon every year](#)—more wild salmon than all of the other U.S. national forests combined.

"One of the things that the Forest Service is interested in doing is estimating the value of the different activities and services that national forests provide," [said](#) J. Ryan Bellmore, a biologist who co-authored a 2019 [study](#), the first of its kind, that estimated the value of the Tongass and the Chugach National Forests to the commercial salmon industry in Alaska. "And the Tongass and the Chugach provide a lot of salmon."

According to the study, the wild salmon born within the boundaries of the Tongass and the Chugach make up around 25 percent of Alaska's commercial Pacific salmon catch and 16 percent of the total commercial value of salmon caught in the state every year. Commercial fishermen caught an average of 48 million "forest salmon" in Alaska yearly during the 10-year-long study period. That amount of salmon translated to an annual average commercial value of [\\$88 million](#).

What these Alaskan fisheries provide goes beyond their quantifiable and significant economic benefit and food source for the people of Alaska and beyond. The salmon have also been part of the traditional way of life for the Indigenous Tribes of the region for millennia. "For over 9,000 years, the [I]ndigenous people of the region have survived because of the salmon," [wrote](#) Brian Footen, a fish biologist who has worked with Tribal, federal, and state fishery departments in Washington state for over two decades. And the fish are also critical for the survival of wildlife, supporting healthy populations of bald eagles, wolves, and brown bears, which in turn, support the entire web of life across the region.

Importance to Indigenous Tribes

The Tongass [contains](#) the traditional homelands of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples, and its well-being is essential to these groups' traditional way

of life, health, and cultural identity. Even the name of the forest itself is wrapped up in Indigenous identity: Translated, “Tongass” means ??“[Sea Lion Tribe](#),” one of the main divisions of the Tlingit people living at Portland Canal, located at the border between southeastern Alaska and British Columbia.

Joel Jackson, president of the [Organized Village of Kake](#) Tribal Council, [noted](#) that these Indigenous groups are “tied to our lands that our ancestors walked on thousands of years ago. ... The [land still provides](#) food security—deer, moose, salmon, berries, our medicines. The old-growth timber is important in keeping all these things coming back year after year,” Jackson said, [adding](#), “especially our salmon, because the trees keep our streams cool.” Maintaining these plentiful resources season after season requires a healthy Tongass.

“I identify my ancestry through descent-based kin groups indigenous to the Tongass Forest and recognize that we are all tied to each other—not independents,” [said](#) Wanda “Kashudoha” Loescher Culp, a Tlingit activist, in a statement to federal lawmakers in 2019 urging increased protections for the Tongass.

“Our food gathering and all other resource harvesting methods seriously involve the thanking of the recognized life we are taking for our benefit. We successfully use every ‘resource’ the Tongass offers wisely, efficiently, without waste, and in gratitude,” said Culp, who is also the coordinator for [WECAN Tongass](#).

In addition to being a year-round natural “[supermarket](#),” the Tongass is a powerful spiritual place for the Tribes who have called it home for generations.

Importance to Jobs and Economy

Because of its natural beauty and opportunity for outdoor recreational activities like camping, boating, canoeing, fishing, hiking, and birdwatching, the Tongass is home to a vigorous and ever-expanding tourism industry.

The Tongass welcomes more than 2.8 million visitors each year, which generates “more than [\\$380 million in spending and over 5,000 jobs](#),” according to the USFS. In particular, the cruise industry provides vital economic inputs to the local economies across southeast Alaska. “The vast majority of visitors to Southeast Alaska are cruise ship passengers,” [according to](#) the USFS.

“Hundreds of thousands of tourists visit the Tongass each summer in the hopes of

experiencing its magnificence: 200-foot-tall spruce and 500-year-old cedar trees soaring overhead,” [states](#) Alaska Conservation Foundation, the only public foundation dedicated solely to conservation in Alaska. “Amid the lush ferns and mossy remnants of fallen trees, one might see a brown bear ambling its way to a salmon stream, in search of its next meal. There is simply no place else like it.”

Tongass Timber Reform Act of 1990

In 1990, President George H.W. Bush [signed](#) into law the [Tongass Timber Reform Act](#) (TTRA), which was crafted as an amendment to the [Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act](#) (ANILCA) of 1980, a federal law signed by President Jimmy Carter that established protection for more than 100 million acres of federal land in Alaska from development by designating “conservation system units,” including national parks, national wildlife refuges, and designated wilderness areas.

The [main goal of the TTRA](#)—which enjoyed massive congressional support, [passing](#) in the Senate 99 to 0—was to increase the protection of the Tongass National Forest from the ecological harms of industrial logging by designating approximately 856,000 acres as roadless areas so that large swaths of old-growth forest would “[retain their wildland character](#).” Specifically, the [act was intended](#) “to protect certain lands in the Tongass National Forest in perpetuity, to modify certain long-term timber contracts, [and] to provide for [the] protection of riparian habitat.”

Following the law’s enactment, [Alaska Pulp Corporation](#) and [Ketchikan Pulp Company](#), two industrial pulp mills located in southeast Alaska, ended their operations in 1993 and 1997, respectively. Alaska’s congressional delegation blamed the closures on environmentalists, the TTRA, and the Clinton administration “for destroying an industry that had been the region’s largest private employer,” [wrote](#) Rich Moniak, in a column for Juneau Empire in which he called that narrative a “fiction.”

The “TTRA was not a substantial factor—indeed, no factor at all—in the closure of the pulp mill and the resulting termination of the contract,” [concluded](#) Lawrence M. Baskir, the U.S. Court of Federal Claims judge who presided over the [lawsuit](#) that Alaska Pulp Corporation filed in 1994, a year after it closed its mill, in part due to declining demand for softwood pulp.

[Bart Koehler](#), the executive director of Southeast Alaska Conservation Council from 1984 to 1991 and from 1995 to 1999, who was part of the grassroots effort to pass the Tongass Timber Reform Act, [called](#) the law “the most significant piece of conservation law signed by President George H.W. Bush.”

The Roadless Rule of 2001

In 1999, President Bill Clinton [instructed](#) the USFS to develop regulations to protect the nation’s roadless areas. The administration aimed to protect the nation’s biodiversity, air and water quality, opportunities for public recreational activities, and local economies. “In the final regulations, the nature and degree of protection afforded should reflect the best available science and a careful consideration of the full range of ecological, economic, and social values inherent in these lands,” Clinton [stated](#) at the time.

Issued in 2001, the Forest Service’s “Roadless Rule” is a federal regulation prohibiting most timber cutting and road building in specific forest lands known as “Inventoried Roadless Areas.” The Roadless Rule protects [58.5 million acres](#) or 31 percent of lands within the federal National Forest System (NFS), which together amounts to about 2 percent of the total land base of the United States.

“Inventoried roadless areas provide benefits to over [220 wildlife species](#) listed as either threatened, endangered, or proposed by the Endangered Species Act—approximately 25 percent of all animal species and 13 percent of all plant species,” according to the USFS. “The intent of the 2001 Roadless Rule is to [provide lasting protection](#) for inventoried roadless areas within the National Forest System,” the agency states.

Trump Administration Rollback of Roadless Rule

The 2001 Roadless Rule designates and manages as inventoried roadless areas more than half of the Tongass National Forest—around [9.2 million acres](#). On October 29, 2020, in the final days of his presidency, Trump [repealed the Roadless Rule](#) from the Tongass, opening up a section of the forest to road-building and industrial activity. Trump’s USDA issued a notice saying that the final plan would open up [186,000 acres](#) for timber production.

GOP leaders welcomed the decision.

Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, who was at the time the chair of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, [noted](#) that Trump’s repeal

of the Roadless Rule would help the state develop not only public infrastructure to help connect the isolated communities in the area but also cheaper sources of energy.

Industry groups also supported the decision. “There’s a handful of small operators that are working on the Tongass, harvesting timber,” Tessa Axelson of the Alaska Forest Association, a timber industry group, [told](#) Alaska Public Media. “In order to continue to survive, those businesses are dependent on a predictable supply of timber.”

Frank Bergstrom, a mining consultant in Juneau, said the rollback could attract investors to mineral exploration in the region. “There’s no roadmap to these things,” he [said](#). “Maybe it’ll lead to a little more optimism. ... This is one obstacle that has at least been diminished.”

Environmental groups decried the move. “Logging the Tongass is an unconscionable leap in the wrong direction,” [said](#) Jennifer Rokala, executive director for the [Center for Western Priorities](#), a nonpartisan conservation advocacy group.

“Americans already pay \$30 million annually to subsidize commercial logging operations on the portion of the Tongass not covered by the roadless rule. This proposed decision would increase the costs to taxpayers by opening the most remote areas of the forest to clear-cutting,” [said](#) Ken Rait, project director for U.S. public lands and rivers conservation at Pew Charitable Trusts. “The Tongass is a global gem. Once these pristine forests are gone, they’re gone forever.”

The Trump administration rollback went against overwhelming public opposition: [Only 1 percent of public comments](#) submitted to the federal government during the U.S. Forest Service’s environmental review supported lifting the existing safeguards on the Tongass.

Statewide [polling](#) in Florida, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin—all battleground states—conducted in 2020 also revealed strong opposition to the Trump administration’s decision to lift longtime environmental protections and open the Tongass to expanded logging operations.

Following the poll’s release, J.D. Hayworth, a Republican former member of Congress who represented Arizona from 1995 to 2007 and spent the majority of

his six terms in office on the House Resources Committee, [warned](#) the Trump campaign months before Trump's decision to lift the Roadless Rule in the Tongass was finalized that the move would hurt his chances at reelection.

"Now, with less than 75 days until election day, the Trump campaign needs to listen to the concerned voices of their base whose wavering support for Trump could be pushed further into the Biden camp if Trump moves forward with lifting protections in America's largest and most important national forest," Hayworth [wrote](#) in an opinion piece published by Bloomberg Law in August 2020.

After Trump lost the 2020 presidential election, his revocation of the Roadless Rule would remain for about two more years. The Roadless Rule was important enough to the incoming Biden administration that on his first day in office, Biden [committed](#) to reviewing the 2001 Alaska Roadless Rule of his predecessor as one "that may conflict with important national objectives including protecting the environment." Still, reinstating the 2001 rule would still take around two years, as the Biden administration went through the lengthy federal review process, including months of allowing the public to comment. In addition, there was an ultimately [failed lawsuit](#) filed by the resource industries and the state of Alaska attempting to maintain Trump's rollback that had to make its way through the court system.

Biden Administration Reinstatement of the Roadless Rule

In July 2021, six months after he took office, President Biden [froze old-growth timber sales](#) in the Tongass as the administration began the lengthy process to reinstate the Roadless Rule. "The announcement that large-scale, old-growth logging is going to be ceased is very positive... because those mass clear cuts are not going to occur here anymore," [said](#) Marina Anderson, Tribal administrator for the Organized Village of Kasaan on Prince of Wales Island.

Finally, in January 2023, the Biden administration was able to [reinstate the Roadless Rule on Alaska's Tongass National Forest](#), which brought back the 2001 protections that had been in place. The decision made constructing roads and harvesting timber inventoried roadless areas illegal, with limited exceptions.

"As our nation's largest national forest and the largest intact temperate rainforest in the world, the Tongass National Forest is key to conserving biodiversity and addressing the climate crisis," [said](#) Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Restoring

roadless protections listens to the voices of Tribal Nations and the people of Southeast Alaska while recognizing the importance of fishing and tourism to the region's economy."

In a [press release](#) issued on January 25, 2023, the U.S. Department of Agriculture said that the reinstatement of the Roadless Rule in the Tongass was "based on the multiple ecological, social, cultural, and economic values supported by roadless areas on the Tongass, and... [followed] months of engagement with Tribes, rural communities, and partners." The agency noted that the majority of the approximately 112,000 comments that the Forest Service received from organizations and individuals during the public comment period (from November 2021 to January 2022) were in favor of the reinstatement of the Roadless Rule, adding that the USDA consulted with the Tribal Nations of Southeast Alaska before the decision was made.

This executive order protects not only a pristine, climate-protecting ecosystem and source of economic stability and growth for Alaska but also the traditional and customary hunting, fishing, and gathering areas for future generations of Southeast Alaska Tribes. It also protects an attraction for the millions of visitors whom it welcomes every year from across the nation and the globe. In addition to securing important wildlife and fish habitat, opportunities for recreation, and traditional and sacred sites, roadless areas in the Tongass will prevent the kind of intensive industrial development and resource extraction that have [destroyed forests](#) worldwide, many of which are damaged beyond repair.

As mentioned, preventing roads from being built in the Tongass has widespread popular support. According to the USFS, [96 percent of the 1.6 million letters and comments](#) submitted during 600 public meetings supported the roadless initiative in the Tongass. Notably, most Alaskans were in support of maintaining roadless areas.

Republicans Denounce Reinstatement

Unsurprisingly, several leading Alaskan Republicans were quick to slam the Biden administration's decision to reinstate the Roadless Rule in the Tongass.

"The Roadless Rule should never have applied to the Tongass, and the Biden administration's decision to reinstate it is federal paternalism at its worst," [said](#) Senator Murkowski. "Roughly 80 percent of the Tongass is already protected

through existing law, land use designations, and the forest planning process, and there is no threat of large-scale development from timber harvesting or any other activity.”

This, of course, is not true. In fact, the reinstated rule does not stop public road-building or other necessary projects. Since 2009, the USFS received and approved [59 project proposals](#) under the Roadless Rule that support power generation, access between communities, and other priorities.

Road-building of any sort is a direct threat to wildlife habitat. While much of the Tongass does have federal protection, what Murkowski fails to recognize is that existing manmade structures in the forest have already hampered the ability of wildlife to live in their natural state. Manmade road-stream crossings, including bridges and culverts, have fragmented natural aquatic habitats that impeded fish migrations. As of 2019, [according to](#) the USFS, 1,120 fish stream crossings—30 percent of the total surveyed within the Tongass—fail to meet current standards for fish passage. Adding noncritical roads would only increase this kind of wildlife habitat fragmentation and add undue stress to many species.

Indigenous Tribes Welcome Reinstatement of Roadless Rule

The return of Roadless Rule protections to the Tongass represents a commitment from the USFS not only to address the climate crisis but also to respect the natural integrity of the ancestral homeland of Southeast Alaska Tribes, who—[like so many Indigenous groups across the globe](#)—continue to be disproportionately impacted by climate change.

Following the Biden administration’s reinstatement of the Tongass Roadless Rule in 2023, a coalition of Southeast Alaska Tribal leaders—including the [Organized Village of Kake](#), the [Organized Village of Kasaan](#), the [Ketchikan Indian Community](#), the [Skagway Traditional Council](#), the [Organized Village of Saxman](#), the [Hoonah Indian Association](#), the [Craig Tribal Association](#), and the [Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska](#)—issued cautious praise for the move, making sure they were afforded agency in decisions that would impact the future of the region.

“As the Forest Service works to repair relationships with Southeast Tribes,” the leaders wrote in a press statement sent to the Independent Media Institute on January 25, 2023, “it is critical that the federal government ensure that the

Southeast Tribal leaders be integral partners in creating a future for the Tongass that is guided by Indigenous values, a genuinely sustainable economy, and a healthy ecosystem—all of which will sustain the Tongass for future generations.”

In January 2023, following the reinstatement of the Roadless Rule, a group of Tribal leaders from the Tongass region issued a [statement](#) that said, in part, “We have engaged tirelessly throughout the Roadless Rule process—some of us for more than 20 years—to bring Tribal concerns to the forefront of the conversation through consultation and legal means.”

“Throughout time, many of our concerns fell on deaf ears,” said the Organized Village of Kake’s Joel Jackson in a statement emailed to the Independent Media Institute on March 21, 2023. “Now that the U.S. Forest Service is listening to Tribal concerns and reinstating the Tongass Roadless Rule, we are optimistic that we will be able to create long-term protections.”

“The return of 2001 Roadless Rule protections [to the Tongass also] signals a commitment from the... [U.S. Forest Service] to address the climate crisis and finally listen to the Southeast Tribes that will continue to be most impacted by climate change effects,” said Jackson.

These federal protections include possible co-management compact agreements “for areas inherent to our traditional and cultural uses through our [Administrative Procedures Act Petition to Create a Traditional Homelands Conservation Rule](#),” the [leaders’ statement](#) said. Tribes also support the 2021 [Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy](#) (SASS). The strategy will end large-scale old-growth timber sales in the Tongass National Forest. It will instead focus on forest restoration, recreation, and resilience while identifying opportunities for investments through meaningful consultation with Tribes.

Going even further, Southeast Alaska Tribes will continue working toward permanent forest protection. The [Roadless Area Conservation Act](#) was introduced in the House in 2021 to put these protections in place.

The seesaw of the Roadless Rule between presidential administrations shows that executive orders can be issued and rescinded. The only way to prevent this back-and-forth policy would be for lawmakers to enshrine protections for the Tongass in state and federal law or for the judiciary to clarify the Roadless Rule’s original intent to protect the Tongass.

“The uncertainty with the Roadless Rule has been a debilitating factor for the last 20 years, and I do not see that ending unless the courts put a stop to it—the political revolving door will keep it in play as long as there are elections,” [wrote](#) Robert Venables, executive director of the [Southeast Conference](#). This southeast Alaska regional economic development group supported the Roadless Rule revision in 2020.

Global Pledge to End and Reverse Deforestation

Leaders at the November 2021 [COP26 climate talks in Glasgow](#) signed a pledge to end and reverse deforestation and land degradation by 2030, with [144 nations joining](#). The commitment, titled the “[Glasgow Leaders’ Declaration on Forests and Land Use](#),” collectively includes at least [90 percent](#) of the Earth’s forests—amounting to [more than 13 million square miles](#)—and is supported by a \$19 billion investment fueled by both private and public funds.

Conserving our forests and other critical ecosystems is... an indispensable piece of keeping our climate goals within reach,” [said](#) U.S. President Joe Biden at the Glasgow conference. “If we all work together to make sure these precious resources are conserved... forests have the potential to reduce... carbon globally by more than one-third... So, we need to approach this issue with the same seriousness of purpose as decarbonizing our economies. That’s what we’re doing in the United States.”

Biden went on to mention the Tongass specifically, saying, “We have put in place protections for the Tongass Forest in Alaska, the world’s largest intact temperate rainforest.” He also announced a “new plan to conserve global forests, which will bring together a full range of U.S. government tools—diplomatic, financial, and policy—to halt forest loss, restore our critical carbon sinks, and improve land management. Through this plan, the United States will help the world deliver on our shared goal of halting natural forest loss and restoring at least an additional 200 million hectares of forests and other ecosystems by the year 2030.”

That is a massive amount of land. To put that figure into context, 200 million hectares is about 770,000 square miles—eclipsing the size of the state of Alaska by more than 100,000 square miles. The area is bigger than many nations, including Mongolia, Indonesia, and Mexico.

Environmental advocates cheered the move. Darci Vetter, global head of policy

and government relations at the Nature Conservancy, an environmental nonprofit, [called](#) Biden’s executive order “a clear recognition of the critical role forests play for our climate and our communities. This science-based, cooperative approach to forest conservation and restoration is a smart strategy we should accelerate and amplify.”

Conclusion

Based on scientific evidence, it is clear that the Tongass National Forest is an important carbon sink not just for the United States—where it stores [more than 40 percent](#) of all the carbon stored by all the national forests—but also for the world at large, being the [Earth’s largest remaining temperate rainforest](#).

The Tongass is also home to a rich diversity of plant and animal species, many of which are unique and found nowhere else in the world. It is a refuge for numerous endangered and threatened species, including the iconic bald eagle and the Alexander Archipelago wolf. Preserving this habitat ensures the continuation of these species and maintains the ecosystem’s delicate balance.

If the Tongass were subject to large-scale development, irreversible damage would be inflicted upon this unique ecosystem. Deforestation and infrastructure projects could lead to habitat fragmentation, loss of biodiversity, and disruption of critical ecological processes.

Additionally, the Tongass National Forest is a significant driver of Alaska’s sustainable economy, particularly fishing, tourism, and recreation. The forest attracts visitors worldwide, drawn to its stunning landscapes, abundant wildlife, and outdoor recreational opportunities. The commercial fishing industry, which heavily depends on the health of the forest’s rivers and streams, also benefits from its protection.

Crucially, the forest is deeply woven into the cultural fabric of Indigenous communities like the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples, who have relied on its resources for millennia. It holds spiritual, cultural, and traditional values, making its preservation essential for respecting the rights and heritage of these native groups.

Following the Biden administration’s reinstatement of the Roadless Rule in January 2023, Dr. Homer Wilkes, the USDA under-secretary for natural resources and environment, [said](#), “Protecting the Tongass will support watershed

protection, climate benefits, and ecosystem health and protect areas important for jobs and community well-being—and it is directly responsive to input from Tribal Nations.”

In their January 2023 [statement](#), Southeast Alaskan Tribal leaders said, “As the USDA works to repair its relationship with our Tribal governments and communities on the ground, the agency will continue to be an integral partner in creating a future for the Tongass that is guided by collaboration, Indigenous leadership and values, the needs of future generations, and sustainable economies that will heal the divisions of the past.”

Preserving the integrity of Tongass National Forest is crucial for the Earth’s well-being. By safeguarding this irreplaceable ecosystem and awe-inspiring landscape, humanity can achieve many positive outcomes, from combatting the impacts of the climate crisis and protecting biodiversity to honoring Indigenous cultures and sustainably supporting local economies. As the Tongass is part of the United States, it is the responsibility of all Americans to act as stewards of this natural treasure, ensuring that future generations can continue to benefit from its immense ecological and cultural value.



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