

A World Political Party: The Time Has Come



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Shared problems require shared action. The world economy and deepening global risks bind us together, but we lack the collective global agency required to address them. A sustainable global future will be impossible without a fundamental shift from the dominant national mythos to a global worldview, and the concomitant creation of institutions with transformative political agency. A world political party would be well-suited to bring about such a shift. Although such a party will not materialize overnight, it can emerge from the chrysalis of activism and experimentation already forming on the world stage.

The transnational Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 (DiEM25) is a compelling experiment in this vein, providing useful lessons for a world political party proper. Although the challenges to forming a transformative world party are profound, the risks of inaction are grave - and the rewards of success momentous.

Party Time

We now understand how small our planet has become. The local and global have become profoundly intertwined as our daily activities depend on the workings of the world economy. Common risks, like ecological crises and weapons of mass destruction, tie all our fates together.

Despite such interconnectedness, people's everyday experiences still differ

greatly. For example, consider the contrasts between a day in the life of a high school teacher in Finland, a textile worker in China, a CEO of a multinational corporation in Brazil, and a janitor in Kenya—a case study in lateral and vertical diversity. Their lives' possibilities are interwoven and shaped by the global economy, but in sharply divergent ways. Shared problems require shared action. But to achieve collective agency on the global level, disparate individuals must learn to see themselves (and their daily lives) as fundamentally connected to one another through common global structures, processes, and challenges. Such collective learning has the potential to politicize the world economy and the institutions that govern it. Rather than being treated as immutable, these institutions can and must become the subject of political contestation. Both radically reforming existing institutions and building new ones must be on the agenda. Seeing the world system as malleable goes hand in hand with the quest for globalized political agency, for advancing transformative visions of “another world.”

The roots of the contemporary quest go back to the formation of transnational political associations in the nineteenth century with the burgeoning peace and labor movements. A century later, in the 1960s and 1970s, new movements for gender and racial equality, nuclear disarmament, and environmental justice sparked global organizing and activism. In the 1980s, economic globalization became an era-defining issue. Then, as the walls of the Cold War came tumbling down and the Internet eroded barriers to communication, the concept of global civil society took hold. To this day, civil society carries the banner of transformative hope, expressed through pursuit of peace, justice, democracy, economic well-being, and ecological sustainability.

The growing organization and influence of global civil society can be seen in the human rights movement. For example, an international criminal court was first proposed in 1872 in response to the atrocities of the Franco-Prussian War. However, the NGO Coalition for an International Criminal Court (ICC), which featured prominent human rights organizations, was not founded until 1995. By the time the Rome Statute was adopted in July 1998, more than 800 organizations had joined the campaign; in the early 2000s, the number was more than one thousand. The ultimate creation of the ICC, though noteworthy, was an achievement tempered by the nonparticipation of China, Russia, and the US, among others, and by accusations, especially by African states, that the court has

been guilty of applying double standards.

In another arena, civil society became a prominent bulwark against corporate-driven globalization, challenging the “Washington Consensus” and its policy agenda of trade liberalization, deregulation, privatization, and fiscal austerity. Counter-summits, mass demonstrations, and targeted campaigns resisted the power asymmetries, injustices, and environmental impacts of the corporate-driven world economy. Global media made the protests of this “alter-globalization” movement visible to people around the world.

The turn of the new century saw the creation of a self-consciously political expression of global civil society in the form of the World Social Forum (WSF), inaugurated in June 2001 with an international meeting of 12,000 activists in Porto Alegre, Brazil. In the years that followed, such global meetings grew larger, and regional meetings were spawned, providing a rolling series of vital platforms for interchange and networking among diverse civil society actors. However, the WSF has suffered from an internal contradiction between its promise to facilitate the transition to a better world and its central organizing principle of simply providing an open space.

Political agency requires transformative capacity, which a mere open space for discourse lacks. Because the WSF has remained hesitant to move into the realm of action, interest has waned, leaving the WSF’s future fragile and uncertain.

Without an overarching framework fostering solidarity, shared vision, and synergistic action, civil society remains fragmented across a plethora of organizations, issues, and places. Those who grasp the character and peril of planetary interconnectedness understand the need for new transnational agents and institutions that can tackle global ecological, economic, and security challenges. The times call for the creation of a world political party (WPP): an open ethico-political association in pursuit of a broad program of societal reorganization on a global scale. A WPP offers the most promise for fostering political coherence in civil society.

For many reasons, a detailed blueprint for a WPP is neither advisable nor possible. Yet, we can explore the broad contours of a diverse, democratic global political formation. Any process for advancing new institutional arrangements, to be legitimate, needs to be responsive to all significantly affected actors—and thus

robustly democratic. Theory and practice must align. Transformative practice itself must thus embrace adaptive learning, seek democratic consensus, and have the capacity for collective decision-making. Meeting these desiderata takes us far beyond open space venues like the WSF and single-issue civil society arenas.

Skepticism about the feasibility of a world political party is understandable, especially in light of the discontent with political parties in national contexts. Across the world, major parties have become “post-democratic” as private money rules in politics and power is increasingly concentrated in a narrow elite.[i] Often, the anti-elite backlash has been nationalist, xenophobic, and authoritarian. Many countries, especially in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa, are sliding towards full-scale authoritarianism.[ii] A viable WPP must be able to respond to the moral and political criticism of existing national parties, while cultivating a democratic ethos within global civil society and exercising effective political agency. Such broad-based political capability presupposes the emergence of public consciousness rooted in shared elements of a wider and deeper worldview. This evolution, in turn, fosters the willingness to engage in collective processes to build trust and commitment.

A world party cannot be created overnight, but rather can emerge out of today’s activism and experimentation in the context of intensifying global crises. One instructive experiment is the Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 (DiEM25). DiEM25’s successes and failures provide critical lessons for forging organs of collective agency beyond one continent.

The Shape of a New Formation

The earliest analogues for a new world party are the socialist internationals of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Marx and Engels’s declaration of “Proletarians of all countries, unite!” helped inspire the International Workingmen’s Association, or “First International.” In the years before World War I, socialist and labor parties joined together in the Second International. Then, after the Russian Revolution, the Soviet Union formed the Third International, or Comintern, as a vehicle for controlling communist parties worldwide. In parallel, organizations such as the Industrial Workers of the World saw themselves as part of a global organizing project, captured in the IWW’s vision of the OBU (“One Big Union”). The reformist, postwar Socialist International—a descendent of the Second International—still exists, but its constituent social democratic parties lack the sense of solidarity and collective agency of their predecessors.

The top-down character of an organization like the Comintern would certainly meet strong opposition in a contemporary civil society culture skeptical of hierarchy. Recognition of equality is part and parcel of human collective learning. The prolific English writer H. G. Wells presaged a better way, exploring the idea of a WPP in essays and novels, with the 1928 *The Open Conspiracy* his most daring effort.[iii] Rather than a centrally organized party, Wells's "open conspiracy" comprised a mass movement united by a humanistic faith and understanding of the world. The diverse set of actors in this movement-party could, he argued, collectively forge a rational and democratic world republic.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, amid lively discussions about the meaning and future of the alter-globalization movement, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri developed the idea of a "multitude," a complex network of a plurality of actors. In part inspired by the experiences of the alter-globalization movements, in part a modern substitute for the Marxian working class, this concept bears some resemblance to Wells's open conspiracy (indeed, Wells, too, used the term multitude). Like Wells, Hardt and Negri developed these ideas in response to the global problem of war, arguing that the war on terror waged against a largely unspecified enemy served to justify and reinforce Great Power domination. However, the global governance reforms Hardt and Negri espouse are quite modest, with a global currency transaction tax the most far-reaching proposal.[iv]

The war on terror in 2001, and the opposition to it, proved to be a turning point, sidelining the alter-globalization movement. Another turning point was the global financial crisis of 2008-9, which increased the socioeconomic insecurity and anxiety of people everywhere.[v] In the years since, wage stagnation, unemployment growth, and skyrocketing inequality have undermined social stability, while the concentration of capital has eroded democratic institutions, enabling a moneyed elite to rig economic and political systems. This inequality and instability, in turn, have fanned the flames of resurgent nationalist populism.

A far-sighted response to the contemporary crisis would be to build a world political party. Such a party would contribute to the process of constructing a global demos, best seen as a pluralist, evolving political community of world citizens exercising political rights in a globalized public sphere. A WPP would welcome a range of different ideological agendas concerning how common global institutions might best be organized. The party would constitute a transnational public sphere, where the sufficiently like-minded—i.e., members of the

party—could freely debate issues and make collective decisions. The *raison d'être* of the party lies in advancing new institutional forms for organizing the planetary public realm.

A nascent world party would spawn nodes at different levels and contexts, each attuned to salient issues at its level within an overarching global perspective and strategy. The various chapters would share a core program while maintaining their autonomy, adopting additional planks into their platform as appropriate (provided that they resonate with the overall agenda). Within this complex transformative agency, balance would be sought between pluralism and unity. Cultivating a sense of mutuality, trust, and sensitivity among diverse participants is key to developing a viable global political community and public sphere.

Collective Learning and Cosmopolitanism

Although ancient Greek city-states had cliques and parties of opinion, the contemporary understanding of political parties is rather recent. Until early European modernity, the metaphor of a “body politic” dominated the political imagination. In this view, a conflict or contradiction in one organism or body is not considered. Today, as a result of effectual collective learning processes, rules are no longer treated as external to individual actors, and thus sacred or unassailable, but rather as the product of free, mutual agreement of individuals endowed with autonomous conscience. This form of collective discourse first emerged in some ancient small city-states, typically among free males, but was repressed by large-scale military-agrarian empires. The demand for equality re-emerged in a more radical form in complex large-scale society with modern political revolutions.

In the context of modernity, new ideas such as human rights and the rule of law became part of social reality. Notably, the trial of Louis XVI marked a break with the mythological view of the monarchy’s power, and the ascent of the understanding of citizens as autonomous actors with the right to revise prevailing rules and laws. For the Girondists, the king no longer embodied the law, but rather subject to it, just like any other citizen. All citizens are equally bound by the law.[vi]

The historical process of collective learning points towards cosmopolitan moral sentiments. In higher stages of reasoning, individuals gain an understanding that morality and ethico-political principles must have validity and application apart

from both the authority of the groups or persons holding these principles, and the individual's own identification with particular groups or institutions. Such is the moral foundation of world citizenship.

Of course, the movement toward cosmopolitanism is hardly inevitable, and not all social learning is progressive. Past lessons can be forgotten, and change can be regressive, undermining future learning. Economic uncertainty can amplify existential insecurity and anxiety, triggering regressive learning. Religion and nationalism can provide channels for diverting resentment and angst originating in socioeconomic conditions. Asymmetric power relations can undermine the learning process as well, by steering public consciousness towards perspectives that serve particular identities, interests, or elites.

Pushing back against such tendencies, a central aim of a WPP would be to nurture positive learning that creates a public more receptive to pluralist cosmopolitanism. This requires strategies for shaping the economic and social conditions that support individual and collective learning, and improving the skills and knowledge required for effective participation in the learning process. Educating the public about global affairs is essential for developing a collective democratic culture and deeper engagement in the global public realm.

Much of our thinking is unconscious, which further complicates learning processes. Thinking is based on prototypes, framings, and metaphors that are seldom explicit. This background is the source of "common sense" views of how we connect and interact and what our expectations are of one another and outsiders. Underlying normative ideas and images generate manifold stories about who we are, where we come from, and where we are heading. A problem for a global political party is that, compared to the rich poetics of national myths and narratives, cosmopolitan prototypes, metaphors, framings, and stories remain rather thin.

A promising way to counter parochial ideologies is to situate the contemporary problematique within a macro-view of cosmological, biological, and social evolution. This "Big History" approach expands both our understanding of "where we are" and visions of "where we want to go." A sweeping narrative can motivate transformative and progressive politics in the twenty-first century.[vii] The point of departure of Big History is that our common human capacities have emerged from the evolution of life, itself an emergent layer of cosmological unfolding. A

sweeping framework puts into context and underscores the import of the Anthropocene: the new geological age defined by the human impact on the whole Earth. Big History encourages narratives and values with a sense of global belonging—the Earth as our common home in the cosmos. This broad panorama suggests a new slogan: think cosmically, act globally.

DiEM25: A Seed Crystal?

Can we see rumblings of a WPP today? Perhaps future historians will look back to many precursors now in play. One promising contemporary initiative is the Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 (DiEM25). Established in early 2016 in the aftermath of the Euro crisis, DiEM25 has assumed many of the characteristics of a WPP. As such, it offers an invaluable testbed for cultivating transnational ethical and political consciousness, deploying new technologies to enable widespread participation, overcoming legal obstacles to a supranational political party, and transcending identity-political fragmentation.

Following the 2015 defeat of the Greek left-wing party Syriza in its struggle against the Troika (the International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank, and EU Commission), Greek Minister of Finance Yanis Varoufakis resigned. Subsequent political meetings in France and Germany convinced him of the need to “band together regardless of nationality and transcend the divide between debtor and creditor countries.” The solution was clear: a new pan-European political movement to prevent a “descent into a post-modern 1930s.”[viii]

To advance this aim, DiEM25’s strategy is to convene a constitutional assembly that would reflect a genuine European democracy. It intends to have a draft constitution prepared by 2025 that, if adopted, would replace all existing European treaties. Beyond this process, the movement strives to overcome austerity and harmful competition in Europe with concrete policy proposals, including the dedication of 500 billion euros per year to green investment and industrial conversion, a European anti-poverty plan, a universal basic income (financed by a “public” percentage of companies’ profits), and a common and humane migration policy.[ix]

Rather than adhering to a single political ideology, DiEM25 is resolutely pluralistic, aiming to attract a broad spectrum of progressives, whether leftists, social democrats, greens, or liberals. Participants are united in their dissatisfaction with Europe’s economic and political establishment, and in their advocacy for a government by the people of Europe. In contrast to the

authoritarian, nationalistic populisms on the rise throughout Europe, DiEM25 exemplifies a form of democratic, transnational populism. Its concept of “we” is a pan-European demos that transcends national identity.

DiEM25’s inclusionary transnationalism manifests in the common front it is building for political activism. But the movement enacts transnationalism in another sense: its commitment to helping the most vulnerable people in the global political economy, especially refugees.[x] As stated in its manifesto, DiEM25 aspires to “an Open Europe that is alive to ideas, people and inspiration from all over the world, recognizing fences and borders as signs of weakness spreading insecurity in the name of security.”[xi] The movement thus offers a clear alternative to Fortress Europe.

Not surprisingly, given DiEM25’s expansive political philosophy, its participants are not exclusively European. Joining many well-known European intellectuals, are visible international figures such as Julian Assange and Noam Chomsky. The members of the Coordinating Collective that organizes and integrates DiEM25’s actions have wide international experience, including in the peace movement, the ICC campaign, Occupy, and the World Social Forum.

DiEM25 has some 70,000 members, mostly in Europe but from other continents as well, along with eight national collectives and a hundred ad hoc collectives around the world. Although more a movement than a political party for now, it will be presenting a list for the 2019 European Parliament elections, dubbing the effort the “European spring.” This “first progressive transnational list ever” includes both candidates directly chosen by DiEM25 and candidates nominated by DiEM25 to appear on the slates of conventional parties. This selection process, as with all DiEM25’s work, relies on modern IT technology to facilitate discussion among dispersed members, in parallel with in-person meetings and events across Europe.

In spite of such mobilization, DiEM25 has yet to become a high-profile actor in European politics. Its membership and budget remain small compared to those of the major national political parties, and the mainstream media largely ignores its activities and positions. Even after years of decline, Germany’s Christian Democratic Union, for instance, commands a budget of tens of millions of euros per year, while DiEM25’s is less than a half-million. Given its limited resources, DiEM25’s near-term electoral success will likely be modest at best. Nevertheless,

as it evolves and grows, it could become a model or, beyond, a seed germinating future world political parties.

Where We Are

While we live longer and value life more highly than ever, the world as a whole faces decades of unprecedented problems. The global economic crisis of 2008-2009 and the subsequent euro crisis are only one indication of how the fates of different countries and regions have become more and more intertwined. The conditions of everyday activities of all people are directly or indirectly affected by how the world economy works—or does not work. The next global crisis will have far-reaching consequences. The challenge then? How to reach the teacher, textile worker, and janitor, to name a few, with the vision and message to convey how a WPP can serve their needs and interests.

Perhaps the most serious immediate threat concerns the danger of global war, and especially nuclear war. Both the escalation of the conflict between Russia and the West and the confrontations in the South China Sea show that questions of global political economy and security have still not been answered on a sustainable footing. Similarly, climate change is a key part of a new geological era, the Anthropocene, in which human action is transforming the composition and processes of the biosphere. The expansion of human society has led, among other things, to the mass destruction of habitats, species, and whole ecosystems. This devolution continues at an accelerating pace, carrying threats to global civilization.

The concept of “world risk society” helps situate our task.[xii] The current epoch, in this conceptualization, is the second phase of modernization, in which actors and movements begin to respond to the problems generated by the consequences of the first phase. The primary feature of this new phase is the emergence of a common world with no outside and no exit. Societal risks demand that we acknowledge the real dangers and threats we confront. At the same time, these risks contain a collective condition and power that creates new ethical, political, and technological opportunities for shaping futures to sustain us and new modernities to dream by.

As humankind is thrilled by scientific discoveries of new planets with the possibility of extraterrestrial life, we become increasingly aware of the peril our technological civilization poses for the future of life right here on Earth. Human

curiosity about our place in the cosmos and the awareness of the great ethical-political choices before us demand a new phase of collective learning and promotion of practices and institutions matched to our common challenge.

Our ability to secure a sustainable global future depends on a fundamental shift from the currently dominant national mythos to a global imaginary. The mechanisms and processes of collective learning through institutional change differ from those of individual growth. Collective learning and institutional change require politically capable transformative actors. Practical and political problems can be overcome by building better common institutions.

The world political party envisaged in this essay embraces this grand task.[xiii] As Wells proclaimed almost a century ago, way ahead of his time, “the alternative before man now is either magnificence of spirit and magnificence of achievement or disaster.” The choice could not be clearer today. The future we want is one that removes constraints on human well-being and enables human flourishing. Navigating history towards collective self-determination on this planet, and one day perhaps beyond it, will take bold, transformative practice.

In our troubled world, the need for global transformative agency is greater than ever. The future is not yet settled, and the path there depends on the choices we make. Our expectations become a feedback loop in the making of the future. Pessimists argue that a series of limited-scale crises or wars—or a full global catastrophe—must erupt before a significant force can coalesce for rational, peaceful, and democratic transformations of global governance.

However likely that view, we cannot stand passively by until crises explode before working for social transformation. If and when a window of opportunity opens, the capacity for such action must already have been established. The time has come, then, to devote our efforts to building a world party as an overarching organizational expression of global citizens’ power.

Notes

[i] Colin Crouch, *Post-Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004).

[ii] For different views on the decline of democracy, see Roberto Stefan Foa and Yascha Mounk, “The Signs of Deconsolidation,” *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 1 (2017: 5-15); the Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index 2017, which reports “the worst decline in global democracy in years” (available at

<https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracyindex>); and John Weeks, "Free Markets and the Decline of Democracy," *Open Democracy*, July 18, 2018, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/john-weeks/free-markets-and-decline-of-democracy>.

[iii] There are many different editions of this work, with different titles (including *What Are We To Do With Our Lives?*, available at <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0201081h.html>). See, in particular, H. G. Wells, "The Open Conspiracy," in *The Open Conspiracy: H. G. Wells on World Revolution*, ed. W. Warren Wagar (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002).

[iv] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), 290–306. The global currency transaction tax they propose relies on a working paper by Heikki Patomäki and Teivo Teivainen, later published in *A Possible World: Democratic Transformation of Global Institutions* (Zed Books: London, 2004), 163–182.

[v] I analyze the global financial crisis and the Euro crisis in *The Great Eurozone Disaster: From Crisis to Global New Deal* (Zed Books: London, 2013).

[vi] Based on Alan R. How, "Habermas, History and Social Evolution: Moral Learning and the Trial of Louis XVI," *Sociology* 35, no. 1 (February 2001): 177–194.

[vii] As discussed in Heikki Patomäki and Manfred Steger, "Social Imaginaries and Big History: Towards a New Planetary Consciousness?" *Futures* 42, no. 10 (2010): 1056–1063.

[viii] Yanis Varoufakis, *Adults in the Room: My Battle with Europe's Deep Establishment* (London: The Bodley Head, 2017), 483–485.

[ix] "European Parliament Elections: Launching the European Spring Transnational List," *DiEM25*, June 2018, <https://diem25.org/european-parliament-elections-launching-the-european-spring-transnational-list/>.

[x] See Panos Panayotu, "Towards a Transnational Populism: A Chance for European Democracy (?) - The Case of DiEM25," *Populismus Working Papers*, 2017, no. 5, <https://www.populismus.gr/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/panayotu-final-upload.pdf> 11. *DiEM25*, "A Manifesto for Democratising Europe (long version)," 2016, https://diem25.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/diem25_english_long.pdf.

12. Beck Ulrich, "Global Risk Society," in *Encyclopedia of Globalization*, ed. George Ritzker, vol. II (Wiley-Blackwell: Oxford, 2012), 836–838.

13. Heikki Patomäki, "Towards Global Political Parties," *Ethics & Global Politics*

About the author

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Here's What A Green New Deal

Looks Like In Practice



Robert Pollin - Photo: UMass Amherst

With the climate change challenge growing more acute with every passing year, the need for the adoption of a new political economy that would tackle effectively both the environmental and the egalitarian concerns of progressive people worldwide grows exponentially. Yet, there is still a lot of disagreement on the left as to the nature of the corresponding political economy model. One segment of the left calls for the complete overthrow of capitalism as a means of dealing with climate change and the growing levels of economic inequality in the era of global neoliberalism, while another one argues against growth in general. In the interview below, Robert Pollin, distinguished professor of economics and co-director of the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, explains some issues raised by each of these positions, and how to move toward solutions grounded in a fuller understanding of economic development.

C.J. Polychroniou: Bob, let's start with the "degrowth" argument for securing climate stabilization and realizing egalitarian aims. What's wrong with this political economy model in an age of catastrophic climatic conditions brought about through 250 or so years of capitalist expansion via the use of fossil fuel energy sources?

Robert Pollin: Degrowth proponents have made valuable contributions in addressing many of the untenable features of economic growth. I agree with degrowth proponents that economic growth in general produces a wide range of negative environmental effects. I also agree that a significant share of what is

produced and consumed in the current global capitalist economy is wasteful, especially most of what high-income people throughout the world consume. It is also obvious that economic growth per se makes no reference to the distribution of the benefits of growth and, more generally, offers no critique of capitalism as a mode of production.

But on the specific issue of climate change, degrowth does not provide anything close to a viable stabilization framework — that is, to stabilize the global mean temperature at a level that will prevent severe negative ecological feedback effects, such as increasing frequency of droughts and floods. Consider some very simple arithmetic. According to its most recent October 2018 report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) now concludes that a viable climate stabilization program will necessitate limiting the global mean temperature increase to 1.5° Celsius as of 2100. This in turn will require global net carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions falling by about 45 percent as of 2030 and reaching net zero emissions by 2050. Let's focus for the moment on the 2030 target of a 45 percent CO₂ emissions contraction. Following a degrowth agenda, let's assume that global GDP [gross domestic product] contracts by 10 percent between now and 2030. That would entail a reduction of global GDP four times greater than during the 2007-09 financial crisis and Great Recession. In terms of CO₂ emissions, the net effect of this 10 percent GDP contraction, considered on its own, would be to push emissions down by precisely 10 percent. It would not come close to hitting the IPCC target of a 45 percent CO₂ reduction. At the same time, this 10 percent global GDP contraction would result in huge job losses and declines in living standards for working people and the poor. Global unemployment rose by over 30 million during the Great Recession. I have not seen any degrowth proponent present a convincing argument as to how we could avoid a calamitous rise in mass unemployment if GDP were to fall four times as much as during 2007-09.

A Green New Deal has been proposed by many over the years, including yourself, as the only viable way to tackle effectively climate change. How would the green growth path lead to climate stabilization?

The core feature of the Green New Deal needs to be a worldwide program to invest between 2 percent and 2.5 percent of global GDP every year to raise energy efficiency standards and expand clean renewable energy supplies.

Through this investment program, it becomes realistic to drive down global CO₂ emissions to zero by 2050, while also supporting rising mass living standards and expanding job opportunities. It is critical to recognize that, within this framework, a higher economic growth rate will also accelerate the rate at which clean energy supplants fossil fuels, since higher levels of GDP will correspondingly mean a higher level of investment being channeled into clean energy projects. [In 2016, global clean energy investment was about \\$300 billion](#), or 0.4 percent of global GDP. Thus, the *increase* in investments will need to be in the range of 2 percent of global GDP — about \$1.6 trillion at the [current global GDP of \\$80 trillion](#), then rising in step with global growth thereafter — to reach zero CO₂ emissions by 2050.

Investments aimed at raising energy efficiency standards and expanding the supply of clean renewable energy will also generate tens of millions of new jobs in all regions of the world. This is because building a green economy entails more labor-intensive activities — i.e. proportionally more money channeled into employing people for a given amount of total spending on any given project — than maintaining the world's current fossil-fuel-based energy infrastructure.

The consumption of oil, coal and natural gas will also need to fall to near zero over this same 30-year period. This amounts to an average rate of decline of about 8 percent per year. Of course, both privately owned fossil fuel companies, such as Exxon-Mobil and Chevron, and publicly owned companies like Saudi Aramco and Gazprom, have massive interests at stake in preventing reductions in fossil fuel consumption; they also wield enormous political power. These powerful vested interests will simply have to be defeated. At the same time, unavoidably, workers and communities whose livelihoods depend on the fossil fuel industry will lose out in the clean energy transition. Unless strong policies are advanced to support these workers, they will face layoffs, falling incomes and declining public sector budgets to support schools, health clinics and public safety. It follows that the global Green New Deal must commit to providing generous transitional support for workers and communities tied to the fossil fuel industry.

I take it that you don't place much value in the position adopted by a certain segment of the left which calls for the immediate and complete overthrow of capitalism as the only realistic option for addressing the climate change threat. What are your arguments against this position?

The Green New Deal program I advocate obviously challenges property rights and ownership forms within capitalism, starting with both the private and publicly owned fossil fuel companies throughout the world. I have also worked with unions, political parties and NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] to advance a program that is committed to expanding good job opportunities, unionization rates, as well as racial and gender equality. I also focus on [Just Transition](#) for workers and communities that are currently dependent on the fossil fuel industry.

At the same time, I am definitely not saying that we have to overturn capitalism completely before we can get serious about climate stabilization. I think there is a close to 100 percent chance that capitalism will still be around in 30 years as the predominant global economic system. We cannot waste those 30 years, failing to advance an effective global climate stabilization project. Moreover, the struggle for an egalitarian climate stabilization project — a Green New Deal — will serve, in my view, as one of the principal areas of struggle in advancing a democratic socialist alternative to capitalism.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has been quite instrumental so far in raising public consciousness about the importance of a Green New Deal, which aims to cut US carbon pollution levels in half by 2030. How realistic is this proposal?

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has done a great job raising consciousness about the imperative of a Green New Deal as a serious climate stabilization project. I don't think it would be fair to insist that she, and the people working with her, would have a fully laid-out plan as what this viable Green New Deal project should look like. It is, therefore, inevitable that various proposals have been put out recently. Based on my own research, as well as that of many other people, I do think it is feasible, if extremely challenging, for the US to cut its CO₂ emissions by 50 percent as of 2030 and to reach zero emissions by 2050. But it is not feasible for the US to get to zero emissions by 2030. The 2015 book by the outstanding Harvard University physicist Mara Prentiss, *Energy Revolution*, presents a compelling case as to the technical requirements for the US to reach a zero emissions standard within roughly 30 years.

One final question: How do you see the prospects of a "blue-green" alliance between the labor and environmental movements for tackling the climate change threat?

The blue-green alliance between the labor and environmental movements has been building for years and continues to strengthen. The earliest efforts at building solidarity between the labor and environmental movements was an organization called the Apollo Alliance, founded by Robert Borosage, Roger Hickey and others in 2001. This then merged into the BlueGreen Alliance. More recently, an important Green New Deal initiative (Initiative 1631) was [led in Washington State by the labor movement in the state](#), including Jeff Johnson, who just recently stepped down as the president of the Washington State Labor Council. In the end, the Washington State Green New Deal ballot initiative was defeated in last November's election, despite having been supported by a broad coalition of community, environmental, as well as labor groups. But the Green New Deal measure lost only after the oil companies spent \$30 million on relentless and shameless propaganda to defeat it. Still, the Washington State labor movement created a template that can be developed further in other states. In Colorado, for example, the state-level AFL-CIO is again working closely with environmental and community groups to advance a viable Green New Deal project.

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Noam Chomsky: Ocasio-Cortez And Other Newcomers Are Rousing The Multitudes



Noam Chomsky

A quick glance around the world today reveals that politics almost everywhere —

from the federal government shutdown in the US to the power struggle in Venezuela and from Macron's crisis in France and UK's Brexit nightmare to the Israeli-Iranian rivalry - are engulfed in a state of uncertainty and turmoil. Meanwhile, oligarchy is replacing democracy as the widening social and economic gap between rich and poor continues unabated. So, who rules the world now? The US is in a state of relative decline, but neither Russia nor China has the capacity to control global developments. How do the super-rich and corporations factor into this equation? In this exclusive interview, world-renowned linguist and social critic Noam Chomsky provides penetrating insights into some of the most critical developments going on in the world today.

C.J. Polychroniou: After 35 days of a partial government shutdown, Trump signed a three-week funding bill but without securing money for the border wall. Leaving aside for the moment the surrealist nature of contemporary US political life, do you detect some hidden political strategy behind Trump's funding conflict over the border wall with the Democrats?

Noam Chomsky: There's a political strategy, but I'm not convinced that it's hidden. With Trump, everything is pretty much on the surface. There have been constant efforts by political analysts to discern some deep geostrategic or sociopolitical thinking behind his performances, but they seem to me unconvincing. What he does seems readily explained simply on the well-grounded assumption that his doctrine is simple: ME!

Trump understands that he has a primary constituency — extreme wealth and corporate power — and that he has to serve its interests or he's finished. That task has largely been assigned to the Ryans and McConnells, who have performed it admirably. Profits are skyrocketing, real wages are barely increasing despite low unemployment, regulations that might limit greed (and help mere people) are being dismantled, and the one legislative achievement — the tax scam — put lots of dollars in the right pockets and created a deficit that can be used as a pretext to undermine benefits. All is working smoothly — with analogues worldwide.

But Trump must maintain enough of a voting base to stay in power. That requires posturing as the defender of the ordinary guy against hated "elites" (always suppressing the true "masters of mankind," to borrow Adam Smith's phrase for the merchants and manufacturers who were "the principal architects" of policy). This act is helped along by such figures as Rush Limbaugh, who instructs his tens

of millions of followers that they should beware of “the four corners of deceit: government, academia, science and media,” institutions that “are now corrupt and exist by virtue of deceit.” So, he argues, just listen to ME.

Meanwhile Trump must rise to the defense of the masses from awesome threats, chief among them now the hordes of “rapists,” “murderers” and “Islamic terrorists” he says are being mobilized down south to storm across the border and slaughter decent law-abiding white Christian Americans. We must therefore have a “beautiful wall” — which *they* will pay for. Trump promised that, and to back down would not only betray the trembling masses but also be a defeat, which his ego cannot tolerate.

The game is not really new. After all, the revered Ronald Reagan bravely donned his cowboy uniform and declared a National Emergency to protect the country from the Nicaraguan army, supposedly poised to destroy us all only two days’ drive from Harlingen, Texas. Trump is only carrying it further, helped by the fading of such infantile notions as “truth” — or “false realities,” to borrow Jared Kushner’s innovation. Former Secretary of State Dean Acheson’s admonition that policymakers must be “clearer than truth” has long passed into obsolescence. They can do far better in the atmosphere of “alternative facts” for those liberated from the four pillars of deceit.

I doubt that there is any deeper political strategy.

Furthermore, such performances are rather natural, perhaps even necessary. As both parties have drifted to the right during the neoliberal assault on the population, the Democrats abandoned the working class and became pretty much what used to be called “moderate Republicans” (something that is beginning to change now in promising ways) while Republicans climbed so deeply into the pockets of the super-rich and corporate power that it became impossible for them to gain anywhere near enough votes on their actual policies. Antics of the Trump style fit the requirements, along with a variety of measures to suppress voting and increased reliance on the many regressive aspects of the constitutional system, which by now make it possible for a small minority of white Christian traditional rural older citizens to have effective control of the government. The tendency is increasing and may soon lead to a major political crisis since it is virtually ineradicable given the structure of the Senate, designed by the Framers so that the small states would ratify the mostly unpopular Federal Constitution. A topic for another day.



*Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez ~
Photo: wikipedia*

Responding to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's call for measures to tackle climate change, press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders made the incredible statement that climate change should be left to God. Don't you find it utterly mysterious and indeed dangerous that such thinking still prevails among US public officials in the 21st century? And, really, how well do you think that such messages resonate with the American public today?

Sanders's insight is not new. She is in good company. After all, the former chair of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, James Inhofe, condemned efforts to address global warming as sacrilege: "God's still up there," he [proclaimed](#), and "the arrogance of people to think that we, human beings, would be able to change what He is doing in the climate is to me outrageous." It seems to work, at least in Oklahoma, where the senior senator has been in office since 1994. Doubtless well beyond Oklahoma, in a society with fundamentalist religious commitments that are far beyond the norm.

Yes, mysterious and dangerous — as is the fact that half of Republicans deny that global warming is even taking place, and of the rest, barely more than half think that humans have some responsibility for it. But there's good news too. Trump's new acting administrator of the EPA, former coal industry lobbyist Andrew Wheeler, agrees that global warming is probably happening — a problem he considers to be an "eight or nine" on a one-to-10 scale of concern, he informed Congress at his confirmation hearings.

Venezuela seems to be in the throes of a civil war. The US backs Juan Guaidó as

interim president, in turn forcing Nicolás Maduro to consider expelling US diplomats, a decision he eventually backed away from, all while the leaders of China, Russia and Turkey slam Trump's stance in Venezuela. First, what's your assessment of what's happening in Venezuela, and, second, why is it that much of the left worldwide continues to support Maduro when it is obvious that he has been a complete disaster?

Maduro has been a disaster, and the best the opposition has to offer is the self-declared President Juan Guaidó. About him little is known, apart from his great admiration for the neo-fascist Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro, whom Guaidó praised for his commitment to “democracy [and] human rights,” as illustrated, for example, by his criticism of Brazil's military dictatorship — because it ... didn't murder 30,000 people as in neighboring Argentina, the worst of the vicious military dictatorships that swept across South America from the '60s.

The roots of the Venezuelan disaster go back to failures of the Chavez administration, including its failure to diversify the economy, which is still almost entirely reliant on oil export. Venezuelan opposition economist Francisco Rodríguez, former chief Andean economist for the Bank of America, notes the failure of the government to set aside reserves during the period of high oil prices so it was at the mercy of international financial markets when prices dropped sharply in 2014 — and has been blocked from access to credit by harsh US sanctions, which have exacerbated the effects of what Rodríguez describes as the “atrocious” mismanagement of the economy under Maduro. [Writing in Foreign Policy](#), Rodríguez observes that the policy of “Starving the Venezuelan economy of its foreign currency earnings risks turning the country's current humanitarian crisis into a full-blown humanitarian catastrophe.” Arguably that is the purpose, following the Nixon-Kissinger script of “making the economy scream” to undermine the Allende regime. (That was the soft track; the hard track, soon implemented, was brutal military dictatorship.)

The drift toward civil war, with outside interference, is all too apparent. There is still room for negotiations among the contending parties, but it diminishes daily as the crisis deepens. Maduro is digging and Washington is intensifying its intervention, imposing new sanctions and selecting the egregious Elliott Abrams to join Bolton and Pompeo in what has been called [“Trump's axis of evil.”](#) If skeletons can shudder, many must be doing so in the Central American countries that Abrams helped to ravage during Reagan's terrorist wars.

Israel and Iran seem to be moving ever further closer toward a full-blown war. Why are they clashing in Syria?

Iran joined Russia in ensuring Assad's victory in Syria, along with Iran's Lebanese ally Hezbollah. Israel has been bombing Syria regularly. Four months ago the [IDF reported over 200 strikes against Iranian targets](#) since 2017, and they have been increasing since.

Israel, of course, has overwhelming military dominance in the Middle East, even apart from its close alliance with the US, which lavishly funds its military with the most advanced weapons in the US arsenal and even uses Israel to pre-position US weapons. And, of course, Israel is the region's sole nuclear power, the reason why Washington has regularly blocked international efforts, led by the Arab states and Iran, to establish a nuclear weapons-free zone (furthermore, WMD-free) in the Middle East. That would end any imagined Iran nuclear threat, but it is unacceptable because the primary US client state in the region would have to open its nuclear arsenal to inspection, and those who regard US law as having some force would have to stanch the flood of military support for Israel.

Iran is not under US control and is therefore an enemy. Furthermore, the US and Israel recognize that Iran is a deterrent to their free resort to force in the region. The same is true of Hezbollah, whose Iranian-supplied missiles target large parts of Israel. The US and Israel have been threatening to attack Iran for years ("all options are open") in radical violation of the UN Charter (hence the US Constitution), but that is a matter of no concern for lawless states with overwhelming power. And Trump has, of course, escalated the confrontation by withdrawing from the Iran nuclear agreement. An actual invasion of Iran would be too costly and dangerous, but the US-Israel might consider attacking from a distance after somehow neutralizing Hezbollah (which would mean destroying much of Lebanon). The consequences could be devastating.

In Davos, the multibillionaires expressed annoyance at and even fear of the presence of radical Democrats in the US Congress and their talk of "soaking the rich" on taxes. Has a global financial oligarchy replaced democracy in today's advanced capitalist world?

It's impossible to replace something that has never really existed, but it's true that the partial democracies of the West have been undermined further by the

financialization of the international economy during the neoliberal years. That's a large part of the reason for the bitterness, anger and resentment, mislabeled "populism," that is shaking the foundations of the western democracies, where the centrist political parties that have run the political system are crumbling in election after election.

Many analysts have to account for the rise of such "populism" throughout the neoliberal capitalist world on the basis of psychic disorders — in [one respected version](#), impulses "deep in our psyches and bodies beyond matters of fact: physical pain, fear of the future, a sense of our own mortality." It is, however, not really necessary to appeal to an epidemic of irrationality and "emotional appeals" somehow spreading over the domains subjected to the neoliberal assault of the past generation, including the enormous growth of largely predatory financial institutions with its deleterious impact on democratic systems of governance.

Fear that the "rascal multitude" will threaten the property of the self-designated "men of best quality" traces back to the first modern democratic revolution in 17th century England, and was a major concern of the framers of the US Constitution in its successor a century later. It reappears constantly when there is even a minor threat to overwhelming power, as in the famous Powell memorandum of 1971, which warned that the world is practically coming to an end because of the slight infringement on overwhelming business domination of the society. The influential manifesto, sent to the US Chamber of Commerce, helped set off the harsh counterattack in the years since.

It's not surprising that these fears are surfacing in Davos as a few young Democratic representatives are arousing the rascal multitude again.

For many years, a considerable majority of the US population has favored higher taxes on the rich, while they regularly decline. And now, a few recently elected members of Congress are advocating what the public wants, most vocally Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who even went so far as to [suggest tax rates at a level regarded as optimal for the economy](#) by the most prominent specialists (Nobel laureate Peter Diamond, Emmanuel Saez, among others). Scandalous indeed.

What else can one expect when 26 people now have as much wealth as half the world's population, according to the latest of the regular Oxfam reports on inequality?

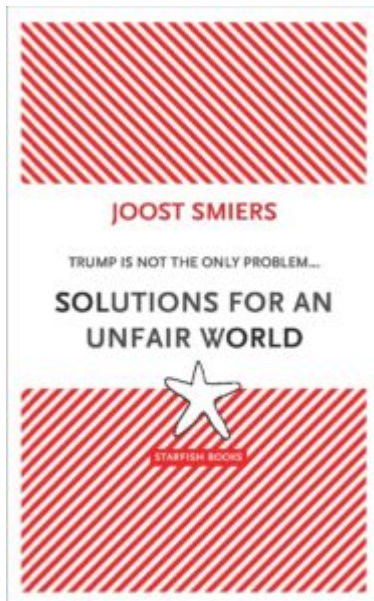
No wonder the "masters of mankind" are trembling.

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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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Solutions For An Unfair World ~ Contents & Introduction: Consternation



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Consternation

After November 8, 2016, I have occasionally thought that the governments of civilised nations should recall their ambassadors from the United States, for consultation as it is called; I'd rather say for consideration. Thus far that recall did of course not happen, but consideration is more than ever necessary. After one year it is abundantly clear that Donald Trump's government has not left relations within the us and the rest of the world untouched.

Obviously, us citizens must set their own course, but as residents of all corners of the world we have to consider what this Trump is doing. Let me mention in this essay a few points that we have to think about. What can we still expect, what have we already seen, how did that affect us, and how can we respond appropriately?

A warning is called for, and it comes from Luigi Zingales - as his name suggests an Italian, who is a professor in the United States. Make the comparison with Berlusconi, he suggests, and deduce lessons from that. *'Mr. Berlusconi was able to govern Italy for as long as he did mostly thanks to the incompetence of his opposition. It was so rabidly obsessed with his personality that any substantive political debate disappeared; it focused only on personal attacks, the effect of which was to increase Mr. Berlusconi's popularity.'* (New York Times, 22.11.16)

The purpose of this essay is not to fall into that trap. The election of Trump forces us, more than anything else, to consider some fundamental issues. At the same time we should not be afraid to formulate ambitious solutions. It is still possible to build a civilised, human, just and ecologically sustainable world. We need radical proposals for that, which I would like to present here in five - in principle separately readable - chapters.

I do not start with Trump - no matter how much we are talking about him. I want to focus first on four topics which form the core of the unrest that is raging around the world.

They contain a lot of explosive material. That is - I discuss it in the first chapter - the unmistakable fact that the unrestrained economic and cultural globalisation of the last decades has yielded relatively few winners, but an enormous amount of losers. If we see *'simplifying* right-wing currents' playing into this, the question arises why the left, with some exceptions, has joined so easily in the neoliberal discourse about the blessings of global free trade, deregulation, privatisation and the degradation of the individual and collective protection of citizen rights, which had been established over the decades.

What is happening now is that the current, unrestrained economic globalisation is meeting with more and more resistance. But it's not clear how we can get rid of it. The big question for now is which economic conditions we find just, human and efficient. This means that we need to make radical choices. This is what I am dealing with in the second chapter. Global, regional and bilateral trade treaties must be recalibrated. At the moment the purpose of these treaties is to give corporations and financial institutions the greatest possible freedom of action. But what about protecting the environment, pursuing social justice, enforcing decent working conditions, and finally ending tax evasion and tax fraud?

When rewriting and renegotiating trade agreements between countries, within regions and at a global level, these types of values must have priority. But that is not enough: too big and too powerful, and therefore democratically uncontrollable mega-corporations must be substantially reduced in size, and the intellectual property rights system that gives them so much power and privatises our jointly-built knowledge and creativity must be torn down. The reason for these major changes is also addressed in this second chapter.

This will be followed by a short, groundbreaking third chapter, with a somewhat unexpected proposal. One can find the forces that want to curb globalisation on the veritable left of the political spectrum and in the camp of what I call the simplifying right. For many people this will come as a small shock, but I think it is necessary that representatives of both extremes will start a dialogue with each other, in spite of all the outright differences and animosities between them. What connects them is however more important than what divides them. What connects them is the joint wish that the unrestrained and uncontrollable social, ideological and cultural globalisation will be stopped.

The fourth issue we are emphatically required to consider is something horrible: the threat of war. Weren't we supposed to have peace after the Cold War? Forget it. The arms race is in full swing. After 1989, we thought nato would be an unnecessary organisation, but it gradually became an instrument that has advanced to the borders of Russia. Was that a prudent thing to do? Now that Trump has announced that he does not want to pay any longer for the defence of Western Europe, and that he intends to spend a lot more on armaments for the us, we have to think suddenly about what kind of army we want to have. The choice we have to make is clear: Europe will invest heavily in - above all - new and technologically ingenious weapons, *or* we will have to pay more attention to the organisation of disarmament conferences and weapon reductions. For the sake of clarity, I do not want to suggest that an army in itself is an unnecessary luxury; however, the question is what kind of army that should be. In addition, we must fear that the motto of years ago ('All nuclear weapons should be removed from the face of the earth') will be more to the point than ever. War and peace, that is the theme of the urgent fourth chapter.

After these major issues, I focus on Trump in the fifth chapter. What does he harbour for the world and how should we respond? It is problematic that the us have always pretended to be a luminous example of what a real democracy is. But

then, the emperor is naked. We are even wondering if the presidential elections of 2016 were fraught with fraud. The trumpeting about lies and half truths is the order of the day. The press, the judicial apparatus, the intelligence services and officials of various government departments are depicted as enemies of the people. *Shame on them!!!!* As a result, the foundations needed for the good and fair functioning of the state are dismantled, which also seems to have been the intention of Trump's former chief advisor Steve Bannon. Trump is further advancing this with his December 2017 tax law, which will lead to the evaporation of the institutions and social provisions of the state. Even for those who had not seen, before the election, that Trump is a man with totalitarian tendencies, it cannot be a mystery anymore: he really is, and more than that.

The most disturbing fact is that we have to fear that this hateful and warlike president is heading towards some form of coup. It is sometimes suggested that the institutions in the us are strong enough to ensure this will not happen. But unfortunately it can happen if the people turn against those institutions. Moreover, the institutions are only as strong as the persons which carry them. In that regard the repulsive and opportunist behaviour of many Republicans does not seem to be hopeful. All this promises little good for the rest of the world. That's why I conclude this chapter with the comment that it is a bit depressed - I can not make it any nicer.

The presidency of Donald Trump can be regarded as a catalyst which has accelerated what was already happening in the world. This essay is an attempt to find our way in all of this, and to think about how we can formulate an answer. It would not do the world any good if that answer would only come from the simplifying right. Of course, given the limited framework of an essay, pressing subjects will be left undiscussed. We can think of what Trump is doing in the Middle East (and in this case not as an entrepreneur). Will the nuclear agreement with Iran remain intact? Do the Palestinians really get the worst of it? Will the relationship between the us and China be one of peace, or will both powers steer a collision course, with the Philippines suddenly turning up in the economic and military 'game' as a joker? Will North Korea be bombed flat? Have the relations with Mexico lost their apparent innocence, can we rest assured that the Trump government will understand what developments occur in Latin America and in Africa, and will it deal with them prudently? And will the normalization of us-Cuba relations be undone? What makes the situation dangerous, is that Donald Trump

improvises as far as foreign policy is concerned.

The biggest risk is that ultra-right forces in the US will do everything in their power to make the United Nations power less. According to Paul Kennedy, in his *The Parliament of Men*, we should be happy to have, in the form of the UN, something that we could not even have dreamt of before the Second World War. '*We have established a town meeting place of the world.*' (2006: 286) That is something very special and we have to cherish it. Despite all its imperfections, with the United Nations we have created a central place where governments from all countries, large and small, can meet and implement international mechanisms.

Within the United Nations we have a multitude of international organisations for many issues in areas such as food, health, culture and education, human rights, and so on. Paul Kennedy: The least you can say, and that's already really extraordinary, is that '*the Great Powers remain inside the tent. At best, they can do great things.*' (2006: 286) Probably I'm not the only one who fears that the Trump-government will not grant the UN the importance that the world needs.

All in all, I suppose that we are confronted by four major challenges. First of all, it is of the utmost urgency that, as I said before, the simplifying right and the veritable left will talk to each other, despite all mutual denunciations of the past. Why this bold proposal? The choice we are facing is the following: either we continue on the path of unrestrained and uncontrolled economic, social and cultural globalisation, or we have to understand that we, as citizens, are losing our grip on our living conditions through this ever-changing globalisation, and that something needs to be done.

The latter is one of the important messages that the simplifying right is taking out on the road. Precisely about that excessive globalisation a conversation is possible with the veritable left. Why do I prefer to talk about the simplifying right and not about the extreme right or the populist right? Whoever argues that the world in which we live has become too complex is not an extremist and not a populist either. But he or she might be simplifying, because simply calling for protectionism, the closing of borders and the setting off of trade wars, or considering people who are 'different' as the enemy, is not the solution. That shows naivety about the nature of the problems. The contribution to this conversation from the veritable left may be that the economic and financial power of large and powerful companies and financial institutions must be addressed.

Here is a challenging research task for the legal, economic, social, technical and agricultural institutes of universities: how can the transition be made from a global economy that is fullblown neoliberal to human-sized economies, in which companies are embedded in the societies in which they operate?

That is the first, and at the same time fascinating, challenge for the coming years. The second is of a completely different caliber. Whether we like it or not, Europe must engage with Russia, and rather today than tomorrow. The reality is that the current tensions between both parts of the European continent are not only due to Russia - in chapter 4 I will return to that. The choice is either to put even more armaments into play, to take NATO even closer to Russia and to stumble into a war, or to make diplomatic traffic work and to prepare the climate for disarmament conferences. In that respect we do not need NATO, on the contrary.

The third challenge that we need to confront is forced upon us by the rapidly changing political climate in the United States. The US have not yet become a totalitarian state, but human rights and the fundamental principles of the rule of law - and of civilisation - are under severe pressure, and it does not seem that this will suddenly improve, despite the resistance of many parts of the population. Slowly I get the strange feeling that Europe is surrounded by countries - now possibly also the US - that do not have many scruples about human rights and the active respect for the rule of law. That realisation charges us with the responsibility to signal every day all the tendencies that threaten to undermine and oppose the rule of law and human rights here in Europe as well. It turns out that a well-organised society is not an inviolable possession.

The fourth challenge also refers to the United States. Since the inauguration of Donald Trump as president the Atlantic alliance is being tested more and more day after day, by his style of governance as well as by the content of his policy in areas such as the environment, trade, financial traffic, armaments, nuclear weapons and NATO. Whatever one thinks about this policy, Europe must assume that the self-evidence that used to exist in the relationship with the United States since the Second World War has disappeared as snow before the sun. In itself, that could be good, but we can also get it wrong. This means that Europe is forced to redefine its relations with the United States in many areas. That will not be easy, if only because Europe is not a textbook example of unity when it comes to turning into new roads. Still, it will have to.

To make this terrifying concrete: Suppose it is not only so that Trump cs. have been in touch with certain circles in and around the Kremlin. The need to research this is urgent and it is not unthinkable that this leads to the impeachment of the 45th president of the US. Suppose as well that the elections as such have been sabotaged to the detriment of Hillary Clinton - the New York Times has used such words (22.3.17). Then it might be concluded that the presidential elections of 8 November 2016 have been hijacked, and that the legitimacy of the presidency of Donald Trump is at stake, as well as that of his potential successor. In the New York Times of March 24, 2017, Nicholas Kristof speaks of '*A smell or treason in the air.*' High treason. If that is the case, there should be new presidential elections in the US. In Chapter 5 I will return to that. What will this bring about? We have to fear the worst. I'm not saying this will necessarily happen, but it is not an unthinkable scenario, and we should be prepared for that.

In this essay I will be frugal with citations and the names of authors, but of course I am in debt to many commentators who have helped me, both before and after November 8, 2016, to distinguish between essentials and side issues. At the end of my essay there is a list of my sources of inspiration, and there I thank my friends who have helped me to stay on track.

There are nearly two hundred countries in the world. Most of them have periodic elections, or something that looks like that. The results of these - as far as I follow them - can make me happy or sad, but even in countries that enjoy my special attention the elections have never put my life on its head. However, that has been the case with the arrival of Trump.

I reached maturity in a time of mutual trust and great expectations - expectations about equality, respect for others, concern for the climate - without being afflicted with the idea that a particular country or people is better than any other. Is this perspective disappearing?

My friends and I, and all the people that have suffered a similar shock as a result of Trump's election, must find our way in a hard and dangerous world that we are not familiar with, but our values have remained unchanged. Hence this essay: an attempt to make the most of it.

Solutions For An Unfair World ~ The World In Which We Live Is Too Complex



It is beyond any doubt: for many citizens life in the second decade of the twenty-first century is difficult. Many are burdened with debt. In the United States and, for example, in Spain, residents can be evicted from their homes at any time. The chance that people will find a decently paid job is decreasing. Long-term unemployment is rather rule than exception. Industries are disappearing. Many suburbs need proper maintenance, but it's not happening, and the police there will not always be seen as your best friend. Worst of all perhaps is that the social safety nets, which have helped people through difficult times in their lives, are becoming increasingly wide-meshed. You often are on your own, in an environment in which you suspect - or are convinced - that immigrants are driving you out of the housing and job market, and have easier access to social services. The neighbourhood in which you live has less social cohesion than before, and mutual trust is gone. Daily life has almost no certainties anymore.

Of course we do not know this precisely, but the shaming of the political elite that is the order of the day may have something to do with this. After all, is it not the responsibility of politics to provide citizens with a safe and secure existence?

When we think about this, some paradoxes stand out. First of all, there is hardly any anger directed at the business establishment. The leaders of big companies always claim to be the true leaders of the free world, but if something goes wrong in society - and that is really the case now - they are not held responsible. Secondly, by confronting the political elites angry citizens make it abundantly clear that they expect a lot of care from the government. Despite decades of neoliberalism - which advocated the perishing of the state - for many

citizens the state still seems to be the entity that needs to keep society in order.

And the third paradox is that citizens have chosen time and again for political leaders who, according to the principles of neoliberalism, have denied the state the financial and organisational means of realising something for individual citizens and the society as a whole. At the same time the state should look after jobs and pensions, affordable health care, safety and everything that gives life perspective. In the absence of resources and competence, states, and thus politicians, can not provide all these things under neoliberal regimes. Nevertheless, the state is expected to deliver protection and social security to its citizens. After all, markets can only flourish if the state is strong enough to make life liveable for its citizens.

The relative impotence of the state to provide citizens with security in their lives is in stark contrast with the power that big companies have acquired over the course of several decades. These are companies that have grown into transnational corporations. Their structure is usually so complex that it is hardly understood what they do - anywhere in the world - and what the consequences might be. They can regard any form of regulation as being irrelevant to them and even prevent these rules from being implemented, including by lobbying at a large scale, wherever appropriate. Such transnational corporations act as collaborative entities that secure their interests on a worldwide scale.

If there are losers, because of the growing power of companies and the globalisation of our economies, there are also winners. A class conflict of formidable size has arisen: an increasing number of super-rich people is flanked by a small part of the population that is affluent, able to travel and having interesting work - the young urban professionals. But even their security of life is not guaranteed; they can be sacked any minute, and then it does not seem to matter that they once had a fantastic job.

On the use of the word class conflict nowadays rests a big taboo, as if the difference between the very rich and the very poor has no economic origins. It is as if it does not matter that there is a significant inequality in opportunities and wealth. What matters to many people is what is happening close to home. For example, when they meet people in the street whose roots lie elsewhere. Cultural contrasts and inconveniences - which are real in some situations - overshadow the other distinction: between a life that offers little perspective and

the horn of plenty that some people can enjoy, say the sunny side of the street.

By furthering the globalisation of companies and financial institutions, and by freeing markets and economic traffic between countries, the idea was that there should be prosperity for everyone in every corner of the world. As could be expected, this did not happen. But something else did: the relationships between people have become harsher; people are sometimes fiercely opposed to each other. This is not surprising. Neoliberalism maintained that everybody should look after his or her own interests, so people should not expect too much collective solidarity. They must compete almost permanently with each other, and if possible treat others and society to a nasty trick. Taxes are no longer something you pay, be it grudgingly, because you know what they are for; paying taxes has become something for idiots. Additionally, the concept of the citizen - and the dignity associated with it - has been replaced by the concept of the consumer. What for are we on earth, according to neoliberalism? To buy and sell.

In his beautiful essay *Discomfort* essayist Bas Heijne writes about the permanently dissatisfied citizen who is used to being approached as a consumer and who has no room for any sense of community. For people who primarily have to deal with the economic and social disadvantages of globalisation, it is hard to swallow that their desires will not be realised: *'These citizens are used to getting their way, they have been promised that they can make their own world; what does not satisfy their desires causes their disinterest, or, if they feel thwarted, their anger. These citizens are diva's, utterly egocentric and pampered, intolerant to other views, essentially for everything that is perceived as different.'* (2016: 65, 6)

This statement is pretty bold. But if you put it next to the nearly endless possibilities that the rich of this planet have, it is true. There is no reason for them to be furious, because their desires and the realisation of them are lying along the same route. At the same time it is not in their interest that there will be a class struggle. Nevertheless, the anger of the losers of the merciless economic competition will have to focus on something, on people who are perceived to be guilty of their loss. Then they will soon arrive at people in their own neighbourhood who are different. It does not matter if the other is a migrant, a homosexual, a Jew, an Arab, a Muslim, a Mexican or a self-conscious woman: so many flavours, so many options to be angry, depending upon the cultural sensitivities which lead a dormant existence in any particular society. Thus,

Trump and his fellow-thinkers act as pyromaniacs. It's not hard to stir these animosities and to make the flames flare up.

Perhaps only this is surprising: even then there is no trace of the idea that the main distinction is not that between you and your neighbour, near or far, but that everything should turn around the antithesis between classes. A bizarre example: in December 2016 it appears that top soccer players, like Cristiano Ronaldo, evade taxes on a large scale. For his fans, that's no problem: '*Anyone in Spain with money would do exactly the same.*' (NRC Handelsblad, December 5, 2016)

The blame for the shortcomings - either real or purely perceived as such - can also be given to foreign powers. Trade relationships that are unfair, or branded as such, may be the spark to the tinder. The world is getting ever more disordered. There are many issues in the world that are too complex to comprehend and control. They can cause tensions between countries, until they are no longer containable, after which they will be followed by wars. The image of the enemy has been given so much magic power that, under the great enthusiasm of the populations, armies can be sent to the battlefield and cyber attackers make overtime. *Peace in our time.*

Which leaders of important countries dare to recognise that wars - for example, between the US and China - are no longer unthinkable, and that peace is no longer self-evident? They even make threats with it.

So we have arrived at a crucial point in history. It could happen that governments will rouse their citizens, after which wars of enormous magnitude could occur. Here's a task for global peace movements: make people around the world aware of the fact that armed conflicts and cyber attacks on an unprecedented scale can actually become like the familiar scenes of Hollywood movies. These latter ones have to be restricted a little bit anyway. It's not a good idea to put war in the imagination of people: the step from fiction to reality is quickly made, as if reality is the same as fiction. Don't we live in the post-truth era?

Just warning for the threat of violence is not enough. It is time for us to realise that the world in which we live has become too complex and is exceeding the human scale. Communication networks are no longer controllable and will be targeted by anyone who wants to hurt and disrupt societies. Transnational

companies do what they think their shareholders want from them, without any regard for fundamental societal interests - think of the climate, social care, fair competition, research on what is urgently needed, decent wages and strong unions. Investments in innovations involve ever-increasing costs, without the actual costs being outweighed by the benefits: the law of reduced profitability. On the other hand, investments are being made in robots, which will only increase unemployment. Robots do not come out of the blue. It is a choice to do large-scale research on them. For example, there is little or no investment in research into renewable energy sources and the limitation of the use of raw materials.

Systems are becoming increasingly complex: those of producing companies, transport chains, political structures, the European Union, intellectual property rights and the 'theft' thereof, stock markets, the energy supply, climate control, high-speed capital, trade agreements, sanctions, and criminality of all stripes. This turmoil of complexities is now reaching its limits. Democratic control over all those elusive processes threatens to become illusory. No society can function if it suffers from excessive complexity.

We must acknowledge that this complexity, which does not make our lives any better and safer, is largely human-made. Granted, new transport and communication technologies have taken down boundaries and made processes unclear. But it was not a law, set in stone, that the removal of trade barriers, from the 1980s and 1990s, and the introduction of new communication channels would unfold in the way we have witnessed. The importance of unregulated global markets was made crucial. The problem with it - and with the principle of free trade, proclaimed by neoliberalism - is that these markets are not - or hardly - embedded in our societies. There is simply no global society, and certainly no global democracy.

In ordinary circumstances *national* markets are being managed by national politics and supervised by special authorities. But in the *global* context, where companies can do what they want, issues that are important to citizens in specific societies are not taken care of. There is no global competition authority, no global supervisor of business operations, no *global lender of last resort*, no global safety net to safeguard citizens from excessive disaster, no global bank that can effectively manage money traffic, no global environmental agency, and no global prosecutor who can institute criminal proceedings in a global court against worldwide operating corporations and those responsible for those companies.

Because of neoliberalism governments have come to a disadvantageous position in relation to the markets, and at the global level there are no governments that can act on a level playing field with market parties. But we must make sure that markets and governments are complementary. If we want better and fairer markets, strong governance is required from the public sector. That means: powerful public authorities that are not subordinate to the markets. That's what we lack nowadays.

Economic, social and cultural globalisation has become an imperative: that requires from all countries that they pursue the same policy in areas such as making room for companies without too many obstacles; imposing taxes on companies which are as low as possible; deregulating markets; privatising knowledge and creativity according to the high standards of intellectual property rights; limiting the power of unions; introducing equal rules for food safety, as coarse-grained as possible, introducing environmental measures, and admitting the free movement of capital - as if local interests regarding the circulation of capital are not essential for the well-being of local economies.

Is it possible to imagine that the current hyper-globalisation will be tamed by a global government which is at least as strong? Asking the question is answering it. If even the European Union - in spite of all its good intentions - does not succeed in adopting a common policy in all these areas against the self-centered power of large companies, which is seen by people of all walks of life as beneficial and enriching, it is impossible to think that such a strong government could exist on a global scale. The differences between countries and the needs of their populations differ in such a way that *one size fits is all* is impossible and especially undesirable. As is apparent now, there is an increasing abhorrence of super-national structures.

If democracy at a global level is out of reach, the illusion must also be relinquished that open global markets and unrestricted financial traffic are desirable. So we have to think of something else. It is good to maintain the benefits of limited globalisation and not to retreat into protectionism; that has led to the Second World War, so we don't want that anymore.

What matters now is to explicitly recognise the benefits of national diversity, I would almost say to celebrate them. The authority of national governments must be restored to primacy, in all areas of economic, social and cultural life, not to

mention the fields of environment, agriculture and energy. Markets work best if they are well-organised, for the benefit of citizens, for the profit expectations of entrepreneurs who should not be overrun by strong market parties, for the protection of property rights, and for all that is needed to give citizens - who are not consumers for a change - the feeling and, above all, the certainty that their interests will be taken seriously, and that the income differences between the rich and the poor will not become too extreme.

If the parties of the simplifying right claim to be the only ones to have put globalisation on the agenda, the center-left needs to be blamed. Together with the parties of the conservative right, the social democrats in Western Europe and the Democrats in the United States have cleared the way for uncontrolled globalisation. They have embraced the idea and practice of uncontrolled and unregulated global free markets, which did not have to protect anything that was weak and vulnerable. Was it not under the presidency of Bill Clinton that the watershed, which banks had to apply between their clients' money and their own economic activities, was made undone?

This watershed was the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act, which - until Clinton cancelled it - kept the banks under control. After that, the banks could speculate with their customers' money - slicing and selling risks until no-one was responsible anymore - until the system collapsed in 2008. Under Obama, with the 2010 Dodd Frank Act, an attempt was made to tame the banks again. One of the electoral promises of Donald Trump was to undo this law, or at least to make it weaker, and that is what he has done. This will lead to the next financial crisis caused by banks that have too much freedom and can not quit speculating.