Why Are Archaeologists Unable To Find Evidence For A Ruling Class Of The Indus Civilization?

Adam S. Green – Photo: University of York

What we can learn from an ancient egalitarian civilization in the Indus Valley.

Little more than a century ago, British and Indian archaeologists began excavating the remains of what they soon realized was a previously unknown civilization in the Indus Valley. Straddling parts of Pakistan and India and reaching into Afghanistan, the culture these explorers unearthed had existed at the same time as those of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, and covered a much larger area. It was also astonishingly advanced: sophisticated and complex, boasting large, carefully laid out cities, a relatively affluent population, writing, plumbing and baths, wide trade connections, and even standardized weights and measures.

What kind of a society was the Indus Valley Civilization, as it came to be known? Who lived there and how did they organize themselves? Archaeologists and other experts ask these questions to this day, but the first explorers were already noticing some unique features.

In Mesopotamia and Egypt, “much money and thought were lavished on the building of magnificent temples for the gods and on palaces and tombs of kings,” observed Sir John Marshall, who supervised the excavation of two of the five main

cities, Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, “but the rest of the people seemingly had to content themselves with insignificant dwellings of mud.” In the Indus Valley, “the picture is reversed and the finest structures were those erected for the convenience of the citizens. Temples, palaces, and tombs there may of course have been, but if so, they are either still undiscovered or so like other edifices as not to be readily distinguishable from them.”

In its heyday, from about BC 2600 to BC 1900, the Indus Valley Civilization created what may have been the world’s most egalitarian early complex society, defying long-held presumptions about the relationship between urbanization and inequality in the past. Its large cities were expansive, planned, and boasted large-scale architecture, including roomy residential houses, and smaller settlements in the surrounding areas appeared to support a similar culture with a similar standard of living.

The most tantalizing feature of the ancient Indus Valley remains is what they appear to lack: any trace of a ruling class or managerial elite. This defies the longtime theoretical assumption that any complex society must have stratified social relations: that collective action, urbanization, and economic specialization only develop in a very unequal culture that takes direction from the top, and that all social trajectories evolve toward a common and universal outcome, the state. Yet, here was a stable, prosperous civilization that appeared to remain that way for centuries without a state, without priest-kings or merchant oligarchs, and without a rigid caste system or warrior class. How did they manage it?

Unfortunately, in the early decades of exploration and research, archaeologists tended to assume that lack of evidence of a top-down, hierarchical society in the Indus Valley remains meant only that they had not yet been found. Some have argued that lack of evidence of inequality only indicates that the region’s ruling class was very clever at disguising the boundaries between itself and other social strata. Pointing to the fact that Indus Valley burial sites contain no monumental tombs, some researchers suggest that the rulers may have been cremated or deposited in rivers, as was the practice in other imperial cultures. But cremation is not archaeologically invisible; the remains of other cultures often include evidence of it.

More recently, archaeologists have been willing to go back to the original explorers’ observations and use the evidence directly in front of them to develop

theories about ancient life in the Indus Valley Civilization. Archaeological data from South Asia has improved greatly: and there is much more of it. Numerous Indus sites are now known to archaeologists that decades ago were not, and the environmental contexts that enabled urbanization in the region—climate, natural resources—are now much clearer. Archaeologists have also honed a strong set of tools for identifying inequality and class divisions: from mortuary data, palace assemblages, aggrandizing monuments, written records, and soon, possibly, from household data. Yet, in a century of research, archaeologists have found no evidence of a ruling class in the Indus Valley that is comparable to those recovered in other early complex societies.

In the late 1990s, Indus archaeologists started to consider a new concept that seemed to better fit the facts. Heterarchy asserts that complex political organization, including cities, can emerge through the interaction of many different, unranked social groups, rather than from top-down decisions by an elite: that cooperation, not domination, can produce collective action. It's now widely argued that multiple social groups contributed to the construction of Indus cities and the economic activities that took place in them, and that none seemed to dominate the others.

Bolstering this argument, no evidence exists that any group of Indus producers was excluded from the use of scarce materials that craftspeople had to obtain from long distances away, or that particular groups limited access to those materials to seize a higher position for themselves in Indus society. One of the most distinctive and technically dazzling products of the Indus culture are stamped seals engraved with imagery and text; over 2,500 have been found at Mohenjo-daro alone. But the seals were produced by many different groups of artisans in many locations, and there is no evidence that a ruling class controlled production. Technological styles tended to cross-cut different groups of artisans, indicating a great deal of openness and knowledge sharing.

Indus city-dwellers built large- and small-scale public buildings; the Great Bath at Mohenjo-daro is a massive structure that contained a large paved bath assembled from tightly fitted baked bricks, waterproofed with bitumen and supplied with pipes and drains that would have allowed control over water flow and temperature. At Mohenjo-daro, nonresidential structures were built atop brick platforms that were as substantial as the structures erected on top of them, and would have required a great deal of coordinated action. It's been calculated that

just one of the foundation platforms would have required 4 million days of labor, or 10,000 builders working for more than a year.

Yet, at both Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, these large nonresidential structures were relatively accessible, suggesting that they were "public," as opposed to palaces or administrative centers restricted to a privileged class. Some of these may have served as specialized spaces for exchange, negotiation, and interaction between different groups clustered in neighborhoods or along important streets and roads. These spaces may have helped the city-dwellers maintain a high degree of consensus on planning and policy and ensured that no one group was able to accumulate wealth at the expense of the rest.

The Indus Valley remains have yet to yield all of their riches. The Indus script has yet to be deciphered, and we still don't know why the civilization started to decline in the second millennium BC. One of the most positive recent developments has been a dramatic increase in data and interest in the civilization's small-scale settlements, which may shed light on the question whether these settlements were qualitatively different from one another or from the cities—and how far Indus egalitarianism extended across its broader landscape.

What we have already found, however, suggests that egalitarianism may have been a boon to collective action: that distinct social groups may have been more willing to invest in collective action if the benefits were not restricted to a subset of elites. That suggests that heterarchy may act as a kind of brake on coercive power amongst social groups, and across society as a whole.

If this is the case, and after a century of research on the Indus civilization, archaeologists have not found evidence for a ruling class comparable what's been recovered in other early complex societies, then it's time to address the Indus Valley's egalitarianism.

Urbanization, collective action, and technological innovation are not driven by the agendas of an exclusionary ruling class, the evidence suggests, and can occur in their total absence. The Indus Valley was egalitarian not because it lacked complexity, but rather because a ruling class is not a prerequisite for social complexity. It challenges us to rethink the fundamental connections between collective action and inequality.

The priest-king is dead: or, in this case, most likely never existed.

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Why Turkey And Hungary Are Currently Blocking Sweden From Joining NATO

Vijay Prashad

On July 11-12, 2023, the 31 members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will hold their annual summit in Vilnius, Lithuania. To prepare for the summit, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg met with U.S. President Joe Biden to discuss the agenda for the summit. They spoke about the importance of Western support for Ukraine "for the long haul" and Stoltenberg told Biden that

“he looks forward to welcoming Sweden as a full member of NATO as soon as possible.”

In their joint press conference on June 13, neither Biden nor Stoltenberg mentioned anything about Ukraine’s membership of NATO, although both hoped that Sweden would become a member, “hopefully….very shortly,” as Biden said. Despite noises in the German Bundestag from Christian Democratic members—such as urging by Roderich Kiesewetter—to bring Ukraine into NATO, there seems to be no appetite for any such move at present, least of all from German Chancellor Olaf Scholz who is being very cautious. Germany is wary of allowing Ukraine into NATO during a war, but has no problem—in principle—with Ukraine’s membership in NATO. With Sweden, the chessboard is far more complicated.

Finland Joins, but Not Sweden

In May 2022, Finland and Sweden applied to join NATO, a military alliance that had—at that time—consisted of thirty countries (the most recent entrant being North Macedonia in 2020). At that time, Stoltenberg said of the applications, “It is great to see you both.” Indeed, it was widely expected that these applications would be fast-tracked and that all four Scandinavian states would be within the military camp of NATO. Norway and Denmark were both founder members in 1949 (Denmark’s accession was particularly necessary so that the U.S. could build a vast base on Danish colonized Greenland—Pituffik Space Base, the northernmost U.S. military base—in 1951, displacing the local Inuit population).

Just short of a year later—on April 4, 2023—NATO welcomed Finland into the alliance. “Joining NATO is good for Finland,” said NATO’s Stoltenberg. “It is good for Nordic security, and it is good for NATO as a whole.” Finland shares a very long (832-mile) border with Russia, the longest border of any European Union or NATO state. By joining NATO, Finland has doubled the NATO-Russia border. Finland began to build a border fence along the “riskiest areas,” notably where Russian migrants might try to cross over. Social media in Finland mocked pictures released by the Border Guard of the fence, saying that it was just about useful for stopping horses; the “fence is not for horses,” responded Lieutenant Colonel Jukka Lukkari.

At the ceremony to welcome Finland into NATO, Finland’s President Sauli Niinistö said that his country’s membership is “not complete without Sweden.”

Standing beside him, NATO's Stoltenberg said, "I look forward to also welcoming Sweden as soon as possible."

Why was Sweden not taken into the Western military alliance? In 1949, when NATO was established, the principle of decision-making adopted by the members was that of "consensus," which means that *all* countries must agree to any decision; this consensus decision-making applies particularly to the question of membership. Two NATO members—Hungary and Turkey—ratified Finland's entry into NATO but blocked that of Sweden. That they allowed NATO to welcome Finland, which—unlike Sweden—has a direct border with Russia, shows that it is not the war in Ukraine that troubles these two countries. They have other problems, directly with Sweden.

The Sweden Problem

At a press conference in Washington with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and NATO's Stoltenberg, Vivian Salama of the Wall Street Journal asked, "Are you concerned that Turkey is increasingly becoming a disruptive ally?" Both Blinken and Stoltenberg ducked the question, which led Kylie Atwood of CNN to ask directly about NATO membership for Sweden. Stoltenberg obliquely noted Turkey's concerns regarding the presence of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Sweden. "All NATO allies are of course ready to sit down and address those concerns, including the threats posed to Turkey by PKK," Stoltenberg said.

In 2009, when Sweden held the presidency of the Council of Europe, then-Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt promised to shepherd Turkey into the European Union. Relations, at that time, were robust. Turkey's war in recent years on the Kurdish minorities in the southeast of the country and in northern Syria roused the exiled Kurdish community in Sweden. Protests in Stockholm have annoyed Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has repeatedly called in the Swedish ambassador to Ankara to complain about these protests. When an effigy of Erdogan was burnt by the Rojava Committee of Sweden, Sweden's foreign minister Tobias Billström wrote on Twitter, "Portraying a popularly elected president as being executed outside City Hall is abhorrent." This statement was not sufficient. Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said that his country had weak "anti-terror" laws and that his government was in talks with Ankara to see what could be done.

On his way to Azerbaijan on June 14, Erdogan dismissed the possibility that

Sweden would be allowed to enter NATO this July.

In May 2023, Hungary's president Viktor Orban went to Doha to attend the Qatar Economic Forum. He was asked why his ruling alliance, Fidesz-KDNP, which dominates the parliament (135 out of 199 seats), refuses to ratify Sweden's entry into NATO. Orban bluntly said that he would not back down because "Sweden unfairly expresses a damaging opinion about the situation of democracy and the rule of law in Hungary." Sweden is not alone in these concerns, which have been made very strongly by thirteen Hungarian intellectuals in a powerful book ("Igazságosság—demokrácia—fenntarthatóság") last year.

Orban was very upset with Sweden for its support of a European Union parliamentary report from September 2022 that described the Hungarian political system as "a hybrid regime with parliamentary autocracy." Unless Sweden revokes this attitude, Budapest says, it will not allow it to join NATO.

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Source: Globetrotter

Where Are The World's Water

Stresses?

John P. Ruehl

Around the world, significant issues are negatively impacting water security. While the situation appears dire, cooperation initiatives show some signs of relief.

In May 2023, the Arizona Department of Water Resources imposed restrictions on the construction of new housing in the Phoenix area, citing a lack of groundwater. The decision aims to slow population growth in one of the fastest-growing regions in the U.S. and underlines the dwindling water resources in the drought-stricken southwest.

As water levels in the Colorado River have declined, the states dependent on it (Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming) are increasingly at odds over how to distribute the declining supply.

The U.S. is not alone in contentious domestic debate over water supplies. Australian states have constantly quarreled over water rights across the Murray-Darling Basin. Disruptions to water supply or perceived misuse can cause immediate social unrest, and countries like Iran and France have seen violent protests regarding water recently.

Constant and affordable access to fresh water is recognized as a basic human right by the UN. And in addition to providing a foundation for life, fresh water is also crucial for industry and manufacturing, energy production, agriculture, sanitation, and other essential societal functions.

But around the world, its availability is threatened. Desertification, climate change, man-made water diversion, dam building, pollution, and overuse have seen rivers, lakes, and aquifers dry up. Since 2000, the world has added almost 2 billion people, putting further strain on global water infrastructure and supplies.

Poor water management and infrastructure also play a major role in water scarcity around the world. In Iraq, up to 14.5 percent of the country's water is lost to evaporation and two-thirds of its treated water is lost due to leaks and poor

infrastructure. Up to 25 to 30 percentof South Africa's water is lost to leaks, while even in many industrialized countries, up to 15 to 20 percent of water supply is lost.

Inequality can also exacerbate water stress. Amid Cape Town's water shortages in recent years, 14 percent of the population has been found to be responsible for more than half of the freshwater use in the city. Across Africa, one in three people already faces water scarcity, where "the availability of natural hygienic water falls below 1,000 m3 per person per year."

On top of government control of water supply and infrastructure, multinational companies like Nestlé S.A., PepsiCo, Inc., the Coca-Cola Company, and the Wonderful Company LLC play a huge role in the global water industry. In 2013, former Nestlé CEO Peter Brabeck-Letmathe was forced to backtrack after a 2005 interview resurfaced where he stated it was "extreme" that water was considered a human right.

However, water privatization has increased significantly over the last few decades. In 2020, Wall Street allowed water to begin trading as a commodity, and today, "farmers, hedge funds and municipalities alike are now able to hedge against—or bet on—future water availability in California." Monetization has even seen countries like Fiji, the world's 4th-largest water exporter in 2021, face water supply shortages over the last few years.

Tap water remains drinkable only in certain countries, but fears of contamination can occur rapidly and incite alarm. After thousands of gallons of a synthetic latex product spilled into the Delaware River in 2023, Philadelphia authorities shut down a nearby water treatment plant. While it was ultimately deemed that tap water was still safe to drink, government warnings and alarm on social media led to panic-buying of water.

Contamination can also lead to longer-term damage to public faith in water infrastructure. After heightened levels of lead were found in Flint, Michigan's drinking water in 2014 (together with the tepid government response), the local population remained hesitant to resume drinking it even after it had been declared safe.

Water security also has a major impact on relations between countries. The U.S.

and Mexico have historically competed over water rights to both the Colorado River and the Rio Grande. Strong population growth on both sides of the border in recent decades, coupled with drought, has exacerbated bilateral tensions.

In 2020, tension over Mexico's inability to meet its annual water delivery obligations to the U.S. from the Rio Grande, laid out in the 1944 Water Treaty, saw farmers in northern Mexico take over La Boquilla Dam, weeks before the deadline. While the crisis was eventually resolved, the fundamental issue of strained water flows remains ongoing.

Iraq has meanwhile increasingly accused Iran of withholding water from tributaries that feed into the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, with Iran accusing Iraq of failing to use water responsibly. Iraq and Syria have also disputed Turkey's construction of dams and irrigation systems that have hindered the traditional flows of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Relations between Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia have similarly deteriorated since the latter began construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) in 2011. The project has aggravated regional fears over Nile River water shortages, and though outright conflict has so far been avoided, it has inflamed concern over supply in Sudan, which saw deadly clashes over water shortages in 2023.

China has been labeled an "upstream superpower" because several major rivers begin in China. The construction of dams and hydropower plants on the Mekong River has caused friction with Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam, while Kazakhstan and China have often disagreed over water rights regarding the Ili River.

Fears have also arisen that India and China, the world's two most populous countries, could come into conflict over the Brahmaputra River and Indus River. But India and downstream Pakistan have their own disputes over rights in the Indus River basin that have raised regional concern.

Other countries have weaponized water as part of a wider conflict. Ukraine and Russia have both used water to harass each other since the first round of unrest between them began in 2014. Ukraine almost immediately cut off Crimea from water supply from the North Crimean Canal, shrinking the peninsula's arable land from 130,000 hectares in 2013 to just 14,000 in 2017.

Russia reopened the canal following the start of the war in Ukraine in 2022. Additionally, Russian forces have since been accused of withholding water to some Ukrainian regions, deliberately flooding others, and targeting Ukraine's water infrastructure. Both Russia and Ukraine accused one another of blowing up the Kakhovka Dam and hydroelectric power station located on the Dnieper River on June 5, 2023, which flooded downstream communities.

The Islamic State (IS) was meanwhile instrumental in causing water shortages during its rise across Syria and Iraq a decade ago, by polluting and cutting off water supplies and flooding regions. The Taliban also repeatedly attacked water infrastructure in Afghanistan throughout the U.S.-led occupation of the country.

Longstanding disputes between the Taliban and Iran over access to the Helmand River also resulted in deadly clashes at their mutual border in 2023. And in recent years, cyberattacks have increasingly targeted the vulnerable water infrastructure of the U.S.

Thankfully, the future of water stress may be less dire than feared. Global population growth has slowed significantly over the last few decades and the population is expected to peak by the end of the century. Furthermore, regions experiencing water stresses are typically not high-population growth areas. The global community is also taking renewed steps to address global water security, with the UN holding in 2023 its first summit on water since 1977.

And even countries with longstanding disputes have recognized the importance of maintaining water supplies. The 60-year-old Indus Water Treaty between India and Pakistan has largely held despite persistent tensions between them. China has initiated cooperation with downstream states on transportation and water flows, including the Lancang-Mekong River Dialogue and Cooperation forum to share data and prepare for shortages and flooding.

There have also been recent breakthroughs regarding the GERD. Sudan's de facto leader, Abdel-Fattah Burhan, recently came out in support of the dam, noting it could help regulate flooding. Greater cooperation between Ethiopia and Egypt could see less water evaporate from Egypt's Aswan High Dam if it can be stored in the GERD during warmer months.

And though seawater desalination remains expensive and energy-intensive, it is becoming more efficient and widespread. In Saudi Arabia, 50 percent of the

country's water needs are met by desalination, while Egypt plans to open dozens of new desalination plants in the coming years. Currently, 70 percent of the world's desalination plants are found in the Middle East.

Domestic U.S. initiatives are also promising. California's Orange County recycles almost all of its waste water back to the nearby aquifer through the world's largest water reclamation plant, which opened in 2008. Arizona, California, and Nevada also agreed in May 2023 to reduce water intake by 10 percent over the next three years, and Arizona's decision to suspend housing construction may mark the beginning of more restraint over domestic water consumption.

Ongoing domestic and international cooperation will nonetheless be required to resolve water disputes and create sustainable water management practices. Preventing the use of water as geopolitical leverage or a tool of war, coupled with effective management of climate change and pollution, will be integral to avoiding wars over water in the future.

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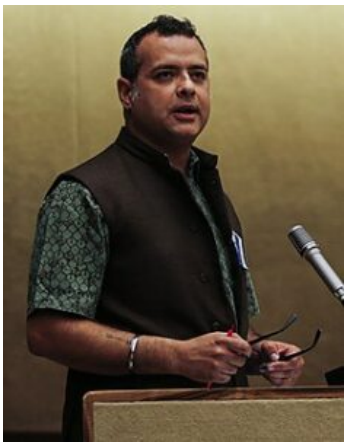
Can China And The United States Establish Mutual Respect To

Lessen Tensions?



Vijay Prashad

On June 3, 2023, naval vessels from the United States and Canada conducted a joint military exercise in the South China Sea. A Chinese warship (LY 132) overtook the U.S. guided-missile destroyer (USS Chung-Hoon) and speeded across its path. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command released a statement saying that the Chinese ship "executed maneuvers in an unsafe manner." The spokesperson from China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Wang Wenbin, responded that the United States "made provocations first and China responded," and that the "actions taken by the Chinese military are completely justified, lawful, safe, and professional." This incident is one of many in these waters, where the United States conducts what it calls Freedom of Navigation (FON) exercises. These FON actions are given legitimacy by Article 87(1)(a) of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Sea. China is a signatory to the Convention, but the United States has refused to ratify it. U.S. warships use the FON argument without legal rights or any United Nations Security Council authorization. The U.S. Freedom of Navigation Program was set up in 1979, before the Convention and separate from it.

Hours after this encounter in the South China Sea, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. The Shangri-La Dialogue, which has taken place annually at the Shangri-La Hotel since 2002, brings together military chiefs from around Asia with guests from countries such as the United States. At a press gaggle, Austin was asked about the recent incident. He called upon the Chinese government "to reign in that kind of conduct because I

think accidents can happen that could cause things to spiral out of control." That the incident took place because a U.S. and Canadian military exercise took place adjacent to Chinese territorial waters did not evoke any comment from Austin. He emphasized the role of the United States to ensure that any country can "sail the seas and fly the skies in international space."

Austin's pretense of innocence was challenged by his Chinese counterpart, Defense Minister Li Shangfu. "Why did all these incidents happen in areas near China," Li asked, "not in areas near other countries?" "The best way to prevent this from happening is that military vessels and aircraft not come close to our waters and airspace… Watch out for your own territorial waters and airspace, then there will not be any problems." Li contested the idea that the U.S. navy and air force are merely conducting FON exercises. "They are not here for innocent passage," he said. "They are here for provocation."

Tighten the Net

When Austin was not talking to the press, he was busy in Singapore strengthening U.S. military alliances whose purpose is to tighten the net around China. He held two important meetings, the first a U.S.-Japan-Australia trilateral meeting and the second a meeting that included their counterpart from the Philippines. After the trilateral meeting, the ministers released a sharp statement that used words ("destabilizing" and "coercive") that raised the temperature against China. Bringing in the Philippines to this dialogue, the U.S. egged on new military cooperation among Canberra, Manila, and Tokyo. This builds on the Japan-Philippines military agreement signed in Tokyo in February 2023, which has Japan pledging funds to the Philippines and the latter allowing the Japanese military to conduct drills in its islands and waters. It also draws on the Australia-Japan military alliance signed in October 2022, which—while it does not mention China—is focused on the "free and open Indo-Pacific," a U.S. military phrase that is often used in the context of the FON exercises in and near Chinese waters.

Over the course of the past two decades, the United States has built a series of military alliances against China. The earliest of these alliances is the Quad, set up in 2008 and then revived after a renewed interest from India, in November 2017. The four powers in the Quad are Australia, India, Japan, and the United States. In 2018, the United States military renamed its Pacific Command (set up in 1947) to Indo-Pacific Command and developed an Indo-Pacific Strategy, whose main focus was on China. One of the reasons to rename the process was to draw India into

the structure being built by the United States, emphasizing the India-China tensions around the Line of Actual Control. The document shows how the U.S. has attempted to inflame all conflicts in the region—some small, others large—and put itself forward as the defender of all Asian powers against the "bullying of neighbors." Finding solutions to these disagreements is not on the agenda. The emphasis of the Indo-Pacific Strategy is for the U.S. to force China to subordinate itself to a new global alliance against it.

Mutual Respect

During the press gaggle in Singapore, Austin suggested that the Chinese government "should be interested in freedom of navigation as well because without that, I mean, it would affect them." China is a major commercial power, he said, and "if there are no laws, if there are no rules, things will break down for them very quickly as well."

China's Defense Minister Li was very clear that his government was open to a dialogue with the United States, and he worried as well about the "breakdown" of communications between the major powers. However, Li put forward an important precondition for the dialogue. "Mutual respect," he said, "should be the foundation of our communications." Up to now, there is little evidence—even less in Singapore despite Austin's jovial attitude—of respect from the United States for the sovereignty of China. The language from Washington gets more and more acrid, even when it pretends to be sweet.

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Source: Globetrotter

Chomsky And Pollin: Just Transition Can Stop Earth From Becoming Uninhabitable

Noam Chomsky

We must act now to heed the UN secretary-general's warning that climate change is "making our planet uninhabitable."

Climate change is "making our planet uninhabitable," said UN Secretary-General António Guterres in late March. Indeed, the threats of the impending climate crisis have become very tangible, and the world's top scientists are warning that the Earth is likely to pass a dangerous temperature threshold very soon unless we act now. Nonetheless, the gap between what is happening to the planet and what is needed in terms of climate action is growing rather than decreasing because, as Noam Chomsky points out in the joint interview with Robert Pollin that follows, "this is how the system works," unless collective action forces those in power to change course. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly evident that a just transition is pivotal to transformative climate action for workers, communities, and all regions of the world. Pollin shows what a just transition entails and why it is so important.

Robert Pollin

Noam Chomsky is institute professor emeritus in the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy at MIT and laureate professor of linguistics and Agnese Nelms Haury Chair in the Program in Environment and Social Justice at the University of Arizona. One of the world's most cited scholars and a public intellectual regarded by millions of people as a national and international treasure, Chomsky has published more than 150 books in linguistics, political and social thought, political economy, media studies, U.S. foreign policy, and world affairs. His latest books are *Illegitimate Authority*: *Facing the Challenges of Our Time* (with C. J. Polychroniou; Haymarket Books, 2023); *The Secrets of Words* (with Andrew Moro; MIT Press, 2022); *The Withdrawal*: *Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, and the Fragility of U.S. Power*(with Vijay Prashad; The New Press, 2022); and *The Precipice*: *Neoliberalism, the Pandemic, and the Urgent Need for Social Change* (with C. J. Polychroniou; Haymarket Books, 2021).

Robert Pollin is distinguished professor of economics and co-director of the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. One of the world's leading progressive economists, Pollin has published scores of books and academic articles on jobs and macroeconomics, labor markets, wages and poverty, and environmental and energy economics. He was selected by *Foreign Policy* Magazine as one of the 100 "Leading Global Thinkers for 2013." Chomsky and Pollin are coauthors of *Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal*: *The Political Economy of Saving the Planet* (with C. J. Polychroniou: Verso 2020) and are now working together on a new book on the climate emergency.

C. J. Polychroniou: Noam, it has been clear for decades that human activities are having a huge impact on the physical environment in many critical ways, and that we are the cause of global warming, with the burning of fossil fuels accounting for nearly 90 percent of all carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions. It is true, of course, that

some concrete actions have been taken over the past three decades or so to stop environmental degradation and reduce carbon emissions, but the gap between what is happening to the planet, which includes a sharp decline in biodiversity, and what is needed in terms of environmental and climate action seems to be growing rather than decreasing. Indeed, one could even argue that our handling of the climate crisis is flawed as evidenced by the growing emphasis on carbon capture technologies rather than doing away with fossil fuels. Another revealing example of governments constantly advancing highly incomplete courses of action with regard to climate change is the adoption of a historic new law from governments across the European Union today toward deforestation. European governments have agreed to ban the import of goods linked to deforestation, but the new deforestation law does not oblige European banks or investors to stop funding deforestation. So, if it is the link between policy making and economic interests that prevents us from implementing fully comprehensive strategies to stop environmental destruction and prevent global warming from becoming worse, what ways are there out of this conundrum?

Noam Chomsky: Two years ago, John Kerry, Biden's special envoy on climate, reported that he'd been "told by scientists that 50% of the reductions we have to make (to get to near zero emissions) by 2050 or 2045 are going to come from technologies we don't yet have."

While intended to strike a note of optimism, this forecast was perhaps a little less than reassuring.

A few months later, as U.S. representative at the COP27 Glasgow international conference on climate, Kerry was still more optimistic. He reported exuberantly that now the market is on our side, as asset managers pledge tens of trillions of dollars to overcoming the impending catastrophe.

A qualification was noted by political economist Adam Tooze: The pledge holds as long as the investments are profitable and "de-risked" by guarantees from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

The "technologies we don't yet have" remain technologies we don't yet have or can realistically envision. Some progress has been reported, but it is very far from what would be required to deal with the impending crisis.

The present danger is that what must be done to eliminate fossil fuel use is being

set aside on the pretext that some remote technological breakthrough will ride to the rescue. Meanwhile we can continue to burn up the Earth and pour even more cash into the bulging profits of the fossil fuel industry, now so overflowing that they don't know what to do with their incredible riches.

The industry of course welcomes the pretext. It might even spare some cash for carbon capture — maybe as much as a rounding error for their accountants — as long as the usual qualification holds: funded by the friendly taxpayer and de-risked. Meanwhile more federal lands are opened up for fossil fuel production, more gifts are provided to them like the 300-mile long Mountain Valley Pipeline – Manchin's condition for not tanking the global economy — and other such amenities.

In the background of the euphoria about asset managers and technological miracles lies the Stimson Doctrine, enunciated by Secretary of War Henry Stimson 80 years ago as he was overseeing the huge mobilization for war: "If you are going to try to go to war, or to prepare for war, in a capitalist country, you have got to let business make money out of the process or business won't work."

That's how the system works — as long as we let it.

In the early stages of the war, business was reluctant to accept the bargain. Most hated the reformist New Deal and did not want to cooperate with a government not entirely devoted to their interests. But when the spigot was opened, such reservations disappeared. The government poured huge resources into war production. Keeping to the Stimson Doctrine, policies were structured to ensure great profits for business contractors. That laid the basis for what was much later criticized as the military-industrial complex but might more accurately be described as the not-so-hidden system of U.S. industrial policy, the device by which the public funds the emerging high-tech economy: A highly inefficient system, as elaborated by Seymour Melman and others, but an easy way to gain congressional approval for what approved rhetoric calls a marvelous system of free enterprise that helps the munificent "job creators" labor day and night for the benefit of all.

Eisenhower apparently at first wanted to use the term "military-industrial-congressional complex." That would have been appropriate. Why does Congress go along? One major reason is provided by political economist Thomas Ferguson's

well-confirmed “investment theory of politics.” In a current updating, once again corroborating the theory, he summarizes the crucial conclusion simply:
‘The dominating fact about American politics is its money-driven character. In our world, both major political parties are first of all bank accounts, which have to be filled for anything to happen. Voters can drive politics, but not easily. Unless they are prepared to invest very substantial time and effort into making the system work or organizations that they control will – such as unions or genuine grassroots political organizations – only political appeals that can be financed go live in the system, unless (of course) as helpful diversions.’

That insight into “our world” also offers advice as to ways out of the conundrum. And also, ways to confront the reigning Stimson Doctrine, which is a virtual epitaph for the human species in the context of the awesome and imminent threat of heating the earth beyond the level of recovery.

It is suicidal to look away from the gap between what is happening to the planet, which includes a sharp decline in biodiversity, and what is needed in terms of environmental and climate action seems to be growing rather than decreasing. When we do look, we find a mixed picture.

One critical case is the Amazon Forest. Its central role in global ecology is well understood. It is self-sustaining, but if damaged can shift rapidly to irreversible decline, with catastrophic effects for the region, and the entire world.

During Bolsonaro’s term in Brazil, agribusiness, mining and logging enterprises were unleashed in an assault on the forest and the Indigenous societies that have long lived there in harmony with nature. To take just one measure, “Deforestation across Brazil soared between 2019 and 2022 under the then president, Jair Bolsonaro, with cattle ranching being the number one cause.” More than 800 million trees were destroyed for beef export. The main researchers, the Indigenous peoples expert Bruno Pereira and his journalist collaborator Dom Phillips, were murdered while conducting their work in the Amazon.

Brazilian scientists report that some sectors of the forest have already passed the tipping point, transitioning to savannah, permanent destruction.

Lula’s election in 2022 offered hope to limit, perhaps end, the destruction. As minister of the environment, he appointed Marina Silva, a courageous and dedicated environmentalist, with a truly impressive record. But “the masters of

mankind" who own the economy (in Adam Smith's phrase) never rest. Their congressional supporters are chipping away at Silva's jurisdiction.

Those who hope to save the world are not resting either. Brazilian ecologists are seeking ways to support Indigenous communities that have been the guardians of the forest, and to extend their reach.

The struggle continues.

It continues on other fronts as well. Some good news from China is summarized in the *Washington Post*. Reviewing many studies, the *Post* reports that China is far in the lead globally in "churn[ing] out batteries, solar panels and other key ingredients of the energy transition" as China has "moved aggressively on renewables," leaving the U.S. far behind — very far behind in per capita terms, the relevant figure. China is "likely on track to meet its goals of peaking its emissions before 2030 and achieving net-zero emissions by 2060. It installed a record amount of solar power capacity last year — and this year alone is set to install more than the entire existing solar capacity of the United States."

I've been mispresenting the article, however. The *Post* does not come to praise China, but to condemn it. Its praise is for the U.S., which, from its lofty perch on transitioning to renewable energy is seeking ways "to pressure China to help avert climate catastrophe" — the headline of the article. The article warns ominously that China is responsible for more than double U.S. emissions; or to translate from Newspeak, China is far behind the U.S. in per capita emissions, again the relevant figure.

The article discusses the means under consideration to induce China to join us in our noble pursuit of saving the climate, omitting, however, the most important of these: "Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said Tuesday that the U.S. will rally allies in order to mount pressure on the world's second-largest economy. 'If we really want to slow down China's rate of innovation, we need to work with Europe,' Raimondo said."

We have to make sure to contain China's innovations in producing the advanced technology that might save the world. The prime method, openly announced and highly praised, is to deny China access to the computer chips that are necessary for advanced technology.

At the same time, Raimondo warned China that the U.S. "'won't tolerate' China's effective ban on purchases of [Idaho corporation] Micron Technology memory chips and is working closely with allies to address such 'economic coercion'."

More insight into the famed "rules-based international order" and its subtle design, as the world burns.

Polychroniou: India has overtaken China as the world's most populous country, and its population is certain to continue to grow in the decades ahead. Do we have to reduce global population to save the planet?

Chomsky: The global population should be reduced, perhaps considerably. Fortunately, there is a method to achieve this result, one that is furthermore humane and should be undertaken irrespective of the goal of saving the planet: education of women. That's been shown to lead to sharp population reduction in both rich countries and poor.

Education of women should be supplemented by other humane methods, such as those prescribed in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection."

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was initiated by the U.S., but that was in a different era, when New Deal social democracy still had not been undermined by the bitter business assault that finally reached its goals with Reagan. By then, the socioeconomic provisions of the declaration, including the ones just quoted, were ridiculed as "a letter to Santa Claus" (Reagan's UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick). Kirkpatrick was echoed by Paula Dobriansky, the official in charge of human rights and humanitarian affairs in the Reagan and Bush administrations. Dobriansky sought to dispel "the myth [that] 'economic and social rights' [of the declaration] constitute human rights." These myths are "little more than an empty vessel into which vague hopes and inchoate expectations can be poured." They are "preposterous" and even a "dangerous incitement," in the words of Bush ambassador Morris Abram when he was casting the sole vote against the UN Right to Development, which closely paraphrased the socioeconomic provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

By then dismissal of the letter to Santa Claus had become largely bipartisan,

though the GOP has maintained the lead in savagery, as we can see right now in the farcical doings in Congress.

There is a lot more to say about this, but for another time.

Polychroniou: Bob, a "just transition" is seen as essential for advancing ambitious climate change policies. Why is a "just transition" so crucial for effective climate action, and how exactly does it affect average citizens?

Robert Pollin: The term "just transition" has been used in various ways. I will first use it to refer to measures to support workers and communities that are presently dependent on the fossil fuel industry for their incomes and well-being. I will then consider below a second use of the term, considering the ways in which high-income economies need to support the Green New Deal programs advanced by low-income economies.

With respect to the first issue of supporting workers and communities that are now dependent on the fossil fuel industry, the broader context is very important. As we have discussed many times before, investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy to build a global zero-emissions energy infrastructure will be a major engine of overall job creation. That is, overall, saving the planet is very good for jobs. This is, of course, the opposite of the fulminations we hear from likes of Donald Trump, but also much more widely across the political spectrum. The vaguely respectable version of this position is that phasing out fossil fuel consumption might well be beneficial on environmental grounds, but it still going to be a job killer. And everyone other than rich coastal elites care more about jobs than the environment.

Here is how this position can actually resonate. While the clean energy transition is indeed a major engine of job creation overall, it is still also true that phasing out the fossil fuel industry will inevitably mean losses for workers and communities that now depend on the fossil fuel industry. In the absence of generous just transition policies, these workers and communities will indeed be facing layoffs, falling incomes and declining public sector budgets to support schools, health clinics and public safety. Should we be surprised that, without hard commitments to generous just transition policies, a good share of these workers and communities will vehemently oppose the fossil fuel industry phase out?

A viable just transition program for these workers and communities needs to build from the framework first advanced by Tony Mazzocchi, the late great labor movement and environmental leader. Mazzocchi was the person who came up with the term "just transition" in the first place. In considering the phasing out of nuclear plants and related facilities, Mazzocchi wrote in 1993: "Paying people to make the transition from one kind of economy to another is not welfare. Those who work with toxic materials on a daily basis … in order to provide the world with the energy and the materials it needs deserve a helping hand to make a new start in life."

Starting from this Mazzocchi perspective, we still need to establish what specifically would constitute a generous set of just transition policies. For the workers, I would argue that, as a first principle, the aim of such policies should be simply, to truly protect them against major losses in their living standards. To accomplish this, the critical components of a just transition policy should include three types of guarantees for the workers: 1) a guaranteed new job; 2) a guaranteed level of pay with their new job that is at least comparable to their previous fossil fuel industry job; and 3) a guarantee that their pensions will remain intact regardless of whether their employers' business operations are phased out. Just transition policies should also support displaced workers in the areas of job search, retraining and relocation. These forms of support are important but should be understood as supplementary. This is because, in themselves, they are not capable of protecting workers against major losses in their living standards resulting from the fossil fuel industry phase out.

Among major high-income economies, just transition policies for workers have recently been enacted within the European Union, Germany and, to a lesser extent, the United Kingdom. Such initiatives are still mainly at the proposal stages in the U.S., Japan, Canada. But even in the cases of Germany, the U.K. and the European Union, these policies remain mostly limited to the areas of job search, retraining and relocation support. In other words, in none of these cases have policies been enacted that provide workers with the guarantees they need.

The most substantive commitments to just transition policies have been advanced by the European Union, within the framework of the European Green Deal. Thus, Frans Timmermans, executive vice president of the European Commission, has stated that that "We must show solidarity with the most affected regions in Europe, such as coal mining regions, and others, to make sure the Green Deal

gets everyone's full support and has a chance to become a reality."

In that spirit, the European Commission established a Just Transition Fund in January 2020 to advance beyond broad principles into meaningful concrete policy commitments. Nevertheless, to date, the scope of these programs and the level of funding provided are not close to adequate to achieve the goals set out by Vice President Timmerman, of "making sure the Green Deal gets everyone's full support." In particular, the categories of support for displaced workers under the Just Transition Fund are limited to skill development, retraining and job search assistance. The fund does not include any provision for the most critical areas of support for workers who will be facing displacement — that is, the guarantees with respect to reemployment, wage levels and pensions.

To obtain a sense of what a much more robust just transition program would look like, I have developed, with coworkers, illustrative programs for eight different U.S. states, for the U.S. economy overall, and, most recently, for South Korea. For now, it might be useful to focus on the case of West Virginia, since it is one of the most fossil fuel dependent state economies in the U.S. As such, West Virginia provides a highly challenging environment in which to mount a generous just transition program.

It is critical that the just transition policies for West Virginia would be one component of an overall Green New Deal program for the state. Under the overall program, fossil fuel production will fall by 50 percent as of 2030 and clean energy investments will make up the difference in the state's overall energy supply. We estimate that the clean energy investments in West Virginia will generate an average of about 25,000 jobs throughout the state through 2030.

What about the job losses from the state's fossil fuel industry phase out? There are presently roughly 40,000 people employed in West Virginia's fossil fuel industry and ancillary sectors, comprising about 5 percent of the overall West Virginia labor force. But it is critical to recognize that all 40,000 workers are *not* going to lose their jobs right away. Rather, about 20,000 jobs will be phased out by 2030 as fossil fuel production is cut by 50 percent. This averages to a bit more than 2,000 job losses per year. However, we also estimate that about 600 of the workers holding these jobs will voluntarily retire every year. This means that the number of workers who will face job displacement every year is in the range of 1,400, or 0.2 percent of the state's labor force. This is while the state is also

generating about 25,000 new jobs through its clean energy transformation.

In short, there will be an abundance of new job opportunities for the 1,400 workers facing displacement every year. We estimate that to guarantee these workers comparable pay levels and intact pensions, along with retraining, job search and relocation support, as needed, will cost about $42,000 per worker per year. This totals to an average of about $143 million per year. This is equal to about 0.2 percent of West Virginia's overall level of economic activity (GDP). In short, generous just transition policies for all displaced fossil fuel workers will *definitely not* create major cost burdens, even in such a heavily fossil fuel dependent state as West Virginia.

For the other seven U.S. states that we have examined, the costs of comparable just transition programs range between 0.001 and 0.02 percent of the state's GDP. For the U.S. economy overall, the just transition program's costs would total to about 0.015 percent of GDP — i.e. one-tenth to one-twentieth of what the West Virginia program would cost relative to the overall economy's size. In short, providing workers with robust just transition support amounts to barely a blip within the U.S. economy. It is almost certainly the case that similarly robust just transition programs in other high-income economies would generate comparable results.

Now let's consider communities' transitions. In fact, communities that are now dependent on the fossil fuel industry will face formidable challenges adjusting to the decline of the industry. At the same time, it is critical that, as I described for the case of West Virginia, the decline of the fossil fuel industry will be occurring in conjunction with the rapid expansion of the clean energy economy. This will provide a basic supportive foundation for advancing effective community transition policies.

One important example has been the integration of clean renewable energy sources— primarily wind and solar power — into Alaska's long-standing and extensive energy microgrid infrastructure. A microgrid is a localized power grid. Since the 1960s, these grids have been heavily reliant on diesel generators. But since 2005, renewable energy has become an increasingly significant alternative to diesel fuel. As of 2015, the Alaska Center for Energy and Power described this development as follows:
'Over the past decade, investment in renewable energy generation has increased

dramatically to meet a desire for energy independence and reduce the cost of delivered power. Today, more than 70 of Alaska's microgrids, which represent approximately 12 percent of renewably powered microgrids in the world, incorporate grid-scale renewable generation, including small hydro, wind, geothermal, solar and biomass.'

Another important development, primarily thus far in Australia, Germany and the U.S. is with creating pumped storage hydropower sites in now defunct coal mines. A *Wall Street Journal* article from late 2022 reports as follows:
'Mining operations that contributed to greenhouse-gas emissions could soon help to cut them. Around the world, companies are seeking to repurpose old mines as renewable-energy generators using a century-old technology known as pumped-storage hydropower. The technology, already part of the energy mix in many countries, works like a giant battery, with water and gravity as the energy source. Water is pumped uphill to a reservoir when energy supply is plentiful. It is released and flows downhill through turbines generating hydroelectric power when electricity demand is high or there are shortages of other types of power. Finally, the water is captured to be pumped uphill again in a repeated cycle. Surface and underground mines hold potential as reservoirs for the water, and could be developed with a lower environmental impact and upfront costs than building such plants from scratch, experts say.'

More broadly, there is no shortage of opportunities for revitalizing fossil fuel dependent communities through developing innovative clean energy projects in these very communities. To its credit, the Biden administration's Inflation Reduction Act — which is primarily about financing clean energy investment projects in the U.S. — is providing large-scale funding for such projects. Naturally, the congressional Republicans tried to kill such funding through the farcical and now mercifully concluded debt ceiling debate. Fortunately, they failed.

Polychroniou: If moving away from fossil fuels and toward clean energy is the only way forward for the survival of the planet, climate action must be ultimately coordinated on a global level. What does global just transition entail, and what sort of new relationships of power need to be created since the world remains divided by huge differences between rich countries and poor countries?

Pollin: Let's first be clear that there is no such thing as a viable climate

stabilization program that applies only to rich countries. All countries, at all levels of development, need to drive their emissions to zero by 2050. It is true that, at present, China, the U.S. and the European Union together account for 52 percent of all global CO2 emissions. But that also means that if, miraculously, emissions in China, the U.S. and the European Union were all to fall to zero tomorrow, we would still be only a bit more than halfway to driving global emissions to zero. Moreover, if large, fast-growing developing economies like India and Indonesia continue to power their growth through a fossil fuel-dominant energy infrastructure, we will not cut global emissions *at all* by 2050 relative to today, even if emissions in China, the U.S. and the European Union were to indeed fall to zero. The point is that every place does matter if we really are going to hit the target of zero emissions by no later than 2050.

Thus, recognizing that a Green New Deal program has to be global in scope, the worker-and-community just transitions that I have described above for high-income economies applies equally, if not more so, for low-income economies. For starters, the clean energy investment transition programs will be a major engine of job creation in low-income economies just as it is for high-income economies. For example, research that I have done with coworkers finds that creating a clean energy economy in places like India, Indonesia and South Africa will generate between two-to-three times more jobs for a given spending level than maintaining these economies' existing fossil fuel-dominant energy infrastructure. At the same time, phasing out fossil fuels in these economies will still also entail losses for fossil fuel industry dependent workers and communities. These workers and communities will require just transition support comparable to what we have described above for the U.S. and other high-income economies.

We still need to ask the question: who pays for the Green New Deal in low-income countries? As a baseline matter of planetary survival, we can start by recognizing that *somebody* has to pay. How then should we establish fair and workable standards as to who should pay, how much they should pay and via what financing channels?

Two initial points are critical. First, starting with the early phases of industrial development under capitalism, what are now the globe's high-income countries, including the U.S., western Europe, Japan, Canada and Australia, are primarily responsible for loading up the atmosphere with greenhouse gas emissions and causing climate change. They therefore should be primarily responsible for

financing the global Green New Deal. And second, moving from this historical perspective to the present, high-income people in all countries and regions have massively larger carbon footprints today than everyone else. As documented in a 2020 Oxfam study, the average carbon footprint of people in the richest 1 percent of the global population, for example, is *35 times greater* than the average emissions level for the overall global population.

Thus, by any minimal standard of fairness, high-income countries and high-income people, no matter where they live, need to cover most of the upfront costs of a global clean energy transformation. At the same time, let's also remember that these upfront costs are investments. They will pay for themselves over time, and then some, by delivering high efficiency and abundant renewable energy at average prices that are already lower today than fossil fuels and nuclear, and falling.

But it is still necessary to mobilize investment funds into low-income economies right now at both a speed and scale that are unprecedented. We are already seeing that, despite various pronouncements and pledges, private capitalists are not about to accomplish this on their own. As Noam described above, private capitalists are rather waiting for their clean energy investment prospects in developing economies to become "de-risked" by public entities. That means, to summarize Noam, that the private investors get big subsidies from public entities to undertake investments, but then pocket all the profits when the investments pay off. The public entities handing out the subsidies can include their own rich country governments, the governments of the low-income countries where they might invest, or international public investment institutions like the World Bank or International Monetary Fund.

It is also the case that the rich country governments have not been fulfilling the pledges they made initially in 2009 to provide $100 billion in annual climate-related support for poor countries. Between 2015-2020, 35 high-income countries reported providing an overall average of $36 billion per year, only one-third of the $100 billion annual pledge. Moreover, even this low-end figure overstates the actual level of climate finance rich countries are providing, given that countries can claim virtually anything as constituting "climate finance." Thus, according to a *Reuters* story from June 1, 2023:
'Italy helped a retailer open chocolate and gelato stores across Asia. The United States offered a loan for a coastal hotel expansion in Haiti. Belgium backed the

film *La Tierra Roja*, a love story set in the Argentine rainforest. And Japan is financing a new coal plant in Bangladesh and an airport expansion in Egypt….

Although a coal plant, a hotel, chocolate stores, a movie and an airport expansion don't seem like efforts to combat global warming, nothing prevented the governments that funded them from reporting them as such to the United Nations and counting them toward their giving total.'

It's obvious that a serious system of monitoring is one necessary step toward moving significant financial resources into legitimate climate projects in developing economies. But in addition, it will also be critical that public investment banks in low-income countries serve as primary conduits in moving specific investment projects forward in their economies. The public investment banks should be managing the financing of clean energy projects in both the public and private sectors, along with mixed public/private projects. We cannot know what the best mix should be between public and private ownership with any specific project in any given low-income country (or for that matter, any high-income country). There is no point in being dogmatic and pretending otherwise. But, in all situations, we need to operate under the recognition that it is not reasonable to allow private firms to profit at rates that they have gotten away with under 40 years of neoliberalism. If private firms are happy to accept large public subsidies to support their clean energy investments, they then also need to be willing to accept limits on their profitability. Such regulatory principles are, for example, routine in the private U.S. electric utility sector. Similar standards can be easily established in all regions of the globe.

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different languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Turkish. His latest books are *Optimism Over Despair*: *Noam Chomsky On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change* (2017); *Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal*: *The Political Economy of Saving the Planet* (with Noam Chomsky and Robert Pollin as primary authors, 2020); *The Precipice*: *Neoliberalism, the Pandemic, and the Urgent Need for Radical Change* (an anthology of interviews with Noam Chomsky, 2021); and *Economics and the Left*: *Interviews with Progressive Economists* (2021).

Conflict, Migration, And Demography In Russia And Its Border Regions

John P. Ruehl – Source: Independent Media Institute

06-07-2023 ~ *For centuries, Russian authorities have modified their approach to*

managing the country's large, diverse population, held together by an ethnic Russian core. The war in Ukraine has again altered the Kremlin's strategy of managing its complex domestic demographics.

Despite the absence of a clear definition of "ethnic group," the term generally refers to people with a common history, culture, and ancestry. Russians are widely considered the largest ethnic group in Europe, and historically they have lived in a multiethnic state where they formed a majority of the population. Within the country's vast territory, imperial Russia and later Soviet authorities often encouraged internal migration to help populate barren regions for economic exploitation, typically resulting in cooperation and assimilation between ethnic and social groups.

But cultural fusion has not always been possible nor desired, and conflicts and forced population transfers have occurred both internally and in Russia's border regions for centuries. Since the Soviet collapse, the Kremlin has attempted to enforce a sense of patriotism among its diverse citizenry by synthesizing Russia's ethnic and national identities, while weakening the links between the two in other post-Soviet states.

Early Russia to Tsardom

The Russian identity begins with the Slavs, a diverse collection of tribal societies with common linguistic, religious, and other cultural ties who settled across Eastern and southeast Europe in the 5th Century AD. The first Slavic-majority state was the Kievan Rus, declared in 882 and centered around Kyiv. Its Viking and Finnic minorities steadily Slavicized through intermarriage and cultural assimilation, and the Rus adopted Orthodox Christianity from the neighboring Byzantine Empire in 988. But the Slavic-majority state soon became weakened by internal political divisions and in 1240 was destroyed by the expanding Mongol Empire. This left Moscow, a small city on the Rus' periphery, subservient to the Mongol yoke.

After the Grand Duchy of Moscow, or Muscovy, was established in 1263, the young Russian state, defined largely by its Eastern Slavic and Orthodox heritage, expanded across its sparsely populated territories in the west and north over the next two and a half centuries. It steadily absorbed other Slavic and Orthodox communities, as well as several others, into the developing Russian identity.

By the 15th century, expansion into what is now southern Russia and Ukraine brought the Duchy into significant contact with Cossacks. Typically a mix of

runaway serfs, hunters, bandits, mercenaries, and fugitives from Eastern Europe, Cossacks lived in militarized yet lightly organized settlements across border regions in Russia's south and east. Their diverse ethnic origins and semi-nomadic societies prevented Cossack groups from developing a strong national identity. Many, however, belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church and spoke "in dialects of Russian."

Following the establishment of the Tsardom of Russia under Ivan the Terrible in 1533, Cossack groups became essential to wider Russian military campaigns against regional Tatar groups. While Tatar origins are often debated, they have generally been portrayed as descendants of Turkic nomadic tribes who invaded Eurasia with the Mongol Empire and remained there after the empire dissolved in 1368.

The Russian state also sought to reunify what it saw as "Russian lands," namely the Orthodox and Eastern Slavic populations in modern-day Belarus and Ukraine, including the Cossacks living in these lands. In 1654, Russia signed the Pereiaslav Agreement, facilitating the absorption of parts of eastern Ukraine, and in 1686 it gained additional former territories of the Kievan Rus. Education, intermarriage, and government service also instigated the "Russification" of Ukrainian nobility. However, there was significant tension between the relatively autonomous Cossacks and the organized states that sought their assistance and incorporation, including Russia. Cossack groups launched several rebellions against Russia in the 1600s and 1700s, which often spurred Russian serfs and other minority groups to join. Cossack military campaigns against Russia, sometimes in coordination with other states, were also common.

But Russian authorities could offer Cossacks something other states could not—an open frontier. In return for military service, Cossacks enjoyed vastly reduced taxes, freedom of movement, and significant autonomy. Cossack groups steadily helped conquer smaller, often warring Finnic, Turkic, Ugric, and Tatar tribes across Siberia and into Alaska, establishing many settlements that later became major cities. Russian expansion was often brutal, but agreements with local elites permitted conquered communities to retain elements of their culture and assimilate into the empire by accepting Tsarist rule. Russians and Cossacks would also adapt to local cultures, and intermarriage between groups was common.

Russian Empire

Following the establishment of the Russian Empire in 1721, Cossack groups steadily became integrated into Russian military command and proved integral to Russian campaigns to expel local Muslim populations to Russia's south and west. Between 1784 and 1790, 300,000 Crimean Tatars (out of a population of roughly 1 million) left or were forced to leave the peninsula. Hundreds of thousands of Circassians also left or were forced to leave the mountainous Caucasus region in the 1800s.

In both instances, most displaced Muslims settled in the nearby Ottoman Empire, paving the way for Russian settlers to move in. Yet population transfers in primarily Muslim lands were not universally carried out. In the Caucasus, Russian authorities created alliances with some local communities between the 16th and 18th centuries, who were wary of Ottoman and Persian influences in the region. Russian authorities also sought to use the empire's Muslim minorities to expand into other Muslim regions. Tatar communities who accepted Tsarist rule, for example, were used as cultural emissaries in Central Asia, building relationships with the local populations as the Russian Empire spread further into this region in the 1700s and 1800s. Additionally, many "noble Russian families were of Tatar descent and there was frequent intermarriage between the Russians and Tatars."

Lacking the population to hold territory as Russia's empire continued to expand, Catherine the Great's second manifesto in 1763 invited European settlers to Russia. Without requiring citizenship and enticed by tax breaks, loans, land grants, and religious freedom, hundreds of thousands of immigrants from Germany, the Balkans, and other parts of Europe moved to the sprawling empire and its new territories over the next few decades, often maintaining their distinct cultures.

However, the rise of nationalism in Europe in the 1800s began to threaten the loose national identity that Russian authorities had nurtured for centuries. Following the emancipation of Russian serfs in 1861, integration problems also arose as the Russian government began giving land only to citizens and began to more forcefully promote Russification. This included introducing conscription and other obligations for non-Russians, expanding the use of the Russian language among ethnic groups, and identifying "potential Russians" in the European part of the empire. Violence against the Jewish population meant that roughly 2 million Jews also left the empire between 1881 and 1914. But because the Russian Empire required a larger population to sustain industrialization and its enormous

territory, a net migration of 4.5 million people arrived in Russia from 1860 to 1917. Immigration and territorial expansion meanwhile meant that ethnic Russians went from roughly 77 percent of the population at the time of the establishment of the Russian Empire to roughly 44 percent at the time of the 1897 census.

In addition, Russification policies caused tension with some minority communities and were one of the major causes of the Russian Revolution in 1905. Ethnic violence among minority groups also broke out across the empire, such as the Armenian-Tatar massacres from 1905 to 1907.

World Wars and the Soviet Union

Ethnic tensions persisted even after Russia became embroiled in World War I in 1914. Disputes between Russian authorities and local populations in Central Asia, including over the unfair distribution of land to Russians and Ukrainians, conscription in the Russian army, and other issues, resulted in the 1916 Central Asian Revolt. Thousands of Slavic settlers were killed, while reprisal attacks, famine, and disease saw 100,000 to 270,000 deaths of mostly Kazakhs and Kyrgyz afterward. Ethnic tensions persisted throughout the empire, and many countries and ethnic groups declared their independence from Russia after the Russian Revolution in 1917. The ensuing Russian civil war saw the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), or Soviet Union, in 1922. Though Soviet forces were able to recapture much of the Russian Empire's territories by the early 1920s, Finland, the Baltic states, and Poland gained their independence, while resistance to Soviet rule continued throughout the 1920s in Central Asia.

After consolidating power, Soviet authorities kickstarted a more calculated and ruthless management of the country's sprawling, multiethnic society. Smaller clan and region-based identities were homogenized in accordance with Soviet nation-building policies, and "by the end of the 1920s people who had not really thought in national terms before the World War [I] found that they now had a national language, a national culture, national histories and national political structures—in short, they had become members of a nation." Internal borders were established based on ethnic identity under a policy known as national delimitation, followed by Korenizatsiya, or "indigenization," where minority nations and populations were given significant autonomy as well as power in the national government.

Eventually, 15 major Soviet republics emerged. The Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), the largest, was further divided into autonomous ethnic minority territories. Both inside the RSFSR and the Soviet Union, Russian cultural dominance was reduced considerably. However, in the 1930s, Soviet political leader Joseph Stalin reversed much of this process to harness Russian nationalism and consolidate power against separatist-inclined republics and regions. While the specter of "Great Russian chauvinism" was carefully repressed in the Soviet Union until its collapse, power began to be recentralized in Moscow and the "petty bourgeois nationalism" of smaller ethnic groups was also curtailed.

Beginning in the 1930s, Stalin also began large-scale forced population transfers of entire ethnic groups, which continued during World War II. Mass rail transit systems allowed Soviet authorities to deport more than 3 million people between 1936 and 1952 belonging to 20 social and ethnic groups. Several were largely removed from their "ancestral homelands," including the Volga Germans, Kalmyks, Karachai, Balkars, Crimean Tatars, and Meskhetians. And whether true or not, many minority groups—among them Chechens, Ingush, and Cossacks—were accused of working with Nazi Germany during the war. Like others, they were sent to Siberia and Central Asia to labor camps or "special settlements," where hundreds of thousands perished.

Slavic migration to Central Asia also increased during WWII, as populations sought to avoid the encroaching German army. Additionally, the redistribution of industrial capacity to Central Asia during WWII, as well as urbanization, further changed the ethnic layout of the Soviet Union.

Stalin's death in 1953 largely ended massive, forced population transfers, and most groups were able to return to their ancestral homelands over the next few years. But Soviet authorities maintained the Stalin-era borders to divide and weaken ethnic groups. By avoiding the creation of homogenous republics, they could more easily suppress separatism and compel ethnic groups to require the assistance of the Kremlin to manage their territorial disputes. Soviet authorities also sought to continue redistributing the labor force, and in the years following WWII until the mid-1970s, 2.7 million Russians left the RSFSR to Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic states, and Central Asia. However, by the 1970s this trend reversed, and 2.5 million Soviet citizens flocked to the RSFSR from 1975 to 1991.

While Russians (and their culture) enjoyed a privileged position of "first among

equals" in the Soviet Union, overt Russification policies were mostly abandoned in favor of "Sovietization," which instead promoted a non-ethnic national identity. By the 1960s, Soviet sociologists advocated for the existence of a Soviet people "with a shared identity based on common territory, state, economic system, culture, and the goal of building communism." Yet despite a rise in interethnic marriages, traditional ethnic and cultural ties, as well as grievances, proved difficult to dislodge. Tied by a common east Slavic and Orthodox heritage, Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians dominated the Soviet Union's political structures. Ethnic solidarity could also affect foreign policy—Central Asian soldiers, for example, were initially used during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, but due to fraternization with local Afghans, were largely replaced by Slavic troops in 1980.

The synchronization of Russian cultural identity with that of the Soviet one meant Soviet culture steadily lost its appeal among the non-Russian population, while many Russians also grew disenfranchised by the 1980s. And by 1989, the ethnic Russian majority of the Soviet Union had fallen to roughly 51 percent. Growing avenues for ethnic nationalism among minority groups as a result of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms, as well as ethnic Russian frustration with these policies, played an essential role in the Soviet collapse in 1991.

Russian Federation

In the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse, the 15 republics became independent countries. Millions of ethnic Russians returned to the Russian Federation in the 1990s from across the former Soviet Union, in addition to non-Russians who sought to live and work in Russia. Initially from European former Soviet states, migrant groups have increasingly arrived from former Soviet states in the Caucasus region and Central Asia in recent years.

Government authority was decentralized away from Moscow to Russia's other regions throughout the 1990s. And like other post-Soviet states, Russia was afflicted by demands for greater autonomy from ethnic and social groups, as well as outright secession movements. In Chechnya, Russian troops were forced to secede from the region in 1996 following their defeat in the first Chechen war.

Upon his rise to power in 1999 as acting President Vladimir Putin began reestablishing centralized, top-down rule over Russia. His path to the presidency coincided with the launch of the second Chechen war that brought the region

back under Russian control in the 2000s. And while Cossack groups were permitted to reemerge as distinct cultural entities in the 1990s, Putin took more formal steps to reintegrate them into national military command, including using them in Chechen counterinsurgency operations.

Russian officials also became increasingly critical of Western-style multiculturalism. Though cultural and political rights were afforded to non-Russians and Putin warned against promoting Russian ethno-nationalism, the Kremlin has supported the need to build a patriotic identity within Russia through a civic identity of common values and traditions—notably the widespread adoption of the Russian language. Non-Russians would be welcomed in the Russian Federation, but it was ethnic Russians that would "cement this civilization." The ethnic Russian population has declined slightly since 1989, the year of the last Soviet census. Ethnic Russians composed roughly 81.5 percent of Russia's population in 1989, 79.8 percent in 2002, and 77.7 percent in 2010. The 2021 census showed a remarkable drop to 71.7 percent, though this can largely be explained by "the declining importance of ethnicity as an identifier in ethnically homogeneous areas, such as the predominantly ethnic Russian oblasts of central Russia", and the rising number of ethnic Russians declining to declare their nationality.

To complement the country's political and cultural restructuring, the Kremlin merged several territories in the 2000s, and with the addition of Crimea in 2014, Russia boasted 85 federal subjects. Forty-six are ethnic-Russian dominated oblasts, with 22 republics that are home to an ethnic minority. Additionally, there are four autonomous okrugs or districts (with significant ethnic minority populations), nine krais (similar to oblasts), three federal cities, and one Jewish autonomous oblast.

Ethnicity and 21st Century Post-Soviet Conflicts

Russia's relatively successful efforts to foment patriotism among its multiethnic population and reforge a powerful, centralized state since 2000 contrasts to some other post-Soviet states. Ethnic rivalries within them have been exploited by the Kremlin to challenge their stability and sovereignty. Alongside using ethnic Russians living outside Russia to achieve these aims, Russia's own ethnic and social minorities have been primary participants in various conflicts and disputes abroad.

From 1989 to the early 1990s, for example, two Georgian separatist territories populated by ethnic minorities, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, waged wars against Georgian forces. Russia provided Abkhazians and South Ossetians with considerable military and economic aid, which increased after Georgia began drifting toward the West following the 2003 Rose Revolution. As Abkhazia and South Ossetia gained increasing autonomy from Georgia, tensions culminated in the 2008 Russo-Georgia War. In addition to aiding the ethnic separatists, the Russian military employed Cossack and Chechen militant groups against the Georgian armed forces in 2008. In the aftermath, the remaining ethnic Georgian populations were largely expelled from Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Both Cossacks and Chechens were also utilized by Russia during the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the launch of the proxy war in Russian-speaking eastern Ukraine. Russian-speaking Ukrainians (including Ukrainian Cossacks), ethnic Russians in the south and east Ukraine, as well as those from across the former Soviet Union and beyond, filled the ranks of the pro-Russian separatist groups. These militants maintained a proxy conflict for Russia in Donetsk and Luhansk until the official Russian invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022, and continue to take part in Russia's ongoing "special military operation." Additionally, Russia has used non-ethnic Russian minorities within Russia to fight at the frontline of the conflict, and they are reportedly dying at higher rates in Ukraine than their Slavic counterparts.

After reigniting conflicts in Georgia and launching one in Ukraine, Russia has also taken steps to annex their separatist territories. In the years before Russia's 2008 campaign in Georgia, the Kremlin steadily gave Russian passports to Abkhazians and South Ossetians, a tactic now known as passportization. The need to protect Russian citizens helped Russia justify the war and allowed it to more easily absorb these territories by granting them freedom of movement to Russia. Days after the war had concluded, the Kremlin recognized Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's independence in August 2008, and in 2022, South Ossetian leader Anatoly Bibilov declared the region's intention to join Russia, its "historical homeland."

And following Ukraine's lurch to the West in 2014, significant passportization took place in Ukraine. Days before the February 24, 2022, Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Kremlin recognized the independence of Donetsk and Luhansk, likely in anticipation of future calls to join Russia. These two regions were annexed by Russia in September 2022, joining Russia as republics, while two oblasts (Kherson

and Zaporozhye) were also annexed from Ukraine by Russia. Russian forces, however, have been unable to establish complete control over all of the claimed territories.

But the Kremlin also sees the Ukrainian war as an opportunity to "integrate" the country's population with its own amid Russia's declining population. For centuries, Russian strategists have believed that Ukrainians, viewed as a subcategory of the Russian ethnic identity, could help Russify parts of the country where ethnic Russians do not form a dominant majority. In 2014, more than 1 million Ukrainians fled the country's southeast to Russia, mostly just across the border. However, in keeping with the Kremlin's desire to populate other regions, Ukrainian refugees began moving to the Volga Basin, the Ural Mountains, the Far East, and other areas. Since the outbreak of full conflict in 2022, millions of Ukrainians have fled to Russia or been forcibly removed, and have been resettled across the country. Thus, while the war in Ukraine is central to Putin's foreign policy ambitions, encouraging Ukrainian immigration to Russia is also an important domestic imperative.

Other regions across the former Soviet Union remain vulnerable to Russian attempts to use ethnicity to destabilize them. Since a 1992 ceasefire, Moldova's separatist region of Transnistria, populated largely by Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians, has been under the control of separatist authorities. Additionally, the Soviet 14th Army, which was stationed in Transnistria, was inherited by Russia after the Soviet collapse. Today, its remnants form Russia's part of the trilateral peacekeeping force (with Moldovan and Transnistrian soldiers) and the Operational Group of Russian Forces (OGRF), which guards old Soviet arms depots in the separatist region. Cultivating pro-Russian sentiment among Transnistria's Slavic majority, could quickly reignite the conflict. Russian military figures stated in April 2022 that the "second phase" of Russia's military campaign would annex enough of Ukraine to connect it to Transnistria, though this appears unfeasible for the foreseeable future.

After annexing Crimea in 2014, the Kremlin's declaration that it would protect ethnic Russians everywhere resonated with many of the millions of Russians scattered mostly in former Soviet states. In Central Asia and the Baltic states, where they are most numerous, ethnic Russians have faced restrictions on the use of the Russian language and other forms of cultural expression since the Soviet collapse, making exploitation easier. Kazakhstan's roughly 3.5 million Russians

make up roughly 18 percent of the total population. Most ethnic Russians migrated primarily to northern Kazakhstan beginning in the 19th century and during the Soviet period, and have significant economic and political power. In Estonia and Latvia, ethnic Russians largely migrated during the Soviet period, and today form roughly 25 percent of the populations in both these countries. In addition to higher rates of unemployment, hundreds of thousands of Russians remain stateless persons in the Baltic states, as their citizenship (and those of their descendants) was denied after the Soviet collapse. Russia has leveraged these realities to help inflame social unrest, such as Estonia's 2007 Bronze Night incident, as well as wield indirect political representation through Estonia's Center party and Latvia's Harmony party. Significant passportization among Russians in the Baltic states has also taken place in the last few years.

Millions of ethnic Russians living in former Soviet states left for Russia in the 1990s and 2000s, reducing the Kremlin's influence over these countries. However, the Baltic states have seen more Russians immigrate than emigrate in recent years, while more than 200,000 Russians avoiding conscription during the ongoing war fled to Kazakhstan in September 2022. How the Kremlin exploits these changing circumstances remains to be seen. And as in Transnistria, Ukrainian and Belarusian communities in these countries also look to Russia for protection, particularly, in defending the use of the Russian language in their societies.

Predictions

Russia's ability to use ethnicity for domestic stability and as a foreign policy tool is not without risk. Nurturing ethnic Russian nationalism is unnerving to minority groups and has occasionally led to the eruption of ethnic violence, such as in the city of Kondopoga in 2006 and in Stavropol in 2007. Historical persecution has led to significant emigration even in modern times, which occurred among Russian Germans and Russian Jews in the 1990s. Giving minority groups greater rights could meanwhile instigate secession attempts, while failed attempts to merge additional federal subjects in 2020 demonstrate the limits of Russia's federal authority.

Russia's birth rate has rebounded from a record low of 1.25 children per woman in 2000 and was expected to reach 1.8 children per woman by 2020. But it is still below replacement level and there has been a significant population decline in Russia for years. While the population grew slightly during the 2010s, it is again

shrinking. Minority groups often have higher birthrates than ethnic Russians, and though no ethnic minority groups equate to greater than 5 percent of Russia's total population, its various Muslim minorities amount to 10 to 15 percent of the population. Radical Islam came to partly define the Chechen independence movement in the 1990s, and many volunteer Muslim-Russians from across the country arrived to fight against Russian forces. The Kremlin is fearful of a similar situation in the future with its growing Muslim population.

The Kremlin will also have to contend with managing the delicate alliances it has with its minority groups. Clashes were reported in Ukraine between Chechen soldiers and those belonging to the Buryat minority group in 2022, while tension between Cossack groups and Russian nationalists has been evident since 2014. Russia will also inherit ethnic disputes as it seeks to expand its territory. More than 260,000 Crimean Tatars returned to Crimea after the Soviet collapse, reviving historical animosity between them and local Cossack communities. Russia's war in Ukraine also risks solidifying anti-Russian sentiment in much of Ukraine's population.

Regardless of these threats, the Kremlin continues to push ahead with its vision to remake Russian society and disrupt its border regions. Russian officials increasingly define Russianness in cultural terms, inviting minority groups to be absorbed more effectively. Highlighting the importance of revered "Russian" leaders, such as Joseph Stalin (Georgian) and Catherine the Great (German) showcase the important leadership roles that non-Slavs have played in Russian history. Russia has also shown initiative in using other elements of minority cultures to expand its influence abroad. Russia has been an observer state of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Countries (OIC) since 2005, and Putin has promoted the idea of the "similarity of the Russian and 'Islamic' approaches to many international issues." Chechen military personnel have been used in Russia's military campaign in Syria, while Tatar minorities are often responsible for Russian diplomatic and cultural outreach to Central Asia.

The Kremlin has, however, suppressed minority languages in Russia. This policy forms part of its efforts to promote Russian movies, television, social media, literature, and other media forms to Russify other countries. In 1939, for example, more than 80 percent of all Belarus inhabitants spoke Belarusian at home. By 1989, that had fallen to 65 percent, and by 2009, almost 70 percent of Belarusians spoke Russian at home. In 2017, Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko

expressed open alarm over this linguistic evolution, declaring that" [i]f we lose our ability to speak Belarusian, we will cease to be a nation." But Lukashenko's need to defeat the widespread protests against him after the 2020 election only deepened his reliance on Russia. The use of Belarusian territory to assist in the invasion of Ukraine and Lukashenko's cooperation with Putin will now completely isolate Belarus from the West, increasing its dependence on Russia further. The potential for even greater political, economic, and military integration between Russia and Belarus, formalized through the Union State, will only be further augmented by Belarus' steady adoption of the Russian language.

But the Kremlin's campaign in Ukraine will remain its most pressing imperative, and it has focused on efforts to alter and weaken Ukraine's demographics. For example, the war has prompted millions of Ukrainian citizens to leave the country, and the longer they are away, the less likely they are to return. Reports on the forced transfer of Ukrainian minors from Ukraine to Russia have also been apparent since the beginning of the war, and roughly 20,000 Ukrainian children are estimated to have been sent to Russia, according to Ukrainian authorities. In March 2023, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for both Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova, the Russian commissioner for children's rights, in connection with the affair. It is unlikely that either of them will ever be prosecuted, while Russia has stated that the population transfers are part of a humanitarian response to young Ukrainians made orphans by the war. Reducing Ukraine's population by creating refugees and bolstering Russia's by transferring orphans further demonstrate the demographic aspect to the conflict.

With centuries of experience in using ethnicity and conflict to redraw borders, the Kremlin has aimed to reconceptualize Ukrainian statehood. Reinforcing the notion that Russians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians are "one people" may help Russia expand its territory through conflict, and reverse its declining population by assimilating millions of potential Russians into the country. Whether this will be worth the consequences of sanctions and isolation from the West for the Kremlin will remain up for debate for the foreseeable future. A clear Russian defeat, however, would have disastrous implications for Russia's territorial integrity, and would likely inspire greater calls for separatism in Russia not only from ethnic minorities, but also ethnic Russian communities dissatisfied with living under Moscow's thumb. Thus, like Ukraine, Russia's fate will depend on the outcome of the war and its ability to consolidate its diverse population once hostilities

decline.

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