

# If Democrats Can't Win The Economic Debate, Trump Will Win In 2020



Prof.dr. Robert Pollin

Pundits and economic models predict that if nothing changes in the next two years on the economic front, Donald Trump will be re-elected in 2020 by a bigger margin than in 2016. To be sure, the economy is usually the top priority for voters heading into a presidential election, and the U.S. economy appears on paper to be doing well since Trump moved into the White House. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, real gross domestic product (GDP) [increased at an annual rate of 3.2 percent in the first quarter of 2019](#) (real GDP grew by 2.2 percent in the fourth quarter of 2018), and the national unemployment rate is at a low 3.8 percent, with applications for unemployment benefits having declined to a 49-year low.

Nonetheless, while the economy looks strong, the economic condition of most Americans is anything but rosy. And, [according to a Federal Reserve's "Report on the Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2018,"](#) roughly 40 percent of households would not be able to cover a \$400 "unexpected expense."

At the same time, [the majority of Americans think that the economic system benefits mostly the wealthy](#), and want to see the government do something about this situation.

As such, the question is whether Democratic presidential candidates have the vision and the boldness to put structural economic reforms on top of their pre-

election campaign. Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren have already positioned themselves as the ideas candidates for fixing the economy, although [Wall Street Democrats will clearly oppose both of them](#). In the absence of a plan to abolish capitalism, drastic reforms to make it more equitable are a necessary precondition for the economic well-being of the majority of people in the U.S. — reforms that would likely prove to be detrimental to the economic interests of the super-rich, who are intent on accumulating ever higher amounts of wealth. Yet, it is unclear what sort of reforms deserve top priority in today's U.S. economy. To answer that question, we interviewed *Robert Pollin*, distinguished professor of economics and co-director of the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

*C.J. Polychroniou: Bob, the U.S. economy is said to be booming, although Democrats attribute this fact to the policies of the Obama administration. Firstly, is the U.S. economy in such a good shape as it appears to be on paper? Secondly, for how long can the Democrats go on giving credit to Obama for today's signs of a strong economy?*

*Robert Pollin:* First of all, based on the most standard measure of overall economic performance, the growth rate of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the U.S. economy has not been booming under Trump. Indeed, over the two full years under Trump, 2017-18, real economic growth (adjusted for inflation) averaged 2.5 percent per year. This is no better than the average for the full eight years since the Great Recession officially ended in 2010. Over the 57-year period prior to the 2008 Great Recession (1950-2007), U.S. real economic growth averaged 3.4 percent per year. The Trump economy obviously hasn't come close to reaching this long-term average growth trend.

It is true that the official unemployment rate is at a historic low, at 3.8 percent of the labor force. However, let's also consider a broader official measure of unemployment coming from the U.S. Labor Department, one which includes both the "underemployed" — i.e., people in part-time positions but seeking full-time work — as well as people who have become discouraged from looking for a job due to lack of success. By this measure, the unemployment rate rises to 7.3 percent. If we also add in the roughly 5 million people who have dropped out of the labor market following the Great Recession, that would bring the unemployment rate to 10.3 percent. So while labor market conditions are indeed far better now than they were 10 years ago, as we were just coming out of the

Great Recession, there is still a lot of distress among people trying to get jobs, much less good jobs.

The Obama administration, along with the Federal Reserve, does deserve credit for helping to avoid a total financial collapse in 2008 that could have led to a Depression as severe as the 1930s. Who knows where we would be today if, a decade ago, the unemployment rate had risen to, say 25 percent, as it did in the 1930s, versus 10 percent during the Great Recession.

*Some Democrats seek to generate greater support among voters by focusing on the stagnant wage narrative. What are the economics reasons behind stagnant wages, and is wage stagnation in itself a winning strategy?*

Wage stagnation has been a defining feature of economic reality under neoliberal capitalism for almost 50 years now, in the U.S. and elsewhere. The average real wage for non-supervisory workers in the U.S. was about \$23 an hour in 1972. (That is the wage in 1972 expressed in today's dollars, after adjusting for inflation). As of 2016, it was about \$22 an hour, 4 percent lower. Meanwhile, average labor productivity more than doubled between 1972 and 2016. If the average wage had kept up with productivity over this 44-year period, the average worker would be earning \$49 an hour today. In other words, the gains from rising productivity have flowed upward, primarily to the top 1 percent. This is the single most important factor driving the overall rise in U.S. inequality.

The basic explanation for wage stagnation is straightforward — the loss of bargaining power by workers. This is another central feature of neoliberalism. Workers have lost bargaining power for several interrelated reasons. First, unions have become historically weak, and are therefore unable to give workers the support they need in bargaining. In turn, part of the reason that unions have been weakened is that corporations have become, over time, much more aggressive in asserting their power — through, for example, outsourcing production jobs to low-wage economies. Businesses can credibly threaten to their employees: “If you want a raise, then, fine, we outsource to China.” This is what former Federal Reserve Chair Alan Greenspan called the “traumatized worker” effect back in the mid-1990s. This loss of worker strength has, in turn, led to labor laws that increasingly favor capital over labor, including the notorious 2018 Supreme Court decision in the *Janus* case that prohibits unions from requiring workers to receive fees for negotiating on behalf of the workers.

Should the Democrats focus on wage stagnation as an issue? Absolutely, yes. Wage stagnation has been a major driver alienating working people who traditionally supported the Democratic Party. Trump has capitalized on this alienation by blaming immigrants for “stealing” jobs from U.S. residents. The Democrats need to explain the real reasons behind the persistence of wage stagnation and consequent rise of inequality.

*Today’s progressive youth in the United States have made “good jobs” a central focus of their political and social demands. What would constitute “good jobs” in a reformed U.S. economy?*

There are three basic components to a “good job”: good compensation levels, including wages and benefits; opportunities for advancement within a firm; and significant autonomy — i.e., decision-making power — in the workplace. All three features are critical. Considering the last feature, firms that operate with a significant degree of worker self-management perform at least as well (if not better) than traditional top-down hierarchical firms, according to standard measures such as productivity.

*Household debt is once again on the rise, after several years of sharp decline due to the recession that followed the 2007-08 financial crisis. Is this still related to stagnant wages, or is it part of a larger story related to the culture of U.S. consumerism and the outreach of financialization in every aspect of U.S. economy and society?*

In fact, household debt rose sharply as of 2008 to nearly 100 percent of GDP, then fell continuously to about 80 percent of GDP through 2016. The increase over the past two years in this ratio has been modest. More to the point, just before the Great Recession, households were spending over 13 percent of their income to cover their interest and principal payments on their debts. Now they are spending less than 10 percent. In general, though, the rise of household debt, starting in the 1980s, was certainly tied to wage stagnation as one major factor. Working-class households took on more debt in an effort to maintain their living standard in the face of wage stagnation. But there was a second factor also contributing to the rise of household debt. This was at the other end of the income distribution. Wealthy households borrowed more to engage in speculative financial market activities. Both factors still operate today.

*Those who oppose a Green New Deal do so by citing its potentially adverse effects on jobs and growth. Yet, the United Nations Environment Programme sees the*

*green economy as a “net generator of jobs, adequate wages, safe working conditions, job security ... and workers’ rights,” a set of conclusions which are also supported by your own individual research work on greening the economy. Shouldn’t this message — the economic benefits of a green economy — then become central to all Democratic presidential candidates’ campaigns?*

This all depends on specifically what we mean by the “Green New Deal” — and the specifics here are critical. In my view, and in my research around this question over the past decade, the Green New Deal means four interrelated things:

- 1) Dramatic reductions in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions through investing in energy efficiency and clean renewable energy, especially solar and wind power. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions should fall to zero by 2050;
- 2) Generating millions of good jobs through these clean energy investments;
- 3) Steadily ending dependence on fossil fuels as an energy source, since burning coal, oil and natural gas to produce energy is the single biggest source of all greenhouse gas emissions. Fossil fuel consumption should be eliminated altogether by no later than 2050; and
- 4) Providing generous “[just transition](#)” support for workers and communities who are currently dependent on the fossil fuel industry for their livelihoods.

In my view, these features of the Green New Deal should be front and center for any Democratic Party politician, no matter what office they are seeking. Trump and his Republican acolytes are insistent climate deniers. Given what we know about the science of climate change, it is clear that we are courting ecological disaster by not advancing a viable global climate stabilization project. As such, any politician of any party or persuasion is embracing an immoral position by not supporting the most aggressive climate stabilization program possible. The Green New Deal, as I understand the program, has the greatest chance of achieving climate stabilization while also expanding job opportunities and improving mass living standards.

*In your view, what other economic issues ought to be on top of the list for Democratic presidential candidates?*

The most obvious one is Medicare for All. Enacting a single-payer health care system, in which everyone has access to good quality care without having to worry about costs — i.e., premiums, deductibles, co-pays and other out-of-pocket expenses — will be transformative to people’s lives. Of course, there are other

critical policies that must be advanced to create an egalitarian (if still capitalist) economy — that is, building a program capable of overturning the hegemony neoliberalism has maintained for 40 years, and for thwarting the rise of Trump-style neofascism. These include, among others, establishing a \$15 minimum wage at the national level, re-writing labor laws so that they support workers' right to organize, and greatly strengthening financial regulations to weaken financial speculation and strengthen the channeling of investments into productive activities. These financial market interventions should include the Wall Street tax — a tax on all financial transactions, that will discourage speculation while still generating up to roughly \$200 billion a year in revenue; stamping out racial and gender discrimination that are still obviously pervasive; and reversing the Trump administration's draconian treatment of immigrants.

#### *About the author*

C.J. Polychroniou is a political economist/political scientist who has taught and worked in universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. His main research interests are in European economic integration, globalization, the political economy of the United States and the deconstruction of neoliberalism's politico-economic project. He is a regular contributor to *Truthout* as well as a member of *Truthout's* Public Intellectual Project. He has published several books and his articles have appeared in a variety of journals, magazines, newspapers and popular news websites. Many of his publications have been translated into several foreign languages, including Croatian, French, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish. He is the author of [\*Optimism Over Despair: Noam Chomsky On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change\*](#), an anthology of interviews with Chomsky originally published at *Truthout* and collected by Haymarket Books.

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## **Noam Chomsky: Trump's “Economic Boom” Is A Sham**



Donald Trump ran a campaign — and won the 2016 presidential election — based on unorthodox tactics, whereby he used irrational provocation to defy traditional political norms and make a mockery of established beliefs on both domestic and international issues confronting the United

States. Amazingly enough, Trump has continued his instinctual political posturing even as president, dividing the nation and causing severe friction with the traditional allies of the U.S. Yet, his unorthodox tactics and irrational leadership style appear to remain a winning formula as [current polls indicate](#) that, unless something dramatic happens, Trump may very well be re-elected in 2020 by an even bigger margin.

How do we make sense of Trump's continuing popularity? Noam Chomsky, one of the most respected public intellectuals alive, shares his insights on Trump's actions in the exclusive *Truthout* interview that follows.

*C.J. Polychroniou: Noam, I want to start by asking you to reflect on Trump's political posturing and leadership style and explain to us how this apparently "irrational" president continues to enjoy unquestionable support among nearly half of all voters and has managed to turn the GOP into his own fiefdom.*

*Noam Chomsky: Whatever one thinks of Trump, he is a highly skilled politician, with a good sense of how to gain popular approval, even virtual worship in some circles. His job approval just passed 50 percent for the first time, according to the [latest Zogby poll](#).*

He certainly has taken control of the GOP, to quite a remarkable extent. He's been very successful with his two constituencies: the primary one, wealth and corporate power; and the voting base, relatively affluent fairly generally, including a large bloc of Christian evangelicals, rural whites, farmers, workers who have faith in his promises to bring back jobs, and a collection of others, some not too admirable.

It's clear why the primary constituency is mostly delighted. Corporate profits are booming. Wealth continues to be concentrated in very few hands. Trump's administration is lavishing them with gifts, including the tax bill, the main legislative achievement, across-the-board deregulation, and rapidly increasing

fossil fuel production. He and McConnell — in many ways the evil genius of the administration — are packing the judiciary with reactionaries, guaranteeing the interests of the corporate sector and private wealth even after these “glory days” are past. They don’t like his trade wars, which are causing disruption of global supply chains, but so far at least that’s outweighed by his dedicated service to their welfare.

To keep the rest in line is sometimes easy, among them the Christian right, white supremacists, ultranationalists and xenophobes, and those in terror of “hordes” of immigrants. It is easy to throw them occasional chunks of red meat. But sometimes maintaining their allegiance takes the kind of demagoguery at which he is expert. Thus many who are understandably aggrieved by the economic policies of the neoliberal years still seem to feel that he’s the one person standing up for them by shaking his fist at those they blame for taking away their jobs: immigrants and “the scheming Chinese,” primarily.

Numerous press reports reveal how the scam works. Thus, in *The New York Times*, Patricia Cohen investigates the attitude of owners of large farms to Trump’s trade wars, which sharply cut their exports to China and cause severe financial hardships. In general, she finds, they continue to support the president. “I get why he’s doing it,” [her major informant says](#): “America has been bullied” by China. And if the trade war persists through the 2020 election, “I would be OK with that.” He’s sure that Trump will do everything possible to help. Furthermore, “It makes me feel really good to hear Trump say farmers are important to this country. That’s what makes me want to stick with the president.”

Shaking a fist at the “Yellow Peril” and a little sweet talk carry the day, helped by \$16 billion to compensate for export losses.

The gift is largely paid by a new hidden tax on the general public. Tariffs are in effect a tax on consumers (contrary to Trump’s pretenses about China paying for them). The New York Fed estimates the cost to consumers at \$1.6 billion annually, [a tax of \\$831](#) for the average American household. Hence Trump’s tariffs tax the general public to maintain the loyalty of a prime constituency.

With regard to immigrants, while there may be some cases where they take jobs from U.S. citizens, in general that is not the case (and decent wages for all wouldn’t exactly hurt). On the contrary, many studies indicate that immigrants



improve the economy, and they commonly take jobs that U.S. citizens don't want.

The case of China is more interesting. It's quite true that huge numbers of jobs have fled to China, but who is responsible for that? China? Is China holding a gun to the heads of Apple, GM, IBM, GE ... and forcing them to ship jobs to China? One can't even say that it's the fault of the managers of the corporations. Their responsibility, in fact legal obligation, is to make profits for shareholders, and that purpose is served by shifting jobs to China, Mexico, Vietnam, Bangladesh....

Those who object to these practices should be demanding that such decisions should not be in the hands of management and the board of directors, but rather in the hands of those who actually do the work of the enterprise, as democratic principle might suggest. Perhaps along the lines of a 19th century writer whose initials are K.M. But somehow one doesn't see this interesting idea explored in mainstream commentary. Passing strange.

*Trump is taking all credit for the current state of the economy, which includes a historically low rate of unemployment. First, exactly what sort of economic policies has Trump implemented since coming to office that can explain the present economic boom, and, second, how really sound is the current state of the economy?*

To begin with, there is reason for caution about the low rate of unemployment. In the (very good) economics journal *Challenge*, relying on Bureau of Labor Statistics figures, economist John Komlos estimates that "the real unemployment rate in the fall of 2018 was closer to 7.4 percent of the labor force. Among those without a high school diploma, it was twice as high," reaching 28 percent unemployed among African Americans. The prime reason for the discrepancy in figures — all from the same government sources — is the significant decline in labor force participation. Many have dropped out of the labor force in their prime years. The high actual unemployment rate, Komlos plausibly suggests, is part of the reason why "there is so much despair in the society."

Gallup polls regularly measure stress, worry and anger. The U.S. ranks high by these measures, reaching new highs in 2018, by now even higher than during the great recession. In reported stress levels, the U.S. has "one of the highest rates out of the 143 countries studied and it beat the global average (35 percent) by a full 20 percentage points." The U.S. is [even above Venezuela](#) in its current distress.

The dire emotional state of Americans is illustrated dramatically by the “[deaths of despair](#)” (death by suicide, drugs and alcohol) documented by Anne Case and Angus Deaton among working-class whites; tellingly, those “who would have entered the market starting in the early 1980s,” when the neoliberal assault took off. The deaths of despair are estimated at 150,000 a year, contributing to the decline in life expectancy in the U.S. for the past two years, the first time since World War I and the 1918 flu pandemic — a phenomenon unprecedented in developed societies.

All of this is happening in the most powerful state in world history, with extraordinary advantages not approached anywhere. Worth contemplating.

“The alleged full employment,” Komlos writes, “is a statistical mirage designed to hide the real pain in the labor market,” exacerbated by wage stagnation for 40 years and actual decline: “Real median household incomes have been declining for every educational group since the turn of the twenty-first century,” for those without a college degree by 17 percent, continuing the stagnation or decline in real hourly wages since the ‘80s. Add to this Alan Greenspan’s “greater worker insecurity,” the foundation of his success in economic management as he boasted to Congress, and we get a more realistic picture than what is in the headlines, and an explanation for the general despair. Much the same is true throughout the regions afflicted by the neoliberal/austerity plague, though deaths of despair seem to be an American phenomenon.

The “economic boom” is a continuation of the slow recovery that began under Obama. The McConnell-Ryan Congress restricted a needed government stimulus during the Obama years, wailing about deficits, but as usual, when they took office it turned out that “Reagan taught us that deficits don’t matter” (Dick Cheney), when Republicans create them. Trump’s one legislative achievement, the tax giveaway to the rich and corporate sector, provided a stimulus to the economy (without the promised investment). A Brookings Institution study by Robert Barro and Jason Furman (conservative, liberal) [estimated](#) that the boost of Trump’s tax cut law to short-term GDP growth was 1.1 percent for the first quarter of 2019, accounting for the increase from the consensus expectation of 2 percent. The tax cut, of course, exploded the deficit, which can now provide a pretext for cutting social spending.

The continuing increase in employment has led to a slight increase in wages, with

opportunities for those at the lower end of the income scale, but it doesn't come close to making up what has been lost during the period of stagnation from the early '80s.

*Recent data indicates that the counties that voted for Donald Trump have experienced more job growth than the counties that voted for Hillary Clinton. What can explain this discrepancy?*

There's a [good analysis in Bloomberg news](#). Jobs are growing slightly faster in Trump-supporting rural and exurban counties than in the urban mostly Clinton counties. At the same time, real wages declined slightly in Trump counties and increased slightly in Clinton counties, in both cases a decline from the Obama years. Their analysis, which doesn't include the effect of his recent trade wars, attributes the growth mainly to expansion of energy production, manufacturing (in part energy-related), and truck driving.

*Trump's tariff wars against China are escalating, even though U.S. economic interests may suffer more than those of China. What is really behind Trump's trade wars with China and even with the EU, which the "tariff man" has called "a brutal trading partner"? Is it the vision of MAGA, or pure politics?*

Both national economies will suffer, very likely the weaker party (China) more so. But as always, the framework of national conflict obscures a good deal. The estimated \$6 trillion cost of the "war on terror" re-declared by President Bush in 2001 (renewing Reagan's war on terror of 20 years earlier) is borne in varying ways among the population, and the same is true of the trade wars. One illustration has already been mentioned: higher taxes to keep Trump's constituency in line.

It's of considerable interest to explore the justification for the trade war, to inquire into just how "naïve America has been bullied by China." I've already discussed China's responsibility for job loss. Other complaints have to do with their unfair economic practices, such as targeting funds to specific industries — something we'd never dream of doing, and would not have stooped to in earlier years. That aside, why is this a complaint, rather than a cry of joy? Ultrationalist True Believers should be celebrating China's stupidity, which, according to received free market doctrine should be harming their economy, hence contributing to U.S. economic power.

As an aside, it should be noted that U.S. economic power is in fact astonishing. In

recent articles and an important forthcoming book titled *American Power Globalized: Rethinking National Power in the Age of Globalization*, international economist Sean Kenji Starrs argues persuasively that in the recent years of globalization, national accounts mean much less than they used to. A more realistic estimate of economic power is the share of global wealth owned by nationally based multinational corporations. For the U.S., that comes to the staggering figure of about half of world wealth, more than U.S. national economic power at its height after World War II. How this will be affected by Trump's wrecking ball, with its possibly complex effects on global supply chains, remains to be seen. Again, this colossal wealth, of course, does not devolve to the population.

Another charge is that China steals U.S. technology by forcing firms to hand over secrets as a condition on investment (already dealt with) and by violating World Trade Organization rules on intellectual property (TRIPS). Again, other questions arise, discussed particularly by [economist Dean Baker](#) for many years. Putting aside the legitimacy of these highly protectionist devices, which raise patent protection far beyond the historical norm, we can ask who gains and who loses if, say, China uses discoveries in U.S. research labs to produce cheaper drugs than the corporations that have gained the patents, or to develop a better alternative to the Windows operating system? American consumers gain, while Big Pharma's huge profits are somewhat reduced and Bill Gates might decline slightly in the ranks of richest men in the world.

More generally, one might ask, what right does the U.S. have to try to impede Chinese development, as generally assumed without argument? Or even to impose sanctions? That the Chinese state is harsh, brutal and oppressive is not in doubt. China's "re-education camps" for perhaps a million Uyghurs, which may well be the [largest mass incarceration of a racial or religious group since the Holocaust](#), is surely a major crime, meriting harsh condemnation. Is it a worse crime than the imprisonment of 2 million Palestinians in "the world's largest open-air prison" in Gaza, Israel's favorite punching bag, which is soon to become unlivable, international monitors estimate? Why then does the former merit U.S. sanctions, while the latter is lavishly funded by Washington? A rhetorical question of course, but one worth raising nevertheless.

*It seems that more and more Democrats may be warming up to the idea of an impeachment. Is this a good idea? My personal view is that such a course of*

*action will only serve to increase Trump's popularity among his base, and maybe even beyond.*

I agree. Charges of impeachment go to the Senate for trial. Trump's lock on the Republican majority should be enough to clear him of any charges. The effect will then be much like that of the Mueller investigation. He will claim to have been proven innocent of the charges, which he will depict as a malicious and underhanded effort by the Democrats and the Deep State to silence the Tribune of the People, behavior that may even be treasonous, as he is now intimating with regard to the Mueller investigation. His base will be energized, if not infuriated, by what these "traitors" are trying to do to their defender. It's a losing effort for the Democrats, I think, just as their laser-like focus on Mueller and "Russiagate" has proven to be — not a great surprise.

#### *About the author*

C.J. Polychroniou is a political economist/political scientist who has taught and worked in universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. His main research interests are in European economic integration, globalization, the political economy of the United States and the deconstruction of neoliberalism's politico-economic project. He is a regular contributor to *Truthout* as well as a member of *Truthout's* Public Intellectual Project. He has published several books and his articles have appeared in a variety of journals, magazines, newspapers and popular news websites. Many of his publications have been translated into several foreign languages, including Croatian, French, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish. He is the author of [\*Optimism Over Despair: Noam Chomsky On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change\*](#), an anthology of interviews with Chomsky originally published at *Truthout* and collected by Haymarket Books.

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# **Joseph Roth ~ Die Flucht ohne Ende**



### *Kapittel 1 ~ Vorwort*

Im folgenden erzähle ich die Geschichte meines Freundes, Kameraden und Gesinnungsgenossen Franz Tunda.

Ich folge zum Teil seinen Aufzeichnungen, zum Teil seinen Erzählungen.

Ich habe nichts erfunden, nichts komponiert. Es handelt sich nicht mehr darum, zu »dichten«. Das wichtigste ist das Beobachtete.

*Paris, im März 1927*

*Joseph Roth*

### *Kapittel 2*

Der Oberleutnant der österreichischen Armee Franz Tunda geriet im August des Jahres 1916 in russische Kriegsgefangenschaft. Er kam in ein Lager, einige Werst nordöstlich von Irkutsk. Es gelang ihm, mit Hilfe eines sibirischen Polen zu fliehen. Auf dem entfernten, einsamen und traurigen Gehöft des Polen, am Rande der Taiga, blieb der Offizier bis zum Frühling 1919.

Waldläufer kehrten bei dem Polen ein, Bärenjäger und Pelzhändler. Tunda hatte keine Verfolgung zu fürchten. Niemand kannte ihn. Er war der Sohn eines österreichischen Majors und einer polnischen Jüdin, in einer kleinen Stadt Galiziens, dem Garnisonsort seines Vaters, geboren. Er sprach polnisch, er hatte in einem galizischen Regiment gedient. Es fiel ihm leicht, sich für einen jüngeren Bruder des Polen auszugeben. Der Pole hieß Baranowicz. Tunda nannte sich ebenso.

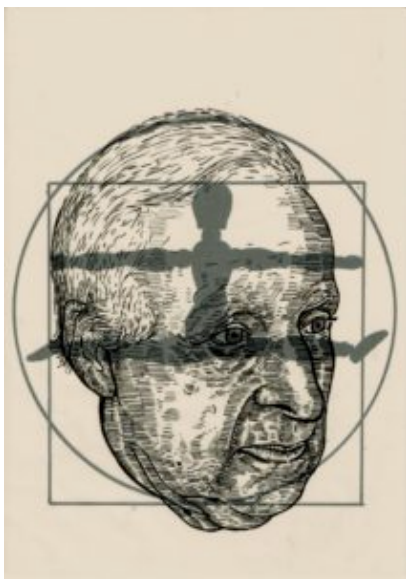
Er bekam ein falsches Dokument auf den Namen Baranowicz, war nunmehr in Lodz geboren, im Jahre 1917 wegen eines unheilbaren und ansteckenden Augenleidens aus dem russischen Heer entlassen, von Beruf Pelzhändler, wohnhaft in Werchni Udinsk.

Der Pole zählte seine Worte wie Perlen, ein schwarzer Bart verpflichtete ihn zur Schweigsamkeit. Vor dreißig Jahren war er, ein Strafgefangener, nach Sibirien gekommen. Später blieb er freiwillig. Er wurde Mitarbeiter einer wissenschaftlichen Expedition zur Erforschung der Taiga, wanderte fünf Jahre durch die Wälder, heiratete dann eine Chinesin, ging zum Buddhismus über, blieb in einem chinesischen Dorf als Arzt und Kräuterkenner, bekam zwei Kinder, verlor beide und die Frau durch die Pest, ging wieder in die Wälder, lebte von Jagd und Pelzhandel, lernte die Spuren der Tiger im dichtesten Gras erkennen, die Vorzeichen des Sturms an dem furchtsamen Flug der Vögel, wußte Hagel- von Schnee- und Schnee- von Regenwolken zu unterscheiden, kannte die Gebräuche der Waldgänger, der Räuber und der harmlosen Wanderer, liebte seine zwei Hunde wie Brüder und verehrte die Schlangen und die Tiger. Er ging freiwillig in den Krieg, schien aber seinen Kameraden und den Offizieren schon in der Kaserne so unheimlich, daß sie ihn als einen Geisteskranken wieder in die Wälder entließen. Jedes Jahr, im März, kam er in die Stadt. Er tauschte Hörner, Felle, Geweihe gegen Munition, Tee, Tabak und Schnaps ein. Er nahm einige Zeitungen mit, um sich auf dem laufenden zu halten, glaubte aber weder den Nachrichten noch den Artikeln; selbst an den Inseraten zweifelte er. Seit Jahren ging er in ein bestimmtes Bordell, zu einer Rothaarigen, Jekaterina Pawlowna hieß sie. Wenn ein anderer bei dem Mädchen war, wartete Baranowicz, ein geduldiger Liebhaber. Das Mädchen wurde alt, es färbte seine silbernen Haare, verlor einen Zahn nach dem andern und sogar das falsche Gebiß. Jedes Jahr brauchte Baranowicz weniger zu warten, schließlich war er der einzige, der zu Jekaterina kam. Sie begann ihn zu lieben, das ganze Jahr brannte ihre Sehnsucht, die späte Sehnsucht einer späten Braut. Jedes Jahr wurde ihre Zärtlichkeit stärker, ihre Leidenschaft heißer, sie war eine Greisin, mit welchem Fleisch genoß sie die erste Liebe ihres Lebens. Baranowicz brachte ihr jedes Jahr die gleichen chinesischen Ketten und die kleinen Flöten, die er selbst schnitzte und auf denen er die Stimmen der Vögel nachahmte.

*Weiter lesen:* <https://gutenberg.spiegel.de/die-flucht-ohne-ende-8647/2>

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# Justus de Visser ~ Spagaat óf balans - Een verkenning van de nooit eindigende spanning tussen nationalisme en Europese integratie



*Justus de Visser. Ills.  
Joseph Sassoon Semah*

Na het succes van Justus de Vissers eerste boek *Europa - Dáárom* (2014) dat hij afsloot met een krachtig pleidooi voor het wij-gevoel (= samen in de EU), heeft hij nu een boek over het spanningsveld tussen het nationalisme en de Europese integratie geschreven. *Spagaat of Balans* is een heftig pleidooi om samen op te trekken en het debat met elkaar aan te gaan over de liberale democratie en een halt toe te roepen aan de nationalistische afbraak van de Europese orde. Populisme, Brexit, Catalonië, migratie en terrorisme, Turkije, Midden- en Oost-Europa, Rusland, Oekraïne, Georgië, het nationalisme is overal en ze komen in het boek uitgebreid aan bod, voorzien van vele voetnoten.

*Spagaat of Balans* is een strijdbaar en informatief naslagwerk voor een ieder die is geïnteresseerd in het hedendaagse Europa en zich wil verdedigen tegen



nationalisme, xenofobie en illiberalisme. De Europese waarden als democratie, gelijkheid, vrijheid, mensenrechten en de rechtsstaat staan onder druk en moeten worden verdedigd. De Visser roept op te strijden tegen de politici die de sociale rechtsstaat, die de EU wil zijn, van binnenuit bedreigen.

Justus de Visser, die jarenlang diplomaat voor Nederland is geweest en werkzaam was op het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, ziet de bedreiging van het herlevend nationalisme niet primair als bedreiging van buiten, maar vooral als het 'Kwaad' in ons zelf. De Visser stelt zichzelf de vraag waar de liefde voor het eigen vaderland, dat wat we patriotisme noemen, de zoektocht naar geborgenheid, over gaat in haat tegen de ander, dat nationalisme is (dit onderscheid ontleent hij aan de vroegere Duitse Bondspresident Von Weizsäcker). Nationalisme is voor De Visser vooral een op mythe gebaseerd identiteitsbesef, zoveel verschillen we niet van elkaar. Het nationalisme komt vooral voort uit angst en gebrek aan erkenning en respect en dat brengt agressief gedrag met zich mee. De kiezer wil de natiestaat terug en politici spelen handig in op deze angst- en onlustgevoelens. We trekken steeds meer muren op, fysiek en mentaal. De grenzen komen weer terug en dat levert spanning op met de Europese eenwordingsambitie.

21e eeuwse nationalisme leidt tot 21e eeuwse machtspolitieke confrontaties, ook buiten Europa. President Trump maakt handig gebruik van nationale gevoelens zonder dat de consequenties zijn te overzien. Wat er buiten de grenzen van Europa gebeurt heeft enorme invloed op Europeanen en daarom moeten wij hechter aaneen sluiten, Europa moet verder integreren, zeker nu Amerika afstand neemt van Europa.

'We kunnen niet langer volstaan een wetgevingsmachine te zijn, we zullen ook samen geopolitiek moeten gaan bedrijven, veiligheids- en defensiebeleid daaronder begrepen. Er valt geen tijd te verliezen- jammer genoeg is dat besef nog niet levend genoeg', aldus Justus de Visser. Het is tijd voor een nieuwe politieke daadkracht.

Op 9 mei 2019 was Justus de Visser een van de inleiders van *Vier de dag van Europa* tijdens alweer de 3de Schuttersmaaltijd in Pakhuis de Zwijger, waar hij zijn boek *Spagaat óf balans* onder de aandacht bracht en het publiek uitnodigde mee te denken over welke politieke daadkracht kan bijdragen aan een beter Europa. Zelf is hij betrokken bij VOLT, een pro-Europees initiatief met een pan-Europese visie.

Aan de tafels o.l.v. Bette Adriaanse, Steve Austen, Linda Bouws, Tabo Goudswaard, Sherman De Jesus, Chris Luth en Farid Tabarki werd intensief gesproken over het thema van de avond: De kunstenaar en het kunstbedrijf als citizenship educators en over de toekomst van Europa.

Tafelheer Chris Luth, stelt zich de vraag waar de collega's blijven uit de culturele sector. 'We kunnen er onze verbeeldingskracht en kritisch vermogen goed gebruiken en ons aansluiten bij een politieke partij.'

In 5 punten geeft Chris Luth aan waarom hij zich kandidaat stelt voor het Europese Parlement voor VOLT Nederland ( [www.volteuropa.org](http://www.volteuropa.org))

### 1) Trots op ons engagement

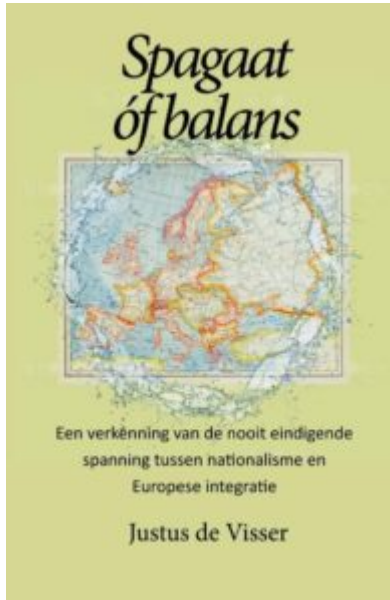
Als architect, curator, docent en deelnemer van vele evenementen in de kunst & cultuur, heb ik me altijd sterk verbonden gevoeld met het engagement van onze sector. Ik was trots op ons maatschappelijk bewustzijn en op de wil om deel te nemen aan de publieke discussie. Ik voelde me onderdeel van een kritische maatschappelijke voorhoede.

### 2) Eerste stap in de politiek

In februari werd ik - 5 minuten na het lezen van een artikel van Caroline de Gruyter in het NRC - eigenlijk tot mijn eigen verbazing lid van de pan-Europese politieke partij en beweging genaamd Volt. Grensoverschrijdende uitdagingen (zoals het klimaat, vluchtelingen en de wereldwijde economie) aangaan door in Europa slimmer samen te werken - it just made sense to me.

### 3) Omringd door 'professionals'

Wat me heel erg opvalt bij Volt en bij andere partijen, is dat er zo weinig kunstenaars, curators, producenten en docenten uit de culturele sector bij aangesloten zijn. Als een van de héél weinige architecten en misschien wel de enige curator in heel Europa, ben ik er omringd door economen, politicologen en juristen.



#### 4) Waar blijft de kunst & cultuur?

Waar blijven onze prachtige vrienden met visie en verbeeldingskracht? Hoezeer we ons kritisch vermogen en open houding wel niet kunnen gebruiken tussen deze soms wat rechtlijnige pragmatici! Ze weten alles van wetten en organogrammen, maar kunnen amper brainstormen, en kijken vragend bij het woord esthetiek!

#### 5) Sluit je aan!

Ben je kunstenaar of werk je in de culturele sector? Wil jij je kunstzinnige en culturele talenten ook inzetten voor een Europees Parlement waar jij je werkelijk door vertegenwoordigt voelt. Sluit je dan aan bij een politieke partij!

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Justus de Visser - Spagaat óf balans. Een verkenning van de nooit eindigende spanning tussen nationalisme en Europese integratie. Mosae Libro, 2019. ISBN 9789086664795

*Linda Bouws - St. Metropool Internationale Kunstprojecten*

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# **As Capitalism Fails, We Need A Roadmap To Survive Climate Change**



Paavo Järvensivu

As we enter an era of energy transition and the effects of climate change become more dramatic, our need for new forms of economic thinking is becoming increasingly urgent. The existing economic theories and models are clearly ill-equipped to address the intertwined challenges of a massive energy shift and climate change because they are all linked to the era of material abundance and cheap energy resources. The existing economic system has failed and if it continues it will lead to inestimable catastrophic consequences. But what would the policy framework of the much-needed new economics on energy, climate and environment look alike?

*C.J. Polychroniou: Dr. Järvensivu, how did your research unit end up producing the background paper for the U.N. Global Sustainable Development Report?*

*Paavo Järvensivu:* BIOS is an independent, multidisciplinary research unit, launched in Helsinki in 2015. Our basic task is to study the effects of environmental and resource factors on Finnish society and develop the anticipatory skills of citizens and decision-makers. To be able to do that, our research, of course, deals with the same issues also globally.... Moreover, we felt that due to the urgency to act on the climate crisis, researchers need to engage much more proactively outside the academic community. We dedicate much of our time on ongoing dialogue with decision-makers, journalists and many others.... There are few [other] research teams that would systematically aim at a comprehensive view of the political, economic and cultural changes caused by mitigating and adapting to climate change.

*The paper your research unit produced for the U.N. claims with certainty that we will soon be entering a new energy era. What is this new energy era all about, and how will it replace the capitalism of today, which relies mostly on fossil fuels for supplying the vast majority of our energy needs and, subsequently, for growth?*

The question of future energy can be approached as a [carbon] source and [carbon] sink problem. According to some estimates, the depletion of accessible fossil fuels would drive dramatic changes in the human energy system. This is true in a certain time frame, but climate change, or the inability of ecosystems in their current state to handle all the emissions from the excessive use of fossil fuels, gets us there first. Mitigating climate change requires a rapid decarbonization of the energy system — not only electricity generation but also heating/cooling and transportation.

Most likely we need to reduce energy consumption in order to succeed in rapid decarbonization. Replacing fossil fuel infrastructure with low-carbon solutions is such a demanding task physically, financially and organization-wise that the chances for succeeding improve dramatically if we lower overall energy consumption at the same time. This would be in line with also other environmental goals, especially with fostering biodiversity. In practice, this would entail qualitative changes in people's lives through an emphasis on public transport and walking and biking, and perhaps relaxing on the (very new to humankind) requirement to have the same temperature inside throughout the year.

If the major economies don't succeed in decarbonization, the global fossil economy is in for a rough ride. As an example, in a world with escalating geopolitical tensions — for instance, due to climate refugees — the position of fossil fuel-importing countries is weakened. Those countries — such as Finland, where I'm from — would be better off with less dependence on fossil fuels. Acting on this proactively, investing a lot on low-carbon infrastructure, should be on the high priority list of current and next governments.

*Yet, Donald Trump's energy plan is all about more fossil fuels and fewer rules for environmental protection, so the question is this: Will the new energy era begin when fossil fuels run out?*

Again, globally speaking, it is climate change that sits on the driver's seat toward the new energy era. But locally, many fossil fuel plants are [getting too expensive](#) to operate. The depletion of cheap, good quality fossil fuel sources will damage

many economic actors and investors.

For Trump, though, fossil fuels don't seem to be about economics. Rather, he's using fossil fuels to [say]: "I won't let anyone come and take away the unnecessarily big, loud and gas-guzzling pick-up truck that you hold so dear." This way, people are clinging on to certain symbols, and more or less artificial political divisions are being made. One sad collateral damage in all this is science-policy relations.... We are now seeing this also in Finland with the rise of the [right-wing populist Finns Party](#). They are seeking to gain votes by saying that the "climate-hysterical" will come and get the sausages out of the mouths of the working people.

*Climate change is linked in your report to some of the major economic and political problems confronting many of today's societies, including economic inequality, rising debt levels, slow economic growth and unemployment. What exactly is the link between climate change and some of the economic challenges mentioned above?*

Looking forward, we can easily see that climate change is tightly linked to those challenges. Decarbonizing societies requires massive investments into basic infrastructure, which raises the costs of heating and cooling homes, transportation, and so on, at least for the next decade or two. Much of current economic capacity will be allocated to realizing the transition, leaving less capacity for doing all the other things. At the same time, we have to ensure that everyone has the means to satisfy their basic needs. With rising basic costs, this involves significant income transfers.

A managed [transition of jobs](#) will also be needed. A lot of jobs are currently directly or indirectly dependent on the continued use of fossil fuels and, thus, will be threatened by the low-carbon transition. The workers need to be re-skilled and new jobs will need to be created for them. It should be added that there is no point in creating jobs for jobs' sake, but we can be sure that there is more work to do in decarbonization than there are workers.

Climate change will inevitably proceed to some extent due to historical emissions. Some will be more prepared than others to adapt to the effects. Generating these future capacities now is also a matter of justice and equality, having to do with physical infrastructure at hand, but also with skills and cultural practices.

Looking back, we can see that the growing use of fossil fuels was not an accidental but rather an elemental part of the growth of industrialized economies.

We could not have had this kind of industrialization without catalyzing climate change. The growth in productivity was not only due to innovative technologies and human ingenuity in general; the machinery needed fossil fuels to function. Economic growth has meant growing energy use. Economic growth has stalled at the same time as the cheapest and best fossil fuel sources have become depleted and the costs of climate change have become more apparent. It is only now that we are gradually learning how to power some of our machinery without fossil fuels.

Some have also made the argument that with the overall energy costs rising, economies have been forced to seek growth through ever more debt, postponing the payback. And now that we are not seeing much growth — and growth in energy — the debt cannot be paid back in full. Private debt needs to be carefully managed, because there are a lot of economic expectations tied to fossil fuels that cannot be fulfilled. It is the job of governments to pave the path from current financial structure to the post-fossil fuel one.

*Your report suggests that a new economic thinking is needed to address pressing issues such as human migration. What elements need to be incorporated into the new model of economic thinking for the era of energy transition and climate change?*

The low-carbon transition needs to be planned, financed and coordinated. We need economic thinking and tools that make this possible. Orthodox economics and market-oriented mechanisms are not enough, especially because they lack the power to direct different economic sectors and actors toward a shared low-carbon path.

First of all, we need a mid- to long-term vision, a decarbonization roadmap, so that economic actors can orient their thinking and strategies around something predictable. The roadmap must be based on a multidisciplinary scientific understanding. It will probably be layered to encompass cities, states and the nation. Or in Europe, cities, countries and the EU/Eurozone. A successful roadmap acknowledges the deep connections in and between economic sectors and large-scale infrastructure systems. For example, in transport, one cannot bet on electric vehicles, the other one on biofuels, and the third one on public transport. Although those all can coexist, we have to know where the emphasis will be. The choice has dramatic consequences for electricity and fuel production, vehicle production, electric vehicle charging infrastructure and city planning.

With investment cycles of around 10 years, we don't have the time for second guessing.

We can think of the economic challenge as having two components: limiting emissions and coming up with new solutions. Cutting down and investing. Carbon pricing, the market-oriented mechanism supported by most economists, punishes for bad behavior. That's good, but that's not enough. For many years, there has been a lack of long-term investments in the U.S. and in Europe. A central reason is that the investment horizon seems rather fuzzy. Everything seems to be in turbulence. The roadmap will help in this, but it also seems clear that significant public investment programs are needed as well. The public authority [i.e., the state] is the only body that has the funds, must think long-term and can stomach the financial risks associated with the transition. Modern monetary theorists have done a good job in analyzing economic sovereignty and defending the fiscal and policy room that governments in reality have.

The roadmap will also help in coordinating the activities related to the transition. But we need to go further. For instance, there are things we don't yet quite know how to accomplish that need research and development. I am most familiar with the case of district heating in Helsinki — how to do it without burning coal, wood or anything else. There are both social and technical issues that need to be overcome. The mayor of Helsinki just promised a million euros for anyone that comes up with a solution. But of course, it's a matter of continuous development rather than a stroke of genius.

Research and development efforts need to be much more focused than they have been for the last few decades. We need to start solving the most acute problems, and to accomplish that, we need to get cities, universities and businesses to collaborate around shared goals. Economist Mariana Mazzucato has described a model for this and labeled it mission-oriented innovation policy. This is how we got to the moon and built the internet. Or in Finland, created Nokia, the once-leading mobile phone maker. Why would it be impossible now to come up with things that actually matter for the world?

*This interview has been lightly edited for clarity and length.*

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*C.J. Polychroniou* is a political economist/political scientist who has taught and



worked in universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. His main research interests are in European economic integration, globalization, the political economy of the United States and the deconstruction of neoliberalism's politico-economic project. He is a regular contributor to *Truthout* as well as a member of *Truthout's* Public Intellectual Project. He has published several books and his articles have appeared in a variety of journals, magazines, newspapers and popular news websites. Many of his publications have been translated into several foreign languages, including Croatian, French, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish. He is the author of [\*Optimism Over Despair: Noam Chomsky On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change\*](#), an anthology of interviews with Chomsky originally published at *Truthout* and collected by Haymarket Books.

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## **Anna Eijsbouts ~ Voting In The EU**

A short film explaining democracy in the EU and the European Parliament and how your vote moves it.

Written by European Constitutional Law Professor Tom Eijsbouts, animated & directed by Anna Eijsbouts.

This film has been made out of necessity and has been funded via Kickstarter.

Credits:

Voice - Gabriella Schmidt

Sound Design - Rik Kooijman

Additional Post Production - Kasper Werther

Thanks to Lot Rossmark, Marlyn Spaaij, Dorien Suntjens, Amber Verstegen, Tünde Vollenbroek, Jamie K. Bolio

Executive Producers - Jan Eijsbouts, Dolf Huijgers, Pieter Jan Kuiper, Laurence Chazournes de Boisson, Kris Spinhoven