

How Extensive Is The Privatization of Security?



*John P. Ruehl –
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09-11-2024 ~ While attention has been brought to the privatization of warfare, the growing privatization of policing continues to progress globally.

In August 2024, due to a \$4 million budget shortfall, Idaho's Caldwell School District terminated its \$296,807 contract with the local police department, [opting instead](#) for armed guards from Eagle Eye Security. The new \$280,000 contract is just a drop in the bucket of the roughly [\\$50 billion](#) U.S. private security industry and the [\\$248 billion](#) global market that is reshaping law enforcement worldwide.

While private military companies (PMCs) like [Blackwater](#) (now Academi) and [Wagner](#) have gained notoriety in war zones, private security companies (PSCs) are rapidly expanding in non-combat settings. Despite [some overlap](#) between the two, PSCs generally protect assets and individuals. Often [collaborating with law enforcement](#), the effectiveness and ethical standards of PSCs vary widely, and armed guards are [increasingly common](#). Security guards in the U.S. [in 2021 outnumbered police](#) by about 3:2.

Public policy is still playing catch up. Unlike police forces, PSCs operate under contract rather than direct taxpayer funding. They also don't have the same level of regulation, oversight, or accountability. Criticisms of the police—such as excessive force and inadequate training—are frequently directed at private security officers as well. Many former police officers with controversial histories find employment in PSCs, where barriers to entry are low. Turnover, meanwhile,

remains high, while wages are minimal. Yet the sector's ongoing expansion appears inevitable.

[Government forces](#) and [private security forces](#) have been a part of society for millennia. Government forces mainly responded to unrest rather than preventing crime, often relying on volunteers. Private security options included hiring guards and bounty hunters, while [communal efforts](#) like the “hue and cry”—where villagers collectively chased down criminals—were also common ways of enforcing security. With increasing urbanization, though, traditional law enforcement methods became less effective, prompting the creation of the first modern police force, the London Metropolitan Police, [in 1829](#). Distinct from the military, more accountable to city authorities and business interests, and focused on crime prevention, this model was adopted by Boston [in 1838](#) and spread to nearly all U.S. cities by the 1880s.

The emergence of public police forces coincided with the birth of the modern private security industry. Founded in the U.S. [in 1850](#), the Pinkerton National Detective Agency, as it was eventually called, is considered the first modern PSC. With its nationwide reach, investigative expertise, and role in safeguarding companies, Pinkerton distinguished itself by protecting businesses from theft, vandalism, and sabotage. Its controversial role in events like the [Homestead Strike](#) of 1892, when the company “essentially went to war with thousands of striking workers,” led to greater regulatory scrutiny, but the company continued to drive industry growth.

After World War II, the rise in PSC use [within U.S. residential communities](#) boosted demand, further accelerated by the racially tinged civil unrest of the [1960s and 1970s](#), which spurred private initiatives to police cities. The 1980s [brought deregulation](#) and professionalization, as many corporations established in-house security departments and PSCs prioritized hiring former law enforcement officers over those with military backgrounds.

Today, private security has a global presence, providing services ranging from bouncers and bodyguards to crowd control units and specialized armed teams. PSCs are [generally cheaper](#) than using police forces, and the widespread adoption of surveillance and other technologies has increasingly leveled the playing field. However, private personnel primarily serve as a visible deterrent, [discouraging crime through their presence](#) rather than direct intervention. They are often

focused on monitoring and patrolling, which can divert criminal activity rather than resolve it. As the demand for private security grows, debate continues over their role and broader societal impact.

U.S. ratios of police staffing to civilian population [peaked around the early 2000s](#), and police agencies say shortages are [now widespread](#). As police departments have struggled to boost their ranks, PSCs have filled the gap. Allied-Universal, [with 300,000 American employees](#), is one of the largest private employers in the country. Meanwhile, for high-net-worth individuals like Mark Zuckerberg, [personal security expenses](#) can exceed \$14 million annually.

PSCs have stepped in to respond to a variety of situations, including protests at universities. [In January 2024](#), Apex Security Group personnel dismantled pro-Palestinian encampments at UC Berkeley, later clearing similar sites at Columbia University in April and UCLA in May. Many PSCs, however, pursue more lucrative long-term contracts. UCLA has paid Contemporary Services Corporation (CSC) for campus patrols for years, and UC San Francisco spent \$3.5 million on CSC in 2023, according to watchdog group American Transparency.

PSCs are also widely employed to target the unhoused and address shoplifting in California. Following a rise in the state's homeless population by [40 percent since 2019](#) and an increase in [petty crime](#), PSCs [have secured valuable contracts](#) with local governments, private businesses, families, and individuals. The Bureau of Security and Investigative Services oversees the sector in the state, but incidents still raise concerns. In May 2023, an Allied Universal guard [fatally shot](#) Banko Brown, an unarmed Black person suspected of shoplifting. The San Francisco district attorney's office chose not to file charges, sparking public outcry.

In Portland, police budget cuts spurred by defunding initiatives following the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests led to the disbanding of special units and a wave of [officer resignations and retirements](#). 911 hold times [increased fivefold](#) from 2019 to 2023, as [more lenient crime policies](#) allegedly contributed to a rise in crime rates.

In response, thousands of private security personnel now patrol the city, with the number licensed to carry firearms rising by nearly 40 percent [since 2019](#). More than 400 local businesses pay [Echelon](#), a Portland-based PSC, to deploy dozens of guards around the clock. Echelon and its personnel have attempted to build

relationships with the homeless and people suffering from addiction and mental illness by providing food, responding to overdoses, and de-escalating conflicts. While crime in Portland [has gone down](#) since its peak in 2022, this [reflects nationwide trends](#) and comes as the city has [attempted to reinstate](#) police numbers.

American PSCs are expanding their roles across the country. In Las Vegas, Protective Force International [formed its own squad](#) in May 2024 to clear out squatters from an apartment complex, in addition to its other security services in the city. In New Orleans, Pinnacle Security is one of many firms operating, with [roughly 250 security guards](#) patrolling neighborhoods, businesses, and government buildings.

In Chicago, [a 2021](#) accusation by Mayor Lori Lightfoot that businesses were failing to take adequate theft prevention measures spurred greater private initiatives. The Fulton Market District Improvement Association, a local [group supported by local restaurateurs and developers](#), launched private patrols with P4 Security Solutions in 2024. P4 personnel operate both on foot and by car and provide security to other Chicago neighborhoods, with plans to expand further.

Private security, however, is not just a U.S. phenomenon. PSCs are well established globally, no more so than in Latin America. From the 1970s onward, the War on Drugs fueled massive transnational criminal empires and widespread police corruption. As military dictatorships ended in the 1990s, the transition to democratic governments in Latin America often resulted in weak institutions, leading to instability and security challenges. In response, private security boomed, primarily serving the wealthy.

Today, Latin America is home to more than 16,000 [PMCs and PSCs](#) employing [more than 2 million people](#), often outnumbering police forces in [poorly regulated markets](#). Their rapid expansion has led to serious issues, including criminal infiltration of PSCs [in Mexico](#) and [El Salvador](#) and claims of extrajudicial killings in Guatemala. Western resource companies, in coordination with local authorities, [have also used PSCs](#) to safeguard their operations and confront protesters in the region.

Latin America has typically been a source of recruitment for the private security industry, with many U.S. PMCs [employing personnel during the War on Terror](#).

Recently, the region has also become a market for foreign PSCs. Chinese PSCs, while restricted domestically, are increasingly involved in [China's Belt and Road Initiative](#) (BRI) projects in the region, as well as in private ventures.

Zhong Bao Hua An Security Company, for example, has [contracts with businesses](#) in El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Panama. Tie Shen Bao Biao offers personal protection services in Panama, while the Mexico-Chinese Security Council was established in 2012 to protect Chinese businesses and personnel from violence.

The collapse of security states in Eastern Europe in the 1990s, combined with the adoption of capitalism, created fertile ground for both PMCs and PSCs. In Bulgaria, early PSCs were often founded by sportsmen, particularly wrestlers, with connections to organized crime. By 2005, a United Nations report estimated that [9 percent of working men](#) in Bulgaria were employed in private security—a pattern found across the [former Eastern Bloc](#).

Though growth has been slower in Western Europe, [PSCs have still expanded](#). France recently deployed 10,000 security guards across Paris for the 2024 Olympics, only for many of them to [strike over working conditions](#) weeks before the opening ceremony.

The European Union has increasingly [relied on PSCs](#) to manage its migrant crisis, generating [massive profits for the industry](#). Private actors were quick to label migration as a security threat while [supporting policies](#) that promote instability abroad. Major arms dealers and security firms like Airbus and Leonardo, for example, [sell weapons in conflict zones](#) that fuel violence and displacement. They then profit again by selling security equipment to European border agencies.

While violence has [decreased across Africa](#) in recent decades, localized instability has led to [a surge in the security industry](#). The distinction between PSCs and PMCs is often blurred on the continent, with PSCs frequently finding themselves undertaking quasi-military roles such as convoy protection, [protection of natural resource extraction](#) sites in hostile areas, and armed confrontations.

Chinese PSCs [have become more prevalent](#) to compensate for the security gaps left by African governments for BRI investments, contrasting to [Russia's use of conflict-oriented PMCs in Africa](#). Regulation varies, with minimal oversight in countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo and [more stringent controls in Uganda](#).

South Africa's PSC industry in particular has flourished since the end of apartheid in the 1990s. Rising crime and [falling police numbers](#) have led citizens to rely [more on the private sector](#) for safety and asset protection. According to the [Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority](#), there are [2.7 million registered private security officers](#) working in South Africa, [outnumbering police 4:1](#). Services include patrolling neighborhoods, providing armed guards, and tracking and recovering stolen vehicles.

The PSC industry's rise has been fueled by gaps in state security measures. However, in areas where PSCs operate, crime rates frequently remain high due to their focus on protecting private property and individuals rather than maintaining public order. Financial incentives can also lead to problems being managed superficially rather than addressing underlying issues. Additionally, [PSC employees frequently face](#) burnout, low pay, and negative working conditions. As PSCs [intersect with private prisons](#), this has raised further concern over their expanding influence and overlapping roles.

Despite its growth in recent decades, the PSC industry's progress has proven reversible in the past. [By 2001](#), Argenbright Security controlled almost 40 percent of U.S. airport checkpoints, but the creation of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) after 9/11 centralized airport security back under government control, with limited private sector involvement.

Nevertheless, the industry is likely to continue expanding, particularly as new initiatives find uses for them. India, which has the [world's largest private security force](#) at approximately 12 million, is expected to continue seeing strong industry expansion, especially in securing its increasing number of private communities, colloquially termed "[gated republics](#)."

Private security already plays a major role in [private cities](#), which are becoming more prevalent [worldwide](#). In these cities, governance is largely handled by boards and CEOs rather than elected officials, and profit motives often overshadow public needs. The safety divide between rich and poor is further exacerbated, as security becomes a commodity instead of a public concern.

In Honduras, the island of Roatán is at the [epicenter of a clash](#) between the government and local communities on the one hand and international entrepreneurs behind Próspera, a company developing a private city on the

island, on the other. The escalating tensions highlight the realities of under-resourced government forces facing off against well-funded companies backed by heavily armed private guards.

As the role of private security continues to expand, regulations must evolve at the same pace. In the U.S., with regulations primarily established at the state level and lacking uniformity, there is a need for greater oversight to address potential issues effectively. Failing to do so will undermine public accountability by allowing private companies to operate with minimal restrictions, as well as deepen societal divides.

By John P. Ruehl

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The Growth Of Malignant And Exclusionary Social Movements



09-11-2024 ~ The U.S. and many other societies are cycling into situations of toxic polarization today; discussion, let alone consensus, often appears impossible and the advantage goes to exclusionary social movements built on malignant rather than [goodwill impulses](#). As Heritage Foundation president Keith Roberts [stated](#) in July 2024,

“[W]e are in the process of the second American Revolution, which will remain bloodless if the left allows it to be.”

As recently as a decade ago, violent social movements were gaining ground primarily in countries and regions that were struggling economically as they integrated themselves into the neoliberal global economy: examples include Russia, Hungary, and other states of the former Eastern Bloc, Turkey, India, and Greece. More recently, however, toxic polarization has also threatened to engulf countries at the core of the liberal democratic political grouping, including France, Germany, Italy, the UK, and the U.S.

In every case, the malignant social movement aims to overthrow a political order built—at least notionally—on principles of inclusion and goodwill, which the movement blames for its followers’ loss of economic and political status within their societies. What’s most striking, even counterintuitive, about this takeover is its seeming inexorability, due to the failure of parties of the center and left to offer coherent alternatives—and the resulting landscape in which extreme positions are steadily normalized.

The result is a crisis of democracy, stunting people’s faith in collective self-government owing to its inability to help address practical problems such as climate change, economic inequality, and mass migration. To reverse this trend, we must first understand the conditions that brought it about.

Nine Developments That Produce Toxic Polarization

Toxic polarization becomes possible, if not inevitable, when a convergence of political, economic, and social conditions activate three [powerful forces](#):

Malignant bonding: An impulse to solidify communities built on resentment, bigotry, and a desire to exclude those who are “different”;

The scarcity mind: A psychological state that frames social life as a zero-sum game pitting oneself and one’s social affinity group against a racial, ethnic, or class-based *other*; and

Trans-historical trauma: The fears and compensating behaviors that accumulate over many centuries of physical and emotional violence and become encoded in our collective behavior.

When they converge, these conditions lay the groundwork for a conventional wisdom built on limited assumptions about what can be achieved by society. This in turn produces a deep sense of alienation from the existing order, especially among the dominant racial, ethnic, and class-based groups, which in turn generates new, exclusionary social movements. By alienation, we mean a feeling of isolation and disconnection from the larger society or from what that society is becoming. Alienation can quickly turn into a lack of sympathy and lead to open hostility toward the supposedly undeserving portion of the population.

The pivotal forces in this process are social movements, which are the incubators and carriers of the zeitgeist. Exclusionary social movements, which come to the fore in periods of toxic polarization, always either exist or are latent. So are inclusionary social movements, which aim to build on a very different set of impulses: empathy, goodwill, good-faith communication, mutual aid, and an openness to finding common ground in inclusive and widely beneficial change.

Traditionally, these two types of movements either clash or coexist, but neither seizes the upper hand for more than a limited period. Today, however, we are witnessing the convergence of nine key developments, some of them dating back decades, which favor the rise of powerful and possibly long-lasting exclusionary social movements:

Decreased economic progress and social mobility: The developed world has witnessed a decline in economic expansion and social mobility stemming from the outsourcing of jobs and vastly unequal growth patterns in the developing world. Rising global levels of migration, partly due to the imposition of neoliberal economic policies, complemented by insurgencies in the Middle East and parts of East Asia, have caused dominant ethnic groups in receiving countries to feel threatened. Often, the concern is with “job theft” or crime, but the underlying impulse is racial or cultural prejudice.

Self-inflicted austerity: Four decades of fiscal austerity, rationalized by neoliberal economics and concentrated primarily on social spending, stalemate and stigmatize previously successful efforts to bring underprivileged and socially marginalized groups into the circle of prosperity.

Over the past two centuries, the state has emerged as the core agency for delivering on the promises of the inclusive or goodwill agenda. Austerity has the

knock-on effect of “starving the state,” causing programs that large sections of the population depend on to deteriorate along with the goodwill agenda they were founded on. Benefits are curtailed, service worsens, and the citizenry become disgruntled or even alienated from the system that created and built loyalty through them.

A deteriorating retail encounter with the state: An additional effect of constraints imposed by austerity and rising debt is a decline in the state’s delivery of services. Bureaucratic agencies become less efficient and responsive and more impersonal. Also, the physical infrastructure deteriorates. These developments leave residents feeling further alienated from the state.

Rising debt at all levels: While the severity of debt burdens is often debatable, they reinforce austerity at the government level and hold back households’ and governments’ ability to invest for the future, further weakening inclusive movements. Over the past 50 years, these debt burdens have come increasingly under the control of global banks, investors, and multinational institutions: a “debt industry” that sees them as an opportunity to exploit rather than a means of equitable growth and development.

A sense of national decline: Political and economic collapse, stalemated wars that cost money and lives and lead to crises in national morale, and the erosion of a previously exalted geopolitical status give rise to a sense of decline within the society. Fifty years of failed wars, from Vietnam to Iraq, have been costly in blood and treasure, but are remembered in the American popular imagination as gallant missions that would have succeeded if the cause had not been betrayed by defeatist politicians.

Fear of loss of potency: This is fed by a fear of declining fertility, especially within the dominant ethnic group; declining birth rates contribute to a sense that their overall position in society is crumbling. This creates a platform for theories like the “[Great Replacement](#)” to take hold, leading in turn to further marginalization of ethnic minorities and migrant communities and a new wave of racial bigotry and violence.

Among men within the dominant ethnic group, the decline in birth rates aggravates misogyny based on a zero-sum, scarcity-based belief that women, by claiming their rights, are infantilizing and castrating them. This sometimes results

in a violent backlash against women's rights.

Energy, environmental, and technological crises: Global warming generates fears that the current living model is unsustainable, or that the crisis is a hoax intended to persuade people to accept a lower living standard. Fears of nuclear warfare endure but are now accompanied by concerns about new, high-tech forms of warfare and surveillance being used against people. The increasing role of sophisticated, computer-based systems in nearly every aspect of daily life creates a deepening fear that many long-time occupations will be eliminated or downgraded, damaging millions of workers' confidence in both their livelihood and sense of personal worth.

Growth of corporate and financial power: As union power declines and business evolves into a new model in which companies are managed as a collection of salable assets rather than productive enterprises, people grow more alienated from the capitalist system. On the right, people are encouraged to blame stigmatized groups (the Jews, the Chinese, the Arabs) for wielding economic power against them and covertly encouraging their "replacement" by migrants.

Inclusionary movements lose their capacity for movement-building: Social movements built on goodwill, while in the ascendancy, come to rely on the state to address challenges related to inclusion, through policies and programs that address socioeconomic inequality and marginalization. But with the state on a starvation diet, the leadership of these movements no longer have the means to address their inclusionary goals; their policies and programs become—or appear to become—untenable. The leadership can no longer deliver results for their popular base.

Focused, in an electoral democracy, on winning elections, the leadership seek a new formula and new backing that will enable them to remain in power. They concede that capital is in the driver's seat and that challenging its interests and ambitions is futile, leading to a shifting of focus to crafting technocratic, "third-way" policies such as welfare reform and marginally milder alternatives to closing the border. These fail to win back the movement's base, instead creating an opening for exclusionary movements to expand their popular support.

Over time, the leadership of the exclusionary movement are emboldened to claim the accomplishments of the inclusionary movement as their own, seizing control

of the historical-cultural narrative. In this telling, the abolition of slavery, the vast expansion of the middle class in the postwar decades, and the end of legal segregation become examples of America's greatness rather than the outcome of decades of struggle against violent opposition from exclusionary movements.

When it refuses to buy into this version of the story, the inclusionary movement is demonized for failing to celebrate America. ("The American people rejected European monarchy and colonialism just as we rejected slavery, second-class citizenship for women... and (today) wokeism," the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 "Mandate for Leadership" [declared](#). "To the left, these assertions of patriotic self-assurance are just so many signs of our moral depravity and intellectual inferiority.")

Exploiting Alienation

The scarcity mind informs both the framing of the nine developments just described and the response to them. Some are quite real—declining economic growth, austerity, the resulting rise in migration and insurgencies, the climate crisis, and the rise of corporate power—and some reflect a psychological state—fear of the *other*, fear of debt in the abstract, and fear of national decline. Collectively, they nurture a profound feeling of alienation.

As alienation increases, people grow more desperate to be seen and heard, to belong, and to feel that the powers directing society are on their side—and not someone else's. These impulses generate new, exclusionary social movements, fueling a zeitgeist that spreads malignant bonding and toxic polarization, and which can then be used to forge a dynamic and passionate new political thinking of the right.

Alienation gives malignant bonding a powerful, long-lasting pull, at least while the conditions that facilitate it persist. In our time, Roberts's "second American Revolution" takes its place within a pattern of self-renewal that began with the 1968 "silent majority" election of Richard Nixon in a campaign built on coded racism ("law and order") and extends to the 2016 and 2020 elections that brought Donald Trump to power and then solidified his right-wing populist MAGA movement.

Starving the state helps sustain this cycle as it accelerates the delegitimation of the inclusionary agenda. To gain power, however, a social movement needs

resources and a conduit to the institutional and financial apparatus of capitalism and the state. For this, it needs the support of at least a portion of what we might call the Third Force: the elites, including propertied individuals who amass capital and control access to it and the institutions that defend and promote their interests.

The Third Force typically finds it easiest to form alliances with exclusionary rather than inclusionary movements, since the former find their organizing principle in imagined scarcity and dreams of a lost golden age and, therefore, seldom question existing wealth arrangements. Additionally, exclusionary movements fetishize power, making them useful partners in controlling marginal social elements.

At the same time, often-chaotic exclusionary social movements need the organized, disciplined institutional structures and expertise that the Third Force can build for them:

- Think tanks that can turn ideological preferences and resentments into policies (example, the Heritage Foundation);
- Media and messaging platforms (example, Fox News, Newsmax, and social media influencers);
- Advocacy groups (example, the Federalist Society); and
- An electoral machine and fundraising capabilities that can pull together a group of well-to-do donors behind a populist leader (example, the Republican Party, political action committees).

Over time, these resources enable exclusionary movements and their leaders to generate new elites, operating on a somewhat different set of assumed principles than the previous elites, but still desiring to establish a new status quo. The nature of this new set of arrangements always depends greatly on the movement's relationship with the Third Force.

The success of this cycle of self-renewal blocks progressive political forces from implementing changes that might address the concrete issues giving rise to feelings of alienation: economic stagnation and austerity, the loss of workers' power and the rise of a corporate-financial hegemony, and technological fears.

A Way Forward for Inclusive Movements?

An exclusionary movement built on alienation and malignant bonding, when combined with the resources of the Third Force, can radically change the direction of society, potentially reversing decades of social and economic progress. It can also, as we have just seen, change the direction of the rival inclusionary movement, neutralizing it while setting it up as the enemy for supporters of the exclusionary movement to rally against.

Even in the long periods when inclusionary movements have been ascendant, their rivals work to undermine them. In the 1960s and early 1970s in the U.S., when it seemed that many inclusionary goals, ranging from socioeconomic equality for people of color to universal health care, were within reach, the seeds of a powerful reaction opposing these goals were already sprouting. But inclusionary leaders often ignored or dismissed them. Real or perceived crises were then exploited, often very successfully, by exclusionary social movements as grounds for pinning the blame on their opponents.

One reason why this strategy is effective for the exclusionary movements is that attacks on vulnerable groups—women, migrants, racial and ethnic minorities, and gender nonconformists—are easily rationalized and emotionally gratifying to embattled working people who are used to occupying a more favored place in society. Another and equally important reason is that inclusive social movements often respond by emphasizing the gap between society's goals and its achievements, rather than highlighting its real accomplishments as reason to believe it can do better. This approach easily devolves into blaming and shaming the exclusionary movement's target audience, which that movement can then easily exploit.

Our next article will address the following questions related to the inclusionary movements: What makes them—despite generating mass support for long periods—susceptible to this cycle, and what does this tell us about the requirements for making them successful in the long run? Why have the inclusionary movements not been able to sustain and renew themselves to the same degree as their exclusionary rivals? What holds them back, and how can they find the capacity to do so?

By Colin Greer and Eric Laursen

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Editor's note: This is the second of three articles on the role of social movements in bringing about transformative change.

The first article: <https://rozenbergquarterly.com/widening-the-we/>

Why Children's Rights Are Critical For Climate Policy And Environmental Activism

09-10-2024 ~ *Birth equity is essential for ecological security.*



The *actual* cause of the climate crisis is the anthropogenic emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere since the start of the industrial revolution. But the *proximate* cause—the underlying activity that sparked the climate crisis and the intertwined environmental crises—is how we have built society, starting from when humans are born.

Despite the threat of the [sixth extinction](#), [ecosystem collapse](#), [air](#) and [water pollution](#), and the numerous associated [health impacts](#), few environmental activists or politicians recognize the proximate cause.

The climate crisis has fundamentally been fueled by countries treating future generations as a means to sustain their economies instead of as an intrinsic part of their nations. Society is set up to view children as workers, consumers, and taxpayers rather than as empowered citizens with an influential voice in their democracies. This ill-advised social doctrine is the proximate cause of the climate crisis. We must take remedial measures and seek justice for the natural world—humanity and all species—through legal means that [address children's rights via birth equity](#).

By shifting the focus to children's rights as a fundamental aspect of policy evaluation, we can reshape climate policy, save countless lives, and redefine wealth entitlements.

This is especially important since extreme temperatures will lead to more suffering for already vulnerable populations worldwide. According to international studies, these extreme weather conditions are likely to [impact](#) ethnic minorities more and will lead to the “[greatest risks](#)” for people from developing countries. To protect future generations from heat waves, the [attenuation of democracy](#), and the [reduction of representation ratios](#), children's rights and the rights of individuals must drive policymaking.

If we addressed these factors, particularly [intergenerational justice](#), climate policy would be different, saving [countless lives and trillions of dollars](#).

Why Advocacy Organizations Need to Focus on Family Planning

Advocacy organizations working to bring about positive social, economic, and environmental changes should consider including family planning in their goals. Including birth and development equity in their work is essential to ensuring meaningful changes for future generations. Ignoring this aspect might undo the

positive impact these organizations might otherwise have.

The climate crisis goes beyond emissions; it is a multifaceted catastrophe, with efforts to mitigate it being undone on all levels as children enter the world without access to birth and development [equity](#). For example, [not using children's rights as the basis](#) for family planning systems has allowed ecocidal growth and also diluted the role of each person in governance and their capacity to halt the crisis.

Family policies should be integral to animal protection, child welfare, environmental protection, human rights, and democracy to secure children's futures.

Impact Fraud: Good Work Is Being Undone

Instead of focusing on increasing the economic wealth of nations, governments should ensure that women and their families have access to child welfare resources consistent with the Children's Rights Convention. Unfortunately, family planning policies have failed to achieve this. Instead, children (primarily of color) enter the world with [no functional protections](#) and are exposed to environmental and socioeconomic conditions that are not conducive to helping them survive and thrive.

According to a July 2022 Pew Research Center [study](#), almost half of U.S. parents felt the government was doing "too little" to resolve issues that concerned them, while 54 percent gave the same reply regarding the government's response to addressing problems faced by children.

Evidence [of ubiquitous and horrific child abuse worldwide demonstrates this](#), along with the push for mindless growth, which comes at the cost of environmental damage. According to a 2020 [study](#) published in the Journal of Population and Sustainability, "more than three-quarters of the reductions in carbon emissions achieved since 1990 by increased efficiency and reducing carbon dioxide emissions from energy production have been canceled out by the effects of a growing population."

[Studies](#) also show that the increasing financial burdens and "climate change fears" are deterring people from having children. According to a 2021 article in the Lancet, 39 percent of young people globally were reluctant to have children due to climate change.

This constitutes fundamental [threshold harm](#) on at least seven distinct or incommensurable levels (welfare, equity, human rights and democracy, environmental, reproductive rights, efficiency, and trust).

A February 2024 press release by UNICEF is a reflection of how we are failing child welfare globally, with 1.4 billion children not having any “[basic social protection](#).” “Fewer than one in ten children in low-income countries have access to child benefits, leaving them vulnerable to disease, missed education, poor nutrition, poverty and inequality.”

The family policies many support are quietly doing more harm—[undoing climate mitigation efforts](#) that will lead to 4 million people [dying](#) between 2000 and 2024—than other policies are doing good. This dynamic can be labeled “impact fraud.”

“Overall, the effects of global climate change are predicted to be heavily concentrated in poorer populations at low latitudes, where the most important climate-sensitive health outcomes (malnutrition, diarrhea, and malaria) are already common, and where vulnerability to climate effects is greatest. These diseases mainly affect younger age groups, so... the total burden of disease due to climate change appears to be borne mainly by children in developing countries,” [research](#) by Australian epidemiologist Anthony McMichael and his team concluded.

These policies position us to benefit from a coercive legal system of entitlements without paying the high costs. We can also meet our obligation to future generations by ensuring children are [born and raised in conditions that protect their rights and guarantee birth and developmental equity](#).

Impact fraud can be measured against a few simple metrics, like whether we invest enough in children, whether states are capable of holding functional constitutional conventions, or the concept of child rights-based legitimacy (the idea that children’s rights logically precede and enable human rights and are thus the basis of political obligation and state legitimacy).

A Fatal Decision: The United Nations Human Rights Conference of 1968

The climate crisis is less about emissions or population growth. It should be viewed as more of a [policy mistake made by world leaders in 1968](#) (when the United Nations held its International Conference on Human Rights in Tehran)

that allowed society to benefit at a fatal cost to future generations. At the time, politicians and policymakers conflated the disparate acts of having children and choosing not to as covered by autonomy rather than birth equity and children's rights.

The human rights policy of 1968 hid actual costs and favored wealthy families that relied on a growing class of workers and parental autonomy. Therefore, it chose cyclical inequity and unsustainable growth over the [inclusivity that creates genuine political autonomy](#). This obscured the overriding nature of birth equity as the first human right.

At the most fundamental level, the policy cemented by United Nations agencies in 1968 limited the interventions regarding the decision to have children—their number, the resources they deserve, the conditions in which they are born and raised, their level of influence in [setting the rules of democracy, and the actual impact of population on the nonhuman world, etc.](#)

Indeed, no one can justly benefit from a system when the reason for preventing intervention is based on the value of autonomy, pointing to the misconceived logic behind this thinking. It placed greater value on the rights of people to decide whether or not to have children rather than the rights of children.

People—Not Documents—Constitute Nations

The current and widespread concept of reproductive autonomy is the antithesis of self-determination—an inversion of autonomy where some children are born into horrible circumstances, and others live in extreme wealth but are controlled by others.

People, not documents, constitute nations. If liberalism has struggled to find a way to include oneself in a system yet remain free, the easy answer would be this: You have to care enough about each child born into the world to position them so that you will both be empowered. You must be empathetic enough to care about the children born into unfortunate circumstances and their impact on the nonhuman world they need to survive.

The Act of Having Children Is Not a Private Act

Our current policy [treats children as means to be used by others](#), substitutes coercion for inclusion in rulemaking, and is the genesis of the fallacy of personal autonomy irrespective of our accessibility to intergenerational wealth. Any person

having a child does so while being part of a political system, making this choice hardly a personal or private act for parents.

[Maintaining the status quo family policy](#)—including the greenwashing that hides its impacts—has killed many simply because we hid liability and did not move the extreme wealth that was made at the cost of pursuing these policies.

Because of these mistakes, people were not valued, which allowed consumption, population growth, inequity, and exclusive political systems to grow, which fundamentally drove the current child welfare crisis. Some (primarily white people) benefited at a cost to others (and controlled the basic criteria for cost/benefit analysis) by never meeting their most fundamental obligations: Ensuring birth and development conditions consistent with children's rights.

A few benefitted from a coercive legal system of entitlements, [the legitimacy of which was falsely premised](#) as a form of inclusive freedom.

'Distractivism'

The animal law/animal rights movement can lead us toward ecocentrism and help shift the focus to nature's integral role in ensuring the survival of future generations.

We cannot protect nonhuman animals without accounting for how the children we have and raise will individually and collectively relate to them as vulnerable entities outside of functional legal protection and as the inhabitants of the ecologies that allow humans to be free and thrive.

Protecting animals requires more meaningful action than prosecuting animal cruelty, setting a precedent through legal cases, or introducing a new vegan product. This means animal law implementation should not be limited to discussions or hijacked by "[distractivists](#)." We must recognize that animal personhood is integral to human reproductive rights, and our family planning policies must reflect that.

A more fundamental vision aligns animal rights with other social justice movements because it shifts focus from legal coercion to ensuring that all beings inhabiting the planet are treated well.

The anthropocentric approach we currently follow perpetuates a cycle of growth

and environmental destruction instead of concentrating on reversing the climate crisis by adopting a bottom-up approach centered around ensuring that children and animals thrive.

The animal rights movement's claims of success are the most inaccurate when we [factor in the impact of family policy on animals](#). More animals have [died](#) from unchecked human population growth than have been saved by dietary change. Focusing on food without first focusing on family, inclusion, and legitimacy turns a fundamental justice movement into a racket of selling vegan products to a tiny percentage of consumers and leads to low-impact campaigns that are examples of distractivism.

Moreover, funders have driven animal organizations toward growth-based food because they are invested in the companies that make it. This is another example of turning the focus away from pressing issues like animal welfare.

Animal rights should thus not ask how humans should treat nonhumans, which is the arrogant and anthropocentric mindset that led to the climate crisis and threatens the existence and survival of humans and nonhuman animals alike.

Major animal protection organizations have been [publicly called on to assess whether their approach to family policy](#) harms animals more than their other work does good, and they have had no response. Activists like Wayne Hsuing have [advocated for truth and change](#) in this area to avoid undoing the work done to protect nonhuman animals.

Animal law must concentrate on policies, like family law, which have the most significant impact, not sensational or profitable policies premised on our ability to replace other species. It is the most unifying form of justice around a zero baseline to avoid harming others.

But this will not work if wealthy funders silo the movement and base assessments of legitimacy on whether the law protects their current entitlements or focus on low-impact precedent, sensational victories, or on cases and statutes, the benefits of which are being undone by inequitable families. These funders live in a fictitious juridical world where calling something nature or saying it has rights has some magical impact, while in the real world, [pro-natal policies](#) have been [undoing the work](#) done to create more equity and hiding life-saving reparations.

Living in that top-down fantasy world clouds the high ideal of a legitimate system that protects nonhumans. Such a system would need to be more inclusive [and thus aligned with minimal “social sources” conceptions of positive law](#), consistent with reasonable representative ratios.

Most people define law as unique because it comes from the participation of its subjects. But of course, that depends on several factors, like how many people are involved, whether they are represented, whether their votes are diluted, etc. By most measures, current legal systems are [far too crowded and attenuated from their members to be participatory and legitimate](#).

Redefining State Sovereignty Around Birth Equity

A [petition before the United Nations](#), filed by our group, Fair Start Movement, would redefine state sovereignty and legitimacy around the most primary value, child rights/birth and developmental equity, as defined by the metrics above, and require certain things of member nations. This is not altruism but creating freedom through equitable relations that ensure we show the trust democracy or relative self-determination requires.

Today’s extreme wealth was made at a cost to that value and is [owed to those who have paid the most to ensure “increased economic prosperity.”](#) This way of functioning has also violated the fundamental human right to matter. [And those who have benefited are trying to hide this fact](#) to ensure they continue to gain from this unequal system.

This policy and outlook change would set a baseline for any climate harm evaluation that does not scam victims out of what they are owed—self-determination, prioritizing reparations as the first human right, and providing conditions that ensure maximum protection for children.

Reforming the baselines can be accomplished through existing programs that invest in women. Examples include [Environmental, Social, and Governance \(ESG\) policy](#) reforms, requiring an objective standard for social and environmental claims that match the actual harms to infants and mothers, and getting high-profile entities to admit their prior use of terms like sustainable was inaccurate given the growth they embraced.

In the field of family planning, storytelling has had an enormous impact and can be used to increase demands for equity reparations as activists model them.

[Tax reforms](#), baby bonds, child welfare, and minimum income policies are also geared to incentivize and support the birth of children at a time, place, and with resources that ensure each child's development conditions are minimally consistent with the Children's Convention and ensure birth equity. Children's rights must also be aligned with animal rights or ecological restoration rather than human rights.

Even if ethicists cannot agree on this standard, it should be used provisionally to avoid more irreparable harm. All of this work cascades from an action currently before the [United Nations seeking to concretize equity/self-determination as the basic norm underlying human rights](#). There are a [variety of national, state, and local model statutes to implement this change](#).

At a corporate level, nonprofit and for-profit companies can be certified, ensuring they are not benefiting at a deadly cost to others.

Requiring restorative or [ecocentric](#) environmental policies and birth and developmental equity, as included in constitutional rights to personal freedom or the ability to control the influence others have over us is another step in this direction. Environmentalism failed because it treated the environment as a human resource rather than the homes of nonhuman families and communities that value autonomy.

Creating a system of child welfare entitlement, consistent with [intergenerational justice](#) and [political legitimacy](#), would require identifying a [series of thresholds](#) for [family planning entitlements](#):

- A [minimum level of welfare](#).
- A [minimum level of equity](#).
- [Restoration of the nonhuman world](#) and climate.

This work could, in the long run, help prevent mass violence where those who lash out feel disempowered and are unable to access the justice system because they were never included in it in a meaningful way.

We can avoid continuing to make the deadly mistake described above by asking ourselves and others one question: What are we doing to ensure that the conditions all children are born and raised in, including their environment and

resources, help them become self-determining individuals? Also, what are we doing to ensure that the benefits of our work are not undone?

We must make conscious choices to improve the planet on which we raise our children by respecting nonhuman beings and the environment. Learning the importance of co-existing in harmony is essential to breaking away from our unhealthy lives and policy choices. We must also choose to place greater value on individuals over senseless growth.

By Esther Afolaranmi and Carter Dillard

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Source: Independent Media Institute

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The Surprising Ways Inventions And Ideas Spread In Ancient

Prehistory



*Brenna Hassett -
Photo: en.wikipedia.org*

09-10-2024 ~ You can learn a lot about humanity from the first technological revolutions of more than 10,000 years ago.

The human capacity for invention is unparalleled. We have developed technologies that have allowed us to survive and thrive far beyond the ecological niches that constrained our ancestors. While our innovation has allowed us to break loose from the constraints of our home continent, Africa, and even our home planet, the actual way in which our species adopts new technologies remains a subject of huge debate among those scientists who study the past. Does one hominid ancestor start to shuffle upright, and the rest follow? Does the first human to loop a piece of string through a shell bead inspire the rest of the species to create the world's first jewelry? Or do different animals take up the same new adaptation at different times, because it solves a problem that appears in many places?

We know that in some of our closest living relatives, the primates, new technical skills are passed on through direct learning. Macaques, in particular, are responsible for innovative behaviors that have been transmitted through their societies by individuals who have seen and observed them and then adopted them as their own. This is true of behaviors as varied as [“hot tubbing”](#) by the macaques of Japan's northern Hokkaido island and the habit of [dipping sweet potatoes in](#)

[the sea](#) to “salt” them developed by macaques on Koshima island further south.

Many of the technological innovations that have had the greatest impact on our species were first seen about 10,000 to 15,000 years ago in a region that archaeologists refer to as the “Fertile Crescent.” The region encompasses a swathe of land crossing the countries between the easternmost Mediterranean Sea and the Sinai, Arab, and Syrian deserts and up into the Zagros Mountains of what is now Iran. It is a region of famous firsts in terms of radical changes to our species lifestyle: settling down, cultivating plants, and taming the animals we eat are all first attested in this strip of relatively abundant land.

It was along the shores of the Sea of Galilee where we have the [first evidence of the wild ancestors of today’s wheat](#) being exploited more than 20,000 years ago, at the site of Ohalo II, reconstructed from the microscopic remains of shattered seeds still clinging to a grinding stone after millennia. From 15,000 years ago, in a corridor stretching up and down the eastern Mediterranean we call the Levant, there comes the first signs of a new way of life for humans; one that involves staying in the same groups and homes all year round, rather than following food around the landscape as we had done for the 300,000 years prior. Those seeds from Ohalo II have grown into entirely new shapes by the time they are uncovered in these new inventions, called villages, and by [around 9,000 years ago](#) this new human-friendly type of wheat was well on its way to becoming our first domesticate (domesticate that wasn’t a dog—those we have had for [probably 30,000 years](#)). Meanwhile, [over the last 10,000 years or so, goats, sheep, pigs, and eventually cattle were all brought into these new human habitations](#), and bred into the shapes that suit us rather than them: better to eat or easier to manage.

What is even more remarkable about these radical changes in a species that had been living as foragers for hundreds of thousands of years was how fast these new innovations “spread.” Archaeologists in the 20th century dedicated huge amounts of time to tracking the movements of new technologies through the evidence of ancient houses, pots, and bones to work out how people from the Near East had “invaded” Europe with their culture of domestication, and even when the idea of a mass invasion was put to rest, some still claimed that [people themselves carried the new ideas of domesticated life](#). The way we saw human inventions was as hot-tubbing macaques at a larger scale: one clever inventor and her friends and family following behind.

This has large implications for human knowledge. Did it take people literally passing on new skills to spread farming, domestic animals, and year-round lifestyles to all corners of the globe? Is this the only way our species learns something this life-changing?

We are not, as it turns out, macaques. Good scientific evidence has given us dates for a [farming and animal revolution in China that happened just a thousand or so years later](#), but for a totally different crop: rice. The invention of cultivated plants occurred independently, as did other similar innovations like domesticating animals. In fact, around the world, there was an endless series of radical revolutions, some earlier, some later, but all bringing plant and animal life under human management: [from the potato and the alpaca in South America to pearl millet and cattle in West Africa](#).

This phenomenon is called “independent invention,” and it is our strongest evidence yet that every innovation our species has made has been a response to a place and time; that some technologies travel far and wide but, where they don’t, we are perfectly capable of inventing them again.

By Brenna R. Hassett

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Source: Human Bridges

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A Note On The ‘Lesser Of Two Evils’ Voting Argument In 2024



C.J. Polychroniou

09-10-2024 ~ Why people, and radicals in particular, fail to grasp the reasoning behind this argument is truly mind-boggling.

One of the most bewildering reactions on the part of certain segments of the U.S. left (whatever that means these days) is that every time there is a crucial election, and the voice of reason dictates casting a ballot in a direction which will help the most to keep out of public office the most extreme, and often enough the positively nuts, candidate in the race, is to scream that this is a case of “the lesser of two evils” thinking and to imply in turn that the one making such an argument is, somehow, a sellout.

[Noam Chomsky](#), of all people, has been the recipient of such brainless reactions for much of his life as he has repeatedly made the argument that voting for a third-party or independent candidate in a swing state would accomplish nothing but increase the possibility of the most extreme and positively nuts candidate winning the election.

Why people, and radicals in particular, fail to grasp the reasoning behind such an argument is truly mind-boggling. Either they don’t understand the nature of U.S. politics, with its winner-take-all election system, or they are simply wrapped up in the “feel-good” factor in politics to even notice such subtleties. But since even a fairly bright elementary student would most likely be able to understand the difference between a winner-take-all election system and proportional representation, it would be logical to conclude that what we have here is nothing less than a display of the politics of feeling good, which basically translates to

acting in whatever manner makes one feel good, politically speaking, regardless of the consequences of those actions.

Now, one might say that when the Comintern adopted Stalin's thinking in the 1920s that "social democracy is objectively the moderate wing of fascism" and proceeded later to lump together Hitler's Nazi party and the German Social Democratic Party that it was doing so out of conviction that the capitalist world was teetering on the brink of collapse and that the communists would inevitably emerge as the victorious party.

But what is the excuse of the tiny segment of U.S. self-professed radicals who fail to see that in order to advance the program of socialism we must first defeat Trump at the ballot box? Incidentally, this also happens to be the official stance of the [Communist Party USA](#). Yet, one can already hear the argument that U.S. communists must have also fallen victims of the picking a lesser of two evils mental attitude. However, in numerous conversations I've had with radicals (leftists, anarchists, and communists) across Europe, their own thinking was also in line with the reasoning of the Communist Party USA—namely, that priority number one of U.S. progressive voters should be to defeat wannabe dictator [Donald Trump](#) in the upcoming U.S. presidential election.

Can this be done by voting in a swing state for someone like Cornel West or Jill Stein when these candidates have zero chance of winning? My chances of being attacked and killed by a shark, which are estimated to be one in 3.75 million, are far greater than either of these two candidates making it to the White House in November 2024.

Oh, but I forgot! Such realizations hardly matter in comparison to *how good it might make one feel* by voting for a candidate outside of the two existing parties. Who cares if the candidate who would love to turn the U.S. into an autocracy wins the election? The other candidate is simply the lesser of two evils, which is like saying that it makes no difference to live under a political regime that is inadequate in realizing the ideals of a decent society and one that is bent on a process of societal fasticization.

Still, there is something even more bewildering with the lesser-of-two evils dictum that is thrown around by small segments of the left. Generally speaking, as [Noam Chomsky](#) has pointed out, there have been two doctrines about voting: the official

doctrine, “which holds that politics consists of showing up every few years, pushing a lever, then going back to one’s private pursuits,” and the “left doctrine.” For the latter, “politics consists in constant direct popular engagement in public affairs, including a wide variety of activism on many fronts. Occasionally an event comes up in the formal political arena called an ‘election...’ It’s at most a brief departure from political engagement.”

The third doctrine about voting, which is the “lesser of two evils” principle, has appeared on the political scene rather recently and, as Chomsky highlighted, is “now consuming much debate on the left.” The debate, he went to say, “also falls within the official doctrine, with its laser-like focus on elections.”

Most leftists, radicals and communists know fully well what the Democratic Party represents. Moreover, the recently held Democratic National Convention, with its pathetic effort to reclaim the mantle of “freedom” in a simultaneous display of militaristic jingoism, gave us ample warnings of what lies ahead. It takes no political genius to see that [Kamala Harris](#) is yet another centrist and wholly opportunistic Democrat who will change her tune as the circumstances dictate. Or, as the British political philosopher [John Gray](#) aptly put it, to recognize that she has “been abruptly transformed by compliant media from a vice-president commonly acknowledged to be barely competent into an uplifting national leader.”

Leftists, radicals and communists living in capitalist societies know that elections are hardly the stuff of political participation that will turn things around. Only grassroots activism can bring about meaningful change. But whenever elections come up, and proportional representation is not in the picture, we hold our nose and vote for the lesser-known threat to what is left of the democracy we have. And then we go back to real activism in order to change society and the world for the better.

It’s not complicated.

Source: <https://www.commondreams.org/opinion/lesser-of-two-evils-harris-trump>

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The Decline Of The U.S. Empire: Where Is It Taking Us All?



Richard D. Wolff

09-09-2024 ~ The evidence suggests that empires often react to periods of their own decline by over-extending their coping mechanisms. Military actions, infrastructure problems, and social welfare demands may then combine or clash, accumulating costs and backlash effects that the declining empire cannot manage. Policies aimed to strengthen empire—and that once did—now undermine it. Contemporary social changes inside and outside the empire can reinforce, slow, or reverse the decline. However, when decline leads leaders to deny its existence, it can become self-accelerating. In empires' early years, leaders and the led may repress those among them who stress or merely even mention decline. Social problems may likewise be denied, minimized, or, if admitted, blamed on convenient scapegoats—immigrants, foreign powers, or ethnic minorities—rather than linked to imperial decline.

The U.S. empire, audaciously proclaimed by the Monroe Doctrine soon after two independence wars won against Britain, grew across the 19th and 20th centuries,

and peaked during the decades between 1945 and 2010. The rise of the U.S. empire overlapped with the decline of the British empire. The Soviet Union represented limited political and military challenges, but never any serious economic competition or threat. The Cold War was a lopsided contest whose outcome was programmed in from its beginning. All of the U.S. empire's potential economic competitors or threats were devastated by World War II. The following years found Europe losing its colonies. The unique global position of the United States then, with its disproportional position in world trade and investment, was anomalous and likely unsustainable. An attitude of denial at the time that decline was all but certain morphed only too readily into the attitude of denial now that the decline is well underway.

The United States could not prevail militarily over all of Korea in its 1950-53 war there. The United States lost its subsequent wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The NATO alliance was insufficient to alter any of those outcomes. U.S. military and financial support for Ukraine and the massive United States and NATO sanctions war against Russia are failures to date and are likely to remain so. U.S. sanctions programs against Cuba, Iran, and China have failed too. Meanwhile, the BRICS alliance counteracts U.S. policies to protect its empire, including its sanctions warfare, with increasing effectiveness.

In the realms of trade, investment, and finance, we can measure the decline of the U.S. empire differently. One index is the decline of the U.S. dollar as a central bank reserve holding. Another is its decline as a means of trade, loans, and investment. Finally, consider the U.S. dollar's decline alongside that of dollar-denominated assets as internationally desired means of holding wealth. Across the Global South, countries, industries, or firms seeking trade, loans, or investments used to go to London, Washington, or Paris for decades; they now have other options. They can go instead to Beijing, New Delhi, or Moscow, where they often secure more attractive terms.

Empire confers special advantages that translate into extraordinary profits for firms located in the country that dominates the empire. The 19th century was remarkable for its endless confrontations and struggles among empires competing for territory to dominate and thus for their industries' higher profits. Declines of any one empire could enhance opportunities for competing empires. If the latter grabbed those opportunities, the former's decline could worsen. One set of competing empires delivered two world wars in the last century. Another set

seems increasingly driven to deliver worse, possibly nuclear world wars in this century.

Before World War I, theories circulated that the evolution of multinational corporations out of merely national mega-corporations would end or reduce the risks of war. Owners and directors of increasingly global corporations would work against war among countries as a logical extension of their profit-maximizing strategies. The century's two world wars undermined those theories' appearance of truth. So too did the fact that multinational mega-corporations increasingly purchased governments and subordinated state policies to those corporations' competing growth strategies. Capitalists' competition governed state policies at least as much as the reverse. Out of their interaction emerged the wars of the 21st century in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Ukraine, and Gaza. Likewise from their interaction, rising U.S.-China tensions emerged around Taiwan and the South China Sea.

China presents a unique analytical problem. The private capitalist half of its hybrid economic system exhibits growth imperatives parallel to those agitating economies where 90-100 percent of enterprises are private capitalist in organization. The state-owned-and-operated enterprises comprising the other half of China's economy exhibit different drives and motivations. Profit is less their bottom line than it is for private capitalist enterprises. Similarly, the Communist Party's rule over the state—including the state's regulation of the entire Chinese economy—introduces other objectives besides profit, ones that also govern enterprise decisions. Since China and its major economic allies (BRICS) comprise the entity now competing with the declining U.S. empire and its major economic allies (G7), China's uniqueness may yield an outcome different from past clashes of empires.

In the past, one empire often supplanted another. That may be our future with this century becoming "China's" as previous empires were American, British, and so on. However, China's history includes earlier empires that rose and fell: another unique quality. Might China's past and its present hybrid economy influence China away from becoming another empire and rather toward a genuinely multipolar global organization instead? Might the dreams and hopes behind the League of Nations and the United Nations achieve reality if and when China makes that happen? Or will China become the next global hegemon against heightened resistance from the United States, bringing the risk of nuclear war

closer?

A rough historical parallel may shed some additional light from a different angle on where today's class of empires may lead. The movement toward independence of its North American colony irritated Britain sufficiently for it to attempt two wars (1775-83 and 1812-15) to stop that movement. Both wars failed. Britain learned the valuable lesson that peaceful co-existence with some co-respective planning and accommodation would enable both economies to function and grow, including in trade and investment both ways across their borders. That peaceful co-existence extended to allowing the imperial reach of the one to give way to that of the other.

Why not suggest a similar trajectory for U.S.-China relations over the next generation? Except for ideologues detached from reality, the world would prefer it over the nuclear alternative. Dealing with the two massive, unwanted consequences of capitalism—climate change and unequal distributions of wealth and income—offers projects for a U.S.-China partnership that the world will applaud. Capitalism changed dramatically in both Britain and the United States after 1815. It will likely do so again after 2025. The opportunities are attractively open-ended.

By Richard D. Wolff

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