

Activism, Not Global Climate Summits, Is The Answer To The Climate Crisis



CJ

Polychroniou

In response to COP26, C. J. Polychroniou argues that we cannot rely on summits to solve climate change. Instead, radical and legal activism are the best hopes for our future.

The outcome of international climate summits hasn't changed over the last few decades. The task of forging a global consensus on transformative mitigation strategies to the climate emergency somehow always eludes the participating parties, and the result is to keep kicking the can down the road as if to say, "let future generations take care of the problem."

Unfortunately, in spite of being touted as "our last best hope," the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow ended up being just another big flop, thus confirming the position of Democratic US Rep Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez that people shouldn't expect international climate summits like COP26 or governments to solve the climate crisis.

Indeed, the only hope for solving humanity's greatest existential crisis lies with our ability to mobilize people behind the global climate movement.

The outcome of COP26, a great "compromise" between moderates and reactionaries, does very little to slow the pace to the precipice. The final document, called the Glasgow Climate Pact [cma3_auv_2_cover decision \(unfccc.int\)](https://unfccc.int/ma3/auv/2/cover/decision), made no progress with regard to existing national plans to cut emissions by 2030, which are highly inadequate to limit warming to 1.5C. In fact, as things stand, the planet is headed to a disastrous 2.4C of heating. And only very naïve souls can gain comfort from the fact that the pact obliges countries to return to next year's COP with revised targets.

Fossil fuels, which supplied 84 percent of global energy in 2020 [Fossil Fuels Still Supply 84 Percent Of World Energy — And Other Eye Openers From BP's Annual Review \(forbes.com\)](#), will continue to dominate global energy consumption. The power of the fossil fuel producers is apparently too strong to counter in diplomatic negotiations over the future of the planet.

Moreover, nothing was done in relation to the issue of climate finance, and rich countries have failed to honor their pledge of providing \$100 billion each year by 2020 to help the poor nations deal with the threats of global warming. In the meantime of course, climate debt [grows exponentially](#).

In sum, decarbonization remains a distant dream in spite of the pressing need to do so almost immediately in order to keep temperatures from rising “well above 2C.” At COP26, amazingly enough, even coal, the dirtiest of the fossil fuels and the single largest source of global temperature increases, received a mere slap in the hand as India, with the backing of China, succeeded in changing the wording of an earlier draft from “phase out” coal to “phase down.”

All this while there is a near unanimous consensus among scientists that global warming is caused from human-produced greenhouse gas emissions and that the climate crisis represents humanity's largest existential crisis.

If COP26 participants were really serious about solving the climate crisis they should have made, at a minimum, the following pledges:

1. Eliminate all fossil fuel subsidies, which according to a recent IMF study amounts to \$5.9 trillion in 2020;
2. Ban banks from funding new fossil fuel projects;
3. Make ecocide an international crime similar to genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes;
4. Demand the cancellation of debt for lower income countries, which now spend several times more on servicing debt than dealing with the challenges of global warming;
5. Create large-scale funding sources to assist with the transition to a green economy.

Instead, we got mostly a lot of “blah, blah, blah” and more inertia.

But why the persistent failure among governments in putting the world on a

sustainable climate pathway?

Yes, the existential crisis of global warming must be addressed in a world occupied by mainly egoistic and highly imperfect creatures; where the nation-state remains the primary political unit; and with an economic system in place that is driven by the maximization of profit and the exploitation of natural resources. Under neoliberalism, in particular, nature is being destroyed at [unprecedented levels](#), while “the average global temperatures have [risen relentlessly](#).”

But, alas, it's not all so difficult or hopeless as the international climate summits make it seem. We have made some progress in the fight against global warming. Cities worldwide are at the forefront of climate action, thanks to grassroots activism. The majority of European cities have already committed themselves to reaching carbon neutrality by 2050, with 12 of them before 2040. In California, a project of building a clean energy infrastructure and reducing emissions by 50 percent as of 2030 and achieving a zero-emissions economy by 2045 has been endorsed by nearly [20 major unions across the state](#). In the Ohio River Valley, ReImagine Appalachia, a broad coalition of individuals and organizations, is laying the groundwork for a post-fossil fuel economy.

Activism is indeed the key ingredient behind the support for green transition programs, and even some major legal victories have been won in the fight against global warming. European courts sided with activists in their effort to put an end to logging in an ancient protected forest in Poland, driving bans have been enforced in some of Germany's inner cities, and a Dutch court ordered oil giant Royal Dutch Shell to cut its greenhouse emissions by 45 percent by 2045.

Thanks to activism, judges refuse to leave issues about climate and the environment totally in the hands of policymakers.

This is a trend that will most likely increase in the years ahead as international climate summits and governments fail to take the drastic measures needed to for the planet to avoid a climate catastrophe.

As such, revolutionary activism is indeed our last best hope to keep humanity from returning to barbarism on account of the potential collapse of civilized social order due to a climate apocalypse.

In practice, this means turning every city and every town in every major country around the world into a stronghold of the global climate movement. This is the only way that the “general will” can be enforced on the powers-that-be.

Source:

<https://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/activism-not-global-climate-summits-answer-climate-crisis>

C.J. Polychroniou is a political scientist/political economist, author, and journalist who has taught and worked in numerous universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. Currently, his main research interests are in U.S. politics and the political economy of the United States, European economic integration, globalization, climate change and environmental economics, and the deconstruction of neoliberalism’s politico-economic project. He is a columnist for Global Policy Journal and a regular contributor to Truthout as well as a member of Truthout’s Public Intellectual Project.

Urgently Needed: A Global Green New Deal From Below



CJ

Polychroniou

Restructuring the international economic order to avert cataclysmic climate change demands bottom-up participation.

Solving global warming is humanity’s greatest challenge. It can be done, but it is exceedingly difficult as it requires a fundamental restructuring of the world economy.

There are, for all intents and purposes, three paths of restructuring the global

economic order in order to keep catastrophic climate change at bay: (a) dismantle capitalism; (b) shrink dramatically economic activity; and (c) implement a Global Green New Deal.

We have both the technological know-how and the economic resources to make the transition to a “green economy.” The only thing that’s missing from making this happen is the political will.

The first path is hardly realistic at the current juncture. Socialists everywhere are in retreat, while socialism continues to have multiple meanings and interpretations. There is not a single place on earth where a socialist revolution is brewing. In this context, I think we can safely say that the dismantlement of global capitalism through a world socialist revolution is nothing more than fantasy.

The second path is almost equally unrealistic, as well as exceedingly dangerous. This is what may be called as the “lazy” approach to tackling the climate crisis. A dramatic contraction of economic activity will lead to mass unemployment, rise in poverty to unprecedented levels, political instability, and social chaos. Neither rich nor poor nations will benefit from intentional policies to shrink economic activity, and surely no one can imagine any government in any part of the world embarking on such an undertaking in hopes that it will help save the planet from the menace of global warming due to anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions.

More important, reducing global economic activity won’t save the planet from global warming. As economist Robert Pollin has argued in [*Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal: The Political Economy of Saving the Planet*](#) (co-authored with Noam Chomsky), even if global GDP were to contract by 10 percent over the next 10 years (which, incidentally, would be several times larger than what was experienced over the global financial crisis of 2007-09), carbon dioxide emissions would be pushed down by precisely 10 percent (p. 117). So the world economy remains far away from reaching zero emissions, while workers suffer massive damage to their livelihoods.

The third path, the implementation of a Global Green New Deal, is the only realistic one for humanity to avert a catastrophic climate breakdown. A Global Green New Deal is essentially a call on all governments around the world to use the power of state intervention to halt global warming by stopping fossil fuel

emissions and making a transition to clean and renewable sources of energy. The Green New Deal will stimulate the economy while eliminating the bad side of growth.

We have both the technological know-how and the economic resources to [make the transition to a “green economy.”](#) The only thing that’s missing from making this happen is the political will—in spite of so many international climate summits having taken place so far.

Indeed, at COP26, the lack of political will among the world’s leaders to take drastic action to combat the climate crisis is more than obvious and incredibly disconcerting. “Tough talk,” but no commitment to a Global Green New Deal, which is why thousands of protesters [took to the streets in Glasgow](#) during the COP26 conference.

As things stand, the most promising way out of the impasse lies with [revolutionary activism](#). Change, as always, will take place from the bottom up. Indeed, a Global Green New Deal will materialize only when citizens of the world demand it.

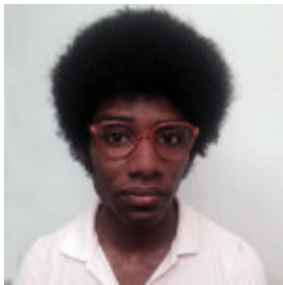
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C.J. Polychroniou is a political economist/political scientist who has taught and worked in numerous universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. His latest books are [The Precipice: Neoliberalism, the Pandemic and the Urgent Need for Social Change](#) (A collection of interviews with Noam Chomsky; Haymarket Books, 2021), and [Economics and the Left: Interviews with Progressive Economists](#) (Verso, 2021).

People Worldwide Name US As A Major Threat To World Peace. Here's Why.



Khury Petersen-Smith Photo: ips-dc.org

How is it that people across the globe have come to agree that the United States is now [one of the primary threats to world peace and democracy](#)?

Having leveled two Japanese cities with atomic bombs and established itself as the world's top superpower following the collapse of the international order in the aftermath of World War II, the U.S. quickly became intoxicated by its newfound military superiority.

The U.S. soon went on to introduce a doctrine that positioned itself as the world's police, drop more bombs in the Korean and Vietnamese wars than there had been dropped in the whole course of World War II, and orchestrate military coups against democratically elected governments throughout Latin America. It ended up in turn supporting brutal dictatorships and establishing more foreign military bases than any other nation or empire in history all over the globe.

All this occurred within the first 30 or so years after the end of World War II. By the time the 21st century came around, the U.S. was the only military and economic superpower in the world. Yet, that did not put an end to U.S. imperial ambitions. A "global war on terrorism" was initiated in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, with the U.S. ending up by 2013 being seen by people around the world as "[the greatest threat to world peace](#)."

What are the roots of U.S. imperialism? What has been the impact of imperial expansion and wars on democracy at home? Is the U.S. empire in retreat? In this interview, scholar and activist Khury Petersen-Smith, who is Michael Ratner Middle East Fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, discusses how U.S. imperialism has undermined democracy, both home and abroad, with the wars abroad even being tied to police brutality at home.

C.J. Polychroniou: The U.S. has a long history of war-on-terror campaigns going all the way back to the spread of anarchism in late 19th century. During the Cold War era, communists were routinely labelled as “terrorists,” and the first systematic war on terror unfolded during the Reagan administration. Following the September 11 attacks, the Bush administration renewed the war on terror by implementing a series of far-reaching policy initiatives, many of which, incidentally, went unnoticed by the public but also continued during the Obama and Trump administrations, respectively, which subverted democracy and the rule of law. Can you elaborate about the impact of war-on-terror policies in the dismantling of U.S. democracy?

Khury Petersen-Smith: It’s true: The tactics and beliefs that the U.S. has deployed in the war on terror have deep roots that stretch well before our current time. I would argue that the U.S. has never been a democracy, and that a key reason is its basically permanent state of war, which began with its founding. New England settlers, for example, waged a war of counterinsurgency against Indigenous peoples here who resisted colonization in King Philip’s War. The settlers besieged Indigenous nations, considering communities of adults and children to be “enemies” and punishing them with incredible violence. This was in the 1670s.

In a different U.S. counterinsurgency, in the Philippines in the early 20th century, American soldiers used “the water cure,” a torture tactic comparable to the “waterboarding” that the U.S. has used in the war on terror. This was one feature of a horrific war of scorched earth that the U.S. waged as Filipino revolutionaries fought for an independent country after Spanish colonization. The U.S. killed tens of thousands of Filipino fighters, and hundreds of thousands — up to a million — civilians. There was also a staggering amount of death due to secondary violence, such as starvation and cholera outbreaks, and due to the U.S. declaration that civilians were fair game to target (as seen in the infamous Balangiga Massacre). It was during that episode in 1901 on the island of Samar, when an American general ordered troops to kill everyone over the age of 10. The designation of

whole populations as the “enemy” — and therefore targets for violence — has echoes that reverberate in Somalia, Yemen, Iraq and other places where the U.S. has fought the war on terror.

This is to say that there are different chapters in the history of U.S. empire, but there is a throughline of justifying military violence and the denial of human rights in defense of U.S. power and “the American way of life.” This history of wars informs those of the present.

In the 20th century, labeling various activities “terrorism” was one way of rationalizing the use of force. The U.S. did this especially with its allies in response to anti-colonial liberation movements. So the South African apartheid regime called anti-apartheid resistance “terrorism,” and the Israeli state did (and continues to do) the same to Palestinian resistance, however nonviolent. The U.S. has armed and defended these states, embracing and promoting the rhetoric of war against “terrorism.”

The flip side of “terrorism” — the blanket enemy against which all violence is justified — is “democracy” — the all-encompassing thing that the U.S. claims to defend in its foreign policy. But again, the 20th century saw the U.S. embrace, arm and wage war with and on behalf of anti-democratic, dictatorial forces on every continent. The decades of violence that the U.S. carried out and supported throughout Latin America in the latter part of the 20th century, in response to waves of popular resistance for social and economic justice, serve as a brutal chapter of examples.

All of these things helped constitute the foundation upon which the Bush administration launched the war on terror.

To answer your question more directly, military violence always requires dehumanization and the denial of rights — and this inevitably corrupts any notions of democracy. War, in fact, always involves an attack on democratic rights at large. When the U.S. launched the war on terror in 2001, the federal government simultaneously waged military campaigns abroad *and* passed legislation like the USA PATRIOT Act, issued legal guidelines and other practices that introduced new levels of surveillance, denial of due process, rationalization of torture and other attacks on civil liberties. These efforts especially targeted Muslims and people of South Asian, Central Asian, Southwest Asian and North

African origin — all of whom were subject to being cast as “terrorists” or “suspected terrorists.”

It is worth noting that while Bush drew upon the deep roots of U.S. violence to launch the war on terror, there has been incredible continuity, escalation and expansion throughout it. Bush launched the drone war, for example, and President Barack Obama then wildly [expanded and escalated it](#). President Donald Trump then [escalated](#) it further.

Have the war-on-terror policies also affected struggles for racial and migrant justice?

The war on terror has been devastating for racial and migrant justice. The Islamophobic domestic programs that the U.S. has carried out are racist. And once they were piloted against parts of the population, they could be expanded to others. This is how U.S. state violence works. Indeed, the mass policing, mass incarceration regime built up in the 1990s — which was supposedly directed at “fighting crime,” and the “war on drugs” — targeted Black people and Latinos in particular, building an infrastructure that was then deployed against Muslims and others in the war on terror. With policing vastly expanded in the name of the war on terror, its force came back to Black and Indigenous communities — as it always does in the United States.

It is important to acknowledge the new level of credibility and power that the police attained after 9/11 and in the war on terror. There was actually a powerful wave of anti-racist protest against the police in the 1990s — especially strong in cities like New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and Los Angeles. In New York, thousands mobilized to demand justice for Amadou Diallo, Abner Louima, Patrick Dorismond, and others brutalized and killed by the New York City Police Department. The police were on the defensive. They seized upon the post-9/11 moment and the beginning of the war on terror to rehabilitate their image and attain new powers.

With this in mind, I wonder if the current moment of “racial reckoning” unfolding in the U.S. over these two years — brilliant and important as it is — could have actually happened 20 years ago. I think that anti-racist movements were on track to do it, and the war on terror set us back two decades. Consider all of the Black lives lost in that time.

And yes, the war on terror has been catastrophic for migrant justice. One of the early measures was the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, which forced the registration of non-citizens from South and Central Asian, Middle Eastern, and North and East African countries. It was largely unopposed, setting the stage for more racist, targeted policies, like the Muslim ban. Before the war on terror, there was no Department of Homeland Security, no Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The U.S. government seized the opportunity of the war on terror to build on the long history of white supremacy in controlling migration and open a new chapter of border militarization, policing and surveillance of migrants, and deportation.

The United Nations condemned this past summer, for the 29th year in a row, the U.S. trade embargo on Cuba. Indeed, the U.S. is notorious around the world for violations of international law and has been widely perceived as the greatest threat to world peace. However, the influence of the U.S. in world affairs is sharply in decline and its so-called “soft” power has all but evaporated. Are we living through the death of an empire?

I’m afraid that U.S. empire is far from death, or even dying.

From the perspective of humanity and the planet, the war on terror has been catastrophic in its levels of destruction and death. But from the perspective of the proponents of U.S. empire, those at its helm, it was a gamble. Bush administration officials were clear from the start that the invasion of Afghanistan was the opening of what they conceived of as a series of invasions and other military operations to demonstrate U.S. hegemony, and punish the minority of states located in the most strategic regions of the world that were not solidly in the American orbit. After invading Afghanistan, Bush declared the “Axis of Evil,” targeting Iraq, Iran and North Korea. The U.S. then invaded Iraq, implying that Iran and North Korea could be next. The idea was to project U.S. power and to disrupt and prevent the rise of potential rivals to it.

The U.S. lost the gamble. Not only did untold millions of people around the world suffer from the wars, but the U.S. also failed in its strategic objectives. The regional and world powers whose ascension the U.S. sought to curtail — especially Iran, Russia and China — emerged more powerful, while U.S. power was set back.

But the U.S. remains, far and away, the most powerful country in the world. And it will not surrender that status quietly. On the contrary, even as it continues and supports military operations as part of the war on terror, it is very openly preparing for confrontation with China. It is pursuing a belligerent path that is driving rivalry and militarization — a path toward conflict.

The story of the path the U.S. is pursuing regarding hostility toward China is another that reveals the subterranean, forward motion of empire that continues across presidential administrations. President George W. Bush's [2002 National Security Strategy](#) first signaled that, "We are attentive to the possible renewal of old patterns of great power competition," and identified China as one potential competitor. In 2006, the Bush administration gestured further toward identifying China as posing a problem for U.S. empire, [saying](#), "Our strategy seeks to encourage China to make the right strategic choices for its people, while we hedge against other possibilities."

When President Obama took office, the U.S. foreign policy establishment had clearly united behind the notion that China was an enemy to be isolated and whose rise was to be curtailed. Then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton [declared](#) "America's Pacific Century" and argued for a winding down of American attention to Iraq and Afghanistan, and a new strategic focus on Asia and the Pacific. Obama launched the "Pivot to Asia," which involved shifting military weapons and personnel to the region and building more facilities there, all aimed at addressing China's ascension. President Trump, of course, brought anti-China hostility to a fever pitch, blaming China for the COVID-19 pandemic, openly using crude, racist language directed at China (but impacting Chinese American people and many other Asian Americans), and opening the door for *Fox News* personalities and officials like Sen. Tom Cotton to talk directly about the supposed "threat" that China poses and call for military action against it. That brings us to today, where there is near consensus between both parties that the U.S. should be gearing up in armed competition with China.

Unfortunately, empires do not simply die. This means that we — around the world, and especially those of us located in the United States — are called upon to resist, undermine and disrupt empire. We need to, across borders, envision a radically different world, and fight for it.

This interview has been lightly edited for clarity.

Source: <https://truthout.org/people-worldwide/>

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Besame Mucho - Een saxofonist verstript



De muziek van de film *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* uit 1958 - regie Louis Malle - is bekender dan de film zelf. Miles Davis maakte de soundtrack, die niet alleen bij jazzliefhebbers bekend is. Vaak is de muziek te horen als achtergrond bij documentaires of televisiereportages. Het onmiskenbare trompetspel van Davis wordt afgewisseld met melancholische saxofoonklanken. Er ontstaat een serie lang uitgesponnen saxofoon- en trompetsolo's met een simpel, telkens

terugkerend thema, zonder echte melodie, wat zich eindeloos lijkt te herhalen. Filmkijkers herinneren zich vooral deze muziek bij de scènes waarin een wanhopige Jeanne Moreau, op hakjes, verdwaasd over de beregende kinderhoofdjes van straten in Parijs beweegt. Het zijn ook de enige beelden uit de film die blijven hangen. Zonder de muziek van Miles Davis zou de film waarschijnlijk al lang in de vergetelheid zou zijn geraakt.

Film noir

Ascenseur pour l'échafaud is de eerste lange speelfilm van regisseur Louis Malle (1932-1995). Het is een in zwart/wit gedraaide film noir die bij vlogen hitchcock-achtig aandoet.

Een vrouw – Jeanne Moreau in de rol die haar doorbraak zou betekenen – en haar minnaar zijn van plan haar echtgenoot te vermoorden. Het plan dreigt te mislukken wanneer de minnaar opgesloten raakt in een lift in een verder verlaten kantoorgebouw en zo zijn afspraak met de vrouw misloopt. Wanhopig dwaalt ze 's nachts door een uitgaanswijk van Parijs, in café's en nachtclubs op zoek naar haar minnaar.

Nouvelle Vague

Hoewel *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* niet door alle filmhistorici gerekend wordt tot de Nouvelle Vague, de Franse filmstroming die brak met de traditionele wijze van filmen, geldt de film wel als voorloper ervan. Zeker is dat de film een belangrijke inspiratiebron was voor regisseurs als François Truffaut en Jean-Luc Godard, toonaangevende vertegenwoordigers van de Nouvelle Vague.

Eind jaren vijftig en in het begin van de jaren zestig weken Truffaut en Godard, maar ook regisseurs als Claude Chabrol, Eric Rohmer en Agnès Varda, met hun werkwijze fundamenteel af van de tot dan toe heersende filmtradities. Hun aanpak was niet gebaseerd op van te voren geprogrammeerde scènes en dichtgetimmerde scenario's, maar ging uit van experiment en improvisatie tijdens de opnames, in camerawerk, chronologie en editing, net als de soundtrack.



Jean Seberg en Jean-Paul Belmondo

Straatscènes

Als een van de eersten nam Louis Malle – later de regisseur van onder meer *Zazie*

dans le Metro (1960), *Pretty Baby* (1978) en *My Dinner with André* (1981) – de camera mee de straat op. Niet om vanuit een vast standpunt te filmen, maar juist om op straat met personages mee te kunnen bewegen. Om Jeanne Moreau lopend door straten te kunnen filmen, werd de camera op een kinderwagen gemonteerd zodat ze overal gevolgd kon worden. François Truffaut filmde later op soortgelijke wijze straatscènes in Parijs voor zijn debuutfilm *Le Quatre Cents Coup* (1959). Truffaut liet de camera op een 2CV zonder dak monteren om de jonge Antoine Doinel te kunnen volgen op zijn zwerftochten door Parijs.

Schatplichtig aan *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* is ook de beroemde straatscène in Godards *A Bout de Souffle* (1959), waarin Jean Seberg de *Herald Tribune* verkoopt op de Avenue des Champs-Élysées en door Jean-Paul Belmondo wordt aangesproken. Door – op de openingsscène na – de hele film op locatie te draaien in plaats van in een studio, doorbrak Godard fundamenteel de bestaande filmtraditie en baande hij de weg voor een nieuwe manier van film maken.



Jeanne Moreau en Miles Davis

Jazz in Parijs

In november 1957 was Miles Davis voor enkele optredens geboekt in de Club Saint-Germain in Parijs, een bekende jazzclub in de Rue Saint-Benoît. Franse jazzmusici als Barney Wilen, Stéphane Grapelli, René Urtreger en Boris Vian traden er frequent op, maar ook voor Amerikaanse jazzmuzikanten als Art Blakey, Kenny Dorham, Bud Powell en Kenny Clarke was het een geliefde plek. Parijs was

een stad waar Amerikaanse musici graag verbleven.

Trompettist Chet Baker nam in Parijs een aantal van zijn beste platen op (op cd als *Chet in Paris vol. 1-4*).

In de jaren vijftig werd Parijs de stad 'waar het gebeurde'. Europa herstelde zich van de Tweede Wereldoorlog, en Parijs was de stad waar de voorhoede van een nieuwe toekomst zich leek te kunnen manifesteren. Nieuwe stromingen in kunst, mode, cultuur en filosofie kondigden zich aan. Hoogwaardige journalistiek - de *International Herald Tribune* vindt zijn oorsprong in Parijs - en literaire tijdschriften als *The Paris Review* en *Les Temps Modernes* (onder redactie van Jean-Paul Sartre en Simone de Beauvoir) bepaalden mede het sociaal-culturele klimaat.

Drugs

Zwarte musici hadden er nauwelijks last van racistische vooroordelen en discriminatie zoals ze dat in de Verenigde Staten meemaakten. Bovendien heerste er een gunstiger klimaat ten opzichte van drugsgebruik. Heroïne was een veel gebruikte drug onder musici. In Parijs was het niet al te problematisch om in die behoefte te kunnen voorzien. Bovendien was het Franse rechtssysteem aanzienlijk minder streng ten opzichte van het gebruik van harddrugs in vergelijking met de Verenigde Staten, waar de criminalisering en segregatie hand in hand gingen.

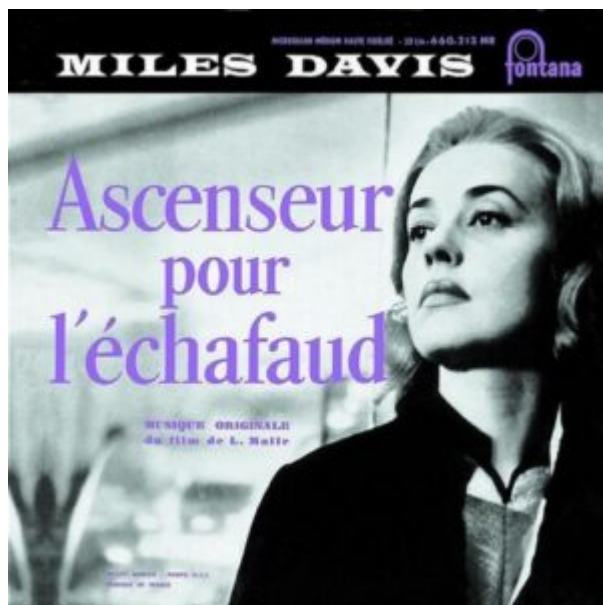


*Juliette Greco en Miles
Davis*

Saint-Germain

Het was niet het eerste bezoek van Miles Davis aan Parijs. Al in 1949 had hij in Parijse clubs gespeeld. De Amerikaanse bebop was in Parijs ongekend populair, met name in de jazzcafé's in Saint-Germain-des-Près. In Parijs werd Davis verliefd op chanteuse en actrice Juliette Gréco, die in bohemienachtige, existentialistische kringen rondom Jean-Paul Sartre verkeerde. In 1957 hernieuwde hij in Parijs zijn relatie met Gréco. Inmiddels was hij wereldberoemd, na het uitbrengen van de legendarische serie platen *Cookin'-, Relaxin'-, Workin'- and Steamin' with The Miles Davis Quintet*.

Jean-Paul Rappeneau, jazzfan en assistent van Malle, kwam met de suggestie Davis te vragen voor de filmmuziek. Voor Louis Malle een uitgelezen kans zijn film publicitair een stuk aantrekkelijker te maken.



Improvisatie

De opnames vonden plaats op 4 en 5 december 1957 in de Le Poste Parisien Studio in Parijs, 116bis Avenue Champs-Élysées. Behalve Miles Davis, bestond de band uit de Amerikaan Kenny Clarke op drums, en de Franse musici Barney Wilen op tenorsax, René Urtreger op piano en Pierre Michelot, bass. Davis gaf de andere bandleden slechts wat globale aanwijzingen over de harmoniestructuur en volgorde van

akkoorden. Terwijl scènes uit de film in de studio op een doek werden geprojecteerd, improviseerden de bandleden op de beelden.

Het samenspel met de bandleden en de ingetogen, trage soundtrack inspireerden Davis vervolgens tot het maken van de plaat *Milestones* (1958) en van *Kind of Blue* (1959), volgens velen de beste jazzplaat ooit gemaakt.

In Europa werd de soundtrack door Fontana uitgebracht op een ten-inch elpee. De eind jaren tachtig verschenen cd bevat ook de alternate takes.



Barney Wilen

Filmmuziek

Voor saxofonist Barney Wilen (1937-1996) geldt *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* als de start van zijn carrière. Direct werd hij gevraagd de filmmuziek voor een tweetal Franse films te componeren: *Un témoin dans le ville* (1958) en *Jazz sur scène* (1958), waaraan Kenny Clarke meewerkte. Ook maakte hij de muziek bij *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (1959) van regisseur Roger Vadim, met medewerking van Thelonius Monk. Ook trad hij op het Newport Jazz Festival op.

In de jaren zestig experimenteerde hij met free jazz en ging zich oriënteren op niet-westerse muziek. In 1968 bracht hij de plaat *Dear Prof. Leary* uit, een eerbetoon aan lsd-profeet Timothy Leary. In de jaren zeventig en tachtig maakte hij muzikale uitstapjes naar de rock en punk en bracht hij lange tijd in Afrika door, waar hij speelde en toerde met Afrikaanse musici.

Uit het Franse clubcircuit was hij verdwenen. Zo nu en dan maakte hij nog een plaat en produceerde hij muziek van anderen.



Stripverhaal

Wilen moet stomverbaasd zijn geweest toen hij in 1987 in een Franse kiosk exemplaren aantrof van het striptijdschrift (*A Suivre*), met daarin het stripverhaal *Barney et la note bleue*.

Overduidelijk hadden scenarist Phillipe Paringaux en tekenaar Jacques Loustal zich voor de strip laten inspireren door het leven van Barney Wilen. Het verhaal: een jonge tenorsaxofonist genaamd Barney, die een opmerkelijke

gelijkenis vertoont met Barney Wilen, speelt in de jaren vijftig met jazzmusici als Art Blakey en Kenny Clark, raakt verslaafd aan heroïne en beleeft meerdere tragische affaires met vrouwen. Hij moet in zijn onderhoud voorzien door te spelen in tweederangs jazzorkestjes, die een weinig indrukwekkend repertoire van uitgemolken jazzstandards spelen. Tegen wil en dank wordt het nummer *Besame Mucho* zijn handelsmerk. Het trieste bestaan van Barney speelt zich af in troosteloze casino's, verlaten Franse badplaatsen en derderangs clubs, om vervolgens iedere dag op een haveloze hotelkamer een spuit met heroïne in zijn arm te kunnen zetten. Vergeten door jazzliefhebbers en zonder vrienden sterft hij in alle eenzaamheid.



*Barney Wilen bekijkt de
tentoonstelling met tekeningen uit
La Note Bleue*

Comeback

Waarheidsgetrouw was het verhaal zeker niet, want Barney Wilen was springlevend, en ook Wilens levensloop had zich duidelijk anders voltrokken. Juist vanwege deze verschillen meende Wilen bij de makers van de strip verhaal te moeten halen. Er volgden pittige gesprekken tussen Wilen, Paringaux en Loustal. Het verhaal – inmiddels als stripalbum gepubliceerd – was wel degelijk bedoeld als eerbetoon aan Wilen, zo was de verklaring van de makers, maar hun research was niet al te nauwkeurig geweest. Onterecht hadden ze gemeend dat Barney reeds was overleden.



Er kwam een compromis, die zowel voor Wilen als de makers publicitair een gouden vondst bleek te zijn. Wilen nam een nieuwe cd op getiteld *La Note Bleue*, met nieuwe nummers en enkele standards, inclusief *Besame Mucho*. De nummers kregen de titels van de hoofdstukken in het stripalbum, Loustal maakte het hoesontwerp. Wilen maakte met de cd een

comeback, Loustal kreeg een tentoonstelling met zijn werk en zou later furore maken als striptekenaar en illustrator. Het stripalbum moest meerdere malen worden herdrukt.

In 1987 kreeg de cd de prijs voor het beste Franse jazzalbum van dat jaar. In de herfst van datzelfde jaar speelde Wilen avond aan avond in de Parijse jazzclub Le Petit Opportun nummers van de cd. Dankzij de strip voor een opvallend jong publiek. Vaste prik iedere avond is een enthousiast gespeelde versie van *Besame Mucho*.

Soundtrack Ascenseur pour l'échafaud

Barney Wilen, Bud Powell, Kenny Clark e.a, Club Saint-Germain, 6 November 1959

Barney Wilen Quartet, Antibes Jazz Festival, Juli 1961

Chomsky: Build Back Better Fiasco Exposes How Both Parties Serve Corporate Power



Noam Chomsky

The United States is an abysmal outlier among its economic peers when it comes to social protection programs. Consider, for example, paid parental leave. According to a survey of the parental leave systems of 41 members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Union, the U.S. was [the only country that does not mandate a single week of paid parental leave](#). It also has an infrastructure bordering on the verge of collapse, including crumbling roads and bridges, water and energy systems.

For specific historical and political reasons, the U.S. never developed a European-style social welfare state. However, since the election of President Joe Biden, and thanks to pressures from the progressive wing of the Democratic Party, bills have been introduced to fill some glaring gaps. The Build Back Better budget reconciliation bill, in particular, focuses on a long list of social programs that would help close the U.S.'s gap with its liberal-democratic peers when it comes to social protection programs. It would also help fight the climate crisis. But so-called moderate Democrats ([actually right-wingers](#)) in Congress have been opponents of such progressive policies from day one and threaten to derail the best opportunity available to transform federal priorities and move U.S. society away from its traditional dog-eat-world mentality.

In the interview that follows, world-renowned public intellectual Noam Chomsky assesses the ongoing drama in Congress over President Biden's spending bills and the political ramifications of the Democrats failing to carry out sweeping social and climate reforms.

C.J. Polychroniou: Noam, more than two decades after the "[end \[of\] welfare as we know it](#)," Democrats have the chance to reshape the country's safety net and close the gap with the U.S.'s liberal-democratic peers on social protection programs, as well as fight the climate crisis. However, in perhaps a rather

unsurprising development, it looks like the obstructionist elements inside the Democratic Party will make sure that the U.S. remains a noticeable outlier among developed countries by not having a major social welfare state. Indeed, Joe Manchin, one of the Democratic senators standing in the way of the passage of the reconciliation bill, said that the U.S. should not turn into an “entitlement society.” How do you assess all the drama in Congress around the \$3.5 trillion in infrastructure, social programs and combatting the climate crisis, and what does this whole experience reveal to us about the state of U.S. politics in the post-Trump era?

Noam Chomsky: It’s not post-Trump, unfortunately. Former President Donald Trump’s heavy hand has not been lifted. He owns the increasingly radicalized voting base of the Republican Party. The leadership slinks to his Mar-a-Lago palace to plead for his blessing, and the few who dare to raise their heads have them lopped off quickly.

The right-wing Democrats (mis-labeled “moderate”) follow along for their own reasons. These are not hard to discern in some cases: It’s not a great surprise that a coal baron who is Congress’s leading recipient of fossil fuel funding (Manchin) should proclaim the fossil fuel industry’s “no elimination” slogan, or that a top recipient of donations from the pharmaceutical industry (Sen. Kyrsten Sinema) should be holding back badly needed drug pricing reforms. That’s normal in a political system mired in corruption.

But the rot runs deeper.

It’s often been observed that the U.S. has a one-party political system — the business party — with two factions, Democrats and Republicans. In the past, the Republican faction has tended to be more dedicated to the concerns of extreme wealth and the corporate sector, but with the resurgence of the one-sided class war called “neoliberalism” under President Ronald Reagan, the leadership has been going off the rails. By now they barely resemble a political party in a functioning democracy.

Since the late President Jimmy Carter years, the Democrats have not lagged far behind, becoming a party of affluent professionals and Wall Street donors with the working class handed over to their bitter class enemy.

One of Trump's occasional true statements was that Republicans could never win a fair election on their actual programs. Recognizing this, since President Richard Nixon's Southern strategy, the party has been mobilizing voters on "cultural issues" — white supremacy, abortion, guns, traditional patriarchal families, God (favoring the evangelical Christian variety)... anything that doesn't lift the veil on their loyal service to their prime constituency. That way they can at least stay in the running, exploiting the deeply undemocratic features of the electoral system with its built-in advantages for their largely rural voting base.

All this and much more has been extensively discussed elsewhere. We need not elaborate here. It's playing out in the halls of Congress right now. The extent to which the U.S. is an "outlier" glares at us wherever we look, sometimes in ways that verge on obscenity. Take paid maternity leave. In the U.S.: none. In the next largest country in the hemisphere, Brazil: about four months. That's in addition to the universal health care, free higher education, and other public benefits that are found almost everywhere.

To be fair, the richest country in the world, with unparalleled advantages, is not alone in [denying paid leave to new mothers](#). (Fathers? Forget about it.) The U.S. is joined by the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea and Tonga.

Recently a lead columnist for the London *Financial Times* quipped that if Sen. Bernie Sanders was in Germany, he could be running on the right-wing Christian Democrat ticket. Not just a witticism, and not a comment on Sanders. Rather, on the socioeconomic system that has been created in the one-party state, dramatically so in the era of vicious class war since Reagan.

It was not always thus. In the 1930s, while continental Europe succumbed to fascism, the U.S. forged a path toward social democracy on a wave of militant labor activism, lively and diverse politics, and a sympathetic administration. Years earlier, the U.S. had pioneered mass public education, a major contribution to democracy and social justice; Europe lagged far behind.

It's beyond irony that now Europe is upholding a tattered social democracy while the U.S. declines to Trump-led proto-fascism, or that under Trump, the secretary of education sought to dismantle public education, carrying forward the neoliberal principles that underlie the sharp defunding of public education aimed

at its elimination. All this is rooted in the [“libertarian” doctrines](#) of Milton Friedman, James Buchanan and other leading figures of the movement, closely linked from its origins to the attack against government “overreach” by desegregating schools.

It’s worth recalling that these doctrines had their origin in bitter class war in interwar Austria, as we’ve discussed before. They are well-suited for its resumption in the neoliberal era.

The Biden effort to move the U.S. somewhat toward the humane norms of other OECD countries is still not dead, but it has been virtually neutralized in Congress. The Republican organization is rock-solid opposed. Its red lines include preservation in full of their one legislative achievement under Trump, “the U.S. Donor Relief Act of 2017,” [as Joseph Stiglitz termed the wholesale robbery](#), which punched a huge hole in the deficit (for a “good” cause, so OK). By charming coincidence this near-\$2 trillion gift to the very rich and the corporate sector is about the same as the measly remnants of the Biden reconciliation bill (spread over 10 years) that have [barely survived the right-wing assault](#).

This time the “deficit threat” is definitely not OK, as is loudly proclaimed. Not a good cause this time. Wrong recipients: the poor, workers, mothers and other “unpeople.”

Should the progressives remain opposed to the infrastructure bill if Congress refuses to pass the social safety net bill in its original version?

It’s question of tactics, not principle. That’s not to say that it’s unimportant. Choice of tactics can have very far-reaching consequences. Rather, it means that it’s not easy to answer. There are many imponderables, not least, how it will affect the coming elections. In earlier years, it was often not too important which faction of the business party took power. In recent years, it has been. Proto-fascism is on the march. Worse still, as we’ve discussed elsewhere, we’re advancing to a precipice from which there will be no return. Four more years of Trumpism might well tip the balance.

Which answer to the question you raise will reduce the likelihood of impending disasters? I don’t see an easy answer. The question may by now be moot, with the vicious cuts in the reconciliation bill.

Won't there be grave political consequences if Democrats blow the chance to reshape federal priorities? After all, the majority of U.S. people seem to be in support of Biden's Build Back Better Act.

The Republicans have been pursuing a careful and well-thought-out policy of maintaining power as a minority party dedicated to great wealth and corporate power. It has been openly announced by the most malicious and politically powerful of the gang: Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, repeating what worked well for his reactionary cause during the President Barack Obama years (helped by Obama's quick betrayal of those who believed the pretty rhetoric about "hope and change").

So far, it's working. If it does work, with Trump and acolytes returning to power thanks to this malevolence, we will be well on our way to proto-fascism and to falling off the precipice. Failure of Biden's efforts to reshape federal priorities will have a terrible human cost. Beyond that, it will also provide a weapon for the McConnell strategy of harming the country as much as possible and blaming the outcome on the Democrats.

Brutal, but not stupid.

Is there a way to fend off these grave political consequences? Not within the confines of the deeply corrupt and undemocratic political system. The only way that has ever worked, and can work now, is mass popular pressure — what the powerful call "the peasants coming with their pitchforks."

Trump has been out of office for several months, yet his influence among Republican voters remains unwavering. What continues to drive the pro-Trump crowd?

We've often discussed it before, and there has been extensive investigation by social scientists — most convincingly, in my opinion, by Tony DiMaggio.

It's not just Trump, though he has shown real genius in tapping poisons that run deep in U.S. history and contemporary culture, and in portraying himself as "your savior" — even "the chosen one" — while stabbing you in the back. That's no small accomplishment for a person with few talents other than chicanery, fraud, and wielding the wrecking ball to destroy everything he can't claim as his own.

But it's not just Trump. We can also ask why Nixon's racist Southern strategy succeeded, or Reagan's quite overt racism — in his case, apparently sincerely held. We can ask why the abortion and gun frauds took hold, or why in the face of overwhelming evidence, segments of the left join the far right in anti-vax campaigns, at enormous human costs, or why “more than half of President Trump's supporters [in 2020] [embraced the QAnon conspiracy theory](#) of a global satanic pedophile ring that was plotting against the 45th president of the United States,” who was valiantly trying to save the children from such “prominent pedophiles” as Biden, Hillary Clinton, and other “Deep State” suspects.

The signs of collapse of the social order are too numerous and familiar to review once again. To a large extent, it can be attributed to the impact of the one-sided and vicious class war of the past 40-plus years. There are deeper cultural and historical roots. It's not just the U.S. European racism and xenophobia is even more malevolent in some respects. One sign is the corpses in the Mediterranean, victims of the frenzy of Europe's dedication to torture the survivors of its centuries of destruction of Africa.

The effort to reveal the roots of such pathologies is no mere academic enterprise, and not just these. We can add the pathologies of the rich and powerful, including the deplorables who hurl the epithet at others. These have been far more consequential. Efforts to understand are of value primarily as a guide to self-reflection and to action to find remedies.

And quickly. Our strange species doesn't have a lot of time to spare.

Source: <https://truthout.org/articles/chomsky-build-back-better-fiasco>

C.J. Polychroniou is a political scientist/political economist, author, and journalist who has taught and worked in numerous universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. Currently, his main research interests are in U.S. politics and the political economy of the United States, European economic integration, globalization, climate change and environmental economics, and the deconstruction of neoliberalism's politico-economic project. He is a regular contributor to *Truthout* as well as a member of *Truthout's* Public Intellectual Project. He has published scores of books and over 1,000 articles which have appeared in a variety of journals, magazines, newspapers and popular news websites. Many of his publications have been translated into a multitude of

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).

Chomsky And Pollin: COP26 Pledges Will Fail Unless Pushed By Mass Organizing



Noam Chomsky

The 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP26) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which takes place in Glasgow from October 31-November 12, will bring together more than 120 world leaders for 12 days of talks aimed at forming an agreement on how to tackle the climate emergency. The expectation is that countries will produce 2030 emissions reductions targets that will secure global net zero by 2050. For that to happen, the phase-out of coal must be accelerated, deforestation must be curtailed and

investment in green energy must rise significantly.

The urgency for action at COP26 cannot be overstated. We are running out of chances to save the planet from a climate catastrophe. But in order for the stated goals of COP26 to be attained, it is imperative that narrow views of national interest be put aside and great powers steer clear of geopolitical confrontations. Indeed, without international cooperation, the continued use of fossil fuels is set to drive societies across the globe into climate chaos and collapse.

So, what can we expect from COP26? Definite action or, as Greta Thunberg recently put it, more “blah, blah, blah?” In this expansive and eye-opening interview, leading scholars Noam Chomsky and Robert Pollin share their thoughts and insights about the upcoming global climate summit and what must ultimately be done to save humanity and the planet from a global climate catastrophe. Noam Chomsky is Institute Professor Emeritus at MIT and currently Laureate Professor of Linguistics and Agnese Nelms Haury Chair in the Agnese Nelms Haury Program in Environment and Social Justice at the University of Arizona. Chomsky, one of the most cited scholars in history and long considered one of the U.S.’s voices of conscience, is joined by one of the world’s leading economists of the left, Robert Pollin, Distinguished Professor and co-director of the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Chomsky and Pollin are co-authors of the recently published book *Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal: The Political Economy to Save the Planet*.

C.J. Polychroniou: Noam, COP26 is believed to be our “last best hope” for meaningful action to tackle the climate crisis. Why is COP26 so important? And wasn’t pretty much the same thing said about COP21?

Noam Chomsky: It was indeed, and correctly. The concept of “last best hope” keeps narrowing. What’s the last best hope at one point is gone later, and the remaining last best hope becomes far more difficult to realize.

That’s been true since the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, ratified by 192 nations, but not the U.S. The Senate would not accept it. George W. Bush pulled out completely; later Canada, did as well. Kyoto was the last best hope in 1997. If the U.S. had joined, the task of escaping devastating climate change would have been far easier.

By 2015 (the Paris Agreement, COP21), the “best hope” was much more remote

and difficult to realize. Again, the U.S. Senate blocked it. More precisely, the plan was for a verifiable treaty, but Republicans would not accept that, so it was reduced to toothless voluntary agreements. And shortly after, Trump pulled out completely. Biden has formally rejoined, but what that means remains to be seen.

Right now, the Republican commitment to destroying the planet in the interest of short-term profit for their prime constituency of extreme wealth seems unassailable. But it was not always so. As we've [discussed before](#), in 2008, there were signs of a deviation towards minimal concern for the fate of humanity, but it didn't last long. A juggernaut by the huge Koch Brothers energy conglomerate quickly returned the Party to obedience, since unchanged.

In defense of the stand of what was once a genuine political party, we should take note of the fact that the U.S. very rarely accepts international conventions, and when it does so, it is with reservations that render them inapplicable to the U.S. That's even true of the Genocide Convention.

One may plausibly argue, however, that these fine distinctions are all irrelevant. Even when the U.S. fully accepts international treaties, it violates them at will, hence also violating the U.S. Constitution, which declares them to be the Supreme Law of the Land, binding on the political leadership. The clearest case is the UN Charter, the basis for modern international law. It bans "the threat or use of force" in international affairs, with reservations irrelevant to the constant violation of the Treaty (and the Constitution) by U.S. presidents.

So normal that it virtually never elicits a comment.

Discourse on international affairs has found a way around these inconvenient facts by devising the concept of a "rule-based international order," as contrasted with the old-fashioned "UN-based international order." The former is preferred, since the U.S. can set the rules and determine how and when they can be enforced — an interesting topic, but not for now.

A treaty on climate change, if it can be reached, is in a different category. Survival is at stake. The basic facts are brutally clear, more so with each passing year. They are laid out clearly enough in the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, released on August 9. In brief, any hope of avoiding disaster requires taking significant steps right away to reduce fossil fuel

use, continuing annually with the goal of effectively phasing out fossil fuel use by mid-century. We are approaching a precipice. A few steps more, and we fall over it, forever.

Falling off the precipice does not imply that everyone will die soon; there's a long way down. Rather, it means that irreversible tipping points will be reached, and barring some now-unforeseen technological miracle, the human species will be entering a new era: one of inexorable decline, with mounting horrors of the kind we can easily depict, extrapolating realistically from what already surrounds us — an optimistic estimate, since non-linear processes may begin to take off and dangers lurk that are only dimly perceived.

It will be an era of "*sauve qui peut*" — run for your lives, everyone for themselves, material catastrophe heightened by social collapse and wholesale psychic trauma of a kind never before experienced. And on the side, an assault on nature of indescribable proportions.

All of this is understood at a very high level of confidence. Even a relic of rationality tells us that it is ridiculous to take a chance on its being mistaken, considering the stakes.

We might tarry for a moment on the date of the release of the IPCC report: August 9. Whether by accident or design, the choice is a momentous date in human affairs: the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. Putting aside the horrors and the dubious efforts at justification, the Hiroshima bombing a few days earlier demonstrated that human intelligence would soon reach the level of being able to destroy everything. Nagasaki demonstrated that the commitment to attain this goal was deeply entrenched in the reigning sociopolitical system and intellectual culture. What remained open was whether human moral capacities, and the institutions humans had created, had the capacity to overcome what human intellect was on the verge of achieving: total cataclysm. After 75 frightening years, the question still remains open even as prospects shrink for a hopeful answer.

The crisis of environmental destruction — which extends well beyond the crime of global heating — raises quite similar questions.

The evidence at hand is not encouraging. Let's go back to August 9, 2021, with its clear warning that we must begin now to reduce fossil fuel use.

Immediately on receipt of this grim warning, the president of the most powerful state in world history issued an appeal to the global oil cartel OPEC to *increase* production. Europe followed suit, joined by the rest of what is called “advanced society.” The reason is an energy crunch. That’s doubtless a problem. One way to deal with it is to race towards the precipice. Another is for the rich in the rich societies, the major culprits, to tighten their belts while we sharply accelerate transition to sustainable energy.

The choice is unfolding before our eyes.

Petroleum industry journals are euphoric, announcing promising new discoveries that they can exploit to enhance production and reveling in the prospects for growing demand for their poisons. A few examples fill in details.

Germany is reacting to the August warning by joining in the call for increasing fossil fuel use and making its own contribution, for example, by [destroying villages](#) to expand coal mining.

Turning to the U.S., a mere [60 percent](#) of voters regard global warming as an urgent problem for government. It is only the most urgent problem that humans have ever faced.

The party breakdown is the usual one: Among Republicans, 45 percent of “liberal/moderate Republicans” see global warming as an urgent problem along with 17 percent of “conservative Republicans.” The persisting lethal denialism is not a great surprise in the light of pronouncements of the leadership and the media to which they are exposed.

Thanks to significant popular activism, Biden’s major program, now being torn to shreds in Congress, did include some useful steps on climate change. Nothing seems likely to survive. Republicans are 100 percent opposed. Democrats need unanimity to pass anything. The Senate chair of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is a right-wing Democrat, also a coal baron and the leading recipient of fossil fuel funding in Congress: Joe Manchin. His position on climate concerns is simple: “[spending on innovation, not elimination](#).” Straight out of the fossil fuel industry playbook.

In South America, destruction of the Amazon is proceeding apace for the benefit of the domestic and international corporate sector, which has been hailing the

policies of Chicago School Economics Minister Paulo Guedes: “privatize everything,” and who cares about the consequences. Recent scientific studies [have found](#) that “the southeastern Amazon was releasing more carbon than it was absorbing, even in rainy years when scientists had expected the forest to be in better health. It meant a part of the rainforest was no longer helping to slow climate change, but adding to the emissions driving it.”

That is a disaster for Brazil and indeed for the world, given the role of the huge tropical forests in regulating the global climate.

A [leaked report](#) of governmental efforts to weaken the IPCC study shows that the usual scoundrels are at work.

Saudi Arabia calls for eliminating such phrases as “the need for urgent and accelerated mitigation actions at all scales” and “the focus of decarbonisation efforts in the energy systems sector needs to be on rapidly shifting to zero-carbon sources and actively phasing out fossil fuels.” It is joined by OPEC, along with fossil fuel producers Argentina and Norway.

Saudi officials elaborated further. Giving no details, one Saudi prince explained that a transition to net-zero carbon emissions is welcome, but it must be reached through a “carbon circular economy” — a plan built around initiatives such as recycling and carbon removal.

Just innovation, no elimination.

Saudi officials and the chief executive of Saudi oil giant Aramco, [the press reports](#), “expect demand for oil to continue and for it to be the dominant energy source for decades to come, and argue that reducing supply before demand drops risks a dangerous oil price spike, hurting economies such as Saudi Arabia’s that are dependent on oil and gas.”

Turning [elsewhere](#), “A senior Australian government official rejects the conclusion that closing coal-fired power plants is necessary” — a stand that is perhaps related to Australia’s position as the world’s leading coal exporter.

Continuing with the submissions to the IPCC, “Brazil and Argentina, two of the biggest producers of beef products and animal feed crops in the world, argue strongly against evidence in the draft report that reducing meat consumption is

necessary to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Both countries call on the authors to delete or change some passages in the text referring to 'plant-based diets' playing a role in tackling climate change, or which describe beef as a 'high carbon' food."

Again, not surprisingly, "A significant number of Switzerland's comments are directed at amending parts of the report that argue developing countries will need support, particularly financial support, from rich countries in order to meet emission reduction targets."

In brief, as we fall off the precipice, the near-uniform reaction is that: *I want to grasp my share of the loot as doomsday approaches.*

Returning to the still-open question posed by the August 9 anniversary, do human moral capacities, and the institutions humans have created, have the capacity to overcome what human intellect and these institutions have shown themselves capable of achieving: total cataclysm?

The answer will soon be known.

And while reflecting on the unanswered question, we should never forget that human intellect has also forged feasible solutions to impending crises, easily at hand, though not for long.

Given our experience up to now with global climate talks, should we really have high expectations about the outcome of COP26? After all, in addition to everything you mentioned above, global oil demand is booming, China continues to build coal-fired power plants around the world, the U.S. is bent on maintaining its hegemonic status in the world system, and we not only have a divided world but a world where now the majority of citizens say that their country's society is more divided than ever before. Indeed, what can we realistically expect from COP26?

Chomsky: The business press is generally fairly realistic. Its audience has a stake in knowing what's happening in the world. So, to answer the question, it is useful to open today's (October 24) business press and read the first paragraph of the [major article](#) on what we can realistically expect: "As the prospects for strong government action to curb climate change grow less certain, energy shares, and especially coal mining stocks, are generating astonishing returns." The article goes on to review the great opportunities for huge short-term profits for the

super-rich while they destroy the diminishing hopes for a livable world for their children.

Economists soberly explain that this is a “market failure” caused by “externalities” — uncounted costs. Not false. The article quotes a recent International Monetary Fund (IMF) study that found that that “market-based fossil fuel prices in 2020 failed to account for \$5.9 trillion in global environmental costs, equivalent to 6.8 percent of global gross domestic product. The I.M.F. estimated that the gap will rise to 7.4 percent of world G.D.P. by 2025.”

Not false, but misleading. Market failures occur all the time, with increasing intensity since the heralded “market revolution” that has assaulted the world since Ronald Reagan opened the doors to wholesale robbery 40 years ago. But the anodyne phrase “market failure” does not begin to do justice to the monstrous crime that state-backed capitalist institutions are perpetrating.

The business press gives little reason to be optimistic about the outcome of COP26, but it’s worth remembering that it does not consider what humans can accomplish, if they choose. With regard to human effort and action, the outcome of COP26 doesn’t matter all that much. If governments make pledges, they won’t implement them without extensive popular activism. If they don’t make pledges, they won’t be driven to adopt and implement them without extensive popular activism. The message is much the same whatever the outcome: More work, lots more, on many fronts, not excluding the long-term dedication to dismantle lethal institutions and the doctrines that chain people to them.

Bob, the economics of global warming and global climate stabilization are quite straightforward. Indeed, a broad consensus has emerged about the economic impacts of global warming, although there is disagreement among economists about the best solutions to achieve significant reductions in carbon emissions. Why is it so difficult to implement viable climate policies even at the national, let alone the global, level?



Robert Pollin

Robert Pollin: Let's start with the most obvious obstacle to advancing viable climate policies, which is the implacable opposition of the fossil fuel companies. Here I refer to both the private companies, such as ExxonMobil and Royal Dutch Shell as well as public corporations such as Saudi Aramco, Gazprom in Russia and Petrobras in Brazil. Let's assume we are working with the target set out by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that we must stabilize the average global temperature at no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (1.5°C) above preindustrial levels. Within that framework, the most recent [careful research](#) by Tyler Hansen shows that the extent of total fossil fuel assets owned by these corporations that are "unburnable" — i.e., cannot be burned to produce energy if the world has a chance of achieving the 1.5°C stabilization target — amounts to between \$13-\$15 trillion. Of this total, about 75 percent of these fossil fuel assets, between about \$10-\$11 trillion, are owned by the public corporations, with the remaining \$3-\$5 trillion owned by private corporations. We should not be surprised that the fossil fuel companies are fighting by all means available to them to continue profiting lavishly from selling this oil, coal and natural gas still in the ground. They don't want to hear about dumping \$15 trillion in assets.

It's true that the publicly owned national companies, controlling approximately 90 percent of the globe's total fossil fuel reserves, do not operate with precisely the same profit imperatives as big private energy corporations. But let's be clear that this does not mean that they are prepared to commit to fighting climate change simply because their stated mission is to serve the public as opposed to private shareholders, and because we, the public, face a global environmental emergency. Just as with the private companies, producing and selling fossil fuel energy generates huge revenue flows for these publicly owned companies. National development projects, lucrative careers and political power all depend on continuing the flow of large fossil fuel revenues.

Overall, then, there is no getting around that the interests of these fossil fuel companies will simply have to be defeated. Obviously, that will not be easy to accomplish. We are seeing this right now in the U.S., with Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia doing everything possible to kill even the minimally decent climate provisions of Biden's Build Back Better program. Manchin himself started his own coal brokerage company in the state and continues to [receive large profits](#) from it. We are also seeing it on a global scale, with Russian President Vladimir Putin issuing [dire warnings](#) of upcoming energy shortages if investments to expand fossil fuel supply do not increase.

But it is also critical to recognize that the fossil fuel companies are not the only obstacle to advancing a viable global climate stabilization project. There is also the matter of pure inertia, which cannot be overlooked. We are faced with the challenge of building a new global energy infrastructure on the foundations of high efficiency and clean renewable energy, while also phasing out our existing fossil fuel-dominant energy infrastructure. This has to be a hugely challenging project, even under the best of circumstances and even putting aside machinations of the fossil fuel companies. I have experienced this firsthand, for example, in our project at UMass-Amherst in which we built the first [zero-emissions office building](#) in western Massachusetts to house the Economics Department. There are lots of new ways of doing things that need to be learned, in terms of engineering, use of materials and workers developing new skills. It also requires people cooperating effectively.

There is also the absolutely critical question of "just transition" for workers and communities whose livelihoods are, at present, dependent on the fossil fuel industry. In my view, just transition has to be at the center of any global Green New Deal project. There is no denying that these workers and communities throughout the world will lose out in the clean energy transition. In order for the global clean energy project to succeed, it must provide adequate transitional support for these workers and communities. It is a matter of simple justice, but it is also a matter of strategic politics. Without such adjustment assistance programs operating at a major scale, the workers and communities facing retrenchment from the clean energy investment project will, predictably and understandably, fight to defend their communities and livelihoods. This in turn will create unacceptable delays in proceeding with effective climate stabilization policies.

My co-workers and I have estimated the costs of a very generous just transition program for all workers in the United States now tied to the fossil fuel and ancillary industries, working with the assumption that all fossil fuel production will have been shut down by 2050. This program would include a re-employment guarantee with wages at least matching the workers current pay, along with pension guarantees, and, as needed, retraining and relocation support. We [estimated](#) these total costs as averaging about \$3 billion per year. This would be equal to roughly 1/100 of one percent (0.01 percent) of average U.S. GDP between now and 2050. In other words, in terms of financing, it would be a trivial matter to establish this sort of just transition program throughout the U.S.

In fact, path-breaking developments are occurring right now in California toward advancing a just transition program in the state. This movement is being led by visionary labor leaders in the state, including leaders of the state's oil refinery workers' union. One such leader, Norman Rogers, a vice president of United Steelworkers Local 675, recently [wrote](#) in the *Los Angeles Times* that, *Though the energy transition is inevitable, a just version is not. Workers know what happens when whole industries go away: Companies maneuver behind our backs, squeeze every last drop of work out of a dying auto plant, steel mill or coal mine and shutter it overnight, devastating communities and stiffing workers out of jobs, pensions and healthcare. The fear is real of jobs lost with no plan for when operations begin to phase out.*

Rogers emphasizes that “many speak of a ‘just transition,’ but we’ve never seen one. No worker or community member will ever believe that an equitable transition is possible until we see detailed, fully funded state [safety net](#) and job creation programs.” But he, optimistically, is arguing that, “With a fully funded equitable transition plan — meeting the immediate need for a safety net for workers and communities, and offering a bold vision to restructure our economy — we can jump-start recovery and move California’s workers, communities and the planet toward a more secure future.”

The enactment of a robust just transition program in California, led by the state’s labor unions, including its fossil fuel industry unions, will also provide a model for comparable measures to be adopted throughout the U.S. and globally. Supporting such initiatives should therefore be understood as an absolute first-tier priority for the U.S. and the global climate movement.

China has emerged as a global economic superpower in the last couple of decades and, in fact, since 2008 tops the annual list of being the largest emitter of greenhouse gas carbon dioxide, although we get a different picture if we look at carbon emissions per capita. Be that as it may, what sort of finance conditions need to be introduced in countries like China and in emerging economies for a successful transition to clean energy resources without sacrificing economic and social development?

Pollin: As of the most recent data, global carbon dioxide emissions were at about 34 billion tons. China is generating about 10 billion tons, 30 percent of this total, making it by far the country with the largest share of total emissions. The U.S. is next at about 5 billion tons, 15 percent of the total. The countries of the European Union (EU) account for another 9 percent. Thus, China, the U.S. and the EU are responsible for [54 percent](#) of all global emissions. They all need to drive their emissions down to zero no later than 2050 for there to be any chance of meeting the IPCC's global emissions reduction targets of a 45 percent decline by 2030 and a net-zero global economy by 2050.

It's true that in terms of emissions per person, China's figure, at 7.4 tons per person, is still less than half the 15.2 tons per person figure for the United States. But it remains the case that China must go from its current total emissions level of 10 billion tons down to zero by 2050, just as the U.S. needs its emissions to fall absolutely, from 5 billion tons to zero.

It also follows that, even if China, the U.S. and the EU managed to push their carbon dioxide emissions down to zero tomorrow, we would still be only a bit more to halfway to achieving the global zero emissions goal, since the rest of the world is today responsible for about 46 percent of all emissions. It is therefore obvious that the transition to a global clean energy system has to be a global project. The transition has to be advancing in India, Vietnam, Australia, Kenya, Puerto Rico, Chile, South Korea, South Africa and Mexico just as much as in China, the U.S. and EU.

Building clean energy infrastructures in developing economies will not entail sacrificing economic and social development. Indeed, the Green New Deal remains focused on expanding good job opportunities, raising mass living standards and fighting poverty along with driving emissions to zero. All of these aims can be realistically accomplished, since investments in clean energy will be a

major engine of job creation. Moreover, the costs of clean energy investments are already [lower](#), on average, than those for fossil fuels. Building a clean energy infrastructure will also support the expansion of a range of new public and private ownership forms. This includes small-scale community ownership in rural low-income communities, such as in sub-Saharan Africa. To date, roughly half of such communities still do not have access to electricity of any kind, despite generations of promises made by politicians of all stripes.

At the same time, we cannot expect low-income countries to finance their clean energy and just transition programs on their own. I have sketched out a global financing framework, in which there are four main components. Other approaches could also be viable. These four funding sources are: 1) a global carbon tax, in which 75 percent of revenues are rebated back to the public but 25 percent are channeled into clean energy investment projects; 2) transferring funds out of military budgets from all countries, but primarily the U.S.; 3) eliminating all existing fossil fuel subsidies and channeling 25 percent of the funds into clean energy investments; and 4) a Green Bond lending program, initiated by the U.S. Federal Reserve and European Central Bank, with other major central banks in China, the U.K. and Japan also participating. Strong cases can be made for each of these funding measures. But each proposal does also have vulnerabilities, including around political feasibility. The most sensible approach is therefore to combine the measures into a single package that minimizes their respective weaknesses as standalone measures.

I work through some of the details of these proposals in our 2020 book, [Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal](#). But let's briefly consider the Green Bond financing proposal by way of illustration. This program will not take money out of anyone's pocket. It rather involves the world's major central banks effectively printing money as needed. This would be just as they did during both the 2007-09 global financial crisis and during the COVID recession, except on a far more modest scale than the largesse that the central banks [showered on Wall Street and global financial elite](#) to keep them afloat. To be clear, I am not suggesting that the U.S. Fed or European Central Bank should rely on this policy — what is technically known as “debt monetization” — on a routine basis. But we need to be equally clear that this is a fully legitimate option that the major central banks have in their toolkit, and that this option should indeed be brought into action under crisis conditions. Note here that the funds will be generated by the major

central banks but then distributed globally on an equitable basis, to underwrite the clean energy investment projects at scale in all regions of the globe. Public investment banks in all regions, but especially in low-income countries, will then serve as primary conduits in moving specific investment projects forward.

What would you consider as the optimal outcome of the talks at the COP 26 summit?

Pollin: The optimal outcome would be for the summit to not produce another round of what Greta Thunberg has accurately described as the “blah, blah, blah” which has resulted from previous such gatherings. COP26 needs to establish truly binding commitments on all countries that would include the following:

1. Meeting at least the IPCC’s emissions reduction targets, of a 45 percent global emissions cut by 2030 and to achieve zero emissions by 2050;
2. Mounting robust just transition programs in all countries and regions, to support workers and communities that will be negatively impacted by the emissions reduction project; and
3. Paying for these binding commitments through strongly egalitarian financing measures.

Noam, the impact of human activities on the environment is so real and profound that past, present and future are interlinked in such way that there can be no blurring between the empirical and the normative. The climate crisis has created a global storm and cooperation and solidarity are essential prerequisites to the survival of the planet. However, given the daunting task that lays ahead (shrinking and ultimately eliminating emissions while advancing at the same time a framework of development that embraces both developed and developing countries and guaranteeing a socially just transition), how do we encourage activists and concerned citizens alike to remain committed to a struggle where the outcome is uncertain without succumbing to defeatism?

Chomsky: Outcomes have always been uncertain. Defeatism is not an option; it translates as “species suicide, bringing down much of life on Earth with it.”

There are steps forward. Crucially, there is widespread understanding of the measures that can be take, quite realistically, to avert impending disaster and move on to a much better world. That includes the comprehensive and detailed studies by our friend and colleague economist Robert Pollin, by economist Jeffrey

Sachs, and by the International Energy Agency, all coming to generally similar conclusions. These results have also reached Congress in a 2019 resolution recently reintroduced by its sponsors, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Sen. Ed Markey. It's all there to be acted upon.

And while Sen. Joe Manchin is working assiduously to block any congressional action that departs from the “no elimination” death warrant issued by the energy corporations, his constituents in West Virginia are showing more concern for survival. A [recent report](#) of the United Mine Workers recognizes that, “Change is coming, whether we seek it or not. Too many inside and outside the coalfields have looked the other way when it comes to recognizing and addressing specifically what that change must be, but we can look away no longer.”

The union supports a transition to renewable energy, rightly insisting that workers receive good jobs — which should in fact be better jobs, as can be readily accomplished along lines that Bob Pollin has laid out in his studies and conveyed to the public in his grassroots work in West Virginia and other mining states, where unions are moving in the same direction.

There has also been considerable progress since COP21: sharp reduction in cost of sustainable energy, significant steps towards electrification and constant pressure to do more, mostly by the young, those who will have to endure the consequences of our folly and betrayal of their hopes. The recent global climate strike was a noteworthy example.

Another hopeful sign is the recovery of the labor movement from the state-corporate blows that were a salient feature of the neoliberal years from their outset, with deep roots in the origins of neoliberal doctrine in interwar Vienna. That's a long and important story, but there are many indications that it is underway, somewhat reminiscent of the early 1930s. The vibrant U.S. labor movement had been almost crushed by state-corporate violence. But as the Depression hit, it began to revive, and spearheaded the New Deal moves towards social democracy that greatly improved the lives of [many, though not all] Americans. It wasn't until the late 1970s that the business counteroffensive became powerful enough to restore a system of radical inequality and suppression of the basic rights of the great majority. Today, that assault is being challenged and may be overcome. One sign of many is the massive refusal to return to the rotten, dangerous, precarious jobs offered to the workforce during the neoliberal

class war. The catastrophic “market failure” of environmental destruction is a catalyzing factor.

If that happens, we can hope for — and try to nurture — a revival of core features of labor activism from the early days of the industrial revolution, among them solidarity and internationalism. We’re all in this together, not each alone trying to collect as many crumbs as we can for ourselves. That consciousness is essential for survival, at home and abroad.

In particular, there must be an end to provocative confrontations with China and a serious rethinking of the alleged “China threat” — experiences we’ve been through before with dire consequences, now literally a matter of survival. The U.S. and China will cooperate in approaching the urgent crises of today, or we’re doomed.

The choices before us are stark. They cannot be evaded or ignored.

This interview has been lightly edited for clarity.

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C.J. Polychroniou is a political scientist/political economist, author, and journalist who has taught and worked in numerous universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. Currently, his main research interests are in U.S. politics and the political economy of the United States, European economic integration, globalization, climate change and environmental economics, and the deconstruction of neoliberalism’s politico-economic project. He is a regular contributor to *Truthout* as well as a member of *Truthout’s* Public Intellectual Project. He has published scores of books and over 1,000 articles which have appeared in a variety of journals, magazines, newspapers and popular news websites. Many of his publications have been translated into a multitude of 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).