Illusions And Dangers In Trump's "America First" Policy: An Interview With Economist Robert Pollin

Robert Pollin ~ Photo: UMass Amherst

Donald Trump will probably go down in history as having pulled the biggest political con job in US electoral politics. With no coherent ideology but lies and false promises, he managed to win the support of millions of white working-class people whose lives have been shattered by globalization and stagnant wages. In an exclusive interview for Truthout, Robert Pollin, professor of economics and co-director of the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, puts into context Trump's stance on globalization and his "America first" stance.

C.J. Polychroniou and Marcus Rolle: Resistance to globalization was the preeminent policy theme in Trump's election campaign, as he not only attacked immigration and promised to build a wall on the US-Mexican border, but rallied against existing trade agreements, including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and promised to withdraw the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal, a promise he carried out immediately upon entering the White House. Given that the US remains the world's only true superpower and that multilateral trade agreements constitute an integral component of the global neoliberal economy, where, firstly, does resistance to globalization locate

Donald Trump on the politico-ideological spectrum and, secondly, what is, in your view, his ultimate vision for the United States?

Robert Pollin: Donald Trump is difficult, if not impossible, to locate with respect to the global neoliberal project; first of all because all evidence thus far supports the conclusion that he has no real convictions at all, other than self-promotion. It's true that he campaigned on a strong nationalist agenda that diverged in many ways from neoliberalism — i.e. from a program of free trade, unregulated financial markets and freedom for multinational corporations to operate as they please. That program did speak to the experiences of the US white working class, which, as even former Federal Reserve Chair Alan Greenspan recognized in the 1990s, had become "traumatized" by the forces of neoliberal globalization. It is unclear how forcefully Trump intends to diverge from neoliberalism in practice, despite his rhetorical appeals to his base within the US white working class. To me, relative to understanding Donald Trump's "ultimate vision," I think it is much more important for progressives to become much clearer in defining our own vision on globalization. Specifically, in my view, what is most important is establishing a clear distinction between neoliberal globalization and globalization in any form at all.

Neoliberal globalization is all about creating freedom for private capital and financial speculation, which in turn has created an unprecedented global "reserve army of labor," to use Marx's brilliant turn of phrase. The global reserve army of labor has indeed pitted US workers against workers in China, India, Kenya, Mexico, Guatemala — you name it. This has weakened workers' bargaining power in the US, which in turn is the most basic factor driving wage stagnation in the United States for the past 40 years, even as US average labor productivity has more than doubled over this period. But we should be able to envision an alternative framework in which the US and other countries are open to trade and immigration within a context of a commitment to full employment and a strong social welfare state. Within a full employment economy with strong social protections, an open trading system will not produce a global reserve army of labor to anything close to the extent we have experienced over the past 40 years. This is the key point.

What has been NAFTA's impact on US workers, and what was wrong with the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal?

It is first important to recognize that NAFTA and the TPP were not simply about "free trade" between the US and Mexico. Much less advertised but at least equally significant was that these were deals that gave freedom of movement and strengthened property rights to multinational corporations and financial institutions. With respect to trade, per se, between Mexico and the US, the basic impact of NAFTA has been, again, to expand the reserve army of labor — i.e. pitting US workers against Mexican workers. This is by no means an abstract matter. What I am talking about are situations in which, say, autoworkers in the US try to bargain for a raise. But the plant owners' response to a demand for increased wages is, effectively: *"You don't like what you are getting paid? Fine, we will move across the border to Mexico, where wages are one-quarter of what you make, or less. Good-bye and good luck."* That has been a credible threat to workers for a long time. NAFTA only made it still more credible.

As part of his "America first" agenda, Trump has vowed to bring back manufacturing jobs by imposing high tariffs on certain imports (for example, he plans to do so on imports of Canadian softwood lumber) and has stressed that all jobs must be first offered to Americans before they can be offered to foreign nationals. How realistic are such policy postures, and what could be the consequences if every other country opted to adopt similar approaches?

I don't think Trump will end up following through on such threats, even while he will likely keep up the rhetoric to appeal to his base. For example, he has already backed off on his threat to declare China a currency manipulator. Of course, in practice, China is no less of a "currency manipulator" than it was six months ago. What has changed is that, with Trump now in office, he is hearing from his top economic advisers — Gary Cohn and Steven Mnuchin, both veterans of Goldman Sachs — that trying to bully China is more likely to hurt US capitalists as well as have dangerous consequences for US military interests. In general, I do not think imposing high tariffs is either realistic or desirable, and I don't think Trump has any serious intention to follow through on such threats.

A more realistic policy framework would work from the existing "Buy America" program that has been in place for decades in the area of federal government procurement, but that has been only weakly enforced in practice. Under Buy America, federally-funded procurement contracts in manufacturing — such as building railcars for municipal public transportation systems — are supposed to give preferences to US manufacturers. That is a reasonable framework both at

the level of federal as well as state and local government policy that most other countries already follow as well, as one important element of a broader set of industrial policies in support of US manufacturing and jobs.

The issue of immigration continues to divide public opinion in the United States, as it does elsewhere around the Western world, insofar as its impact to the economy and society is concerned. Is there any evidence that the inflows of foreign labor reduce jobs or Americans' wages?

The best evidence of which I am aware comes from the UC Berkeley economist David Card, who finds that the impact of immigrants in the US labor force has little, if any, impact on wages of US native-born workers at the lower end of the job market. Card reached this conclusion by comparing conditions in the low-wage labor market in US cities that have a very high proportion of immigrants, such as Miami, New York and Los Angeles, with cities, such as Philadelphia or Atlanta, in which the immigrant population is much smaller proportionally. I myself, along with [Assistant Research Professor at the Political Economy Research Institute] Jeannette Wicks-Lim replicated Card's findings over the years of the Great Recession. Our conclusion was the same as Card's — the mere presence of a high proportion of immigrants in a given local labor market did not negatively impact wages of native-born workers. This is because immigrants in cities, such as Miami and New York, are also people who buy things and set up their own businesses in these cities. They are, therefore, expanding the markets and jobs in these cities, as well as supplying more people to these local labor markets.

What about undocumented immigration? There are some studies indicating that undocumented immigration depresses wages of unskilled American workers.

The same general result applies to both legal and [undocumented] immigrants. Immigrants do take jobs in the low-wage labor market. But they also expand demand by their own purchases, and they also create their own businesses in some cases. That said, there are specific areas of the economy in which the share of immigrant workers is very high — agricultural farm work is perhaps the best example. In this case, you do get more of a reserve army of labor effect, in which the overall wage bargaining dynamic hurts workers against their employers. But we need to be careful not to generalize from the specific case of farmworkers to the general case of all immigrant workers operating in all areas of the US

economy.

Looking at the first 100 days of the Trump administration, an "America first" policy begins to look like a military-first policy aimed towards global hegemony. If the Trump presidency is ushering in a new era of militarism, doesn't this fit with Trump's unilateral trade approach?

"America first" as a foreign policy is nothing new, of course. US global military dominance has been the established program for generations. But this is fully consistent with the point that neoliberal economic policy is clearly the preferred framework for big capital in the US, since it is the program that enables multinational corporations and financial institutions to operate most profitably throughout the world. As such, US militarism has been operating on behalf of an open economic system, supportive of US capital. I don't think that is going to change in a fundamental way under Trump. Overall, again, I think that Trump's global economic policies will be characterized mostly by incoherence, with heavy doses of "America first" rhetoric. Within such incoherence, it is again most important, in my view, that progressives go much further in advancing a policy approach that is open to global trade and investment, but as part of a broader framework in which full employment and a strong social welfare state are the foundations, in the US and elsewhere.

What am I talking about more specifically? At present, the US is officially at full employment, according to the Federal Reserve. But this is with about 23 million people either unemployed, underemployed or having dropped out of the labor force during the Great Recession but not returning since. The federal government needs to directly expand job creation through spending on 1) building a zero emissions green economy; 2) traditional infrastructure, especially public transportation; and 3) education. This can be financed in large part through the so-called Robin Hood Tax — i.e. taxing Wall Street transactions, which can generate in the range of $300 billion per year. This would mean moving money out of Wall Street and into vital areas of social spending, which can also be sources of new job creation. It can also be financed by the Federal Reserve directly purchasing bonds floated by states and municipalities to support public spending on the green economy, infrastructure and education. In addition, we need to move out of our existing disastrously inequitable and wasteful health care system, and replace it with something like "Medicare for All." That would provide decent health care provision for everyone, while still reducing the overall

economy's spending on health care by about 20 percent. There is a model bill of just such a measure being debated now in California.

Finally, the US needs to practice industrial policies to support a manufacturing revival. This would include guaranteeing public sector purchases of US manufactured products, low-cost financing for innovative US manufacturers and the development of regional support systems for manufacturing firms in various areas of the country. The German economy is a good model on this point — they are a manufacturing and export powerhouse, even though their average manufacturing wages are about 30 percent higher than in the US. With this combination of Green New Deal, social infrastructure and industrial policies pushing the economy toward true full employment — i.e. anybody who is willing and able to work can get a decent job — the US could still manage to purchase a good share of imports from all over the world, especially low-income economies that can gain great benefits from being able to sell their products in the US market. Any negative impacts from such import purchases will be greatly diminished because the reserve army of labor in the US will have been itself greatly diminished by policies of full employment and a strong welfare state guaranteeing the well-being of US workers and their families.

ASC ~ Education For Life. Akiiki Babyesiza ~ Introduction

On the occasion of the international conference 'Education for Life in Africa', organized by the Netherlands Association for Africa Studies in The Hague on 19 and 20 May 2017, the ASCL Library has compiled a web dossier on this theme. The conference is dedicated to Goal 4 of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): 'Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning'.

The web dossier contains recent titles from our Library catalogue (from 2013 onwards), divided into six thematic sections. Each title links to the corresponding record in the online catalogue, which provides abstracts and full-text links (when available). The dossier also contains a number of relevant websites. African textbooks present in our Library (for example, on history and on religion), have not been included in this web dossier. They can be searched in our catalogue using the keyword textbooks (form) combined with a keyword such as 'history', 'Islam' or 'Christianity'.

The dossier is introduced by Dr Akiiki Babyesiza, an expert in higher education, specializing in Sub-Saharan Africa. Dr Babyesiza has been working for CHE Consult (Berlin), a consulting company in the field of strategic higher education management, since May 2017.

Introduction

Africa is the youngest continent, with half of its population under the age of 15. An inclusive and equitable education sector from pre-primary to higher education that can offer opportunities for this rising young population is at the core of the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.

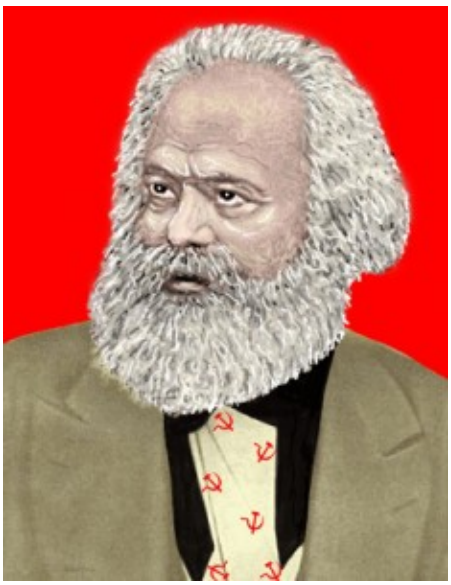
In recent decades, the multilateral initiative Education for All and the education related goals of the Millennium Development Goals have led to substantial changes in the field of education in Africa. Yet, the goal of universal primary education has not been achieved and a high proportion of the world's out-of-school children are African. While access to primary, secondary and higher education has increased, many other challenges persist with respect to equity and quality. Some of the challenges are connected to how and what children learn at school. One important aspect is the language of instruction, which is usually not the pupils' mother tongue. Often, the lack of educational success is connected to a lack of proficiency in the language of instruction. Another issue is the role of pedagogy and whether students learn to apply knowledge or just to repeat it. This is, of course, also connected to the quality of the education and training of teachers. Moreover, inequities remain between rural and urban areas with respect to the distribution of schools, particularly secondary schools and higher education institutions. And there are inequities with regard to gender, ethnicity, disability and refugee status.

These challenges are exacerbated in situations of war and violent conflict, where educational institutions can worsen as well as mitigate conflict. Students can be marginalized by language, teaching content and the politicization of teaching staff. At the same time, educational institutions that offer peace and civic education for students and accelerated learning programmes for former child soldiers can have a positive impact in post-conflict situations.

Whether in times of war or in times of peace, there is need for a more holistic view of education – from pre-primary education to higher education and technical vocational education and training. The higher education sector, for example, has long suffered from neglect due to the strong focus on primary education in international development debates. Due to the social rates of return theory adopted by the World Bank, higher education institutions in Africa were perceived as an unnecessary luxury. These days, politicians and development actors have embraced the interconnectedness of the different educational sectors. Teachers are taught at higher education institutions, so there cannot be successful primary and secondary schools without quality tertiary education. While the number of higher education students in Sub-Saharan Africa doubled between 2000 and 2010, the rate of youth enrolled in higher education is only around 6% (26% is the global average). Furthermore, many scholars, practitioners and politicians believe that the development of a knowledge economy/society, with higher education institutions at its centre, is key to local and global sustainable development.

Access to education and enrolment: http://www.ascleiden.nl/content/education-life ~ scroll down a little for the web dossier.

Dismantling Domination: What We Can Learn About Freedom From Karl Marx



Karl Marx (1818-1883) Ills.: Ingrid Bouws

Over the years, especially following the latest global financial crisis that erupted in late 2007, there has been a renewed interest in the work of Karl Marx. Indeed, Marx remains essential for understanding capitalism, but his political project continues to produce conflicting interpretations. What really motivated Marx to undertake a massive study of the laws of the capitalist mode of production? Was Marx interested in liberty, or merely in equality? And did Marx's vision of communism have any links to "actually existing socialism" (i.e., the socialist regimes of the former Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc)?

Marx's Inferno: The Political Theory of Capital, a recently published book by McGill University Professor William Clare Roberts, offers a rigorous and unique interpretation of Marx's political and philosophical project. The book reveals why Marx remains extremely relevant today to all those seeking to challenge capitalism's domination and violence — from its exploitation of labor power to the use of oppressive stage apparatuses as reflected in the exercise of police brutality. We spoke to William Clare Roberts about Marx's project and vision of communism.

C.J. Polychroniou: In your recently published book Marx's Inferno, you contend that liberty, rather than equality, was Marx's primary politico-philosophical concern and, subsequently, claim that his work and discourse belong in the republican tradition of political thought. Can you elaborate a bit on these claims and tell us how they are derived from a particular reading of Marx's work?

William Clare Roberts: I would say it a bit differently. Marx is certainly concerned with equality. Everyone on the left is. The question is: equality of what? This is where freedom, or liberty, comes in. In my book, I argue that Marx shared the radical republican project of securing universal equal freedom. When we talk about equality on the left today, this is too often assumed to mean equality of material wealth or equality of treatment, such that economic equality is the goal in itself. For Marx, economic inequality was not the main problem. It was a consequence and a breeding ground of domination. This was Marx's prime concern.

To be dominated is to be subject to the whims or caprice of others, to have no control over whether or not they interfere with you, your life, your actions, your body. Republicans, going back to the Roman republic, have recognized that this lack of control over how others treat you is, of itself, inimical to human flourishing. [According to their philosophy], whether or not the powerful actually hurt you is actually less important than the fact that they have the power to hurt you, and you can't control whether or not or how they use that power. It is in this space of uncertainty and fear that power does its work. So, for example, that an employer can fire a worker at will is usually enough to secure the worker's obedience, especially where the worker doesn't have many alternative sources of income. Likewise, that the police have the basically unchecked power to arrest, beat and harass people in many neighborhoods produces all manner of distortions in how people live, regardless of whether they have actually been beaten or harassed. To live free is to live without this fear or this need to watch out for the powerful. And this means being equally empowered.

Traditionally, republicans were concerned only to protect the freedom of a certain class of men within their own political community. In the 19th century, however, workers, women, escaped slaves — people who lived with domination — began to take over this republican theory of freedom and to insist that everyone should enjoy equal freedom. I read Marx as part of this tradition.

Marx's major innovation in this tradition was to develop a theory of the capitalist economy as a system of domination. Radicals then — like many radicals today — assimilated capital to previous forms of power — military, feudal, or extortionary. They saw the capitalist simply as a monopolist, and the government as the enforcement squad of the monopolists. To Marx, this was insufficient as a critical diagnosis. The capitalists are, like the workers, dependent upon the market. They

must act as they do or be replaced by other, more effective capitalists. Marx saw in this market dependence a new sort of all-round social domination. The livelihood of each depends upon the unpredictable and uncontrollable decisions of many others. This impersonal domination mediates and transforms the other forms of domination people experience.

One of the most interesting aspects of your book, at least for me, is the analysis of Marx's use and understanding of exploitation. Clearly, as you point out, Marx was concerned with the exploitation of labor power, not with exploitation as a general social category. What's the political significance of this, and what's your explanation for the general tendency among contemporary radical analyses on capitalism to shy away from the use of expressions like "surplus value" and "class struggle"?

This is a specific development of the previous point. Because the impersonal domination of the market mediates the other aspects of capitalist production, capitalist exploitation is quite unlike other forms of exploitation. As Marx puts it in *Capital*, capitalists did not invent the exploitation of surplus labor. But, in the past, those who enjoyed the fruits of other people's labor did so by means of extortion, theft and coercion. Exploitation was, therefore, a drain on production; it disincentivized production. Capitalist production, on the other hand, incentivizes labor and production like nothing else ever has. The exploitation of labor-power — Marx's technical phrase for capitalist exploitation — is so effective, in fact, that overwork is endemic to capitalist economies.

Marx thought that workers organizing to fight overwork was one of the most important and powerful levers for the development and transformation of capitalist production. The fight against overwork, and for higher wages, was, he argued, the basic spur that drove capitalists to introduce new production technologies. Industrialization and mechanization, in turn, provoke the agglomeration of capitalist producers, increasing both the mass of workers and the concentration of capital. These fights also bring workers together, and give them political experience. All of this, Marx argued, prepared workers to win the battle someday, and to replace capitalist production entirely.

This understanding of the links between exploitation, class struggle, capitalist development and revolutionary politics has largely fallen out of favor among radicals. I am very interested in the history of this theory's decline, in part

because I think the theory had more going for it than many of its critics — even very sympathetic critics — realize….

The criticisms of Marx's value theory … have diverted attention from the basic observations that underlie Marx's account of capitalist exploitation. Unlike materials and technologies of production, which provide objectively predictable inputs to the production process, workers must be induced to work, and how much work they provide is a matter requiring constant management and government. Marx's attention to the workplace as a site of governance and induced activity is as relevant as ever.

The other major reason Marx's analysis has fallen out of favor is that the link between class struggle and revolutionary politics seemed to be broken. On the one hand, the industrial working class seemed to be integrated into capitalism by winning the franchise, winning higher wages through unionization, and winning social security in the form of the welfare state. On the other hand, the locus of radicalism and revolt seemed to be in the students, the peasants of the colonized world, and the oppressed peoples fighting for national liberation.

But none of these developments actually undermine Marx's argument, which was that only those dependent upon wages for life — a class that far exceeds industrial workers — have an interest in universal emancipation. Anyone who is dominated or oppressed has an interest in the emancipation of their own group. But Marx thought that wages made people interdependent on one another and dependent upon technologically advanced production to such an extent that wage workers could only liberate themselves — even at a national level — by liberating everyone, everywhere. At a moment when left populism — be it that of Sanders or Corbyn or Mélanchon — seems compelled to reinforce national frontiers, Marx's argument should be revisited.

Marx's critique of capitalist economy and society, you argue in your book, was influenced by the poetic imagery of Dante. Is this of political import, or simply of literary significance?

I am wary of too simple a distinction between the literary and the political. Marx rewrote Dante's *Inferno*, I argue, because Dante's moral imaginary was deeply ingrained in the vernacular of the workers' movement. The literary aspects of *Capital* — its structure, its metaphors, its images — are integral to its political

mission: to reshape the theoretical and political language of the workers' movement. To us today, it may seem merely literary, but that is because the Christian-Aristotelian moral discourse is no longer part of our vernacular in the way it was in 19th-century Europe.

At the most fundamental level, I think Dante is crucial for Marx's political argument because the *Inferno* provides the basic categories of wrong that structure Marx's argument in *Capital*. Capitalist society is out of control, violent, fraudulent and treacherous. These are Dante's categories. Marx reconfigures and redefines them, fleshes them out with political economy, and transforms them into a critical social theory. You don't need Dante to understand that critical social theory once it is finished, but seeing the Dante in it helps reveal its genesis and structure.

Communism has gotten a bad rap as a result of the experience of "actually existing socialism": the socialist regimes of the former Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. Did Marx have an actual vision of communism? And, if so, how does his ideal communist society relate to republicanism?

Marx's "vision of communism" is notoriously indefinite. I argue that there are good reasons for this. Marx is primarily a diagnostician of domination. He is impressed by the workers' unfreedom, and spent half his life trying to figure out how the institutions that created that unfreedom work. He was convinced that, if the workers knew how their unfreedom was sustained and reproduced, they would be able to figure out how to organize themselves to abolish it.

Part of this confidence, I am convinced, came from the fact that Marx took for granted that republican institutions — well-known in the realm of politics — could be extended to the realm of the economy without grave difficulties. He thought worker-run cooperative factories pointed the way. He thought workers should elect their managers, and that decisions about production, organization and distribution should be subject to political debate. Revolutionary situations — like that of Paris in 1871 — saw the common people organizing themselves into networks of communal self-government. Marx took this as confirmation of his faith in the workers' ability to emancipate themselves and create a global framework of interdependent "social republics."

This emancipatory perspective certainly faded over the course of the 20th

century. This was in part due to the harshness of war and the ravages of nationalism, not to mention the reactionary terrors that always stalked the ascension of socialists and communists to government. But it was also prepared by the fact that "rational administration" always vied with freedom as the goal of the socialist movement. From this perspective, it was the "out-of-control"-ness of capitalism that seemed most objectionable. Control and planning seemed more important, therefore, than the equal empowerment of everyone to resist the impositions of others. Command economies resulted in catastrophe.

Equally important, there are real and massive difficulties of logistics and institutional design that confront the effort to organize global cooperative production. The sheer scale of the project boggles the mind. It is very hard to cooperate, even when it is essential for our continued existence. We don't really know how to do it yet. You can affirm Marx's critical theory of the society ruled by capitalist production in every detail and then affirm that we do not yet know how to replace that society with something better. Rather than a vision of an ideal communist society, we might take from Marx what he offers: a compelling principle of freedom, by which we can evaluate our social and political situation, and a powerful theory of how the capitalist world disregards, endangers and tramples on that freedom. What we can do about it — that we have to supply for ourselves.

Prof. Jayati Ghosh On Economic Growth & Women's Health – UCL Lancet Lecture 2011

Professor Jayati Ghosh (Jawaharlal Nehru University) delivered the 2011 UCL Lancet Lecture: 'Economic growth and women's health outcomes'. One of the most surprising features of the recent rapid income growth in emerging

economies is how it has not been associated with significant improvements in women's health outcomes. Professor Ghosh uses indicators (such as the infant mortality rate, the maternal mortality rate and the child sex ratio) to explore the specific experience of India over the past two decades.

Ubuntu And Natural Resources Management ~ Some Reflexions

"The tragedy of the commons" was the first topic in the subject- environmental science at my university. Although I agree with Hardin (1968) that the "Tragedy of the Commons" is foreseeable with uncontrolled population growth and pollution which is threatening life as we know it. I am unconvinced about his counsel on privatisation of land as a means to better manage the environment. Which implies that communal land would be more difficult to manage and privatisation of land is the answer for improved environmental management.

In Africa, historically, land belonged to the community that lived on it. Land was communal and communalism promoted sharing of resources and managing them together. Humans and animals were not separate from the environment and communalism encouraged a collective sense of responsibility to conservation. It runs far deeper, into African way of thinking and philosophy, into cultural beliefs, ethics, values and indigenous knowledge.

A co-managed forest in Liwonde, southern Malawi (above) compared to one that is managed by the State (below) a few kilometres away.

When we talk about communalism, the African philosophy of "Ubuntu", which is an Nguni Bantu term meaning "I am because you are" is of relevance. Ubuntu is often translated as "humanness," and "humanity towards others," but is often used in a more philosophical sense to mean "the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity". "*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*"

In Zulu language, is literally translated as "a person is a person because of people". Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu were very influential among other people in promoting Ubuntu philosophy. Desmond Tutu has explained Ubuntu as meaning "My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours ."That implies that because we are all part of a greater whole, hence we are all interconnected. Human existence depends on interconnectedness and not on isolation. This interconnectedness can be extended from between humans to include the land and the environment in which humans live.

Rural communities in Africa depend on natural resources in their livelihood, therefore, how land is managed is of particular concern as it has human well-being implications. Communities such as the San people, who lived as close as possible to nature exhibit the spirit of communalism and Ubuntu. In fact, their tribes do not have Chiefs and their spirit of community is so strong that they make decisions for the tribe based on consensus. They live in such harmony within themselves and in nature and are a living testimony that it is indeed possible for people to come together to solve problems collectively for the greater good of their community and the environment. It is possible to practise Ubuntu and live harmoniously and thrive.

Principles of Ubuntu are contained within co-management systems such as those

found in forest management in Malawi. Communal land is managed by traditional authority and Chiefs act on behalf of their subjects to manage land equitably. In 1996, a project by World Bank for sustainable use of forest products such as wood, poles and non-timber products such as medicinal plants was started. Communities came together and set up a constitution and by -laws charting out sharing of forest revenues between themselves and the Government. They also drew up rules for access to resources and the rights and obligations of members. Here, local governance structures were important, as power was divulged from state to local bodies. Such a participatory approach was found to have worked well in most cases and Government would be the enabler providing guidance and training, while it is the communities that make the laws and plans which include marking of boundaries, managing fires, sustainable harvesting of products, penalizing those who do not follow the by-laws and controlling illegal trafficking of forest products. In some co-management programmes, incomes of poor communities have substantially been improved (from 35-98% more). The evidence that co-management works is visible to those who care to simply take a stroll to these areas. I have observed co-managed hills thick with foliage and compared it with barren forest reserves where the state has entire control.

The San community of southern Africa have survived thousands of years as hunter-gatherers and later on acquiring domesticated animal stocks. Values of Ubuntu can also be seen in their rich cultural traditions, where there is no formal authority figure or chief, but they govern themselves by group consensus. Until everyone agrees and airs their thoughts, lengthy discussions are held which culminates in agreement by all. This society shares food and resources, definitely owns and manages land communally. Having survived harsh weather conditions and environmental shocks over decades, the San respect the earth and do not waste any food, living in harmony with nature. We have much to learn from such egalitarian societies, where people are governed by kindness, generosity and sharing.

The debate whether individualism is a disturbing and disintegrating force, or, is good for the society as it promotes self-determinacy, self-reliance and independence has been ongoing. Ubuntu thinking upholds communalism, which is in dissimilarity to individualism. What we have seen is that with natural resources management, community based, participatory approaches do work and they have similarities with Ubuntu philosophy entrenched in African way of thinking, which

promotes equality.

My experience in Southern Africa for the last fifteen years encourages me to desire the use of Ubuntu philosophy for managing the environment in Africa. I have seen fairly good success in co-management in some areas in Malawi. I can't help but wonder: Could Ubuntu be the way to avoid the tragedy of commons? Couldn't problems be solved through collective responsibility and management? I ask this because Ubuntu carries with it universal values such as kindness, sharing, compassion. Perhaps it is time to go back to the roots. Africa is rich in natural resources and values. Let us explore ways and means of using such values to manage the land around us.

See: http://abundanceworldwide.weebly.com/

Marine Le Pen, Donald Trump And The Emergence Of New Right-Wing Movements

Brexit, the rise of Donald Trump and the emergence of a new right-wing radicalism in both Europe and the United States signify fundamental developments in the political and ideological landscape of Western societies, while at the same time, there is a resurgence of extreme nationalism and authoritarian politics virtually all around the world. For an understanding and explanation of some of these disturbing developments and the alternatives available, we spoke to political economist C.J. Polychroniou, editor of a forthcoming book consisting of interviews with Noam Chomsky, titled *Optimism Over Despair: On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change* (Haymarket Books, 2017).

Marcus Rolle and Alexandra Boutri: Today's political landscape in many advanced capitalist societies is marked by the rise of a new right-wing populism centered around anti-immigrant sentiment, xenophobia and extreme nationalism fueled mainly by the antiglobalization rhetoric of authoritarian political leaders. We'd like to start by asking you to put in context the contradictions of global capitalism and the emergence of what has come to be known as the "alt-right."

C.J. Polychroniou: For quite some time now, there have been clear and strong indications across the entire political and socioeconomic spectrum in advanced Western societies that the contradictions of capitalist globalization and the neoliberal policies associated with them have reached an explosive level, as they have unleashed powerful forces with the capacity to produce highly destructive outcomes not only for growth, equality and prosperity, justice and social peace, but concomitant consequences for democracy, universal rights and the environment itself. Indeed, not long after the collapse of the former Soviet Union and its "communist" satellites in Eastern Europe — a development which led to such unbounded enthusiasm among supporters of global neoliberal capitalism that they embarked on an audacious but highly dubious course of (pseudo) intellectual theorization to pronounce the "end of history" — it became quite obvious to astute observers that the forces unleashed by capitalism's inner dynamism and the dominant capitalist states, with the US imperial state at the helm, were more attuned to the brutalities of societal regression, economic exploitation, war and violence than to the subtleties of socioeconomic progress, geopolitical stability and environmental sustainability.

To be sure, we now live in a world of unparalleled economic inequality coupled with massive economic insecurity and dangerously high levels of unemployment (especially among the youth), all while the depletion of natural resources has reached highly alarming rates and climate change threatens the future of civilization as we know it. All these developments are interconnected as they are fuelled by globalization's imminent contradictions, but ultimately sustained by actual government policies and measures that cater almost exclusively to the needs of the wealthy and the concerns of the corporate and financial world. In the meantime, authoritarianism is reestablishing a foothold in many Western nations just as the social state is being reduced to the bare bone under the pretext of fiscal discipline.

Yet, despite poll results showing rising support for socialism in the US, especially

among millennials, growing discontent with the current economic order has thus far resulted not in a new socialist era but in the rise of ultranationalist leaders like Donald Trump who deploy rhetoric shrouded in racism and anti-immigration sentiment.

In France, Marine Le Pen is playing on similar strains of xenophobia and ultranationalism, arguing that "division is no longer between left and right … but between patriots and believers in globalization."

What is called the "alt-right" is in some ways a new phenomenon in the sense that, unlike conservatives and neoconservatives, the new right-wing radicalism belongs expressly in the "antiglobalization" camp. But the "alt-right's" grievance is not with capitalism itself. Instead its adherents blame economic globalization and immigration for their woes. The strengthening of this right-wing antiglobalization movement was behind Brexit and Trump's presidential victory and can explain the resurgence of authoritarian, xenophobic political leaders in countries like France, Austria, Hungary, Italy and Germany, to name just a few.

In a way, then, the sudden rise of the new right-wing radicalism is due to the fact that it has adopted part of the "antiglobalization" posture of the left and a good deal of the old left's radical political discourse, such as the struggle of "people vs. elites." In some cases, extreme right-wing leaders in Europe, such as Marine Le Pen in France, promise to strengthen the welfare state, impose capital controls to avoid speculation, nationalize banks and provide employment opportunities through keeping production at home. Marine Le Pen's economic vision for France seeks to counter "unregulated globalization" and is based on a particular version of old-fashioned state capitalism, which globalization appears to have made obsolete.

Is the formation of an "illiberal state" also part of the "alt-right's" vision for the future of Western society?

The term "illiberal state" is associated with the ideology and policies of Viktor Orbán in Hungary. Since coming to power, Orbán has operated on a political platform that combines social and nationalist populism with anti-European Union rhetoric. He has infringed on the freedom of the press, made inroads into the judiciary system and openly advocates an "illiberal" democracy as a means to counteract the impact of globalization. More recently, he has sought to shut down

Central European University, which was founded by George Soros in 1991 as part of the billionaire's "Open Society" project.

The extent to which the rise of "alt-right" leaders in Western Europe can lead to similar outcomes as in the case of Viktor Orbán in Hungary is a rather shaky proposition. Eastern European countries do not have the system of checks and balances of established democracies. Moreover, millions of Hungarians do not embrace Orbán's authoritarian tendencies, and oppose him every step of the way, as millions of Turks opposed Erdoğan's quest to be granted expansive powers via a highly controversial referendum (51.4 percent voted for it, making Erdoğan officially Turkey's new sultan). Likewise, Donald Trump may be an autocrat, but he cannot just run roughshod over the whole country. The tendency to call Trump a fascist (even though he has authoritarian leanings) and to define the US as a totalitarian state does a great disservice to political analysis and, by extension, to our imaginative capacity for realistic and sustainable alternatives.

In popular accounts of globalization, the impression one frequently gets is that this is a new phenomenon and simply irreversible. What's your take on globalization?

Globalization itself is not a new phenomenon in history. The conquests of Alexander the Great and the spread of Hellenic civilization in Europe and Asia was the first great instance toward the creation of a cosmopolitan, globalized world. And, for the record, Alexander actually sought the "marriage" between different cultures and expressed disdain toward some of his own generals for failing to show proper respect for civilizations older than Greece.

To be sure, as many scholars have shown, the history of the world is practically a history of imperial expansion. Most people throughout recorded history actually lived in empires. And, equally important, there have been different visions of empire. The Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the British Empire and the French Empire shaped the world in fundamentally different ways.

Nonetheless, with the advent of capitalism, sometime during the so-called "long 15th century," the nature of expansion, through trade and commerce accompanied by the sword, follows a different trajectory. Capitalism spreads to all corners of the world, resulting in the accumulation of wealth for European powers and the gradual impoverishment of the colonized countries and regions, simply

out of sheer necessity. As such, capitalism is pretty much distinguished from all previous socioeconomic systems by this fact — that is, that the system has to expand in order to survive. Alexander the Great made a decision to expand Hellenic culture to the deepest ends of Asia. Capitalists have to expand, otherwise they face possible extinction. In short, capitalism is by its nature an expansionist socioeconomic system, with the accumulation of capital being one of the system's basic but fundamental laws of motion.

In the modern times, and prior to our own age, we saw a great wave of capitalist globalization taking place sometime around the 1880s and lasting until the outbreak of World War I. The world economy was as open as it is today, and possibly even more so, and capital movement across national boundaries was so extensive of an activity that a passionate opposition to foreign direct investment had developed in the United States by the 1890s.

After World War I, there were lukewarm efforts to return to the previous era of internationalization, but the political climate of the time proved to be a major stumbling block and the outbreak, eventually, of World War II put to an end all aspirations for the revival of a new international capitalist order.

The latest phase of capitalist globalization begins sometime in the mid-to-late 1970s and comes in the aftermath of the collapse of the postwar structure of capital accumulation. Following World War II, Western capitalism experienced a phase of unprecedented growth and development: the ranks of the middle class exploded, labor rights were solidified (including labor representation on company boards) and workers' benefits were greatly expanded, all while the "social state" became a major pillar of the postwar Western capitalist world. But the postwar social structure of accumulation collapsed when capitalism entered a systemic crisis in the early 1970s, manifested by "stagflation," an oil crisis and the appearance of new technologies that made Fordist production obsolete.

Enter neoliberalism. In an attempt to overcome the accumulation crisis, the major international organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and of course, the US Treasury, began to promote throughout the world the neoliberal triad of liberalization, privatization and deregulation. These policies were accompanied by budget-cutting for social programs and generous tax cuts for corporations and the rich. In this context, globalization becomes a development strategy vehicle for the realization of super-profits.

Like many on the left, certain powerful segments of the extreme right, such as the leader of the National Front in France, think that globalization is reversible. Is it?

If Marine Le Pen wins the French presidential election coming up (April 23-May 7) and pushes forward with her goal of taking France out of the EU and returning to the Franc, the European integration project — and hence, a major component of globalization — could collapse like a house of cards, especially since the anti-euro fever is also spreading in Italy, and a Frexit [French exit from the European Union] will surely have immediate effects among all Europeans now skeptical of the integration project in their continent. However, it should be noted that the Frexit scenario is not as easy as Brexit. It would require a constitutional change, and that is very unlikely to happen. But, yes, globalization is certainly reversible, although it will require nothing short of cataclysmic events in the world's major power centers. Having said that, it is unclear if a return to the old nation-state is desirable. A policy of autarchy is impossible in today's world, and I don't think anyone in his/her right mind advocates such a project. Socialists and radicals must come up with a new version of a globalized economy.

Speaking of the upcoming French elections, there seems to be a new twist with the momentum gained by ultra-left candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon. Is the French radical left back?

This is one of the most interesting and uncertain presidential elections in the history of the French 5th Republic. None of the traditional center-right, center-left party candidates are expected to make it to the second round. This is yet another evidence of the changing nature of the political and ideological landscape in today's Western societies. Marine Le Pen will surely make it to the second round, and the only question is who will be her opponent. Entering the final stretch, it appears that the gap separating the major contenders for the second round is closing, and that Jean-Luc Mélenchon has an actual shot (although the odds are against him) of making it to the second round. If this happens, you would have a candidate from the ultra-right and the ultra-left competing for the French presidency.

Like Marine Le Pen, Mélenchon is against the EU but also promises to pull France out of NATO. And he advocates a much more radical economic agenda than Le Pen, which includes higher wages and a 90 percent tax rate on the very rich. Moreover, and this goes to the core of your question, his supporters seem to be

coming from the entire political spectrum in France. This development has been helped by Mélenchon's overt nationalist rhetoric as of late, and his promise to crack down on "illegal immigration." Not coincidently, the French flag prevails over the red revolutionary flag in the latest rallies organized by Mélenchon's party. This must be seen as an indication that the concerns about the contradictions of globalization cross traditional party lines, and that the new political contest is between those who are in favor of globalization and those who are against it.

Does this mean that there is more hope now for resistance to global capitalism?

Perhaps. We may be reaching a point where the traditional terms "left" and "right" do not have much applicability in today's world, at least insofar as the reaction of a growing segment of the population around the world is concerned with regard to the impact of neoliberal capitalism on their lives and communities. But whatever may be going on in terms of people's political affiliations, hope is all we have.

Despair, as Noam Chomsky keeps saying, is not an option, no matter how horrendously depressing the current world situation appears to be, as resistance to oppression and exploitation has never been a fruitless undertaking even in more dire times than our own. Indeed, the Trump "counter-revolution" in the US has already brought to surface a plethora of social forces determined to stand up to the aspiring autocrat and, in fact, the future of resistance in the world's most powerful country appears more promising than in many other parts of the advanced industrialized world. Of course, the problem with the United States is that it is in the perpetual habit of taking "one step forward and three steps backward." But this does not mean we should give up hope, but only to work harder to create powerful organizing forces that can pose greater resistance to predatory capitalists and war-makers, while at the same time articulating consistently a coherent and realistic vision of radical change.