

# ‘Sacrifice Zones’: The New ‘Jim Crow’ That’s Sickening And Killing People Of Color



*Reynard Loki*

*A product of entrenched, historic racism, “sacrifice zones”—designed to site pollution hot spots within communities of color—are a front line in a largely silent, often deadly, and steadily growing health crisis across the United States.*

The [Black Lives Matter](#) movement and the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) have highlighted how systemic racism disproportionately places danger and harm on low-income and minority populations. One harsh reality of this systemic racism is the existence of “[sacrifice zones](#)”: Communities located near pollution hot spots that have been permanently impaired by intensive and concentrated industrial activity, such as [factories](#), [chemical plants](#), [power plants](#), [oil and gas refineries](#), [landfills](#), and [factory farms](#).

As noted by the [Climate Reality Project](#), an environmental nonprofit based in Washington, D.C., “These areas are called ‘sacrifice zones’ because the health and safety of people in these communities [are] being effectively [sacrificed for the economic gains and prosperity of others](#).”

Designated by corporations and policymakers, these areas are a product of [environmental racism](#): the systemic social, economic, and political structures—including weak laws, lack of enforcement, corporate negligence, and limited access to health care—that place disproportionate environmental health

burdens on specific communities based on race and ethnicity.

Because people of color and low-income groups in the United States are [most likely](#) to live in sacrifice zones, they [breathe polluted air](#), [drink contaminated water](#), and are exposed to a variety of [toxic chemicals](#) and [particulate matter](#). More than [50 percent](#) of residents who live near hazardous waste are people of color, with Black Americans [75 percent](#) more likely to live near these sites. Considering these facts, it is no surprise that communities of color have a [higher chance of dying from environmental causes](#) than white people.

“Thirty-nine percent of the people living near coal-fired power plants are people of color, so what’s absolutely true is that there are a disproportionate number of people of color living next to these plants,” then-senior director of the environmental and climate justice program at the [NAACP](#), Jacqueline Patterson, [told](#) Yale Environment 360 in June 2013. Speaking after the release of an NAACP report on the disproportionate effects of coal-fired plants on minorities, Patterson further added that “[s]eventy-eight percent of African Americans live within 30 miles of a coal-fired power plant. We also discovered that Latino communities, as well as Indigenous communities and low-income communities, are more likely to live next to coal-fired plants.”

### *Entrenched Inequity*

Sacrifice zones are a consequence of an “[extractive development model](#)” supported by self-serving government officials who want to create job and income opportunities provided by polluting industries rather than avoiding irreversible damage caused by these industries to communities of color. “Sacrifice zones are the result of many deeply rooted inequities in our society. One of these inequities takes the form of unwise (or biased) land use decisions, dictated by local or state officials, intent on attracting big industries to the town, county, or state, in an effort to create jobs and raise tax revenues,” wrote Steve Lerner in his 2012 book [Sacrifice Zones: The Front Lines of Toxic Chemical Exposure in the United States](#). “When decisions are made about where to locate heavily polluting industries, they often end up sited in low-income communities of color where people are so busy trying to survive that they have little time to protest the building of a plant next door. Those who make the land use decisions that govern sacrifice zones typically designate these areas as residential/industrial areas, a particularly pernicious type of zoning ordinance.”

“In these areas, industrial facilities and residential homes are built side by side, and few localities have adequate buffer zone regulations to provide breathing room between heavy industries and residential areas,” Lerner continued.

The polluting environment results in an increased [prevalence](#) of health problems among residents living near heavy industries. “The health impact of this patently unwise zoning formula is predictable: [R]esidents along the fenceline with heavy industry often experience elevated rates of respiratory disease, cancer, reproductive disorders, birth defects, learning disabilities, psychiatric disorders, eye problems, headaches, nosebleeds, skin rashes, and early death. In effect, the health of these Americans is sacrificed, or, more precisely, their health is not protected to the same degree as citizens who can afford to live in exclusively residential neighborhoods,” [stated](#) the book.

The [Center for Health, Environment & Justice](#), a nonprofit environmental activism group based in Falls Church, Virginia, [asserted](#) that “[d]ue to redlining, low property values, and other social factors, these communities have historically consisted of [low-income] and/or minority populations.”

The group pointed out that “federal air policies regulate facility emissions one stack at a time and one chemical at a time. Impacted communities, however, are exposed to the cumulative impact of multiple pollutants released over an extended period of time from a cluster of facilities.”

### *Executive Action*

President Joe Biden has made environmental justice a priority in his administration, issuing an [executive order on how to tackle climate change](#) on January 20, 2021, his first day in office. In the order, Biden directed the federal government to “advance environmental justice” where agencies “failed to meet that commitment in the past.”

On January 27, 2021, Biden signed another [executive order](#) that created a [White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council](#) to address the environmental impacts of systemic racism specifically. “We must deliver environmental justice in communities all across America,” the order [said](#). “To secure an equitable economic future, the United States must ensure that environmental and economic justice are key considerations in how we govern.”

A [separate executive order](#) directed federal agencies to prioritize racial equity in

their work, which incorporates racial and environmental justice across the federal government. However, without congressional action on the legislative front, another president could reverse these orders.

Biden's [\\$2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure plan](#) includes provisions that address longstanding racial inequities, including "[\\$20 billion to 'reconnect' communities of color to economic opportunity](#)." In addition, the proposal provides for funds to replace lead water pipes that have [harmed communities of color in cities like Flint, Michigan](#), and to clean up environmental hazards that have harmed Hispanic and tribal communities.

Launched in January 2021, Biden's [Justice40 Initiative](#) encompasses [146 programs within the Department of Energy](#) (DOE)—far more than any other federal department. Together, these programs instruct the DOE to make decisions and fund renewable and fossil fuel projects with the consideration of how they will affect historically disadvantaged communities.

"We at the Department of Energy historically have done a terrible job, honestly," [said](#) Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm at Greentown Labs, a Houston incubator for startups, in March 2023. "Only 1 percent of funding has gone to small, minority, and disadvantaged businesses." She added, "We have had these structural inequalities, inequities in the past, and we're trying to remedy that through embedding sort of structural equity into these programs."

"We'll create good jobs for millions of Americans... and we'll do it all to withstand the devastating effects of climate change and promote environmental justice," Biden [said](#) in his 2022 State of the Union address.

Progress at the federal level has been slow, even though the executive branch has been aware of the systemic issues for decades. In a 2004 [report](#), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said that "the solution to unequal protection lies in the realm of environmental justice for all Americans. No community, rich or poor, [B]lack or white, should be allowed to become a 'sacrifice zone,'" while quoting Robert D. Bullard, who was then a professor at Clark Atlanta University.

On April 21, 2023, President Biden signed an [executive order](#) directing all federal agencies to work toward "environmental justice for all" and improve the lives of communities across the nation that have been most impacted by climate change

and toxic pollution. The order established a new White House Office of Environmental Justice to coordinate revitalized efforts across the government meant to achieve environmental justice.

“For far too long, communities across our country have faced persistent environmental injustice through toxic pollution, underinvestment in infrastructure and critical services, and other disproportionate environmental harms often due to a legacy of racial discrimination including redlining. These communities with environmental justice concerns face even greater burdens due to climate change,” the April 21 [order](#) stated.

Kristine Stratton, president and CEO of the [National Recreation and Park Association](#) (NRPA), praised the order. “NRPA commends the Biden administration for its action that prioritizes a renewed commitment to the climate, ensuring healthy communities and environmental resilience for all,” Stratton [said](#) in a press statement. “We are thrilled to learn of the establishment of the Office of Environmental Justice at the White House, to help coordinate efforts toward protecting vulnerable communities impacted by environmental injustice. We must ensure all people benefit from spaces that are not only resilient and regenerative but also transformative at the community level.”

### *Criticism of Federal Regulation*

In an [opinion piece](#) published by the Houston Chronicle on April 2, 2023, Robert D. Bullard, the founding director of the [Bullard Center for Environmental and Climate Justice](#), criticized federal regulators for paying lip service to impacted communities of color. He wrote: “Communities of color and low-income communities have long felt the adverse impacts of the fossil fuel industry and the climate crisis it caused, but most of those communities didn’t have a seat at the environmental justice roundtable,” referring to a March 2023 meeting of stakeholders organized by the [Federal Energy Regulatory Commission](#) (FERC) “to better incorporate environmental justice and equity considerations into its decisions.”

Bullard pointed out that FERC—an [independent federal agency](#) within the Department of Energy that regulates the interstate transmission of electricity, gas, and oil, as well as natural gas terminals and hydropower projects—has approved “roughly 20 new or expanded gas export terminals... slated to come online in communities across the Gulf Coast within the next decade.” These

projects will only worsen the already heavily polluted, hazardous, and unhealthy region known as "[Cancer Alley](#)" (named for the region's elevated cancer rates) for the minority groups living in these fenceline communities.

Using data processing software and Environmental Protection Agency modeling tool, ProPublica mapped the spread of cancer-causing chemicals from various sources throughout the U.S. between 2014 and 2018. It [found](#) that areas where a majority of the residents were people of color experienced 40 percent "more cancer-causing industrial air pollution on average than tracts where the residents are mostly white."

"The commission [FERC] offers little more than pleasantries with regard to justice and equity as it races to approve more polluting facilities in Black, Indigenous, Latino, and other communities of color across the country. Nothing has changed. Our communities are still being sacrificed," [wrote](#) Bullard. According to him, if FERC's actions were truly fair and equitable, then the farce of holding an environmental justice roundtable wouldn't be needed, and the commission would not be approving export gas projects if it were actually serious about mitigating the negative ecological impacts suffered by the BIPOC communities as a result of these projects.

### *Calls for Legislation*

On April 6, 2021, the [Hip Hop Caucus](#), a nonprofit advocacy group that tackles issues relating to health care, education, and environmental and social justice, launched a [public petition](#) urging Congress to pass legislation that protects communities of color from the health risks posed by environmental degradation.

The petition is cosponsored by several other advocacy groups, including [Progress America](#), [Friends of the Earth Action](#), [Coalition on Human Needs](#), [Evergreen Action](#), and [Progressive Reform Network](#). "Corporate polluters demand human sacrifices," wrote Mike Phelan, a spokesman for Progress America, in an email about the petition sent on April 3, 2021. "They each have a choice between profits and pollution?and every time, they choose profits."

In her 2014 book [This Changes Everything](#), Naomi Klein wrote about sacrifice zones, stating that "running an economy on energy sources that release poisons as an unavoidable part of their extraction and refining has always required sacrifice zones—whole subsets of humanity categorized as less than fully human,

which made their poisoning in the name of progress somehow acceptable.”

### *Natural Disasters Increase Racial Inequality*

Natural disasters like earthquakes and [those tied to climate change](#), like wildfires, floods, and hurricanes, actually increase racial inequality.

A 2018 [study](#) by sociologists Junia Howell of the University of Pittsburgh and James R. Elliott of Rice University in Houston, Texas, found that white Americans who experience disaster accumulate significantly more wealth than any other group after experiencing a natural disaster.

“If you’re white, over time, you’re actually going to accumulate more than if you never had that disaster in the first place. But for [B]lack people, for Latinos, for Asians—it’s not true,” [said](#) Howell to LAist.

Ironically, while people of color are more likely to [experience](#) the negative impacts of climate change, they support and participate in climate action more than white people.

### *Environmental Racism: Clear and Present Danger*

In 2018, scientists at the EPA’s National Center for Environmental Assessment released a study in the American Journal of Public Health (AJPH) called “[Disparities in Distribution of Particulate Matter Emission Sources by Race and Poverty Status](#).” The report confirmed that environmental racism presents a clear and present danger to people of color across the United States, as they are much more likely to live near polluters.

The study found that poor communities (those living below the poverty line) have a 35 percent higher burden from particulate matter emissions than the overall U.S. population. The health burden carried by nonwhites was 28 percent higher than the overall population, while African Americans had a 54 percent higher burden. The researchers cited economic inequality and historic racism as significant factors that determined the location of facilities emitting particulate pollution.

Particles less than 10 micrometers in diameter that are inhaled can [become](#) embedded deep in the lungs and enter the bloodstream. Such particle pollution exposure can cause a number of health impacts, including [aggravated asthma](#), [decreased lung function](#), [irregular heartbeat](#), and [heart attacks](#). For people with

heart or lung disease, [inhaling](#) these particles can even lead to premature death.

Referring to the study published in the AJPH, then-director of the Environmental Justice Program at the [Sierra Club](#), Leslie Fields said, “This report illustrates how people of color and people with limited means have been grossly taken advantage of by polluters who don’t care about the misery they cause,” according to a [statement](#) issued by the environmental nonprofit in 2018. “The disadvantages that come with those health issues, like missing school, create a cycle of poverty and lack of access to opportunity that spans generations and shapes every part of the experience of being a person of color or low-income person in the United States.”

Examining the study in an [article](#) for Colorlines, Ayana Byrd wrote that environmental racism “has been called the [new Jim Crow](#) and continues to target Black, Latinx, Native, Asian, and other communities of color, subjecting them to generations of poor health outcomes.”

While executive actions from the White House can help to tackle environmental racism and bring the issue into the national conversation, eliminating the existence of sacrifice zones beyond a presidential term requires strong legislation from local, state, and federal lawmakers.

*By Reynard Loki*

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*Source:* Independent Media Institute

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# Palm Oil: The Ingredient Behind Human Rights Abuses And Eco-Destruction That's Probably In Your Home Right Now



*Palm oil - Ills.:  
nl.wikipedia.org*

*Palm oil is found in 50 percent of all consumer goods. And it's killing the environment.*

“Oil palm is one of the world’s most prominent and effective vegetable oils globally, and is contributing 40 percent of global trade volume in vegetable oils,” [said](#) Beatriz Fernandez, who manages the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)’s partnership in the [GCRF Trade, Development and the Environment Hub](#), during a [high-level dialogue](#) held on August 30, 2022, in

Jakarta and online, to discuss the situation of the sustainable palm oil trade in Indonesia in light of the shocks to the global food system spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the Center for International Forestry Research, a nonprofit scientific research organization, the challenges for the sustainable palm oil sector [include](#) “the need to align policies and development goals with the country’s biodiversity, climate change and sustainable development commitments; coordination of various certification mechanisms; and limited capacity of smallholder farmers to comply with sustainability standards.”

### *Palm Oil: Violent Business*

Another challenge is violence. In May 2020, the village Ijaw-Gbene in southern Nigeria was burnt to the ground, leaving more than 80 people without homes. According to a [report](#) by Chief Ajele Sunday, the spokesman of the people of the Okomu Kingdom, witnesses identified the perpetrators as members of the security force employed by the Okomu Oil Palm Plantation supported by soldiers in the Nigerian army. At the time, Ijaw-Gbene was the fourth village in the region to experience such an attack.

Joseph Miyani, one of the victims of the attack, said that the company’s security forces and government soldiers fired weapons “before setting our houses ablaze.” He reported that villagers fled into the bush to escape the violence, even jumping into a nearby river to protect themselves. “Since that day my life has been miserable ... I don’t know where to start,” Miyani said. “We are now taking shelter in a church building.”

Okomu is a subsidiary of Société Financière des Caoutchoucs (SOCFIN), an agribusiness corporation that operates palm oil and rubber plantations across 10 Asian and African countries. “In Cameroon, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, and Cambodia, local people complain about ruthless methods wherever [SOCFIN’s] subsidiaries are active,” [reports](#) Rainforest Rescue, a nonprofit environmental organization based in Hamburg, Germany. “Repeatedly, after losing their lands to the company, local communities in Africa and Asia have been subject to violence, intimidation, and distress as a result of the palm oil and rubber exploitation,” [writes](#) Frédéric Mousseau, policy director at the Oakland Institute, a think tank based in Oakland, California, that focuses on social, economic and environmental issues.

Though Okomu [denied](#) their participation in the attack, violence and destruction are increasingly commonplace throughout the global palm oil industry. In November 2020, the Associated Press (AP) [reported](#) on incidents of sexual abuse, rape, human trafficking, child labor, and slavery. “Almost every plantation has problems related to labor,” [said](#) Hotler Parsaoran of the Sawit Watch, an Indonesian nonprofit that has investigated abuses in the palm oil sector. “But the conditions of female workers are far worse than men.”

### *Driving Deforestation*

In addition to its role in human rights abuses, the palm oil industry is also a primary driver of deforestation, which not only exacerbates climate change by releasing into the atmosphere carbon that was previously safely stored in trees cut down to make room for plantations, but threatens wildlife and biodiversity. Parsaoran told the AP that ending these abuses is the responsibility of palm oil producers, multinational buyers, governments, and the banks that finance plantations. But there is another powerful group that supports this entire industry: consumers. As Martin Hickman [reports](#) for the Independent, unwitting consumers “may be contributing to the devastation of the wildlife-rich forests of Indonesia and Malaysia, where orangutans and other species face extinction as their habitat disappears.”

But WWF, a non-governmental environmental organization based in Switzerland, suggests that removing products with palm oil from our shopping lists isn’t necessarily the best course of action for concerned consumers. “Avoiding palm oil could have worse effects because it might take support away from companies that are trying hard to improve the situation,” the group [says](#). “This could encourage companies to use other products that may have even more impact on the environment. Palm oil is by far the most efficient vegetable oil to grow as it takes less land to produce than other vegetable oils. Palm oil can be produced in a responsible manner that respects the environment and the communities where it is commonly grown.”

The group suggests that consumers should look for the RSPO label “to ensure you purchase products made with certified sustainable palm oil.” The certification was established by the [Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil](#), which was formed in 2004 to promote the development of sustainable palm oil and is supported by 99 countries. However, the RSPO has been intensely criticized by environmentalists for the very thing it was supposed to prevent: rampant deforestation for palm oil

production.

### *Greenwashing Environmental Destruction and Animal Cruelty*

In July 2020, a [study](#) conducted by researchers at Tomsk State University in Russia and the Konrad Lorenz Institute for Evolution and Cognition Research in Austria showed satellite images revealing that palm oil production that received sustainable certification actually caused deforestation in Sumatra and Borneo that has threatened the habitats of several endangered mammals over the past three decades, including elephants, rhinos, tigers, and orangutans.

“We suggest that the phrase ‘sustainable palm oil’ must no longer be used to greenwash this tropical product’s reputation because it cannot certify that the production of palm oil comes from a non-recent degradation of tropical forests and endangered species habitats,” the study’s authors write. “In fact, we discovered that the current certified palm oil demand is almost fully supplied by those bases and concessions that, in less than three decades, replaced some of the most diverse tropical forests of the world and habitats of big mammals threatened by extinction.”

“Rapid and relentless deforestation for industrial-scale agriculture, particularly palm oil and timber plantations, leaves orangutans without food and shelter, exposing them to hunters who kill orangutans and capture their babies to sell as pets,” [wrote](#) Alan Knight, chief executive of International Animal Rescue, an animal rights nonprofit based in England, in 2018. “The apes are also in danger of coming into conflict with local people as they stray into villages and onto farmland in search of food. Fires started on an annual basis as part of land clearance operations in Indonesia are also responsible for the loss of thousands of acres of rainforest and the lives of hundreds if not thousands of orangutans.”

### *Ingredient Labels*

Made from the oil palm plant, palm oil is the world’s most widely traded vegetable oil. It is found in about [half of all consumer goods](#), including common foods like bread, cookies, crackers, doughnuts, peanut butter, and breakfast cereal, as well as everyday household products like soap and laundry detergent. Palm oil is also found in a host of cosmetics and beauty products like lipstick, mascara, body lotion, bubble bath, and anti-wrinkle creams. [The list goes on](#). Making matters worse for ethical consumers is the fact that ingredient lists rarely say “palm oil,” but rather a specific ingredient or chemical that contains palm oil, like sodium

lauryl sulfate, glyceryl stearate, stearic acid, and [many others](#).

### *Boycotting Palm Oil*

Boycotting palm oil isn't the best tactic for ethical consumers. Not only would it be extremely difficult to avoid it altogether due to its ubiquitousness, but other options, like coconut oil, would also have the potential to destroy those very same environments currently plagued by oil palm plantations. Christopher Wille of the Rainforest Alliance [told VICE](#) that palm oil is "a bounteous and valuable crop [that is] highly productive compared to other oils, creates jobs and revenues and can be used in an amazing variety of products." He argues that it's not the oil palm plant that is the problem, but rather the way it's grown. He says that ending deforestation, coupled with consumer pressure for "higher sustainable standards" and greater industry transparency about sourcing is the answer. "The hope is that companies will continue making changes to meet market demand. Some lobby for alternative oils, but all farming has a similar impact."

Consumer pressure works. In 2020, the multinational food conglomerate Kellogg's [revised its palm oil policy](#) after more than 780,000 concerned consumers signed an online petition. "If you care about the implications of palm oil," [writes](#) Helen Nianias on VICE, "write emails to companies, ask if manufacturers are committed to zero deforestation. Be that guy. We all need to be that guy."

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# **What If UFOs Have Been A Cover For High-Tech—And Human—Defense Research Programs?**



*John P. Ruehl - Source:  
Independent Media  
Institute*

*10-05-2023 ~ A mix of government, private, adversarial, and unexplained objects are filling up an increasingly congested U.S. airspace. Uncovering what fills it should be of greater public interest.*

Could the decades-long pursuit of unraveling the UFO mystery potentially function as a cover for advanced government research and testing programs for innovative forms of propulsion and craft design? Moreover, might the recent

rollout of official government hearings signal a gradual disclosure of some of those capabilities? This scenario is worth considering, as the process of investigating UFOs comes into sharper public focus.

In 2023, fascination with Unidentified Flying Objects ([UFOs](#)) and Unidentified Aerial Phenomena ([UAP](#)) has spiked. David Grusch, a former intelligence official who led the analysis of [UAPs within the U.S. military](#), told a Congressional hearing in July that the United States had been collecting non-human craft “[for decades](#).” At the first Republican debate [on August 23rd](#), candidates were asked about the president’s responsibility to provide information to the public about UFOs. And on August 31st, the Pentagon [launched a new website](#) providing the public with declassified information about sightings.

Mainstream intrigue surrounding UFOs was born following the 1947 Roswell incident, the crash of what was initially described by the U.S. military as a “flying disc” in Roswell, New Mexico, but later attributed to a weather balloon. To quell public fear and speculation, official government studies to investigate UFO/UAP reports, including [Project Blue Book](#), [Project Sign](#), and [Project Grudge](#), were launched. While the government feared air warning systems could be overwhelmed by reports, it was also wary of Soviet attempts to boost false sightings and promote conspiracy theories that could [instigate panic and allegations of a coverup](#).

During the Cold War, UFO reports became common, often coinciding with [missile and rocket tests \(a habit which continues today\)](#). Several [Soviet](#) and [U.S. military personnel](#) also testified that UFOs were able to temporarily take control over missile and nuclear facilities. However, [in 1997](#), the CIA revealed that the military had lied to the public throughout the Cold War about many UFO sightings to obscure its black projects and keep Moscow in the dark about technological advancements. Blaming sightings on natural phenomena like ice crystals and temperature inversions fueled public distrust toward the government and its claims about UFOs/UAPs.

Many secret military aircraft were frequently mistaken for UFOs, such as [the U-2 reconnaissance plane](#), introduced in the 1950s, which featured a gray frame that often reflected the sun. The SR-71 “Blackbird” [meanwhile started service in 1966](#) and wasn’t declassified until the 1990s. Its distinctive shape, speed, and altitude capabilities were often mistaken for a UFO. The B-2 Spirit, introduced in the late

1980s, also had a unique aerodynamic design and its ability to control lift, thrust, and drag at low speeds often gave the appearance that [it was hovering](#).

Since the Cold War, [secretive experimental military aircraft](#) have continued to generate UFO reports. But unexplained phenomena have also fueled conspiracy theories. [In November 2004](#) off the coast of San Diego, Navy pilots filmed UFOs demonstrating rapid acceleration, physics-defying sudden changes in direction, and other feats in videos eventually released to the public in 2017. And despite formalizing a UFO/UAP reporting process [in 2019](#), Navy pilots and other military personnel who have witnessed them have been hesitant to [come forward](#) due to fear of ridicule or professional repercussions.

The U.S. military's reluctance to disclose UFO/UAP information is often linked to the need to protect classified technology. Military agencies can choose to neither confirm nor deny such information exists. But when the government transparency website, the Black Vault, submitted a Freedom of Information Act request to the Navy for more UFO/UAP videos, it was denied because it would harm national security and "[may provide adversaries valuable information](#) regarding Department of Defense/Navy operations, vulnerabilities, and/or capabilities."

Releasing these videos without additional information may also be an effective way for the U.S. military to hint at its own new technological capacities for various strategic, political, and scientific reasons. Suddenly revealing these technologies could result in rising geopolitical tensions and trigger a reaction, while merely hinting at it may also serve as a deterrence to adversaries. Gradually preparing the public for emerging technologies is equally as important, while encouraging speculation about UFO/UAPs could divert attention away from classified projects.

By clandestinely testing experimental new technologies on their own defenses without resorting to lethal forces, military agencies can also gain valuable insights into their capabilities and vulnerabilities in real-world scenarios.

A 2021 report by the DoD's intelligence agencies also noted [that many UFOs/UAPs were](#) "technologies deployed by China, Russia, another nation, or a non-governmental entity." The New York Times broke the story days before an updated version was [provided to Congress](#) in 2022. An ongoing investigation by The Warzone meanwhile suggests there are a large number of [hostile drones](#)



[mistaken for UFOs/UAPs](#) that the government has until recently failed to confront.

Being unable to properly identify another country's experimental aircraft, by labeling it a UFO/UAP, would also demonstrate shortcomings in U.S. air defense systems. Similarly, releasing documentation of U.S. surveillance of other countries' stealth aircraft and other technology would give them a better idea of U.S. military capabilities and would alert these countries that they were being surveilled.

In addition to other countries, companies are also responsible for a significant number of UFO/UAP reports. The first drones were manufactured [more than a century](#) ago in the UK and U.S., and the capabilities of the private sector have grown considerably since then. Camouflage technology has made commercial drones [increasingly difficult to clearly identify](#), and hundreds of drones by China's largest drone maker DJI, were noted to have entered restricted airspace in Washington D.C. [in 2022](#) alone. And, of course, commercial drones can be purchased and used by other governments.

Nonetheless, much of the technological developments concerning advanced aircraft stem from the U.S. military and other agencies. Since the 1970s, NASA has expanded on [ideas developed](#) by scientist and engineer Arthur Kantrowitz to use lasers to launch satellites without fuel or an engine, with successful tests carried out in the late 1990s. The U.S. [Air Force](#) and [NASA](#) have both continued developing this technology in the 21st Century, while NASA has also explored [plasma propulsion technology](#) that may have caused numerous UFO/UAP reports.

The U.S. Navy has pushed the boundaries of technology further with the development of [laser-induced plasma technology](#), patented [in 2018](#). This innovation can generate extremely high temperatures in the air, creating plasma that can be harnessed to form intricate shapes and lifelike optical illusions, even simulating aircraft performing seemingly impossible maneuvers. Additionally, the U.S. military has developed the ability to [produce sound out of lasers](#), which would add an additional layer of realism to UFO/UAP sightings.

Over the last few years, increasing attention has also been [brought to projects by Salvatore Cezar Pais](#), an aerospace engineer and scientist who has worked for the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD). Despite lacking empirical evidence and rigorous, peer-reviewed scientific

scrutiny, his alleged breakthroughs in propulsion and energy generation would serve as some of the most groundbreaking technological breakthroughs in history.

Pais's [patents with the U.S. Navy](#) relate to the development of advanced propulsion systems that could potentially lead to rapid thrust technology and an abundance of clean energy generation. This includes a "craft using an inertial mass reduction device," which was patented [in 2018](#), while a patent for a "[plasma compression fusion device](#)" was also filed but later appeared [to be abandoned](#). Nonetheless, documents retrieved by The Warzone through the Freedom of Information Act reveal that his [inventions are being considered](#) for the Air Force, NASA, and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

Of course, like U.S. President Ronald Reagan's proposed "[Star Wars](#)" missile defense system in the 1980s, Pais's patents could be designed to bait adversaries into a costly arms race. That is not to say that these countries are not already developing their own fascinating projects. China has been [drastically](#) increasing [its development](#) of plasma technology in recent years, and alongside the UK, Germany, and Japan, is [developing Active Flow Control \(AFC\)](#) technology to improve aerodynamic performance in aircraft. European entities have also recently [made breakthroughs in plasma propulsion technology](#), which may boost UFO/UAP reports across the continent.

Amid these developments, it remains crucial for the public to stay engaged and informed about UFOs/UAP - the more publicly observed the evidence is, the harder it becomes to manipulate. Considering the history of government audacity in crafting political and war propaganda, we should remain skeptical of the entities shaping narratives about extraplanetary intelligent life.

A shift toward destigmatizing and embracing a public approach to UFOs/UAP, both domestic and foreign, is essential. Alongside the Black Vault, initiatives like the [open-data Galileo Project](#), spearheaded by Avi Loeb from Harvard University's Astronomy Department, are actively seeking evidence of extraterrestrial life and pushing our understanding of outer space. By involving the public in the search for answers, we can bridge gaps in understanding and move closer to demystifying these phenomena.

*By John P. Ruehl*

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Source: Globetrotter

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# Our Recurring Flirtation With Government Shutdowns Reveals A System In Crisis



*C.J. Polychroniou*

*Our dysfunctional political system uses the debt ceiling to inflict cruelty on the poor and the working class.*

The threat of a U.S. government shutdown was averted late last Saturday night after the House passed a 45-day stopgap funding bill, which was then approved by the Senate and signed by President Joe Biden.

This is good news, because government shutdowns cause disruption to services and funding, affect millions of workers, and undermine public health and environmental safety.

Nonetheless, the manufactured crisis of the past few weeks may soon return because the bill is a short-term deal. The measure passed extends funding only until mid-November, and MAGA Republicans are bent on imposing their fiscal and policy views on the nation.

But it's more than that.

The threat of a federal government shutdown is yet more proof that the U.S. is not a functioning country when it comes to politics and governance. How can federal funding run out in the wealthiest country in the world? There is hardly any other country in the world whose lawmakers have to struggle to find ways to keep the government afloat, and then just for the next 45 days.

Indeed, the U.S. has a long history of government shutdowns, mainly because of funding gaps, which can occur any time within a fiscal year. Ronald Reagan oversaw [eight government shutdowns](#) during his time in office, while the longest government shutdown, which lasted 34 full days, occurred during Donald Trump's time in office.

Government shutdowns are truly [unique to the U.S.](#) In European parliamentary systems, government services don't stop even when there is a government crisis. Trains run, garbage gets collected and water facilities are safeguarded no matter who is in power — and even when there is *no* government. The cases of Belgium, Italy and Portugal provide ample evidence to this fact. As a case in point, Belgium has gone without a government on quite a few occasions — and for [very prolonged periods of time](#). Yet, government programs and services continued to function in a manner where Belgians could "[see no difference](#)."

But most parliamentary systems in today's world do not rely on anachronistic traditions and institutions. The Anti-Deficiency Act, which dates to the administration of Ulysses S. Grant in 1870 and was initially enacted in 1884, sought to ensure that the executive branch did not use trickery and "backdoor" spending to dilute the fact that the "power of the purse" is one of Congress's main constitutional responsibilities. There was a long-standing concern with the executive branch creating coercive deficiencies, almost from the beginning of the

nation. Congress needed the Anti-Deficiency Act in order to exercise control over how federal agencies spend money. Yet, the Anti-Deficiency Act did not consider the possibility of Congress failing to reach agreements over funding bills.

Even so, the Anti-Deficiency Act did not lead to government shutdowns. For many decades, the federal government and its various agencies would continue to operate even when funding bills were not passed. Federal funding gaps emerged with the passage of the [Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974](#), which formalized and constrained the congressional budgeting process.

The [first government shutdown](#) occurred in 1976 when President Gerald Ford vetoed a funding bill for the Department of Labor and Health, Education and Welfare. It lasted for 11 days. Budget gaps however began to trigger government shutdowns with rather regular frequency after President Jimmy Carter's Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti [issued two legal opinions](#) in the early 1980s in which he argued that government operations must cease when there is a funding lapse. Civiletti's 1981 opinion in particular, which led to an amendment of the Anti-Deficiency Act by amplifying on the emergencies exception for employing federal personnel, rested on a very narrow interpretation of the Anti-Deficiency Act. It claimed that the term "emergencies involving the safety of human life" does not include ongoing, regular function of government.

By imposing restrictions on the operation of government activities, the underlying argument behind the enactment of the Anti-Deficiency Act and the major amendments that occurred in the early 1980s was protecting democracy and preventing abuses of presidential power. But this argument is deceptive because the U.S. is not a full democracy and Congress itself became an enforcer of the imperial presidency. Indeed, since 1950, Congress has willfully abdicated its constitutional duty to authorize or declare war, allowing the executive branch in the process to [make a mockery of the Constitution](#).

These laws and arguments were also made at a time when the ideas of neoliberalism were becoming hegemonic. Neoliberalism calls for austerity (reduced spending and increased frugality) in order to shrink the welfare state. In other words, it changes the role of the state by restraining the role of governments to address social problems and to respond to crises through budgetary action.

Spending laws in the U.S. are not about the enforcement of the “common good” since this is a vacuous term in the context of the nation’s political and economic system. According to Kishore Mahbubani, the U.S. is “[a plutocracy, where society is governed of the 1 percent, by the 1 percent for the 1 percent,](#)” and is now tinkering with fascism.

Even before Trump’s rise to power, in its annual rating of democracy in 167 countries, The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index classified the United States as a “[flawed democracy.](#)”

The fact of the matter is that the U.S. political system was never intended to be democratic; on the contrary, it was designed to keep “popular rule,” which is the essence of democracy, at bay. A political candidate can be elected to become the president of the United States even while having lost the popular vote by millions of votes. Donald Trump claimed a “landslide victory” in 2016 even though he trailed Hillary Clinton by nearly 3 million votes. Further, there isn’t even anything in the Constitution that grants citizens in the U.S. the right to choose their president.

So, what manner of a democracy is this which displays such blatant disregard of the “general will,” to use Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s famous phrase?

The Electoral College is not just an anachronism but a deeply anti-democratic method of selecting a president, which even the “father” of the Constitution himself, [James Madison](#), had opposed.

The U.S. Senate is an even more anti-democratic institution than the Electoral College. Every state is awarded two members in the upper chamber. So Wyoming, the least populated state in the U.S., has the same number of senators as California, whose population is nearly 70 times larger.

And then there is the debt ceiling, which is not the same thing as a government shutdown, but it can affect a potential government shutdown.

The debt ceiling is the absolute amount of debt that the U.S. government is allowed to carry. It is allegedly there in order to keep the nation’s finances in order; in reality, however, it has nothing to do with debt reduction and is being increasingly used instead as a weapon against social programs.

The debt ceiling is nothing but a pretext to punish poor and working-class people by depriving them of basic human rights such as housing and proper health care coverage.

Denmark is the only other country in the world that limits borrowing on absolute terms, but, unlike in the U.S., the debt ceiling there is not being used as a weapon against democracy. In fact, there it is seen as "[more of a formality.](#)"

But Denmark has a multiparty system, a robust representative democracy and ranks consistently in the top 10 countries on the Social Capital Index, which is the sum of social stability and the well-being of the entire population. The plutocratic U.S., in contrast, with its "flawed" system of political governance, [ranks 111th](#), just below economic superpower Nicaragua and above Ghana.

Having said that, what is simply amazing in government funding debates among lawmakers from both parties is that the anti-democratic nature of U.S. politics is never even brought to light. Nor is it of course an issue covered on mainstream media outlets. Indeed, if it wasn't for radical activism, issues such as imperialism, the devastating influence of money in politics, gross inequalities, the climate crisis and environmental degradation, blatant racism, the disintegrating impact of neoliberalism on the social order and the surge of proto-fascism would most likely have been kept completely out of the public eye in the U.S.

It used to be said that history is on the side of the left simply because capitalism is capable of only heightening the contradictions that it generates.

Maybe so.

However, what should be beyond dispute is that any prospect of the U.S. becoming a democracy someday depends on strengthening those political voices and social forces willing to challenge the nation's anachronistic and anti-democratic traditions and institutions. This is why we need a strong, unified political left in this country: a left unified on class struggle as the core basis for resistance to neoliberal capitalism and the primary axis for radical social change. Democracy should be extended into the economy and all people should have access to economic ease and security. We need a system of government that is responsive to people's needs, not a system of governance that leads to frequent government shutdowns and uses the debt ceiling to inflict cruelty and pain on the poor and the working class.

Source:

<https://truthout.org/articles/our-recurring-flirtation-with-government-shutdowns-reveals-a-system-in-crisis/>

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## Okinawa: A Bastion For Peace?





Taiwan - Map:  
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Recently, in Taiwan, the government unveiled its [first home-built submarine](#). In Japan, the government will upgrade civilian airports and seaports to [dual military use](#) in preparation for conflict in Taiwan. The U.S. and allies maneuver to contain China, Russia, and North Korea, while the latter band together against the former's economic sanctions and military threats. Both blocs test the strength and resilience of the region's stability. And while North Korea has been the [regional bogeyman](#) for decades, if war breaks out, it will likely be in Taiwan.

While China has called for an ["indivisible security"](#) where security is dependent upon the security of all, U.S. discourse has centered around the containment of China and deterring war... by preparing for it. If a [rapid and massive](#) escalation in U.S. military capability and alliances is proposed to make an invasion of Taiwan costly and unsuccessful (i.e., "the porcupine strategy"), what would prevent China, which has declared its desire for peaceful unification with Taiwan but hasn't ruled out the use of force, from invading before the U.S. achieves its deterrence fait accompli? While both powers will maneuver just below the thresholds of war, what would prevent a miscalculation from igniting it in the region?

Unable to imagine a world beyond the U.S.-centered one, the anglophone media has little discussion on the peaceful transition towards the multipolar world emerging from the growing wreckage of the U.S.-unipolar one. Thus, shifting the discourse towards peace requires actors from the Global North to raise their voices against war and confrontation and call for peace and coexistence.

The first such voices will emerge from the geopolitical fault lines by those conscious of the destruction of war. Among these, a key actor will be the Okinawan people, whose perilous location in the "keystone of the Pacific" and whose history as a sacrificial lamb shapes their consciousness and positions them to help lead peace movements in the region.

### *"Keystone of the Pacific"*

During the U.S. military rule (lasting until 1972, 20 years after Japan regained its "sovereignty"), U.S. military license plates in Okinawa carried the slogan "Keystone of the Pacific," referring to Okinawa's [strategic importance](#) to the

Korean and Vietnam wars. Today, Okinawa is a keystone in the United States' Taiwan strategy. Military bases such as Kadena Air Base (housing [“the \[U.S.\] Air Force’s largest combat air wing”](#)) serve as unsinkable [aircraft carriers](#).

As much as Okinawa is a strategic point for the U.S. strategy against China, it also invites Chinese counterattack. Beyond geopolitical reality, Okinawans' fear of becoming sacrificial lambs is ingrained in their historical consciousness. As Hideki Yoshikawa, director of the [Okinawa Environmental Justice Project](#), notes, those who lived through World War II's Battle of Okinawa learned that “soldiers, especially the Japanese soldiers, don't protect you.” In fact, “having military bases... means attracting military attack.” Unsurprisingly, a 2022 study revealed that [83 percent of Okinawans](#) believed that Okinawa's bases would be targeted during a conflict.

### *Sacrificial Lamb*

Fought in the final days of World War II, the Battle of Okinawa was the [bloodiest](#) Pacific battle and the only one fought on Japanese land. According to Satoko Oka Norimatsu, director of the [Peace Philosophy Centre](#) in Vancouver, Canada, more than 120,000 Okinawans (one-quarter to one-third of the population) were sacrificed to slow the U.S. military advance into mainland Japan. Middle and high school boys and girls were mobilized as soldiers and nurses. Given Japan's forced annexation and cultural assimilation of Okinawa's independent Ryukyu kingdom in 1879, Norimatsu bluntly notes that the Japanese Imperial Army sacrificed “its southern colony to protect the main Emperor's land.”

It was sacrificed again after the war. The 1951 Treaty of San Francisco with the U.S. returned “sovereignty” to Japan, but handed Okinawa to the U.S. military, which had never left. For another 20 years, Okinawans lived under U.S. law, requiring passports to go to Japan and suffering the indignities and dangers of foreign military occupation: in 1955, a [six-year-old girl](#) was raped and murdered, followed by another rape a week later. In 1972, Japan re-acquired Okinawa, promising U.S. military bases [would be reduced](#) to a level proportional to that of the mainland. Instead of a reduction, the proportion increased. While [“lower defense spending because of the U.S. military presence in Okinawa”](#) enabled Japan's postwar economic surge, Okinawa [remained](#) Japan's poorest prefecture.

Even under Japanese governance, the heinous crimes of U.S. soldiers persisted: the 1995 abduction and rape of a [12-year-old girl](#) by three U.S. soldiers; the [2016](#)

[rape and murder](#) of a 20-year-old woman by a U.S. military contractor; the (at least) [eight sexual crimes](#) from 2017 to 2019 revealed to have been investigated and kept secret by the U.S. military.

Okinawans suffer the dangers and indignities of housing—in a dense urban area—Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, referred to as [“the most dangerous base in the world”](#) by former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. In 2017, a flying helicopter dropped a window on an elementary school [injuring](#) a child. In 2004, a [helicopter crashed](#) on the campus of Okinawa International University. Added to all this is the [incessant noise](#) of low-flying aircraft over residential areas.

### *Waging Peace*

In a 2019 non-binding referendum, [72 percent of Okinawans](#) opposed the construction of a new base in Henoko-Oura Bay to replace Futenma Base. Yet, according to Yoshikawa, the government-dominated media’s barrage of “propaganda about the China threat, Taiwan contingency, and North Korean threats” has made some more amenable to increasing military presence. In contrast to Okinawa island, some of the prefecture’s southern islands, inexperienced in war or occupation, are more open to stationing Japanese Self-Defense Forces.

Yoshikawa says that peace movements are responding by working to “create a larger, more cohesive peace movement” that is organizing events and rallies to which peace groups from mainland Japan and abroad are invited. The growing US-Japan-South Korea trilateral alliance has “sparked a counter-alliance among peace movements” in each country. If Okinawa is an unsinkable aircraft carrier for the U.S. to wage war, it can also become a bastion for movements to wage peace.

By *Dae-Han Song*

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*Source:* Globetrotter

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# The Ethnic Violence In Manipur, India, Explained

The ethnoreligious violence in the Indian state of Manipur between Meiteis and Kukis has been [ongoing](#) since May, but it was only in July 2023 when a video went viral in India [showing two women being paraded naked](#) that the world began to pay attention to the situation in earnest. One of the women was reportedly sexually assaulted after the conclusion of the video. Calls for accountability came from all quarters, including the Indian Supreme Court, and even Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), was [forced to break](#) his conspicuous silence on the conflict in the northeastern state.

The majority of the conflict has been dominated by Meitei mobs, who are mostly Hindus, attacking the predominantly Christian Kukis. The Meiteis have been looting and burning down churches and homes and murdering people, though numerous attacks by the Kukis have also occurred. [More than 200 people](#) have been killed as of September 20, with about [two-thirds being Kuki and one-third being Meitei](#). However, property damage is extensive, and tens of thousands of people have been displaced.

“How can we coexist with people who are constantly attacking us and want us to be annihilated... All we want from the government now is a separate administration,” one Kuki farmer [said to the New Humanitarian](#).

In some ways, understanding the violence in Manipur is simple: the Meiteis, who are in the majority, are [attacking the minority Kuki community](#) under the auspices of the newly ensconced Hindu right-wing government [led](#) by the Bharatiya Janata Party at the state level. It is a playbook that goes back at least two decades to the BJP and allied right-wing Hindu organizations’ 2002 anti-Muslim [pogroms](#) in Gujarat.

The BJP and its affiliated paramilitary groups like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) have sought to establish themselves in Manipur as in many other

parts of the country. In 2017, the BJP won enough seats in state elections to displace the then-ruling Congress Party through a minority government for the [first time](#). In 2022, it won enough seats to form a [majority government](#) at the state level. The emergence of Hinduized communal (sectarian) politics at the state level has led to ethnoreligious violence along with an [internet blackout](#) in Manipur.

But as with so much else in India's ethnically and politically fragmented northeast, [the devil is in the details](#). The northeast is connected to the rest of the Indian subcontinent through a narrow stretch of land referred to as the "[Chicken's Neck](#)." It is where the country narrows to less than 15 miles between Bangladesh and Nepal. Manipur is one of eight northeastern states and can be broken down into two major areas defined by geography: the hills and the Imphal Valley. In Manipur, the Kukis live predominantly in the hills while the Meiteis primarily occupy the valley. The other communities of the state—the Nagas, for example, another Scheduled Tribe (ST) (the government designation for Indigenous people) who also live in the hills, and the Pangals, who are Muslim Meiteis—have largely been sitting out this conflict.

Further complicating matters, the Kukis can be broken down into individual tribes, viewed as "new" or "old" Kukis depending on when they migrated to Manipur, and are considered as part of a larger agglomeration of related peoples outside of Manipur. The latter are known as the [Zo](#) or the Kuki-Zo communities of Myanmar, India, and Bangladesh.

The trigger for the recent conflict was a Manipuri court [decision](#) in March that would have paved the road for the Meiteis to also secure ST status, which they don't currently have, and would have conferred several benefits under India's affirmative action system. The Kukis, already economically, demographically, and—consequently—politically weaker in the state fear the added privileges that the Meiteis would get if the latter are designated a Scheduled Tribe.

In particular, they have been worried about a land grab by the Meiteis in the hills, which ST status for Meiteis would permit as [under](#) the current law, "non-tribals, including the Meiteis, cannot purchase land in the hills," according to Outlook. The Kukis have also been protesting the fact that the Meiteis already benefit from other affirmative action designations, and adding this new boost would provide them complete dominance in a state that they already largely control: [two-thirds](#) of the state legislature's seats come from the Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley,

with only one-third from the hills.

The Kukis have lived in Manipur for an indeterminate amount of time, but the question of how long they have lived there is [deeply contested](#) currently. Arguments that the Kukis migrated to the state in the last few centuries or were “planted” by the British are used to create a narrative about them not being native residents of Manipur, paving the way for potential ethnic cleansing. In facing the threat of expropriation from their current land in Manipur, the Kukis suffer a fate similar to other “hill peoples” elsewhere, such as the Basques and the Kurds in other regions of the world. Meanwhile, arguments in favor of the Kukis having lived in Manipur for centuries are used to establish a basis for their rights and autonomy.

The Meiteis, for their part, [argue](#) that the ST status is necessary for them to protect their culture, and point, in particular, to an alleged influx of migrants from Myanmar and the growing of opium in the hills. But [many](#) like Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh have taken to using this language to depict Kukis as outsiders to the state, and ethnic divisions between the Kukis and the Meiteis are now sharper than they were before the outbreak of violence.

According to a source I spoke with, who is based outside Manipur and wished to stay anonymous for fear of retribution, the largely unchecked violence in the state was “backed by the state in some way or another.” This observer said it was impossible that three months of unchecked mob violence could continue without some level of tolerance by the Manipur government. He noted that the viral video of the sexual assault incident shows how the police were standing by and not intervening.

He further said that the thousands of arms [looted](#) from armories and police stations could not have been taken without a level of complicity by the state. However, it should be noted that in past incidents, such as the [Maoist acquisition of arms in India](#), weapons have been obtained on a mass scale without the government’s involvement or consent.

Finally, the observer said that even before the current conflict, the Manipur state government had begun to take over land in the hills through various means in order to circumvent authorities in Kuki-dominated areas who are meant to have a say under current law.

The worst of the communal violence in Manipur has [largely abated](#). But with thousands of Kukis having fled the Imphal Valley and no clear resolution on the question of ST status for Meiteis and land, it is unlikely that this is the last we will hear of violent communal conflicts in Manipur.

By:

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*Source:* [Globetrotter](#)