

# Chomsky: Trump's Actions On Syria Reflect The Foreign Policy Of A Con Man



Donald Trump's handling of U.S. foreign policy with Syria has baffled and angered both the diplomatic and military establishments in the United States. Nonetheless, he continues to maintain power as "an effective con man who has a good sense of what animates his voting

base," Noam Chomsky argues in the exclusive interview for *Truthout* that follows.

Trump rose to power with the aid of vitriolic but disingenuous "anti-establishment" rhetoric that appealed to millions of disgruntled voters. Essentially, Trump promised to "drain the swamp" in Washington, and to advance a domestic and foreign policy agenda serving U.S. national interests and those of "average people." However, Trumpism in practice has meant something different: rolling back the remaining tatters of liberalism on the domestic front, sharpening racist xenophobia, facilitating the rise of white nationalism and eroding longstanding global alliances that the United States formed after the end of World War II. *Truthout's* C.J. Polychroniou asked Chomsky to share his thoughts on Trump's stance toward Syria, the impeachment effort against the president and the dynamics of the 2020 election.

*C.J. Polychroniou: Noam, since coming to office, Trump has shown on numerous occasions that he is not a normal foreign policy president. But can you make any sense out of his stance toward Syria?*

*Noam Chomsky:* The first of Trump's recent steps was to withdraw the small U.S. contingent that was a deterrent to Turkey's expansion of its invasion of Syria and to authorize Erdoğan's plans to extend his atrocities and ethnic cleansing of Syrian Kurds. His second step was to move U.S. troops to "secure" the oil-producing areas. The latter, apparently after he was told about the oil, is easy to understand. He has held all along that our only standing interest in the Middle

East is to “secure” its oil for our own benefit. As for the first step, we can only speculate, but it seems quite likely that the motive is what guides him consistently: How will the action affect me? Trump is an effective con man who has a good sense of what animates his voting base. In this case, he presumably expected (correctly it seems) that withdrawing a few hundred troops would appeal to the sector of the population that resonates to his message that America is foolishly expending its blood and treasure to help “unworthy” people who don’t even thank us for our sacrifices on their behalf, and that Trump is the first president to stand up for the suffering American people instead of giving everything away to foreigners out of stupidity (or treachery).

It’s worth recalling that [repeated](#) polls have [shown](#) that Americans vastly overestimate the scale of foreign aid — and recommend that it be considerably higher than it actually is (putting aside what constitutes “aid”).

*Much has been written and said about the betrayal of the Kurds, a U.S. ally in the war against ISIS (also known as Daesh). This isn’t, however, the first time that the U.S. has betrayed the Kurds and other former allies.*

Betrayal of the Kurds has been virtually a qualification for office since Ford-Kissinger abandoned the Kurds to the mercy of Saddam Hussein when they were no longer needed. Reagan went so far as to support his friend Saddam’s chemical warfare campaign against Iraqi Kurds, seeking to shift the blame to Iran and blocking congressional efforts to respond to these hideous crimes. Clinton’s method was to provide the arms for the murderous government assault on Turkish Kurds, which killed tens of thousands, wiped out 3,500 towns and villages, and drove hundreds of thousands from their homes. (See Noam Chomsky, *The New Military Humanism*, Chapter 3. London: Pluto Press, 1999). Clinton’s flood of military aid increased along with the shocking crimes, as Turkey became the prime recipient of American arms (outside of Israel-Egypt, a separate category).

Trump’s contribution is particularly disgusting. The Kurds lost 11,000 soldiers, men and women, leading the war against ISIS for which Trump claims credit, helped by some U.S. special forces (five casualties are reported) and air support. Erdoğan demanded that Kurds eliminate defensive fortifications (filling in trenches, etc.) near the border, and at the request of the U.S. command, they complied, trusting Washington’s promise that it would protect them from a

further Turkish assault. Trump's tweet broke that promise, leaving Kurds exposed to the invasion by Turkish-backed forces, most it seems jihadis and criminals. For years, Turkey has been helping tens of thousands of jihadis to flood into Syria for its anti-Assad war and to establish a Turkish presence. No surprises in how the extended Turkish assault has been carried out.

*Former prosecutor and U.N. investigator Carla del Ponte said Erdoğan should be investigated and indicted for war crimes. What about Trump? After all, isn't he the one who gave Erdogan the green light to launch an invasion into the Kurdish semi-autonomous region in Syria?*

Turkey had already invaded and occupied Kurdish-controlled regions of northern Syria, killing hundreds and displacing hundreds of thousands, with [credible charges of serious war crimes](#). Trump's green light was for extending the operation with [the] alleged goal of ending a terrorist threat, in reality in order to put an end to the highly promising social and political achievements in Kurdish-led Rojava by violence and terror, ethnic cleansing, and resettling the region with Syrians of Turkey's choosing.

On war crimes, it is well to remember the stirring words of Justice Robert Jackson, chief U.S. prosecutor at the Nuremberg Tribunal where Nazi war criminals were judged and hanged: "We must never forget that the record on which we judge these defendants today is the record on which history will judge us tomorrow. To pass these defendants a poisoned chalice is to put it to our own lips as well. We must summon such detachment and intellectual integrity to our task that this Trial will commend itself to posterity as fulfilling humanity's aspirations to do justice."

When we ask how these words have been heeded since, we know how history should judge us, and what to expect of punishment for war crimes — even in perfectly clear cases of aggression with no credible pretext, the "supreme international crime" of the Nuremberg judgment: the U.S.-U.K. invasion of Iraq in 2003, to take a textbook example.

Continuing with the Nuremberg judgment, we might recall that "to initiate a war of aggression," such as the invasion of Iraq, "is not only an international crime; it is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole." Included in the

accumulated evil of the whole is the recruitment of such militants as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who joined the resistance to the invasion and, after an education in Abu Ghraib, went on to lead the criminal enterprise ISIS, finally killed in a U.S. special forces operation on October 27.

*Moving to the domestic front, are the Democrats likely to benefit from impeaching Trump, or will the gamble to do so prove to be a costly one for them?*

My own guess is that it will turn out to be rather like the Mueller investigation. Trump will be impeached by the House, then acquitted in the Senate, where few Republicans are likely to be principled enough to face Trump's adoring and militant voting bloc. Then Trump can declare victory for the Tribune of the People, [saying he] has once again protected "real" red-blooded Americans from the machinations of the Deep State and the treacherous liberal elites.

*Economic models predict that if nothing changes with regard to the direction of the economy, Trump will win in 2020 with an even bigger margin. Is this a surprising development, given all the chaos that surrounds Trump's presidency?*

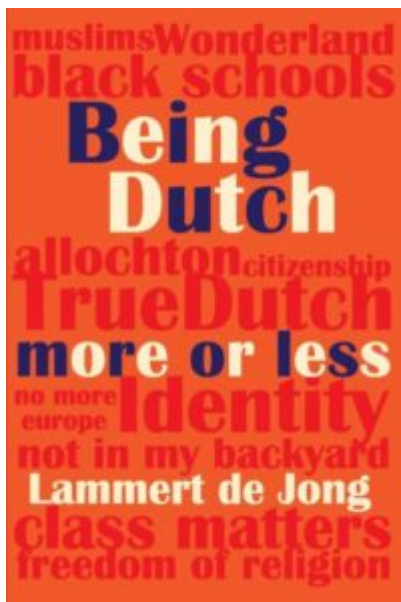
These models are largely based on public perceptions of current economic trends. These take no account of the fact that the Trump economy carries onward the slow Obama recovery from the Great Recession, now with [a real unemployment rate of over 7 percent](#) with almost stagnant real wages and declining benefits — and spectacular enrichment of a tiny sector to the point where over 20 percent of the country's wealth is in the hands of 0.1 percent of the population while [half the population has negative net worth](#).

In the past, these models have been accurate, though we should recall that the best predictor of electability, dramatically for Congress, is campaign spending, as Thomas Ferguson has shown, again in current work. But we are not in normal times. The Republican "radical insurgency," as it was called several years ago by Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute, has gone far off the traditional rails under Trump, undermining democracy and posing an extraordinary threat to the persistence of organized human life on earth — in the all-too-near future. How such factors will enter into the election is not easy to say, though it is unfortunately not difficult to predict the consequences of four more years of Trumpism.

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## The Dutch Black School: They Are Not Us



*Lammert de Jong - Being Dutch. More or less. In a comparative Perspective of USA and Caribbean Practices Rozenberg Publishers 2010. ISBN 978 90 3610 210 0 - The complete book will be online soon.*

### *'An Inconvenient Truth'*

In the Netherlands, 'black' is *not* black; it is 'non-western', including Moroccan, Turkish, and people of Caribbean origin, lumped together as allochtons. In government statistics, schools with more than 70% allochton pupils are generally classified as a black school; schools with less than 20% allochton pupils are graded as white. The *black school concept* is also used in relation to the surrounding neighborhood. Schools with more pupils of non-western origin than expected in view of the composition of the neighborhood are labeled blacker or, in the case of an over-representation of white pupils, whiter. A deviation of 20% or more between neighborhood and school population classifies a school as *too white or too black* (Forum, 2007). The number of primary schools with more than 70% allochton pupils is increasing; in Dutch nomenclature: the schools are becoming blacker.

The *Dutch black school* is a perfidious contraption that locks in children of non-western origin, while its black label flags an underlying *apartheid syndrome* to underscore for the *True Dutch* - intentionally or not - how different these allochtons are. Yet the black school touches an open nerve in the Netherlands, a sensitive reality that surpasses its statistical definition. On the one hand the black school reeks of *apartheid*, which the Dutch so bravely contest when occurring elsewhere in the world. On the other hand the *True Dutch* are well aware that their entitlement and unencumbered access to white schools is at stake when school *segregation* is tackled in earnest. So far Dutch counteraction is limited to research and some experimental desegregation projects.

The Dutch black school is embedded in the particular Dutch school system that funds public-secular as well as private-denominational schools. Once, the Dutch school system was driven by the accommodation of different beliefs. On the strength of their belief - church-religion or secular ideology - parents wanted a school for their children that adhered to the values, doctrines, and rules of their faith, and paid for by the state. *[Note: In 2009 the Netherlands' Council of State pointed out that publicly financed orthodox religion-based schools may refuse teachers who identify with a particular gay life style. The fact that a teacher is gay is not sufficient to deny a position, but if he or she is in a same sex relation and married in church or city hall, that may suffice, as such contravenes the orthodox rule that marriage is a holy sacrament between one man and one woman]*

Denominational and non-religious schools emphasized particularity, a distinctiveness that corresponded with religious doctrines or ideological orientations. The principle of *Freedom of Education* (Onderwijsvrijheid) is enshrined in the Netherlands Constitution, art. 23. Over the years parents have come to believe that they are entitled to choose a specific school for their children, which is a travesty of the freedom to choose a particular type of school, based on denominational or secular definition.

Dutch politics wavers when coming to grips with the effects the black school brings - quite literally - home. Most parents don't set out intending to discriminate, which makes a noble difference, and legally enforced segregation is not on the books. Nonetheless a segregated white-black educational system has become a reality, with most True Dutch children in better schools and having better school careers, and children of allochtons at the other end. And that with long lasting effects after the school years have come to an end. This type of school segregation stigmatizes New Dutch children for life, while reinforcing an allochton footprint that will divide the nation for years to come. Although most political parties assert that integration is the major social issue of our time, they fail to confront the black school with a sense of urgency. Dutch politics still has to acknowledge that the black school emblemizes the allochton population in the Netherlands with an explicit signature: *They are not Us*.

Black schools are a common feature in most major Dutch cities. So far the black school does not stand out in Dutch politics as a problem that must be solved urgently by law, regulation or in the courts. The black school seems more of an inconvenient truth than a critical social or political issue. To an outsider this must be surprising, given that the Netherlands is known for its rock-solid liberal reputation. How come then that the Netherlands has become a segregated nation? And do they discriminate against people of color? Do the Dutch not know how to handle the ethnic complexities of today's multi-cultural society? Or is it a lack of compassion for those who do not belong to the white Dutch tribe: *Discrimination or not, my children first*. Or is it merely a matter of social-economic stratification, a distinction between advantaged and disadvantaged children, so that the Dutch black school is just a *myth* (Vink, 2010)?

### *The Dutch Black School*

The Dutch black school has come into existence at the intersection between non-

western immigration and the particular Dutch history of a nation that until the 1950s was separated by religion and ideology. The Dutch were used to the idea of organizing themselves along the lines of church religion and secular ideology, in schools, politics, libraries, and on the social parcourse. This divide partitioned marriage and friendship, sports and universities, and shopping for groceries, milk and meat. So when immigrants flocked into the Netherlands and concentrated in certain neighborhoods, thus becoming physically separated from the True Dutch, this division fitted into a historic pattern of a segregated nation.

The immigrants were administratively grouped together as allochtons whose children went to black schools.*[Note: According to the Netherlands Statistical Office, Japanese and Indonesian immigrants are classified as western-allochton because of their social-economic and social cultural position. Japanese immigrants and their families are defined as economically incorporated, Indonesian immigrants are mostly born in the Dutch East Indies, which became independent in 1949]*

School segregation was already mentioned in 1971, especially with regard to immigrants from Suriname (Karsten, 2005). Most of the immigrants from Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles are classified as racially black. Concentrations of Surinamese immigrants gradually changed the character of the white neighborhood schools into black schools. Where guest workers settled, schools in their neighborhood became populated with children of Moroccan and Turkish origin. The idea of particular schools for foreign children who eventually would be returning home to Morocco and Turkey (but did not) was not too farfetched. These children had different educational needs, which could be best addressed by schools that also taught the language of origin, though only a few hours per week. At a later stage Muslim schools were established as a logical extension of the Dutch particularistic school system. Occasionally these Muslim schools were challenged as holdouts of backwardness, or not in line with the historic Christian-Judeo cultural signature of the Dutch nation, but overall these schools fitted the Dutch concept that religion merited a particular school, paid for by the state. The concept black school covered all these varieties in school population, which became a distinctive category for schools with a majority of pupils of non-western origin, irrespective of its racial make-up. The use of a black label simplified a more detailed allochton classification. Black is not just a word; it comes with gargantuan amounts of racist baggage, which is included in the True



Dutch perception of these schools. White parents do not send their children to such schools, however liberal minded they might otherwise be.

### *School segregation in Amsterdam (DOS, 2008)*

*Many children in Amsterdam attend white or black schools. A study 'Segregation in Primary Education in 2008 in Amsterdam' comprised 203 schools of which 86 are black (over 70% allochtons) and 31 white (less than 20 % allochton); 86 schools have a balanced ethnic composition. So over half of all primary schools are either white or black.[Note: Zwarte scholen steeds zwarter. In: Trouw, 19 July 2007] Against the background of the composition of the neighborhood population, 29 schools are too black and 31 too white, calculated on a deviation of 20 % or more. When counting pupils, 11% of a total of almost 60,000 attend a 'too black' school and 9% a 'too white' school. 'Too black' schools count on average 222 pupils, which is less than 'too white' schools (311). This study points out that segregation also exists in terms of schools being overcrowded with children whose parents have little education, and schools where such children are few.*

*School segregation follows residential segregation, but is reinforced by parental choice. The Amsterdam study indicates that many children attend schools outside their own neighborhood: 43%, while 57% attend schools in the neighbourhood. Children - black and white - from relatively black neighborhoods, who are going to school elsewhere, attend more often a white school than would have been the case if they had attended school in their residential neighborhood. The difference for white children is 62 against 26%; for black children 17 against 5%, which indicates that parental choice goes for white. That parental choice favors white is also shown in the choice of a school that is further away than three other schools, and is at the same time whiter than those neighborhood schools: 40% of the white parents choose the whiter schools, and 14% of the allochton parents. These parents do not mind their children biking or walking an extra mile to get to a relatively whiter school.*

### *What's Wrong with the Black School?*

Is the black school really that bad? Doesn't the black school perfectly fit into the Netherlands' live and let live tradition? Are black schools a form of discrimination? In quite a number of cities, a black school in a predominantly allochton neighborhood is not perceived as a problem. School governors do not feel pressured to take action, as such schools are a reflection of the (allochton) neighborhood (Forum, 2007, 18). As long as the school population is in line with

the ethnic composition of the neighborhood, the composition is attributed to residential segregation, which is beyond the school governors' control. This black school is considered inevitable and a priori fated not to become desegregated. A black school in an allochton neighborhood is 'at home' as it were, and segregation is not judged to be an issue.

This calculation is disingenuous, as it does not acknowledge the double bind of these children, living in a segregated allochton neighborhood and attending a black school. Residential allochton segregation is topped with black school segregation. The double bind segregation of school and neighborhood is generally overlooked. An exception was an advisory council on Integration and Diversity in Amsterdam that condemned all black school segregation, also the black school in the black neighborhood, because of its adverse effects on the development of common Dutch citizenship (Adviesraad, 2009).

Assuming that the black school cannot be eradicated, perhaps this school should be accepted as such, and be dealt with realistically. Doubt is cast on the received opinion that black schools obstruct social-cultural integration and citizenship participation. Furthermore the practicality of reducing high concentrations of underachievers in allochton neighborhoods is questioned. '*Making the best*' of the *black* school is put forward as a realistic alternative. Specific support programs for black schools must be developed (Karsten, 2007, 19). Additional programs and specific efforts must elevate the black school. Provided that pupils get the same opportunities as children at other schools, the black school should not be considered a problem per se. Black schools must be reformed when they are stagnant schools which do not serve their students upward social mobility (Gramberg, 2005, 189). According to this reformist view, separate but equal is the next-best thing for educating allochtons to proper Dutch levels, a reality that must be accepted. Considering all impediments to a better integrated school system, the black school must become an end in itself, something to be accepted, and where necessary, improved. In the USA the case of the black school has been turned upside down. Movements of *Black Power* and *Black is Beautiful* have encouraged African-Americans to endorse black school segregation, as legal action had for decades not succeeded to end school *segregation*. In the slipstream of this separatist argument, integration of allochtons by means of school desegregation is no longer seen as a feasible option (Karsten, 2007, 19).

Obviously, *black* schools in the Netherlands have created an issue that must be

dealt with, if only by listening to the plenitude of statements on most political platforms: we oppose school segregation, and we oppose the black school. But it seems that, first of all, a multitude of research projects must be undertaken before the problem can be outlined in full. Too white or too black schools are focused on as a problem that can possibly be tackled by manipulating registration and reigning in parental choice. Research is called for to determine the black school plusses and minuses; the effects of the black school. On social integration, and society in general; on immigrants' social-economic advancement and mobilization; children's educational success or failure; and civic participation of the allochton in adult years. It seems that research is called for as a way out of a problem that a priori is deemed intractable, because all parties realize that when white parents have a choice, they do not send their children to black schools, nor do they allow too many allochton kids into the school of their choice. Studies from both the USA and around the world have shown that parental choice often leads to more segregated schools: 'Unless policy makers actively intervene in the choice process, parental choice of school is very likely to make schools more segregated than they would otherwise be' (Fiske & Ladd, 2009, 3-5).

#### *Class Matters-Classmates Count (Paulle)*

Efforts have been made to take the black denomination out of the black school. From that angle the question is raised whether it is strategically right to focus on the black school, as race (or ethnicity) is not the principal denominator of educational failure or success. Doesn't the social-economic status (SES) of parents correlate more strongly with the school scores of their children? In a study of two schools, one in the Bronx, NY, and one in the Bijlmer, Amsterdam, Bowen Paulle quotes a generally respected research finding: '*Educational research suggests that the basic damage inflicted by segregated education comes not from racial concentration but from concentration of children from poor families*' (Paulle, 2005, 276). Pupils from disadvantaged milieus are more sensitive to the quality of teaching. He points to the success of experiments with economic desegregation programs: schools statistically dominated (70% or more) by youth from middle- or high income families can successfully absorb youth from low-income families (Paulle, 2005, 277). Yet this self-evident argument needs further confirmation. The right proportional mix is still a subject of research and debate: what is the actual tipping point for high SES parents, and what is the turning point in absorbing disadvantaged children in a school dominated by advantaged children? These experiments have built a strong case for mixing

school populations according to parental SES in a win-win proportion, yet it does not exonerate the existence of the black school.

The *black* denomination is also taken out to explain differences in school careers of allochton children. *Allochton* children are especially disadvantaged when being tested for further education. In the Netherlands parents are counseled early - at a child's age of 11, about follow-up education, the options being various types of high school, which lead to university education, or a range vocational training alternatives. At this age, many allochton children lag behind *True Dutch* pupils because of a language disadvantage, due to the language of origin often being still spoken at home. They tend to be steered toward vocational training, based on non-biased scores, but perhaps also on a teacher's subtle bias that blacks tend to fail academic education. Quite a number of these students do reach university level, but only after having made a detour of several years on vocational and high school training circuits. This has caused a debate on postponing the age of decision on a child's high school academic or vocational training options, especially in view of the detour black children are making. Though the Dutch may be relieved that also in this case ethnicity can be taken out of the black school, the black school is still there, in actual reality and very much so as a stark image in the Dutch mind, especially because the black school legitimizes *True Dutch* entitlement to white schools.

Dismantling the black school by social-economic stratification and the effects of early decision on secondary education both serve Dutch enlightenment. Social-economic stratification is of course not as bad as a simmering ethnic taboo that allochtons are underachievers from birth, justifying white flight and so creating the black school. Others argue that when segregation is exclusively defined as a black-white issue, the problem of white underachievers in the rural areas is overlooked; the big-city bias of ethnic *segregation* had created a blind spot for white underachievers (WRR, 2009, 162). The SES argument relieves Dutch uneasiness about the black school, because the high rates of underachievement are not a black issue anymore but rather an issue of a forgotten underclass, which includes whites as well. The changeover from black to social-economic class was welcomed as a clearance from the probability that Dutch school particularity had lubricated racial discrimination and ethnic segregation. What a relief. What good news exclaimed Wouter Bos, the labor party leader, when hearing about the near perfect exchange rate between black and underclass scores.[ *Note: Aleid Truijens,*

*Klasssen met louter dezelfde kindertjes. In: De Volkskrant, 27 January 2009]* He may have thought that having an underclass is something to be sorry for, but certainly not as annoying as white-black apartheid. It just ain't that easy.

The black school denomination is whitewashed by research indicating that class matters in explaining achievement scores. Yet this does not change the fact that differences of underachievement continue to be registered in terms of autochthon and allochton scores. The drop-out rates in vocational training schools during 2006-2007 - 27.5% for autochthons, and 50.1% for *allochtons* - testify to a divided reality that, according to Dutch parlance, is a black school issue (WRR, 2009, 27). Given the reality of the black school in Dutch politics, cities, media, conversation and statistics, it is cynical to argue that a black school does not matter much, because SES and class matter more. This class difference does not make the black school disappear from the parental radar that is set to be sensitive for color. Besides, for the most part SES and non-western origin (if you want, race) walk hand in hand in Dutch society (DOS, 2008, 22).*[Note: It is often assumed that allochton children are equally disadvantaged in terms of the low level education of their parents. Amsterdam's segregation study indicates that allochton children vary in being disadvantaged. Half of the Surinamse children (54%) and 62% of the Antilleans are educationally disadvantaged while much more Turkish and Moroccan children are disadvantaged (85 and 86%) (DOS, 2008, 22)]*

The Dutch black school collects children of an underclass, mainly of non-western origin or, according to a fashionable non-class jargon, disadvantaged youth. Yet some critics believe that since the breakdown of bloc-based segregation Dutch society is classless, and its educational system as well.*[Note: Frans Verhagen, De eerste Italianen van Amerika. 'Hun geloof is vreemd en bedreigend.' In: De Groene Amsterdammer, 6 June, 2009]*

Obviously the very existence of the Dutch black school contradicts the assumption of a classless *Dutch Wonderland*.

### *Awkward Family Ties*

The *Dutch black school*, and its underlying residential segregation, inevitably reminds one of *racial discrimination* elsewhere, in South reason, the Dutch black school is whitewashed by SES and cultural disadvantage, and shrouded in black power mystification. In these countries, whites and blacks were kept apart, based on the believed superiority of white over black. Separate educational structures were to safeguard the superiority of the white race: *slegs vir blanke, or whites*

only. South Africa's apartheid came to an end in 1994 when the first elections with universal suffrage were held. The USA's Supreme Court ruled in 1954 against the separate but equal doctrine. Institutionalized and legally enforced separation of white and black education was outlawed. Yet in 1957 the Arkansas Governor called in the National Guard to prevent a group of African-American high schools students to enter the white Central High School in Little Rock: *'Blood will run in the streets if Negro pupils should attempt [to enter] Central High School'* (Ogden, 2008). The struggle of the Little Rock Nine was caught in stark pictures of white hatred and newspaper headlines all over the world. And so was Governor George C. Wallace of Alabama in 1963 when he announced that he would defy the federal court order and block the door of the university's main building to keep the black students out. Eventually President John F. Kennedy managed to resolve the ominous standoff without bloodshed. [Note: Fred Kaplan, *When the Kennedys took on Wallace over Integration. About the television documentary (1963) "Crisis: Behind a President's Commitment."* In: *The New York Times*, 18 January 2009. ]

The Supreme Court ruling did not make the black school disappear, nor did it make much difference to the inferior quality of *black* schools. But the USA upholds the principle that separate but equal is against the law. Transgressions are continuously fought out in court to determine the constitutional options and limits of (affirmative) action to further desegregation.

White hatred and staunch segregationists are rarely to be found among the Dutch. These extreme phenomena are also petering out in the USA; overt bigotry has become risky and unpopular: 'today most racial conflicts involve ambiguous facts and inscrutable motivations' (Ford, 2008, 263). Even so, Richard Ford maintains: 'Today's racial injustices are, in many ways, as severe as ever. But these injustices now stem from isolation, poverty, and lack of socialization as much as from intentional discrimination or racism' (Ford, 2008, 307). Though the Dutch black school does not fit the historical origin and the exact definitions of school segregation in the USA, quite a few characteristics overlap. The vernacular of Dutch school segregation is framed in ethnic and racial definitions.

Most True Dutch parents are liberal enough that they do not mind allochton children in a white school, as long as it remains a white school. After all, a bit of color adds an interesting touch to a cosmopolitan Dutch self-image. But not too many allochtons should have this privilege. White parents do not want their

children in black schools, for sure. Black schools are seen as inferior to white schools; they have become distinctly separate institutions, which offer inferior school careers when compared to white schools. Even when black is taken out of the equation by class and cultural disadvantage, the black school remains firmly rooted in the actuality of Dutch education.

The decisive argument against the black school is not that it scores relatively low on educational benchmarks - an occasional white school may score even lower, but that it is a particular school populated by children of non-western origin, being separated from their white compatriots. The *black* school constitutes de facto a new Dutch reality: a particular school for Dutch children because of their non-western origin, and with a second rate classification. Nomen est omen, the name says it all. The *apartheid* label does apply. In the end, True Dutch parents do not send their children to a black school if they can help it. *True Dutch* parents who insist on a white school for their children are exonerated from being xenophobic or racist; they simply look for what's best, and don't have the intention to discriminate. From their point of view this cannot be wrong.

### *Particularistic Dutch School System*

In the Netherlands, a group of parents is free to establish a school where their children are educated in line with their religion or belief, to be funded with public monies. As such the Dutch school system is rather particular; it is based on intentional segregation according to privately held religious beliefs or secular orientations. As a result, there is no tradition of what in the U.S.A is called a 'common school' that serves the entire community and promotes a common sense of civic and other values (Fiske & Ladd, 2009, 8). The USA public school is a melting pot of differences with a communal public orientation. The concept public school as known in the USA does not make sense in the Netherlands. The USA public school fosters 'the foundation for good citizenship', which necessarily implies that public education is an instrument of public socialization to common values and a common national identity (Ford, 2008, 206). Americans are free to send their children to private schools, for which they pay themselves. A small minority of private schools are prestigious non-religious institutions, but the vast majority of them are operated by religious organizations, predominantly Roman Catholic, but also Jewish and others. A combination of parents, private and religious institutions, funds these schools, while government finances the public schools. Only 11.5 % of all pupils in primary and high school attend private

schools. Income plays a role of course, but also 80 % of the children of families with an income of > \$ 75,000 per year attends a public school (Council for American Private Education). [Note: Council for American Private Education: <http://capenet.org/facts.html> ] The British public school is a different species going back centuries, where admission was restricted for children from a particular aristocratic class. Nowadays the term refers to fee-charging independent secondary schools.

In the Netherlands, the government funds almost all schools, also denominational schools which would be labeled private schools in the USA. The Dutch *Freedom of Education* induced a widely held belief that parents are free to choose the school they want for their children; this has become identified as a constitutional right. Parents can choose schools of a particular religious denomination (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Christian, Jewish, Muslim) (*bijzondere scholen*), or secular schools (*openbare scholen*), which do not claim a particular religious affiliation. All schools have to meet centrally set educational standards and goals. They are supervised by the Inspectorate of the Ministry of Education, and financed out of public funds. Only a few schools are privately funded. What stands out is that denominational schools enjoy full financial support from the state. This has not always been the case.

The Education Act of 1878 reflected the established practice of the day: not one penny of public aid to denominational private schools (Lijphart, 1975, 106). In the second half of the 19th Century, more than three quarter of all pupils attended public (non-denominational) elementary schools, which were paid for by the state. One century later, in 1957, the situation was completely reversed. Only 28 % still attended public-secular schools (non-denominational) and 72 % were in private-denominational schools (Lijphart, 1975, 52). In the second half of the 20th Century, these figures have not changed much. In 2006 31 % attended public-secular schools and 69 % private-denominational schools; 34 % Catholic; 24 % Protestant; and the remaining 11 % include Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Evangelical, Catholic-Protestant-Combined schools. [Note: *Trends leerlingen aantallen 2002-2006. Bron cijfers: Cfi/OCW*] All these schools are financed with public monies.

A decisive moment came at the end of the 19th Century when the ruling political parties recognized that the unequal financial treatment of private-denominational schools and public-secular schools fundamentally divided the Dutch nation.



Around 1900 both the Catholics and the Protestants had grown into strong blocs, each with a principled desire to have their own school financed by the state. The State's regents could no longer overlook these aspirations, all the more so as demands for universal suffrage had become a burning issue as well. Especially the Protestants' *kleine luyden* (little people) acquired strong leadership demanding that also their schools must be financed out of public funds. Voting rights were part of the power struggle in which the *kleyne luyden* also triumphed. The first elections under universal suffrage (according to those days: male only) were held in 1918. Just before, in 1917, the Dutch legislature enacted a law that guaranteed government funding (Lijphart, 1975, 110).

*all elementary schools, public and private, were to get the same financial assistance from the government in proportion to their enrollments.*

The equal financial provision by central government guaranteed the schools an even financial foundation irrespective of denomination, or locality - rich or poor - and so added real value to the doctrine that all men are created equal. Rather interestingly it was assumed that this financial equality would help to consolidate the cultural unity of the nation.*[Note: A proposal to decentralize the financing of schools to municipal and provincial authorities was contested in 2008 for this reason. Jaap Dronkers, Zo verbrokkelt Nederland als cultuureenheid. In: De Volkskrant, 9 December 2008 ]* While in the USA the public school was assigned the task of uniting the nation, in the Netherlands equal funding for public-secular and private-denominational schools had to serve the same purpose. Ever since, the parents' freedom to choose a school has become carved in stone in Dutch national consensus. That is, until the Dutch Muslim community claimed this freedom to set up Muslim schools.

In the Netherlands parents do not have to balance their choice by cost considerations; they can simply opt for what they think is best. From an American point of view, such freedom sounds too good to be true. In the USA private schools are not financed by the state but out of the parents' pockets; and they are very expensive.*[Note: Charter schools are a recent phenomenon in the USA, and can best be defined as a hybrid structure of a publicly financed school - often initiated by philanthropic monies - that is independently operated on a specific charter. Examples include schools dedicated to Arabic language and culture, or those dedicated to the Hebrew language (e.g. the Hebrew Language Academy Charter School)]* No wonder that the USA Brookings Institution came to visit the

Netherlands to find out how this freedom works. Could it be of use across the Atlantic? Alas, the USA concept of separation of church and state forbids the use of public monies for religious causes, although there are numerous exceptions.

School choice based on church religion lost its momentum after the strong wave of secularization passed through the Netherlands. Likewise ideological contestants such as socialism and liberalism had lost much of their imaginative hold by the end of the 20th Century. The formative and behavioral appeal of church-religion and ideology no longer suits the individualized mind. In the meantime, specific pedagogical platforms, also called signatures, such as Dalton, Montessori, Jena, and Waldorf School (Vrije School), have become strong competitive factors in determining parental choice. Although Protestant and Catholic families are still likely to enroll their child in a school with the corresponding religious orientation, a recent study shows that 29 % of Protestants and 23 % of Catholics attend either a non-religious school or a school of another religious persuasion (Fiske & Ladd, 2009, 9). For many parents school choice is no longer determined by church religion or ideology; yet the particularistic school system remains in place, and conveniently accommodated a new phenomenon, the *black* school, which had come into being by default of the *True Dutch* white choice.

### *Freedom of Education's Travesty*

The principle of *Freedom of Education* is meant to guarantee that education is provided and can be accessed according to one's belief (*overtuiging*; Government Paper, 2008, 5). Nowadays *Freedom of Education* has been manipulated to become a choice that takes into account a school's excellence, reputation, and ethnic composition (black or white) as well. Religion lost much of its impact with regards to the choice of a school. Perhaps with the exception of some Jewish, Hindu and Muslim parents, parents now balance their choices between a school's denomination, proximity, ranking and status, and color. Parents generally prefer the best school, which must also be within close range of their residence. These days the choice of a particular school has for many parents little to do with its denominational or secular definition.

Residential patterns and parental school choice determine school segregation. When residential patterns are segregated the schools become segregated: white neighborhoods produce white schools, allochton neighborhoods *black* schools. But parents are not inhibited from looking over the neighborhood boundaries.

White parents do not normally send their children to a black school, as their choice for a white school is a matter of course (with a few exceptions). Not only because of the assumed better education but even more so with regards to school culture and after-school contacts. A black school is perceived to be not as liberal as a white school, especially in case of a dominant Muslim presence. These parents perceive a miss-match between school and home (Karsten, 2005). They contend that white children in a black school have difficulty making after-school friendships. When such white parents live in a predominantly black neighborhood, they look elsewhere, or they move home and hearth to find a white school that fits their aims. This is known as *white flight*. However, a grey flight is formed by allochtons who have progressed on the social-economic status (SES) ladder, and opt for white schools as well, often in suburbia.

White schools are sought after, and thus become overbooked and tend to expand.

On average, half of the white pupils attend a school *outside* their own neighborhood, while 80% of the allochton children are at a school within their neighborhood. Allochton parents are less inclined to travel an extra mile to the school of their preference than white parents. If *allochton* parents prefer a white school, they must compete with white parents. At the same time, Muslim parents may prefer a Muslim or another black school, as they perceive white schools out of step with the traditional upbringing they hold dear. For them, white schools are too liberal.

Parents who insist on free school choice cling to the constitutional provision of *Freedom of Education* as a roadblock against regulating school admission. Though parents' school preference may be directed by a consumer mindset to pick the best school, the *Freedom of Education* still serves as a strong rallying principle. An improbable alliance of disparate activists has gained leverage to block school desegregation, not bonded by principle or intention but by happenstance. Parents that are directed by denominational-choice found a partner in large numbers of enlightened best-school-choice parents to safeguard a principled *Freedom of Education*. Best-school-choice parents now include a rising number of allochton parents who do not want their children in an inferior black school. This rather respectable combination happened to connect with an increasing number of equally principled parents who pursue a True Dutch cause that forbids their children to be mixed with allochton kids: *Not In My Backyard* (*NIMBY*). This alliance of motley adversaries considers desegregation an

infringement upon the *True Dutch* right to *Freedom of Education*, based on denomination, best-school, and NIMBY preferences. Invoking a hard won constitutional right of *Freedom of Education* of more than a century old, this alliance is hard to beat notwithstanding the fact that many of these crusaders harbor a motivation that is irrelevant to the constitutional clause of *Freedom of Education*.

Dutch media have finally begun to picture the black school as an *integration* problem. But as long as the extent of the Dutch principle of *Freedom of Education* is not critically questioned in parliament and courts, all attempts to counter segregation are bound to remain tokens of goodwill without real impact. What are the limitations of this *freedom*? Does this freedom include a choice for a *specific* school, as such has become received opinion and customary practice?

Or is a parent's choice limited to a type of school in terms of religious and ideological orientation? Can this *freedom* be controlled by *positive discrimination* or *affirmative action* to secure equal rights of children who otherwise would not stand a chance? These questions must be raised before they can be answered. Benevolent good-will initiatives are fine, but remain doomed without national, political and legal backing. The Netherlands' minister for Integration absolves himself of the responsibility for the ever-deepening process of school segregation by leaving the problem to municipalities, parents and school boards to deal with, and sits back in anticipation of the outcomes of a few goodwill pilots (Integration Brief, 2009, 22-23). Apparently the black school is too sensitive an issue to be tackled by national politics and parliamentary action. Exactly for this reason, it cannot be solved locally. The stakes are too high for *True Dutch* parents to lose their right of school choice while *Allochton Power* to change this course has yet to be mobilized.

### *Regulating Parental Choice?*

Changes in the playing field are beginning to desecrate the sanctity of parental school choice as an absolute right. Against the backdrop of deepening ethnic school segregation, school choice has become a contentious issue. Critics point out that parental choice has all along been conditioned by availability, zoning of school catchment areas and the discretionary powers of school authorities.

Parental choice has never meant that parents could pick a *specific* school. If schools are full, then parents must look elsewhere. However, the way the system

was organized allowed savvy parents to jump the queue, suggesting that actually the parents called the shots. Growing concerns about the divide between white and black schools in the Netherlands are now causing some people to call for a re-interpretation of *Freedom of Education*. A tentative critic merely suggests that a critical debate on the Dutch particular education system must continue (Scheffer, 2007, 422). A more imaginative approach is proposed by an expert on educational inequality in the Netherlands, who recommends a distribution of pupils based on an all encompassing score system for each local authority (municipality, city), allowing children from lower SES parents to register at a good school. Parental preference does still count but is balanced by a range of other scores and considerations (Dronkers, 2007, 76). An interesting twist in the logic of parental choice is that school segregation actually limits the choice of parents; especially those who do not want their children to attend a white or a black school. These parents prefer the blessings of mixed schools so that their children become aware and accustomed to the habitat of the Dutch multicultural society; a kind of multicultural citizenship training: 'more mixed schools, more choice' (Adviesraad, 2009).

There is even a suggestion that the time has come to replace the Dutch particular *Freedom of Education* system with a general structure which aims at public education for all, while allowing latitude for cultural and religious diversity (Pels, 2008, 170). Ahmed Marcouch, a prominent politician, and ex-mayor of Slotervaart, one of Amsterdam's Burroughs, Muslim, of Moroccan origin, supports an overhaul of the system: 'I believe that Muslims should integrate along with their religious identity. We must create Dutch Muslims. You can't just put children from religious families into separate Muslim schools. That adds to segregation. By teaching different religions in public schools, you encourage children to think critically.' [Note: Ian Buruma, *Letter from Amsterdam. Parade's End. Dutch liberals get tough*, pp. 36-41. In: *The New Yorker*, December 7, 2009] Such a radical departure from Dutch *particularity* however would entail for a politician - even in these secular times - a guaranteed electoral downfall.

Kees Schuyt, an esteemed sociology professor, questions whether the particularity of Muslim schools must be encouraged in view of the demands of a multicultural society: 'One can argue that pupils from the first school day must be confronted with each other's different religion and cultural behavior' (Schuyt, 2009, 123; Translation mine). However, Schuyt warns, this common school may

turn out to be a rough encounter with discrimination and humiliation in classroom and schoolyard. So it may be better to let Muslim children grow up in a protected school environment, namely a Muslim school that scores high on good teaching and postpones the confrontation with a tough outside world to a later age, similar to the way Roman Catholics and Protestants operated. He emphasizes that Muslim schools are in line with the Dutch segregated school system, and that blocking them would be extremely hypocritical. Yet in the end Schuyt doubts whether the present Muslim schools meet the terms of educating children to become free citizens (burghers) in a modern society, just as some other religion-based schools fail to do (Schuyt, 2009, 124). As late as 2010 orthodox protestant schools claim the right to keep their schools free from homosexual teachers and students who live by their sexual identity. Schuyt's argument comes close to a declaration that the Dutch particular school system does not fit the demands of a modern multicultural society, which is held together by a commitment to democracy, personal freedom and the rule of law.

The pressure is mounting to combat school segregation by legislation. At first, in 2009, only one of the political parties publicly recommended legislation to force schools mixing their population.*[Note: Agnes Kant & Sadet Karabulut, Bevecht Segregatie. In: De Volkskrant, 3 October 2009]* A few months later, the governing socialist party (PvdA) also called for legislation to mix schools according to high and low parental SES.*[Note: PvdA: Wet tegen segregatie onderwijs. In: de Volkskrant, 19 January 2010]*

These political suggestions were answered in Parliament by a Christian-Democrat Pavlov reaction, throwing together all possible disagreements to forestall hands-on action: No way! Parents won't support this mixing [...] The effect of mixing white and black schools is not evident: the opinion is still out [...] A child's school success is determined by neighborhood, parents' education and income [...] A black school is not per se a bad school, nor a white school per se a good school [...] Instead of mixing schools, the quality of schools must be raised [...] The preliminary outcome of pilot-projects looks promising.*[Note: CDA: mix zwart/witte scholen vrijwillig. In: NRC, 21 January 2010]*

This reaction makes a travesty of the Netherlands' *Freedom of Education*. Knowing that school segregation deepens, whether defined by white/black color, high/low class parents, or advantaged/disadvantaged youth, the problem is obfuscated to forestall regulatory change. Foreign experts conclude that the

segregation of disadvantaged immigrant pupils in the four major Dutch cities exceeds that of black students in most major American cities: 80 % of ethnic non-white Dutch students attend a black school, while in the USA 50 % of non-white students attend a black school. They are pessimistic about change: 'Thus any efforts to reduce segregation will have to reflect the voluntary commitment of a substantial number of stakeholders for whom private interests in maintaining the status quo may well exceed the public benefit to them of reducing segregation' (Fiske & Ladd, 2009, 25-32).

### *Extras, Goodwill and Projects*

Additional support, private goodwill and benevolent activism help to soften the edges of school segregation. Schools receive extra money for catching-up purposes. Until recently the allocation of a school's budget was apportioned on the basis of a pupil's origin and the level of education of parents: 1.0 for autochthon pupils at the right level, 1.25 for autochthon pupils with parents' of a low education level, and 1.9 for allochton pupils. In 2006/07 the ethnic component was abandoned and since then only the level of education of parents defines the number of disadvantaged pupils (*achterstandsleerlingen*), irrespective of their origin. The net result of this change was that the additional budget was spread thinner over the cohort of *allochton* pupils (Aboutaleb, 2005, 130). Yet a black school's extra budget allows for programs that aim specifically at allochton pupils, which naturally attract allochton parents. Notwithstanding this benevolent purpose, these subsidies in effect ease the way for even more segregation. Some have argued that extra finances should be poured into an integration budget that sets a premium on schools that have achieved a mixed pupil population.[*Note: Jan Marijnissen, Gemengde school bevordert integratie. In: Algemeen Dagblad, 23 December 2003. Weblog Jan Marijnissen*]

A variety of initiatives and agreements have spontaneously sprung up to contest school segregation. Numerous schools use double registers, which temporarily give priority to allochton pupils to a *too white* school and vice versa. A *too white* school will first admit *black* pupils if there is a *black* waiting list.[*Note: Dubbele wachtlijsten tegen zwarte scholen. In: Trouw, 23 november 2004*]

These double ethnic registers are contested - though not in court - as they supposedly disrespect the freedom of choice. *The Council for Education* and the *Commission for Equal Treatment* have spoken out against a distribution based on ethnicity, but support a distribution that aims at parental SES variance. In

thoroughly segregated residential areas, a white-black pupil mix is not attempted. Instead *friendship schools* are formed to stimulate (mostly after-school) interaction between white and allochton pupils. Since 2006-2007 the Ministry of Education obliges an Agenda on Local Educational Affairs (*Lokaal Educatieve Agenda*), to spell out the action taken to counter segregation. These deliberations between school boards and municipal authorities are binding (*bindend; niet vrijblijvend*) but according to how the Dutch phrase these things, this binding does not mean a legal or moral obligation without any possibility of withdrawal or avoidance. What it boils down to is that the parties are obliged by law to report once a year what has been done about school desegregation. Reporting that nothing has been achieved, or even been undertaken, perfectly fulfills this obligation.

At the request of the four big cities, the Ministry of Education has given municipalities a helping hand by establishing an *Expertise Center for Mixed Schools* that provides assistance to pilot programs, publishes about trials and errors, and evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of actions taken (Kenniscentrum, 2008). This expertise center is an extension of the Ministry of Education. At the end of 2010, reports of several pilot projects to combat school segregation, in total 12 municipalities, will be communicated to the Ministry.

An *Agreement* between the City of Amsterdam, Burroughs and School Boards to counter segregation is a case in point. The idea was a departure from idealistic white parents who register their children at a black school. In this *Agreement* the School Boards proposed that popular white schools, which had a waiting list, become mixed with more black students. Neighborhoods were chosen with schools that were too white and too black in comparison with the color composition of the population. In theory this color mismatch made a redistribution of pupils a possibility. The waiting list of the white school was forked into an individual registration, and a twinned registration - a combination of white and black pupils. At the moment of registration white parents who were accompanied by an allochton couple were given priority, which would result in a more mixed school population of the too white school.

The *Agreement* included a cap on school size to prevent that expanding white schools would attract white pupils from mixed schools. This *Agreement* had been almost three years in the making.

When *the Agreement* was signed, Amsterdam's Deputy for Education called this a



historic moment.

The project failed before it even started. The white-black combos were criticized; instead combos of SES variations were proposed, as these would be more in tune with the latest academic results. The high correlation between these entries was deemed irrelevant, and the fact that SES would be more difficult to apply was ignored. Second thoughts sprung up about the political correctness of the project: 'What's actually wrong with black schools?' Another complication was thrown in by questioning how to deal with brothers and sisters of those who are already at school? One of the initiators scornfully reported that the white Dutch elite idolizes Nelson Mandela, South Africa's anti-apartheid hero, while being persistent in placing their children in white schools, no apartheid questions asked.[*Note: Pieter Hilhorst, Apartheid. In: De Volkskrant, 17 December 2008*] The Agreement was shelved and the historic moment forgotten. The *Agreement* did not include any instrument to enforce the agreement. A well-positioned initiative, which was highly publicized and backed by local authorities and school boards, came to naught because as it was lacking formal regulation to keep the parties on task.

Nijmegen, a medium size city, announced in February 2009 a new trial along somewhat different lines than the Amsterdam attempt. In order to pre-empt *white flight* from the inner city, children are obliged to enroll in neighborhood schools. On a preference list of 6 schools, parents may include schools outside the neighborhood. Only if a preferred school outside the neighborhood has vacancies, enrolment may be accorded. Parental preferences are played out against factors such as: the school of brothers-sisters, an equitable distribution of children from parents with little or no education, and a fixed enrolment number per school. Popular schools are not allowed to expand, as this would create a pull-away effect that blackens neighboring schools. Parental religion or political leanings are not factored in, nor a preferred educational platform. All parents receive a binding enrolment advice, which can be appealed and reconsidered by an administrative body. According to a municipal council member, the principle of Freedom of Education is fully respected, but 'full is full'. [*Note: Nijmegen zet het mes in witte en zwarte scholen. In: De Volkskrant, 11 February 2009*] Of course, others disagree. [*Note: Vrije schoolkeuze bevordert segregatie. In: De Volkskrant, 11 February 2009*]

Nijmegen's Deputy for Education expects that 95 % of the parental choice will be

honored, that is one of the six schools on the preference list, which may not be exactly the first choice. The city and school boards are convinced that this project will hold out in court if challenged.

In Utrecht, one of the four big cities, parents and students opted for better schools outside the city of Utrecht, causing the inner city schools to deteriorate even further, and eventually to shut down.[*Note: "Dwang nodig bij schoolkeuze."* In: *De Volkskrant*, 5 February 2009] The problem was to stop the flight of the best segment of secondary education pupils, both autochthon and allochton, to schools in the surrounding municipalities. Provincial authorities pursued the city of Utrecht and the surrounding municipalities to come to an agreement on stopping this flight; to no avail. Utrecht's Deputy for Education complained to the Ministry of Education that school integration was sabotaged on several fronts: by schools, school boards, as well as parents.[*Note: Wethouder Utrecht: sommige scholen willen gewoon wit blijven.'Integratie op school gesaboteerd'*. In: *De Volkskrant*, 29 September 2009] The Deputy argued that voluntary agreements with school boards in the surrounding municipalities had not stopped the grey flight out of Utrecht, and pushed for central government intervention to come up with enforceable regulation.

Parental goodwill is not lacking, but is mostly incidental or unsubstantial, on paper only. Some politically correct white parents do purposely send their children to *black* schools and try to convince neighbors and friends to do so as well. A poll in a neighborhood with an equal share of autochthon and *allochton* children indicated that over 90 % of the parents preferred two mixed schools over one white and one *black* school. Segregation is generally deemed bad, and desegregation as something that must be pursued, but it is not felt as a personal issue when one's own children are involved. Very few feel a personal motivation to actually pursue desegregation (Karsten, 2005). In addition, enlightened white Dutch politicians set a poor example by not sending their children to black schools if they can help it. Why would they, as nobody questions a parental choice that aims at the betterment of their children? A conspiracy of silence seems to prevail in media and politics that a politician's parental white choice has nothing to do with school segregation. Politicians and media-makers generally do not differ in their parental choice.[*Note: The media silence about the Obamas' private school choice for their children after they moved to Washington is a telling mark, especially when compared to the media frenzy about their choice of a White*

*House puppy]* And some racially black parents at the high end of the social-economic status (SES) distribution have stated that school choice is a very complex personal matter, which means that they either regret their choice for a black school, or have chosen differently.*[Note: Personal statement of a black father, with a PhD, and his wife, a prominent Dutch politician]*

Good intentions are not enough as long as the political will to change course is lacking. Regulating school enrolment in order to attain a mixed school with regards to parental SES or children's origin is only at an experimental stage. Although the Netherlands government declared in 2007 to impose a school registration policy (*aanmeldingsbeleid*), nothing has come about as yet. Without formal regulation most initiatives to seal loopholes used by savvy and creative parents fall by the wayside (Karsten, 2005). Apart from a few pilots and goodwill experiments, desegregation runs into a pro-choice wall, built upon the constitutional Dutch *Freedom of Education* and paid for by the state. Thus Dutch particularity is engraved in stone, one of the sacred cows of Dutch politics. A school board director stated that he would rather resign than initiate action to engineer a mixed school population (WRR, 2009, 251). Recommendations given to the Netherlands government on how to create mixed schools of various grades of (under-) achievers receive negative press. One editorial outlined how badly underachievers must feel when they were going to be mixed with high achievers.*[Note: Een gunst is geen recht. In: NRC Handelsblad, editorial. 27 January 2009]* Does it really feel so much better in a black school? In *Today's Youth. One Year in a Black Class*, Kees Beekman, a teacher, depicts in detail how stigmatized these *allochton* children feel; they feel worthless and no good because they attend a school for *Dummies* (Beekman, 2006).

### *Equal Rights, Integration and Diversity*

The Netherlands' rather recent experience with black school segregation and the experimental efforts to do something about it, inevitably invites a comparison with the USA's long history of principled school segregation, and equally principled desegregation. While in the Netherlands *Freedom of Education* set out the course, in the USA the Civil Rights Movement took on school desegregation as a major challenge, culminating in a range of unending USA court battles over equal rights, states rights, racial integration and ethnic difference.

The *Civil Rights Movement* in the USA in the 1960s testifies to the strength of civic activism to pursue codification of rights that were once denied. At that time,

people were killed while securing civil and voting rights for African-Americans: *Civil Rights Act* (1964 and 1965), and the *Voting Rights Act* (1968). A long and bitter fight over equal education rights culminated in a legal victory in 1954. In a now famous case, *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) the separate but equal doctrine of the segregationists in the Southern States was overturned. The Supreme Court decided that separate black schools, even when offering quality equal to white schools, trampled upon the principle of equality. The Court ruled that it was unconstitutional to institutionalize education along color lines: 'The unmistakable promise of Brown was that primary education could and should coax children away from the racial and ethnic solidarities of their parents and supplement those affiliations with a sense of common citizenship that could, at least occasionally transcend racial differences' (Ford, 2008, 306). The Brown case inspired African-Americans in the Southern states to demand their rights as they never had before, without waiting for lawsuits: 'Black college students began sitting in at drugstore lunch counters to demand service; Rosa Parks and countless others suffered hardship to protest the humiliation of being forced to sit in the back of the bus.' [Note: Anthony Lewis, *A New National Scripture. A literature professor analyses the origins and meanings of Martin Luther King's famous speech.* By: Eric J. Sundquist, *King's Dream*, Yale University Press. In: *The New York Times Book Review*, 18 January 2009]

And yet, however victorious this outcome had been, the fight over the black school had just begun. Since the Supreme Court's decision, everything imaginable has been undertaken, either to keep desegregation in place, or to undo it. The boundaries of school districts have been manipulated in order to keep schools white. Elsewhere, courts have ordered busing to transport black children to white schools. In the face of unrelenting obstruction to desegregation, the Black Power movement came to the conclusion that black parents' best choice was a black school for their children.

Notwithstanding fierce opposition and confusing choices, institutional discrimination is not allowed. Legal codification, court orders and activists have changed the tide. Thompson Ford proudly summarizes the achievements in fighting discrimination (Ford, 2008, 27):

*Schools once accepted racial integration only under court order, the armed forces only under executive order, private enterprise only under congressional mandate. Now universities, the military, and private business combine forces to defend integration and race-conscious affirmative action. Officially sanctioned racist*

*propaganda has been replaced by multicultural sensitivity training.*

Yet affirmative action has followed a twisted trajectory in the USA. Over a period of years affirmative action served different goals and used a variety of vehicles, some of which have been declared illegal; it is a policy with a history that is loaded with contest. The American civil rights movement initially argued that affirmative action must achieve racial integration, setting quota aside for African-American students in order to attain a racially mixed school or university population. America's Ivy League elite universities embraced racial affirmative action for a mixture of reasons. On the one hand, it was driven by idealism: 'it would be better for this diverse country if there were a diverse elite.' On the other hand, minority recruitment of the white Ivy League universities was based on more practical considerations. In order to control such a diverse country as the USA 'it would be better to socialize the best and brightest of the minorities and make them more like us.' [Note: Helene Cooper, *Meet the new elite, not like the old*. In: *The New York Times*, 26 July 2009]

Racial affirmative action caused many students, especially at primary and high school level, to travel larger distances than would have been the case when attending school in their white or black neighborhood. School busses and *busing* became iconic and contested emblems of this way of integration. Eventually the highest USA court did not agree with racial quota. The court ruled that such would violate the equal rights of others, the rights of white children. Student assignments based on race could no longer be used to keep public schools from re-segregation after finally having achieved a measure of integration. In the end a most familiar civil rights concept of integration as racial balancing was rejected. Chief Justice John Roberts recently summarized once more his rather uncomplicated opinion: 'The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race, is to stop discrimination on the basis of race.' [Note: Lida Greenhouse, *Two Stars, meeting across a Bible*. In: *The New York Times*, 18 January 2009]

This one liner does not acknowledge the perpetual character of established privilege, nor does it distinguish between the intentions behind race discrimination on one hand and *affirmative action* on the other. *Affirmative action* is designed to bring underrepresented minorities in, not to keep whites out. Diametrically opposite Justice Robert's view stands the observation that *You can only fight discrimination with discrimination*, arguing that the amount of injustice in the world cannot be totally solved or even alleviated but at best be

redistributed (Wijnberg, 2006, 216-220). *Affirmative action* in the USA had to find another vehicle.

Thompson Ford analyzes in *The Race Card* how *affirmative action* meandered through the courts over the years. For *affirmative action* to be legal, a 'compelling interest' must be argued: 'This means that in practice, the legality of affirmative action depends on whether or not it's a good policy' (Ford, 2008, 248-249). Several arguments to build a case for affirmative action flourished, and subsequently foundered: (white) bias in grades and test scores; bigoted teachers; social discrimination; racial stratification; diversification of the nation's well-educated elite; and familiarity with underprivileged minority communities. Only one policy goal got an unambiguous thumbs-up from the Supreme Court: affirmative action that furthers the compelling interest in a 'diverse' student body. The court endorsed the right to select those students who will contribute the most to the 'robust exchange of ideas': to *differ* and to *be different* became an educational asset. The rationale for *affirmative action* became the pedagogical benefits of diversity. Critics argued that racial and ethnic difference rather than racial integration became the orthodoxy of necessity; supporters of affirmative action now needed to shore up racial difference and diversity, which were once fringe positions taken by black nationalists and white supremacists (Ford, 2008, 251).

The Civil Rights Movement became a house divided. On the crest of the *diversity* creed, the drive for integration was turned upside down. *Integration* had failed to improve the education of black children, and *integration* had also manifested itself as whitewashing minority cultural norms and practices. Segregation and separation, which were once the marrow of civil rights activism, now gained legitimacy as a guardian of multiculturalism revisited that glorified the virtue of racial difference. Once forceful arguments are now contested: 'For every argument that racial justice demands integration, there is now a counter argument that it requires separatism [...]' (Ford, 2008, 305). Colleges and universities must now advance a questionable and convoluted justification for affirmative action - diversity - when the more sensible one - integration - is a better fit. Thompson Ford deplores that the strongest arguments for affirmative action have been ruled out by judicial fiat (Ford, 2008, 262-263). The different faces of *affirmative action* over the years are an indication of its political and judicial sensitivity: at first racial integration was the defining metaphor while now

*diversity* and *difference* frame the compelling interest that legitimizes affirmative action. All along through its turbulent course, affirmative action in the USA exercised strong agency to combat school segregation.

### *Positive Discrimination and Affirmative Action*

*Positive discrimination* has become a contested issue. Discrimination literally means recognizing or identifying a difference, or to pay attention to subtle differences and exercise judgment and taste. But the term has gained wide currency as unfair treatment, usually because of prejudice about race, ethnic group, age, religion, sexual preference or gender. In most countries discrimination is unconstitutional; it is against the law. How then can discrimination be positive? The term must be applied to measures that do not have the intention to discriminate but instead to affirm options of people who otherwise would not stand a chance. Positive discrimination allows one to have precedence over another, not on the basis of merit, educational score or performance, but for other reasons. For instance, in order to prevent black-white school segregation, entry quotas have been imposed, which have given black children with lower school scores precedence over white children with an equal or higher score. The student with the higher score is 'discriminated' against to make room for the next best, or even the next-next best applicant. In America's equal rights parlance, the better scoring student's *equal rights* are violated. Much more than in the Netherlands, USA parents and school boards tend to go to court, one day to contest *segregation* by requiring positive *discrimination*, and the next day to protect the principle of equal rights against affirmative action programs. In the rubrics of positive discrimination and affirmative action an ever-progressing range of legal cases has clarified what is legally permissible, and what is not, when pursuing policies of school desegregation.

*Positive discrimination* and *affirmative action* are used interchangeably, but it makes sense to point out a difference. *Positive discrimination* confuses because of its suggestion that discrimination can be positive. Isn't that a contradiction in terms? It also confuses by implying that one's status has been earned at the expense of someone else. Quite a few oppose *positive discrimination* because it supposedly violates equal rights. When one is enlisted at a good school, the best university, or a top position with the help of positive discrimination, these entries have not been earned on the strength of merit and ability, but simply by having been given precedence. Though this is a gross simplification of a day-to-day

reality that is replete with glaring inequalities, a bias of being *second-rate*, or not being as good is always in the air. In spite of *all born equal rhetoric*, people are not born equal, and after being born they are embedded in disparate settings. The social-economic status (SES) of parents, especially their educational level (Dronkers, 2007,14), determines to a large extent the chances their children have, starting from first grade to university, and subsequently in the careers that follow. Children from parents on the high end of the SES scale usually attend better schools, and do better at school, than students born to low SES parents. Ivy League parents tend to create Ivy League access for their children.

In reality, the Dutch *Freedom of Education* has become an advantage to children surrounded by social-economic privilege, and thus not available to everyone. Schools do not intentionally discriminate between students of different background, but it turns out that the school choice of parents firmly correlates with where they come from. Parents who are well off themselves, especially in respect to education, insist on – and often succeed in putting their children in better schools. They know how to maneuver through the registration bureaucracy; they encourage their children to do better, and will step up their own or additional extra-mural efforts when necessary. Not all, but many True Dutch children come from the ‘lucky sperm club’ [Note: Michael Young, *The Rise of the Meritocracy*, 1957. In: *De Volkskrant*, 4 July 2009], and are better off when starting their school education compared to most allochton offspring.

Positive discrimination has been disqualified as giving precedence at the expense of others who are discriminated against. Many a critic emphasizes that positive discrimination is an infringement on the equality principle. For example, Paul Scheffer, an *integration* pundit in the Netherlands, underscores that this may cause conflict, violence, or even war (Scheffer, 2007, 423). He is prepared to make an exception for the black population in the USA because of their history of slavery and forced segregation, but warns against extending this way of thinking to immigrants who don’t need recompense for any historic wrong doing. Scheffer narrows the idea of positive discrimination to compensation for wrong doing at some stage in history, giving advantage to descendents of those who have been done wrong. But why does Scheffer exclude asylum seekers? And why exclude immigrants who have suffered from the Netherlands’ immigration policies of the *live and let live era*?

The party wings of the Netherlands’ ‘Young Socialists’ and ‘Young Liberals’



oppose *positive discrimination* of allochtons and women being recruited by the Police Force, which was recently prescribed by the Netherlands' Interior Department.[*Note: PvdA Nieuwsbrief 31 March 2008, OPINIE Geen positieve discriminatie, Niet gebaat bij positieve discriminatie*] To bolster their opposition the usual arguments were aired: quality deficiency, substantiation of the second-rate level of the target groups, problems on the shop floor, and negative discrimination of capable men and autochthons. They suggest that quality control is blown out of the window with a pro-active recruitment procedure that intensifies the search among the target groups. They do not account for the negative effects that a *True Dutch* white-male dominated Police Force has in cities with a high degree of diversity, populated with groups of people from all corners of the world.

#### *New York Police Department: Diversity matters*

*The ethnic diversity of the New York police that beats the streets correlates securely with the diversity of the millions who occupy these streets every day. The New York Police Department has never been so diverse, a result of quality control indeed. A majority of the cadets in the last rookie police class were members of ethnic and racial minorities, offering a rainbow cross-section of the city itself. Over all, 47.8 % of the city's officers are white, 28.7 % Hispanic, 17.9 % Black and 5.4 % Asian.<sup>31</sup> This is not a matter of course, or Darwinian selection, but of creative design, aka affirmative action by New York City authorities who know that diversity matters in keeping order and peace.*

Of course, there is resistance to this kind of affirmative action. An editorial in *De Groene Amsterdammer* on positive discrimination aired that first the mentality within the Netherlands' Police Force needed to be changed before regulation should be imposed.[*Note: Margreet Fogtelo, Blauwe Vrouwen. In: De Groene Amsterdammer, 5 June 2009*] How is this done? Precisely, by departmental regulation to intensify recruitment from these target-groups! [*Note: Lammert de Jong, Blauwe Vrouwen. In: De Groene Amsterdammer, Letter to the Editor, 17 June 2009.*] This is exactly what the women's Quota-Manifest in 2009 proposed, an initiative that sprang from the supposition that the rise of women to top positions required time and patience, just as was required all along. The Quota Manifest's signatories had lost their patience, and pushed for legally backed quotas to increase the number of women in public and private top-positions.[*Note: 'Geen zeurkous, ze steekt haar nek uit.' In: De Volkskrant, 20 October 2009*]

*Affirmative action* to attain a desired order, at school or university, nation-wide or social-economic, or even international, is an alternative to *positive discrimination*. *Affirmative action* aims to include those who otherwise would not stand a chance; *affirmative action* aims at building bridges between diverse populations. These actions are legitimized by farther reaching political goals, such as having more people participating in the national economic commonwealth; or to widen the recruitment reservoir of talent to be tapped; or to bring apartheid to an end. Where Scheffer's *positive discrimination* is limited to recompense for wrongs done to the African-American or American Indian population, *affirmative action* is a more productive concept because it aims further than compensation to particular groups. Affirmative action is concerned about the disorder of racial segregation, or of a class-riddled society; or the imbalance between disparate regions; the *divide* between rich and poor countries; or the diversity of the nation.

*Affirmative action* basically aims at correcting the damage done to the nation – and the world for that matter – by gross inequality. In the USA *affirmative action* was always meant to be a temporary remedy. Some argue that the policy should be based on 'the situation on the ground,' rather on some arbitrary timeline: '... reasonable people may disagree how much remedy is enough, and how much is too much but ... no reasonable person can look at our society's disparities in income, employment, education and incarceration rates and argue that the job is done.' [Note: David Berman, New York, July 20, 2009. In: *The New York Times*, July 26, 2009] Another commentator adds: 'I too hope that affirmative action will, at some point in the future, not be needed. However, it is not *affirmative action* that corrupts and condescends and corrodes, but rather a society in which unequal educational and economic opportunities are provided to some of its citizens because of the color of their skin. *Affirmative action* is a necessary corrective for our imperfect society.' [Note: Cathleen Barnhart, White Plains, July 20, 2009. In: *The New York Times*., July 26, 2009] Affirmative action is testimony to the belief that the state must level the playing field. [Note: Josef Joffe, *The Worst of the West. Reviewing Tony Judt's 'Ill Fares the Land'*. In: *The New York Times Book Review*, 2 May 2010]

Much government policy, especially in so-called welfare states, can be measured as affirmative action: subsidies for a more expansive family re-production, or producing *affirmative action babies* [Note: *These subsidies produce affirmative action babies in the truest sense of the word. See also Stephen L. Carter,*

*Reflections of an Affirmative-Action Baby. Basic Books, 1991*]; extra development funds for backward regions (European Structural Fund); preferential tariffs for elderly and disabled people; or facilities for enterprising initiatives of economic starters.

These programs and funds serve a purpose and intentionally target regional areas or specific groups of people. Under most fiscal regimens, taxpayers are not treated equally, but are treated according to income and wealth instead, in order to finance - among other things - welfare state policies. In the USA this redistribution of wealth is perceived as coming dangerously close to socialism, or even communism, while in the Netherlands a wide consensus endorses the Dutch welfare state as a telling expression of social solidarity.

Government practice is to make policy choices that often have disparate impacts on different (groups of) people. The intention of these policies *to make a difference* is totally different from discrimination as unfair treatment rooted in prejudice with regard to race, sex, origin or other wicked inclinations (Scheffer, 2007, 423). [Note: Scheffer misses this point when he equates 'negative' discrimination with 'positive' discrimination]

Therefore positive discrimination does not fit as concept; this term can better be ditched as a contradiction in terms, and exchanged for affirmative action defined as political engineering to attain specific societal goals, not only in the realm of undoing historic wrongs but also with regard to today's mundane government affairs. *Affirmative action* is essentially in the interest of good governance; it is regular government business to keep the nation together, or to elevate the underclass, or to regulate immigration. 'In a sense, all law is social engineering' (Ford, 2008, 226). *Affirmative action* is designed to enroll children of non-western immigrants and disadvantaged whites in good schools; this action is not designed to keep advantaged pupils or advantaged colors out (Ford, 2008, 260). And in the case of the Netherlands' job market, affirmative action must help law study graduates of non-western origin to find a place in the law firms and professions, and so combat discrimination (Schuyt, 2009, 132-133).

### *Eyes Wide Shut*

'Relax, it will happen' concludes Frans Verhagen in *'The American Way': do not accelerate an immigrant's advancement in the Netherlands by assistance and positive discrimination; that's counterproductive* (Verhagen, 2006, 244; Translation mine). Does this mean that the slippery palisades surrounding Dutch school

segregation must be left untouched? Has the Dutch disposition to immigrants nothing to want for? Is there no ethnic discrimination to fight? Weariness rather than activism prevails these days with regards to the *black* school. Even among activists a fighting spirit is absent and political leadership to tackle the Dutch black school is limited to secondary adjustments. Some Dutch integrationists argue that ethnic discrimination is a matter of mentality that must be changed, not by laws but primarily by instilling the awareness that discrimination is wrong. Instead of regulation, everybody must come to an agreement that ethnic discrimination is immoral, and must be made aware that it is against the nation's self-interest as scarce talent may be lost in the process (Scheffer, 2008, 424).

How do we arrive at this agreement? Voluntary initiatives, *binding* agreements and lots of goodwill have not substantially changed the segregated school scene; mainly because white parents do not want to risk what they believe to be in their child's best interest. Only one out of six parents and just a quarter of all citizens are willing to consider a next best choice if that would challenge the formation of black schools. The majority does not feel motivated to jump the color line. They are insensitive to arguments of a possible white school bias, which overestimates the quality of the white school, neither are they concerned about the apartheid and out-of-touch white schools in otherwise predominantly multiethnic cities (Aboutaleb, 2005, 133). An *Eyes Wide Shut* attitude negates the effects of school and neighborhood segregation on generations of Dutch children. Against better wisdom!

In 2007 the Scientific Council for Government Policy pointed to *school* and *work* as essential vehicles in the process of an immigrant's identification with the Dutch nation, while criticizing school segregation. The Council observed that school segregation was increasing in terms of *black* schools as well as too *black* schools. [Note: In the period 1985-2000 the share of 'black' primary schools (with more than 70% pupils of non-western families with low education) rose from 15 to 35 % in the 4 big cities in the Netherlands. In 2002 of all the primary schools 33% were 'too white' or 'too black.'] Reviewing the actions to fight this segregation, the Council concluded that such depended to a large extent on local activists (parents, schools, boards, municipalities) who must navigate the rigidity of the constitutional *Freedom of Education*, and the sanctity of parental school choice (WRR, 2007, 119-125). The Council recommended that Dutch parliament legalize a *Connection Through Education* (Verbinden) principle that would assign school

authorities the obligation to pursue a policy of connecting disparate groups. This would provide a legal basis for school desegregation projects and experiments (WRR, 2007, 205). However laudable in its intention, this recommendation was too general to stand a chance to be implemented.

Legalizing a *Connection Through Education* principle was presented as a *must* without a persuasive reconnaissance of its practicalities or an implementation strategy. Being well aware of the problem of school segregation as well as the sanctity of parental choice, the Council made a perfunctory gesture.

In its reaction, the Netherlands' government merely took note of the Council's recommendation; and left it there. Government took a benign stand and declared that everybody should have access to high quality education, which should not depend upon the composition of the school. Government saw no need to amend the constitutional *Freedom of Education* and emphasized that investment in school quality must have priority, as well as combating residential segregation. Government expressed its unwavering support for school desegregation pilots (Government Paper, 2008, 13-14). By failing to be more specific, the Council missed an opportunity to elevate the Dutch black school to the top of the *integration* agenda.

School *segregation* in the Netherlands carves out multiple negative distinctions. First, an immigrant's ethnic group distinction is invalidated by the conception of the *allochton*, denying immigrants the advantage of a hyphenated identity. They are marked *not-Dutch*, while in the same breath their origin is obscured; as *allochton* they are in limbo. Furthermore, the schools their children attend are labeled black schools. This makes Dutch black school segregation essentially different from ethnic school segregation in the USA. In New York, Chinatown in Manhattan, around Avenue A in Brooklyn and in Flushing, Queens, Chinese-American schools abound as a reflection of the Chinese-American neighborhood population. This hyphenated identity does not negate American citizenship; on the contrary, it adds an interesting twist to the roots of these American parents and their American children. Obviously a Chinese-American school testifies to ethnic school segregation, but this school is not painted black nor considered a school for *Dummies*. On the other hand, black schools in Harlem, Manhattan, or Brooklyn, New York, carry a real history of institutionalized racism. White schools were once *Terra Prohibita* for Negroes, as African-Americans were called those days. They had to attend separate black schools, until 1954 when the Supreme

Court ruled that even if these black schools were equal to white schools, this separation was against the law, which eventually inspired a powerful movement for change, though with limited results.

The Netherlands' black school is an expression of how the Dutch position non-western immigrants. The nomenclature of the Dutch integration discourse reveals a curious contradiction in terms. An immigrant's introduction to Holland is marked with segregationist road signs. As soon as non-western immigrants enter the Netherlands they become *allochtons*. They and their children carry this label for the remainder of their life, *undutchable* (White, 2006) as it were. When these children attend a school that is populated with other immigrant children of non-western origin, they find themselves in a Dutch *black* school, to be distinguished from a white school, which adds a connotation of the racist history of white over black. When income rises, allochton parents attempt to get away from the black school, just as autochthon parents have done all along. According to the lingua franca of educational platforms the black school eventually becomes a cesspit (*afvalputje*) with ever more children from underclass families only - in other words, a school for *Dummies*.

The Dutch black school is not a myth; on the contrary, it is a stark expression of *They are not Us*.

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## **“Trump Specializes In Showmanship Not Statecraft”: An Interview With Andrew Bacevich**



*Andrew J. Bacevich.  
Professor Emeritus of  
International Relations and  
History. Photo: Boston  
University*

What are the founding principles of U.S. foreign policy? Was the U.S. ever isolationist as mainstream diplomatic history claims? And what about Donald Trump's foreign policy? Is he a normal foreign policy president? Is he in favor of U.S. global expansion? Is China emerging as the new global empire? *Andrew Bacevich*, Professor Emeritus of International Relations and History at Boston University and now president of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft tackles the above questions in the interview below. A retired US army Colonel who fought in the Vietnam War and lost a son in the Iraq war, Bacevich is the author of numerous works on U.S. foreign policy, including among many others, *Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War* (2010); *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (2005); *Breach of Trust: How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and Their Country* (2013); and of the forthcoming book *The Age of Illusions: How America Squandered Its Cold War Victory*.

*C. J. Polychroniou: I would like to start by asking you to reflect on the founding principles of U.S. foreign policy, which many regard as "geopolitical isolationism" and "unilateralism," and whether this is what the U.S. has practiced for most of its history.*

*Andrew Bacevich:* The overarching theme of U.S. policy from the very founding of the Republic has been 1780s opportunistic expansionism. As far back as the 1780s, the Northwest Ordinances had made it clear that the United States had no intention of confining its reach to the territory encompassed within the boundaries of the original thirteen states. While the U.S. encountered sporadic resistance during the course of its remarkable ascent, virtually all of it proved to be futile. With the notable exception of the failed attempt to incorporate Canada into the Union during the War of 1812, expansionist efforts succeeded spectacularly and at a remarkably modest cost. Already by mid-century, the United States stretched from sea to shining sea.

In 1899, the naturalist-historian-politician-sometime soldier and future president Theodore Roosevelt neatly summarized the events of the century just drawing to a close: "Of course, our whole national history has been one of expansion." When TR uttered this rarely acknowledged truth, a fresh round of expansionism was underway, this time reaching beyond the fastness of North America into the surrounding seas and oceans. Among Europeans, a profit motivated but racially justified imperialism was in full flower. The United States was now joining in.

The year before, U.S. forces had invaded and occupied Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Guam, and the island of Luzon across the Pacific. Within two years, the United States had annexed the entire Philippine Archipelago. Within four years, with Roosevelt now in the White House, U.S. troops arrived to garrison the Isthmus of Panama where the United States, subsequent to considerable chicanery, was setting out to build a canal. Soon thereafter, to preempt any threats to that canal, successive administrations embarked upon a series of interventions throughout the Caribbean. Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson had no desire to annex Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, they merely wanted the United States to control what happened in those small countries, as it already did in nearby Cuba. While President Trump's recent bid to purchase Greenland from Denmark may have failed, Wilson - perhaps demonstrating greater skill in the art of the deal - did persuade the Danes in 1917 to part with the Virgin Islands for the bargain price of \$25 million.

The U.S. preference for operating unilaterally and its determination to avoid getting entangled in European power politics during this period is of much less significance than narrative of expansion, as Americans persistently sought



more — more territory, more markets, more abundance.

*In 2016, Donald Trump called U.S. foreign policy a “complete and total disaster.” Firstly, was he wrong in saying so? And, secondly, has he shown so far to be a normal foreign policy president?*

Taking the long view, U.S. foreign policy has been remarkably effective. By 1945, the United States was the richest and most powerful nation on the planet. That achievement testifies to the shrewdness of American statesmen, who knew how to seize an opportunity when it presented itself.

After 1945 we have a different story. During the Cold War, U.S. policymakers were guilty of making very costly mistakes, with the Vietnam War leading the pack. But where things really went wrong was after 9/11. That’s where Trump’s critique has merit. Over the past two decades, successive administrations have engaged in unnecessary wars that have depleted American power and reduced our standing in the world.

*Does Donald Trump have a consistent foreign policy? Is there such a thing as a Trump Doctrine?*

No, he does not. Understand that the very notion of principles is alien to Trump’s make-up. He is, therefore, incapable acting in a consistent fashion pursuant to some larger sense of purpose. So he makes things up as he goes along. He specializes in showmanship not statecraft.

*Trump has said repeatedly that he is not in favor of wars, yet he is clearly a militarist and the military budget continues to receive large yearly increases (the United States spends more than twice as much on its military as China and Russia combined), although, as you have pointed out before, the US has yet to win its first war in the twentieth-first century. Can you shed some light into what’s going on here?*

I wouldn’t call him a militarist. Again, militarists actually believe something. They fancy that through war, a nation can fulfill its destiny and a people can purify themselves while cultivating an identifiable set of virtues. Trump believes no such things.

*Trump has gone so far as to question the loyalty of U.S. Jews, while Israeli PM*

*Netanyahu has kept quiet. What's behind Trump's unequivocal support for Israel?*

Who knows? My guess is that he assumes that the devotion of American Jews and of conservative Christian evangelicals equals or even surpasses their loyalty to the United States. So full-throated support for Israel may win him votes when he runs to re-election. This much is for certain: The actual interests of the United States figure only minimally in shaping Trump's policies toward Israel. The same can be said regarding his policies toward Saudi Arabia, by the way.

*Trump has just announced the establishment of a U.S. space command. Is space command key to U.S. defense, or will it lead inevitably to the militarization of space and to a new arms race?*

The militarization of space has already occurred and is likely to continue.

*One final question. Is China in the process of building its own empire?*

The answer depends on your definition of empire. China doesn't seek to acquire colonies. So it won't be an empire on the British model. But it clearly intends to exercise indirect influence on a global scale — hence, its massive involvement in development projects in places far from China proper. It appears to be creating an informal empire.

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## **Noam Chomsky And Robert Pollin: If We Want A Future, Green New Deal Is Key**



Noam Chomsky

Climate change is by far the most serious crisis facing the world today. At stake is the future of civilization as we know it. Yet, both public awareness and government action lag way behind what's needed to avert a climate change catastrophe. In the interview below, *Noam Chomsky* and *Robert Pollin* discuss the challenges ahead and what needs to be done.

Noam Chomsky is Professor Emeritus of Linguistics at MIT and Laureate Professor of Linguistics at the University of Arizona. Robert Pollin is Distinguished University Professor of Economics and co-director of the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Chomsky, Pollin and Polychroniou are co-authors of a book on climate change and the Green New Deal, forthcoming with Verso in Spring 2020.



Robert Pollin - Photo: UMass Amherst

*C.J. Polychroniou: Noam, let me start with you and ask you to share your thoughts about the uniqueness of the climate change crisis.*

*Noam Chomsky: History is all too rich in records of horrendous wars, indescribable torture, massacres and every imaginable abuse of fundamental rights. But the threat of destruction of organized human life in any recognizable*

or tolerable form — that is entirely new. The environmental crisis under way is indeed unique in human history, and is a true existential crisis. Those alive today will decide the fate of humanity — and the fate of the other species that we are now destroying at a rate not seen for 65 million years, when a huge asteroid hit the earth, ending the age of the dinosaurs and opening the way for some small mammals to evolve to pose a similar threat to life on earth as that earlier asteroid, though differing from it in that we can make a choice.

Meanwhile the world watches as we proceed toward a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions. We are approaching perilously close to the global temperatures of 120,000 years ago, when sea levels were 6-9 meters higher than today. Glaciers are sliding into the sea five times faster than in the 1990s, with more than 100 meters of ice thickness lost in some areas due to ocean warming, and current losses doubling every decade. Complete loss of the ice sheets would raise sea levels by about five meters, drowning coastal cities, and with utterly devastating effects elsewhere — the low-lying plains of Bangladesh for example. This is only one of the many concerns of those who are paying attention to what is happening before our eyes.

Climate scientists are certainly paying close attention, and issuing dire warnings. Israeli climatologist Baruch Rinkevich [captures](#) the general mood succinctly: *After us, the deluge, as the saying goes. People don't fully understand what we're talking about here.... They don't understand that everything is expected to change: the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, the landscapes we see, the oceans, the seasons, the daily routine, the quality of life. Our children will have to adapt or become extinct.... That's not for me. I'm happy I won't be here.*

Yet, just at the time when all must act together, with dedication, to confront humanity's "ultimate challenge," the leaders of the most powerful state in human history, in full awareness of what they are doing, are dedicating themselves with passion to destroying the prospects for organized human life.

*With rare exceptions, the mainstream political establishment in the United States continues to look the other way when it comes to climate change. Why is that?*

*Chomsky:* Both political parties have drifted right during the neoliberal years, much as in Europe. The Democratic establishment is now more or less what

would have been called “moderate Republicans” some years ago. The Republicans have gone off the spectrum. Comparative studies show that they rank alongside of fringe rightwing parties in Europe in their general positions. They are, furthermore, the only major conservative party to reject anthropogenic climate change, as already mentioned: a global anomaly. Two respected political analysts of the American Enterprise Institute, Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein, describe the Republican Party since Newt Gingrich’s takeover in the ‘90s as not a normal political party but a “radical insurgency” that has largely abandoned parliamentary politics. Under McConnell’s leadership, that has only become more evident — but he has ample company in Republican Party circles.

The positions of the leadership on climate surely influence the attitudes of Republican Party loyalists. [Only about 25 percent of Republicans](#) (36 percent of the more savvy millennials) recognize that humans are responsible for global warming. Shocking figures.

And in the ranking of urgent issues among Republicans, global warming (if it is even assumed to be taking place), is almost undetectable.

It is considered outrageous to assert that the Republican Party is the most dangerous organization in human history. Perhaps so, but in the light of the stakes, what else can one rationally conclude?

*Bob, the Green New Deal is seen as perhaps the only viable solution to avert a climate change catastrophe of the sort described by Noam above, yet many continue to regard it as unrealistic, not only from a purely economic perspective (the claim is that it is simply unaffordable), but also in the sense that modern economies and societies cannot function without fossil fuel energy. First, is the Green New Deal a detailed policy proposal to move us away from a climate change catastrophe, and, second, is it realistic?*

*Robert Pollin:* The Green New Deal has gained tremendous traction as an organizing framework over the past year. This alone is a major achievement. But it is still imperative that we transform this big idea into a viable program. In my view, putting meat on the bones of the Green New Deal starts with a single simple idea: We have to absolutely stop burning oil, coal and natural gas to produce energy within the next 30 years at most; and we have to do this in a way that also [supports](#) rising living standards and expanding opportunities for working people and the poor throughout the world.

This version of a Green New Deal program is, in fact, entirely realistic in terms of its purely economic and technical features. Clean renewable energy sources — including solar, wind, geothermal and to a lesser extent small-scale hydro and low emissions bioenergy — are already either at cost parity with fossil fuels and nuclear or they are cheaper. In addition, the single easiest and cheapest way to lower emissions is to raise energy efficiency standards, through, among other measures, retrofitting existing buildings; making new buildings operate as net zero energy consumers; and replacing gas-guzzler cars with expanding public transportation and electric cars. Energy efficiency measures, by definition, will save people money — for example, your home electricity bills could realistically be cut in half without having to reduce the amount that you light, heat or cool your house. So, the Green New Deal will not cost consumers anything over time, as long as we solve the actually quite simple problem of funding Green New Deal investments through the cost savings we gain by raising efficiency standards and producing cheap renewable energy. My coworkers and I have estimated that building a 100 percent clean energy system will require about 2.5 percent of global GDP per year for roughly the next 30 years. Yes, that's a lot of money in dollar terms, like about \$2 trillion in 2021 and rising thereafter. But it does still mean that 97.5 percent of global economic activity can be devoted to things other than investments in clean energy.

So, absolutely, the Green New Deal can be a realistic global climate stabilization project. More specifically, the Green New Deal is capable of hitting the necessary emissions reduction targets for stabilization at a global average temperature of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by 2100, as set out by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) last October. However, the real question, of course, is not whether the Green New Deal is economically or technically feasible, but rather whether it is politically feasible. On this question, Noam is of course exactly on point in asking: Are we, the human race, going to allow ourselves to become the 21st-century asteroid clone or not?

*What about the claim that a transition to 100 percent renewable energy will result in the permanent loss of millions of good-paying jobs?*

*Pollin:* In fact, clean energy investments will be a major source of new job creation, in all regions of the globe. The critical factor is that clean energy investments will create a lot more jobs than maintaining the existing dirty energy infrastructure — in the range of two to four times more jobs per dollar of

spending in all countries that we have studied, including Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, South Africa, Spain and the United States. Of course, jobs that are tied to the fossil fuel industry will be eliminated. The affected workers and their communities must be supported through generous Just Transition measures, including guaranteeing workers' pensions, moving people into new jobs without losing incomes, and investing in impacted communities, in a range of projects. Land reclamation is just one such investment opportunity, including cleaning up abandoned coal mines and converting the residual coal ash into useful products, like paper. I can't emphasize enough that, throughout the world, ["just transition" programs](#) must be understood as absolutely central to the Green New Deal.

*Noam, how do we increase public awareness about the need for government action vis-à-vis climate change?*

*Chomsky:* The simple answer is: work harder. There are no new special tricks. We know what the message is. We know the barriers that have to be overcome. We have to find ways to shape the message, in words and actions, so as to overcome the barriers.

The message is two-fold: First, we're facing an existential crisis that must be dealt with quickly; and second, there are ways to overcome it.

The first part is expressed simply enough in current articles in the most prestigious and reliable journals. Oxford professor of physics Raymond Pierrehumbert, a lead author of the recent IPCC report, opens [his review of existing circumstances and options](#) by writing: "Let's get this on the table right away, without mincing words. With regard to the climate crisis, yes, it's time to panic.... We are in deep trouble." He then lays out the details carefully and scrupulously, reviewing the possible technical fixes and their very serious problems, concluding, "There's no plan B." We must move to zero net carbon emissions, and fast.

The second part is spelled out in convincing detail in Bob's work, briefly reviewed here.

The message must be conveyed in ways that do not induce despair and resignation among those inclined to accept it, and do not evoke resentment, anger and even greater rejection among those who do not accept what is in fact becoming overwhelmingly clear.

In the latter case, it is necessary to understand the reasons — perhaps rejection of science altogether, or adopting economists' preference for market-based solutions which, whatever one thinks of them, are completely on the wrong time-scale, or the great many who expect the Second Coming, or those who think we will be rescued by some unknown technology or great figure, perhaps the colossus [perceived](#) by scholars at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, whose "spirit seems to stride the country, watching us like a warm and friendly ghost" (Ronald Reagan).

The task will not be easy. It must be undertaken, urgently. By words and by actions, such as those being undertaken in the climate strikes of September 2019.

*Bob, what will it take for the labor movement as a whole to come around and embrace the Green New Deal vision?*

*Pollin:* The Green New Deal has been gaining major [support in the labor movement](#) for several years now. There is still a long way to go, but progress is evident. For example, the coalition in Washington State that advanced a Green New Deal proposition in the 2018 election cycle was led by the visionary then president of the state AFL-CIO, Jeff Johnson. In the end, the initiative was defeated when oil companies flooded the airwaves with \$30 million of virulent propaganda in the weeks before the November election. Similar initiatives are now being advanced in Colorado, again led by the state's mainstream labor leaders.

Of course, we need to very quickly advance beyond just these few shining examples. What is critical here is that the climate movement must be firmly committed to a just transition as one component of the Green New Deal that is of equal significance with all the others. The climate movement needs to also be clear on the point that building the clean energy economy will be supportive of increasing job opportunities and rising living standards, as I am convinced it can be.

There is no reason that the Green New Deal needs to be associated with austerity economic policies in any way. To the contrary, clean energy investments will create new opportunities for a wide range of small-scale public, cooperative, and private ownership forms. You don't need massive mining projects, pipelines or exploration platforms to deliver clean energy. Solar panels on roofs and in



parking lots and wind turbines on farms can, by themselves, get us reasonably far along in meeting the energy needs of a growing egalitarian economy. From this perspective, the Green New Deal should rightfully be seen as offering a fully viable alternative to austerity economics along with the only realistic path for keeping us from becoming the 21st-century asteroid clone.

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*This story is part of [Covering Climate Now](#), a global collaboration of more than 220 news outlets to strengthen coverage of the climate story.*

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## **To Confront Climate Change, We Need An Ecological Democracy**



Dr Marit Hammond

Climate change represents the biggest existential crisis that has ever faced the human race. However, we have yet to come to terms with the moral, political and economic dimensions of the climate crisis. As we confront climate change, we must ask: What would real climate justice look like? And what is the connection between the pursuit of true democracy and the battle to stave off a climatic change catastrophe? Marit Hammond, a lecturer in environmental politics at Keele University in the U.K., advocates for the necessity of an “ecological democracy” in order to meet the climate emergency urgently and sustainably. In this interview, Hammond offers insights on what this new form of democracy would look like and how we can get there.

*C.J. Polychroniou: The challenge of climate change has been confronted so far on both political and economic grounds. Yet fewer people are engaging in conversations about the moral element of climate change. Isn't global warming, first and foremost, a moral issue?*

*Marit Hammond:* It is. However, it is important to stress that this moral dimension is not separate from, but rather stretches into the political and economic dimensions — for it is not just about private individuals' moral behavior. Climate change is a moral issue insofar as it is knowingly caused by human actions, and in turn causes significant, existential harm — avoidable harm — to humans, other species, precious cultures and ecosystems. As is widely known, threats such as crop failures, weather extremes and sea level rise threaten the quality of life, if not life itself, particularly of those who already have the least resources to draw on to manage their lives. It is those who cannot afford to protect themselves against heat waves that die or suffer severe health problems; those already living in precarious, [severe] weather-prone regions are forced to migrate elsewhere and make themselves economically vulnerable in the process.

Although climate change is a complex phenomenon at the planetary level, it is causing suffering in the lives of concrete individuals — as well as the irreversible loss of countless species and unique ecosystems.

If there were a more direct cause-effect relationship, it would go without saying that causing such harm would be immoral. The only difference with climate change is that the actions that cause it are only indirectly related to the suffering it causes, and distributed amongst the global population — everyone who lives in an industrial society contributes to climate change. Thus, it is more difficult to determine intentionality and agency. Moral blame applies where harm is caused intentionally or through negligence — where there is agency to either cause or avoid [dealing with] it. In the case of climate change, this is the clear case, where people intentionally and knowingly lead high-emission lifestyles, such as driving, flying, or otherwise consuming more, or in more highly emitting ways, than they need.

Yet to a significant extent, individuals in industrialized societies actually have very little agency over their lives in these regards. Even those who want to be morally responsible, who have every intention to stop climate change and avert the suffering it causes, are forced to live the kinds of life the socio-economic system around them expects and demands; they inevitably rely on the agricultural, industrial and energy systems that are much more to blame. To make a living, they mostly have no choice but to contribute to a [growth-oriented economy](#), whose ideology of exploitation (of people and nature alike) is the real underlying cause of climate change.

Thus it is important to remind ourselves of the moral dimension of climate change so that people don't just see it as a managerial challenge to embrace — like another phase of modernization, which the growth economy has to adapt to but can ultimately benefit from — but as a prompt to get very angry about this wider system we are forced to live in. As concern about climate change is now growing amongst Western populations, it has become fashionable to consume 'greener' products and to object to the use of plastics, for example. These responses fit into a picture of embracing the need for societies to overhaul themselves, to become better by becoming greener — the spirit of ecological modernization. They do *not*, however, challenge consumerism per se, accept the need for general restraint and degrowth, or push for radical change at the level of the socio-economic system and its exploitative ideology. If it is at that level that climate change is

caused, this is where the moral outrage people feel needs to be directed at. Now that we know about climate change, we have a moral responsibility not just to drive less and carry a reusable coffee mug, but to condemn the political and economic structures that are the real driver of the problem.

*What exactly is climate justice and its connection to preventing climate catastrophe?*

The connection between [climate justice](#) and preventing a climate catastrophe is twofold. On the one hand, the climate justice discourse sheds light on injustice as one of the underlying causes of climate change: Catastrophic anthropogenic climate change is not a coincidence; it has resulted from an economic system that is based on the deliberate exploitation and marginalization of those with a weaker voice, such as people living in precarious conditions, and on the continued prioritization of economic profits over justice and well-being. On the other hand, as a norm, climate justice is what fills this political challenge — to move away from an unsustainable system — with concrete meaning; what would a normatively desirable, more holistically prosperous society look like in the context of climate change?

In the past, justice has often been narrowly understood as ‘distributive justice’ — a just distribution of economic resources. In this context, many understand climate justice to be about how the necessary emissions reductions should be shared internationally, and whether compensation is due across societies or generations. But this narrow understanding only reinforces the way in which economic resources define and drive our societal life at present.

In my view, knowing about climate change adds a much broader context and many new layers to our understanding of justice: It is about rethinking what matters in society and how we should live, and this discussion must include all voices equally and fairly. When understood in this way, climate justice is the political vision of a society that has undertaken the structural change to respond to climate change in a way that is just. Firstly, this highlights the need to respond to climate change in the first place, as climate change is inherently a justice issue itself: caused by (and to the benefit of) the privileged, disproportionately suffered by the marginalized. Secondly, without such a vision, responses to climate change can themselves reinforce structural inequalities and prolong suffering — for example by banking on technological fixes that concentrate power in the hands of

a few, or favoring [adaptation](#) over prevention, which then only the privileged can access and afford. In order for our political responses to climate change not to further worsen the inequality and harm caused by climate change itself, concern for justice must be at the forefront of the debate.

*In your work, you are arguing for a cultural shift toward an “ecological democracy” as the only way to lay the foundations for sustainable prosperity and tackle climate change. What exactly is ecological democracy, and can it co-exist with capitalism?*

Democracy comes into the picture for the same reason that responding to climate change is not only — or even primarily — a technical-managerial challenge, but an inherently political matter. Because of the roles of exploitation and marginalisation in how climate change has been both driven and responded to, sustainability can only be achieved once these underlying power dimensions are addressed. Democracy is what challenges and counteracts unequal power relations. For the response to climate change to reach the structural (not just superficial) level, and to not produce new injustice in the process, there first needs to be a shift in *who gets a say* in this discussion — whose voices are heard. Otherwise marginalization will only worsen.

Thus, I understand ecological democracy as a normative vision of an ecologically sustainable as well as democratically legitimate society; and the basis for it is the fact that neither is possible without the other. Without ecological sustainability, there either won't be any society left at some point, or there will be a struggle for mere survival — as opposed to sustainability as a vision of *prosperous* societies, with prosperity implying space for normative aspirations such as legitimacy, freedom and democracy. But likewise, without democratic legitimacy, I argue in my work, there cannot be sustainability, because this very vision can only emerge out of an open, inclusive societal discussion. Unless everyone has equal say in this discussion, without the distortions that result from deception and abuses of power, the vision of sustainability that results stands no chance of actually achieving societal prosperity — let alone a lasting political basis at such a time of radical, unprecedented transformation.

The problem is that democracy is defined and institutionalized in all manner of ways. The political structures commonly associated with the term “democracy” today — that is, liberal democracy — have themselves evolved so as to serve the

capitalist economy and to effectively temper critical political discourses that would challenge this. Hence, insofar as ecological sustainability is not compatible with capitalism, neither is ecological democracy, and so democracy takes on a much deeper meaning in this context. In my work, I call for a form of deliberative democracy: a political culture (that is, *not* just artificially designed institutional innovations such as citizen assemblies) in which there is such a level of critical, inclusive discourse in the public sphere that the unjustified, unequal power relations, the strategic manipulation of discourses, and the bypassing of democracy in areas of economic decision-making characteristic of the current liberal democracies are no longer possible. Only then can a fairer, more genuine and more engaged public discussion about sustainability emerge instead.

*Politically and pedagogically speaking, what do you consider to be the best methods or strategies for mobilizing social action to build a movement geared toward ecological democracy?*

The first step is information: People need to be well informed about ecological issues such as climate change and their underlying systemic causes. Pedagogically speaking, this is where a culture of critical thinking is vital, as information and public discourses are themselves tied in with the dominant ideology, which warps them in its favor. To escape this, we need political movements — such as [Fridays for Future](#) or [Extinction Rebellion](#) — that not only bring the topic as such to widespread attention, but importantly also provide spaces in which the structural and systemic causes of unsustainability can be critically discussed, and the necessary *anger* at these [causes] thus arises, fueling more radical demands for change. Lastly, we need imagination, creativity and diversity; anything that helps us question the taken-for-granted and think in new ways.

All of these spaces need to be inclusive; social divisions and fear only play into the hands of those with the power to manipulate, and inhibit a hopeful search for new future directions for the society. As I argue in my work on ecological democracy, sustainability in the face of the current threats requires a fundamental *cultural* transformation: not just new policies or technologies, but a shift change in the meanings people attach to the future and to notions such as prosperity — a fundamental new orientation toward what matters, and also what it means to be a citizen in such a world. This can only come from everyone's active engagement, from people's own epiphanies, slow realizations, being confronted with what is

going on in the world at large. Deep cultural change can't be forced. Rather than in leadership by the current elites, I put my hope in the new generation, growing up with a new awareness. In a way, what is needed is a radicalization of the entire public discussion on sustainability — so much critical engagement, within all sorts of inclusive spaces and meeting everyone where they happen to be at the start, that the collective outlook organically shifts over time from a narrower, status quo-compatible activism toward a richness of entirely new perspectives that think beyond the all-encompassing capitalist ideology, to first imagine and then build something altogether new.

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## **Herinnering aan André Köbben (1925-2019)**



Foto nsv-sociologie.nl

*19 augustus 2019.* Op 13 augustus, vorige week dus, overleed André Köbben. Hij was mijn leermeester, in allerlei opzichten. Ik ben vier jaar zijn assistent geweest in de jaren zestig van de vorige eeuw, ik ben in 1974 bij hem gepromoveerd. Vandaag wordt hij gecremeerd, in Leiden, waar hij woonde. Er is veel over hem te vertellen, en ik vermoed dat ik dat op deze plaats ook nog wel zal doen. Maar ter herinnering aan hem druk ik op deze dag een 'gesprek' met hem af. Ik voerde dat begin 2012, ruim zeven jaar geleden dus, voor een tijdschrift: *Tijdschrift over Cultuur en Criminologie*, waarin het later dat jaar (het septembernummer) werd geplaatst.

Een gesprek voor het *Tijdschrift over Cultuur & Criminaliteit*? Je bent van harte welkom, zegt André Köbben aan de telefoon, maar hij geeft me huiswerk op. Hij stuurt me de tekst toe van *Bedrog in de wetenschap*, die hij begin januari (2012) heeft voorgedragen bij de Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen. Ook vraagt hij me de nieuwe bundel met criminologische opstellen van Frank Bovenkerk door te nemen: *Een gevoel van dreiging*. Het ging hem niet om het motto van de bundel, ontleend aan Köbben zelf en met karakteristieke köbbiaanse ironie verwoord: *Zelfs zou ik mij willen verstouten u, lezer, de vaderlijke raad mee te geven: in uw eigen belang en dat van anderen, waag u nóóit aan echte voorspellingen*. Nee, ik moet lezen wat Bovenkerk heeft geschreven over de Noorse massamoordenaar Anders Breivik, de politieke moorden op Pim Fortuyn en Theo van Gogh, de *spray shooting* in Alphen aan den Rijn en de aanslag op de koninklijke familie in Apeldoorn in 2009.



De overeenkomsten tussen beide onderwerpen dringen niet meteen tot me door, maar na een kort college zie ik de analogie. André Köbben en ik ontmoeten elkaar bij hem thuis, in zijn gerieflijke Leidse studeerkamer. Opvallend netjes opgeruimd voor een werkkamer, maar wel met overal stapels boeken en notities - een onderzoeker aan het werk. Begin februari. Buiten is het heftig vriesweer en schijnt een oogverblindende zon. In de jaren 1960 ben ik vier jaar zijn assistent geweest en hebben we vaak zo tegenover elkaar gezeten, op zijn kamer in de Amsterdamse Spinhuissteeg, later aan de Keizersgracht; boeken, tijdschriften, blocnotes en losse papieren tussen ons in. Het voelt vertrouwd en eigenlijk volstrekt gewoon, zo hoort het - André aan het woord, ik met een aantekeningenboekje. Nu tutoyeren we elkaar, dat was destijds ondenkbaar. Ook hij heeft zich voorbereid, er ligt een cv voor me klaar, knipsels, tijdschriftartikelen.

In zijn lezing over bedrog valt Köbben met de deur in huis: 'Op 8 september 2011 kwam het bedrog van Diederik Stapel in de openbaarheid. Het kwam voor iedereen als een donderslag bij heldere hemel.' Velen denken dat het gaat om een uitzonderlijk geval en sommigen, onder wie de rapporteur over de zaak Stapel, beweren zelfs dat er sprake is van het 'omvangrijkste bedrog ooit'. Köbben laat zien dat dit niet waar is, maar wat hem boeit is het stereotiepe karakter van zulke reacties. Net als het feit dat je allerlei commentatoren op ziet duiken die onmiddellijk menen te weten wat de oorzaak zou zijn geweest van Stapels bedrog. De gedachte erachter is dat je zulke incidenten eigenlijk zou moeten kunnen voorkomen, dat er maatregelen getroffen zouden kunnen worden om bedrog in de wetenschap uit te roeien. Daar zit een bepaalde logica achter en wel de 'logica van de risicosamenleving' - de term wordt gebruikt door Frank Bovenkerk en hij bespreekt het begrip in zijn bundel. De zin van het huiswerk begint te dagen. Als er een gruwelijke aanslag zoals die in Noorwegen gepleegd wordt - heel letterlijk: een donderslag bij heldere hemel - klinken er meteen stemmen die de overheid verantwoordelijk stellen: we hadden die Breivik toch wel eerder kunnen ontmaskeren als gewetenloze killer? De werkelijkheid is ingewikkeld, de misdaadbevorderende factoren die in het leven van Anders Breivik kunnen worden aangewezen, vind je ook bij duizenden anderen en daar gaat het blijkbaar niet mis. Toch wordt er een commissie ingesteld die één of een paar veronderstelde oorzaken belicht waar snel iets aan kan worden gedaan. Helaas is het onduidelijk hoeveel rampen in de toekomst kunnen worden voorkomen door zulke ad-hocmaatregelen. Bovenkerk zegt gelaten: 'Het wachten is op de

volgende calamiteit.'

De overeenkomst met wat André Köbben naar voren heeft gebracht in zijn voordracht over bedrog is frappant. Het rapport Levelt over de affaire Stapel bevat, betoogt Köbben, verstandige aanbevelingen hoe dergelijke ontsporingen in de toekomst te voorkomen. 'Alleen', zegt Köbben, 'die zijn al eerder vele malen geopperd en deels al vastgelegd in beroepscode. Maar ze zijn tot nu toe een dode letter gebleven. Waarom zou het voortaan anders gaan?'. In 2003 is het LOWI opgericht, het Landelijk Orgaan voor Wetenschappelijke Integriteit, waarvan de voorzitter onlangs naar aanleiding van de kwestie Stapel te berde bracht dat universiteiten 'datamanagers' zouden moeten instellen om alle onderzoeksgegevens te controleren. Bovendien zouden onderzoekers steekproefsgewijze gecontroleerd moeten worden op het sjoemelen met gegevens. André en ik kijken elkaar aan als we over deze parmantige LOWI-voorzitter komen te spreken en we moeten beiden lachen. In wat voor wereld leeft zo'n man? We hebben ieder oude veldwerknootjes bewaard, Köbben zelfs nog van het allereerste onderzoek dat hij (in 1953-1954) verrichtte onder de Agni en Bete in Ivoorkust - stel dat we deze aan de voorzitter zouden willen afstaan, wat zouden zijn datamanagers daarmee in godsnaam kunnen beginnen? 'Hij zou ze niet eens kunnen lezen', zegt Köbben.

Het scenario waarbij de 'donderslag bij heldere hemel' gevolgd wordt door commissies die maatregelen voorstellen om ons in de toekomst te vrijwaren van andere 'donderslagen' is verhelderend en vermoedelijk in een reeks van uiteenlopende situaties toepasbaar. 'Dat hebben we van de criminologie geleerd', zegt Köbben. De criminologie en antropologie groeien naar elkaar toe, ook al doordat er de laatste jaren nogal wat antropologen in de criminologie terecht zijn gekomen. Goed voor het vak, vindt hij. We praten uitvoerig over de verwantschap tussen de vakken. Mijn oudste associatie met zo'n familieband is wat Köbben zei tijdens een college voor jongerejaars studenten over de Surinaamse Djoeka ('marrons') - in 1962 kwam hij er net vandaan, in dat jaar schreef ik me in als student bij de 'Zevende Faculteit' van de (toen nog) Gemeentelijke Universiteit te Amsterdam.

Je kunt als onderzoeker op diverse manieren proberen te achterhalen wat de effectiviteit is van een bepaalde gedragsregel in de samenleving, hield professor Köbben ons voor - je kunt het mensen mondeling of schriftelijk vragen, maar je kunt ook afgaan op eigen waarneming. Wat gebeurt er als er een kip gestolen

wordt? Als antropoloog ga je niet bij de mensen langs om daar hun opinie over te polsen, maar wacht je af tot er daadwerkelijk een kip wordt gestolen – dan kun je met eigen ogen zien wat er zich afspeelt.

We twisten over de vraag of het een kip dan wel een koe was geweest, maar het college herinnert hij zich nog. Tijdens ons gesprek realiseer ik me dat hij vanaf het begin van zijn loopbaan bezig is geweest met regels en de overtreding van regels. Voor studenten was zijn *Van primitieven tot medeburgers* verplichte literatuur, hoofdstuk 7 gaat over de ceremoniële betalingen bij de Bete en staat vol met boeiende gevallen waarbij de dorpsoudsten boetes opleggen voor ongepast gedrag. Een gehuwde vrouw gaat er vandoor met een andere man, haar echtgenoot wil haar terug en brengt de zaak voor het ‘Tribunaal’; hij krijgt gelijk, ze moet mee met haar man. Maar ze verweert zich als een furie en weigert: hij heeft nog geen cent betaald aan de bruidsprijs; ze dreigt zich van kant te maken als ze nog een dag langer met deze schande moet leven. Haar man vertrekt met hangende pootjes. Een ander college dat onder studenten opwinding teweegbracht, handelde over ‘recht’: wat is dat eigenlijk en hoe werkt het? Wat gebeurt er als verschillende rechtssystemen met elkaar botsen, zoals bijvoorbeeld in Turkije toen Kemal Atatürk in het kader van de modernisering van zijn land van de ene op de andere dag het Zwitsers privaatrecht invoerde?

Tijdens zijn veldwerk in Ivoorkust werd Köbben herhaaldelijk geconfronteerd met erfeniskwesties – mede als gevolg van het complexe adelphische erfstelsel. Daarbij gaat de erfenis, inclusief de grond, van een overleden man niet naar zijn kinderen, maar naar zijn broers van dezelfde moeder en pas als deze broers dood zijn, komt de volgende generatie aan bod. Dan ontstaan soms problemen, want de erfenis komt volgens de officiële regels van een matrilineair systeem terecht bij de zoon van de zuster van de overledene en niet bij zijn eigen zoon. In een situatie van economische voorspoed als gevolg van de invoering van *cash crops*, in Ivoorkust vooral koffie en cacao, kan dat leiden tot diepe weerstanden – de zoons van een gestorven planter zien met lede ogen aan hoe ‘hun’ kostbare grond in handen komt van neven. Rijke, en dus onafhankelijke, planters overwogen wel om hun situatie aan de (Franse koloniale) politie voor te leggen – volgens het Frans recht zouden ze dan zeker hun zin hebben gekregen, maar hun eigen groep zouden ze ermee verraden.

Iets dergelijks maakte hij mee bij de Djoeka. Op bepaalde overtredingen stonden forse fysieke straffen zoals stokslagen. Als je daarmee naar de Surinaamse politie

stapte, wist je dat degenen die geslagen hadden als 'misdadigers' zouden worden beschouwd, terwijl de eigenlijke misdadiger opeens slachtoffer werd. Wat volgens het ene stelsel een terechte sanctie is, geldt in het andere stelsel als een ontoelaatbare overtreding. In sommige gevallen, met name bij de verkrachting van een jong meisje, kon het 'uitheemse' stelsel juist als een versterking van het 'inheemse' stelsel fungeren - dorpsoudsten kunnen soms hun gezag onvoldoende laten gelden en dreigen dan met de Surinaamse overheid die de overtreders aanzienlijk strenger straft dan ze zelf ooit zouden kunnen doen. Volgens Köbben was de dreiging met zo'n stap altijd voldoende om het volk in toom te houden.

Is er in zulke geïsoleerde 'staatjes in de staat' eigenlijk wel sprake van recht? Een vraag die Köbben zich uitdrukkelijk stelt in zijn studie over de Djoeka, waarbij hij gebruikmaakt van Hoebels klassieke "The Law of Primitive Man". We kunnen spreken van recht als op de overtreding van een norm straf staat, waarbij fysieke dwang te pas komt, uitgeoefend door een persoon of groep die door de gemeenschap daartoe zijn gemachtigd. Volgens deze opvatting is er bij de Djoeka sprake van recht en Köbben licht dit toe aan de hand van allerlei gevallen van overspel. Hij heeft er met zijn neus bovenop gezeten en kan er nog steeds geestdriftig over vertellen. 'Overspel is een veel bedreven sport bij de Djoeka', zegt hij en de straf is een afranseling van de betrokkenen door de bedrogen echtgenoot, die daarbij een beroep kan doen op zijn eigen familieleden of die van zijn vrouw. Op een enkele uitzondering na worden de meeste geschillen bij de Djoeka intern opgelost. Köbben en ik spreken over Leopold Pospisil, die we beiden wel eens hebben meegemaakt, en zijn boeiende onderzoek bij de Kapauku Papoea's op Nieuw Guinea. Hij hield zich bezig met 'niet-fysieke sancties'; gelden die ook als 'recht'? Jazeker, maar daarmee rek je het begrip uit en vervagen de grenzen van het juridische domein. Zulke sancties zijn bij voorbeeld spot of een weigering van gunsten of doodzwijgen. Maar, zegt Köbben, 'het recht moet tanden hebben'. De gezagsdragers bij de Djoeka stonden soms machteloos tegenover 'wetsovertreders'.

Misschien is dit alles wel waar het in de antropologie uiteindelijk om draait: het overtreden van normen en de gevolgen daarvan. Ik bedenk het achter mijn bureau als ik het gesprek met André Köbben nog eens de revue laat passeren; het geldt in ieder geval voor veel van het onderzoek dat hijzelf heeft gedaan maar ook voor veel werk van zijn leerlingen, leden van de 'Köbben-familie', zoals het gezelschap in de academische wandelgangen wel werd (en misschien wordt)

aangeduid.

Op verzoek van een van die leerlingen heeft hij zich ooit verdiept in de 'antropologie' van het Oude Testament, te vinden in zijn boek *De tijdgeest en andere ongemakken*. Ook daar is sprake van kleine nederzettingen, net als in de binnenlanden van Suriname of de bossen van Ivoorkust. De hoofdmannen van de clans hebben verschillende functies in één persoon verenigd, waaronder rechtspraak. In latere tijden is de specialisatie zodanig gevorderd dat je min of meer gespecialiseerde rechters kunt onderscheiden, vrijplaatsen waar verdachten zich even kunnen schuilhouden, processen met getuigen. Desondanks speelt het principe van 'oog om oog, tand om tand' een belangrijke rol en wordt de doodstraf voltrokken door de familie van het slachtoffer. Er wordt volgens Köbben rechtgesproken namens een 'tirannieke opperwezen' dat absurd zware straffen oplegt, ook collectieve straffen waarbij de goeden onder de kwaden moeten lijden. Köbben vond een sterke overeenkomst tussen dit gedeelte van de Bijbel en de Koran: de diepe afkeer van homoseksualiteit en travestie, de zware (dood)straffen wegens overspel en de obsessie met maagdelijkheid.

Je kunt Köbbens studie van het wetenschapsbedrijf in hetzelfde licht zien. Als ik na het bezoek aan Leiden thuis ben, zoek ik het boek op dat hij samen met Henk Tromp geschreven heeft over de resultaten van wetenschappelijk werk die door opdrachtgevers vaak als een 'onwelkome boodschap' (de titel van het boek) worden beschouwd. We hebben er allemaal mee te maken gehad, maar als je alles achter elkaar ziet, word je even stil. Onderzoekers worden op tal van manieren onder druk gezet om hun opdrachtgevers naar de mond te praten of bepaalde resultaten te verzwijgen of te verdraaien; dat geldt niet alleen voor louche grootbedrijven en andere handlangers van het roofookkapitalisme, maar ook voor 'eerbiedwaardige' overheidsinstellingen als ministeries en gemeenten. Köbben heeft het aan den lijve ondervonden in zijn functie als directeur van het Centrum voor Onderzoek van Maatschappelijke Tegenstellingen (COMT), toen hij zijn instituut draaiend moest houden op basis van opdrachtonderzoek. Ik heb een rijtje sancties opgeschreven die in het boek ter sprake komen: beëindiging van de aanstelling; dreiging met ontslag; (dreiging met) rechtsgeding; eis tot geheimhouding van de resultaten; isoleren; monddood maken; omkopen; overplaatsing; schorsing; verbod op spreken of publiceren; doodzwijgen... kortom, een oudtestamentisch horrorverhaal.

Praten met André Köbben is een feest. Hij is geestig en erudiet; hij loopt over van

anekdotes en sappige roddels. Veelzijdig. Aanstekelijk. Zo was het altijd als je met hem sprak, ook als student of promovendus: je zag door zijn nuchtere benadering snel de betrekkelijkheid in van 'onoverkomelijke' problemen en kon weer voor een lange periode tegen het harde bestaan. We hebben in ons gesprek zijn hele loopbaan doorgenomen, die inmiddels ruim zestig jaar omvat - een mensenleeftijd. Door het lezen van H.A. Junods boek *Life of a South African Tribe* besloot hij begin jaren 1950 antropologisch veldwerk te gaan doen en hij had geen idee wat hem daarbij te wachten stond. Het moet iets als onblusbare nieuwsgierigheid zijn die hem heeft voortgedreven, want steeds sloeg hij weer een richting in die hem op onbekend terrein bracht. Een onderzoekspionier, tot op de dag van vandaag, 'omdat ik het nog zo leuk vind'. Maar ook een docent tot in zijn vezels. Een paar jaar geleden vroegen Alex Strating en Jojada Verrips hem tijdens een interview naar wat hij had bereikt in zijn vak. Hij noemde de etnografie, de vergelijking, de studie van de academische wereld, de immigrantensamenleving en niet in de laatste plaats de 35 proefschriften die onder zijn leiding tot stand gekomen zijn. Hij preeste de hoge kwaliteit en vooral de 'leesbaarheid'. 'De talloze uren die het me heeft gekost om de verschillende versies te doorgronden, annoteren en bespreken zijn goed besteed geweest'. Soms was hij het oneens met wat zijn leerlingen beweerden of de richting die ze insloegen en hij was niet bang om dat openlijk naar voren te brengen. Maar met velen heeft hij contact gehouden en in allerlei projecten samengewerkt, de leermeester-studentverhouding veranderde in collegialiteit en vriendschap.

Tijdens de lunch mengt echtgenote Atie Köbben zich in het gesprek en vertelt over de programma's die ze ontwikkelt voor afasiepatiënten, ook pionierswerk en eveneens in nauwe samenwerking met de betrokkenen, patiënten in dit geval, die vaak letterlijk niet uit hun woorden kunnen komen. Als je er even over nadenkt eigenlijk ook een vorm van antropologie. André verleent hand- en spandiensten, vooral als fotomodel voor de didactische plaatjes die ze maakt; je ziet hem zittend in bad of met een lampenkap als hoofddekseel. Als we afscheid nemen, komt André nog terug op de kwestie Stapel. Hij heeft voor zijn KNAW-voordracht over bedrog in de wetenschap een reeks artikelen van de voormalige Tilburgse topgeleerde bestudeerd. Een bizarre wereld, die sociale psychologie. Stapel leverde zijn studenten kant-en-klare onderzoeksresultaten aan en had de interpretatie ook al gereed. Er was veel flauwekul bij, die nergens over ging.

André Köbben zegt: 'Des te vreemder dat die studenten niet protesteerden. Het is

toch verbijsterend om je te realiseren dat niemand ooit zei: professor, allemaal leuk en aardig, maar mag ik alstublieft mijn eigen veldwerk verrichten?’



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