

Chomsky, Pollin And Lapavitsas: Are We Witnessing The Demise Of Neoliberalism?



Noam Chomsky

After 40 years of neoliberal rule, in which the state actively sought to eradicate the boundary between market, civil society and governance by making economic rationality the cornerstone of every human activity, advanced capitalism appears to be at a crossroads on account of the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. So-called “big government” has staged a dramatic comeback, and even conservative leaders have broken with some of the basic orthodoxies of neoliberalism.

Are we in the midst of fundamental and permanent changes with regard to the relation between the state and markets? Are we witnessing the demise of neoliberalism? Has the pandemic led to the emergence of a new variant of capitalism?

In this interview, world-renowned scholar and public intellectual Noam Chomsky, along with two preeminent economists of the left — Costas Lapavitsas from the University of London and Robert Pollin from the University of Massachusetts Amherst — share their thoughts and insights about economics and capitalism in the age of the pandemic and beyond.

C.J. Polychroniou: Noam, the neoliberal era of the last 40 years has been defined to a large extent by growing inequalities, slow growth and environmental degradation. Indeed, even the International Monetary Fund admitted some years

ago that [neoliberalism had failed](#). Yet, it took the outbreak of a pandemic for a consensus to emerge regarding the failures of neoliberalism. Why did neoliberalism triumph and endure in the first place, and is it actually dead?

Noam Chomsky: My feeling is that a version of neoliberalism has triumphed because it has been highly successful — for the designers, whose power has been considerably enhanced by such predictable consequences as radical inequality, restricting democracy, destruction of unions and atomization of the population so that there is limited defense against the version of neoliberalism that has been pursued with impressive dedication in this latest phase of class war. I say a “version” because the state-corporate managers of the system insist upon a very powerful state that can protect their interests internationally and provide them with massive bailouts and subsidies when their programs collapse, as they do regularly.

For similar reasons, I don’t think that this version is dead, though it is being re-adjusted in response to growing popular anger and resentment, much fueled by the successes of the neoliberal assault on the population.

Bob, the pandemic has shown us that neoliberal capitalism is more than inadequate in addressing large-scale economic and public health crises. Are the resources mobilized by national states during the pandemic crisis a simple case of emergency Keynesianism, or do they represent a fundamental shift in the traditional role of government, which is to maximize society’s welfare? Moreover, are the policies we have seen implemented so far at all levels of government sufficient to provide the basis for a progressive economic agenda in the post-pandemic era?



Robert Pollin

Robert Pollin: Neoliberalism is a variant of capitalism in which economic policies are weighted heavily in favor of supporting the privileges of big corporations, Wall Street and the rich. Neoliberalism became dominant globally around 1980, beginning with the elections of Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom and Ronald Reagan in the U.S. The top priorities under neoliberalism, as practiced throughout the world, have included: cutting both taxes on the rich along with public spending on the non-rich; weakening protections for both working people and the environment and any semblance of a commitment to full and decent employment; and enabling financial speculation to run rampant while bailing out the speculators when the markets proceed, inevitably, into crises.

Neoliberalism represented a counterrevolution against social democratic/New Deal/developmental state variants capitalism, which emerged primarily as a result of successful political struggles by progressive political parties, labor unions and allied social movements, out of the 1930s Depression and continuing through the early 1970s. Of course, social democratic/New Deal/developmental state capitalism was still capitalism. Disparities of income, wealth and opportunity remained intolerably high, along with the malignancies of racism, sexism and imperialism. Nevertheless, the broadly social democratic models produced dramatically more egalitarian versions of capitalism than the neoliberal regime that supplanted these models. The neoliberal model, in turn, has been highly successful in achieving its most basic aim, which is to shower ever-greater advantages on the already over-privileged. For example, under neoliberalism in the United States between 1978 and 2019, the average pay for big corporate CEOs has risen [*tenfold*](#) relative to the average non-supervisory worker.

With the onset of the COVID pandemic in March 2020, government policies in the high-income countries did pursue measures to prevent a total, 1930s-level economic collapse. Depending on the country, these measures included direct cash support for lower- and middle-income people, significant increases in unemployment insurance and large payroll subsidy programs to prevent layoffs. But by far, the most aggressive policy interventions were the bailouts provided for big corporations and Wall Street.

In the U.S., for example, nearly 50 percent of the entire labor force filed for unemployment benefits between March 2020 and February 2021. However, over this same period, Wall Street stock prices rose by 46 percent, one of the sharpest one-year increases on record. The same pattern prevailed globally. The

International Labour Organization [reported](#) that, “There were unprecedented global employment losses in 2020 of 114 million jobs relative to 2019.” At the same time, global stock markets rose sharply — by 45 percent throughout Europe, 56 percent in China, 58 percent in the U.K., and 80 percent in Japan, and with Standard & Poor’s Global 1200 index [rising](#) by 67 percent.

So while there was a desperately needed expansion of social welfare programs helping people to survive under COVID, these measures were enacted within the framework of still larger efforts to prop up the still prevailing neoliberal order.

Of course, the severity of the climate crisis has continued to deepen during the pandemic. In February, UN Secretary-General António Guterres [said](#), “2021 is a make-or-break year to confront the global climate emergency.... Governments are nowhere close to the level of ambition needed to limit climate change to 1.5 degrees and meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. The major emitters must step up with much more ambitious emissions reductions targets for 2030 ... well before the November UN Climate Conference in Glasgow.”

We are now into October in the “make or break year” and yet, little has been accomplished since Guterres spoke in February. It is true that, throughout the high-income countries, social movements and climate activists are fighting to advance programs that combine climate stabilization and an egalitarian social agenda, under the rubric of a global Green New Deal. The extent to which they succeed will determine whether we will have established a basis for a progressive economic agenda and effective climate policies in the post-pandemic era. We do not yet know how successful these efforts will be. As [we discussed](#) at some length recently, the social infrastructure and climate proposal being debated right now in the U.S. Congress is itself not ambitious enough to be truly transformative. But if it is enacted, it will still represent a significant break from neoliberal dominance that has prevailed since Thatcher and Reagan.

Costas, the COVID pandemic has exposed numerous structural flaws of capitalism, and the neoliberal order may be indeed on the verge of collapse. Still, can we speak of a “crisis of capitalism” given that we do not see large-scale opposition to the current system?

Costas Lapavitsas: There is no question that the pandemic shock represents a tremendous crisis of global capitalism, but I would urge strong caution regarding

the collapse of neoliberalism. The period since the Great Crisis of 2007-2009 looks more like an interregnum (a term offered in the spirit of Antonio Gramsci) when the old is refusing to die and the new cannot be born. And like all such periods, it is prone to monsters, including fascism.



*Costas Lapavistas -
Photo: SOAS University
of London*

The Great Crisis of 2007-2009 was overcome by the state deploying its massive strength to defend financialized capitalism and globalization. But what followed was a decade of low growth, poor investment, weak productivity growth, sustained inequality and partially revived profits. Economic performance was poor in core countries, providing further evidence of the failure of neoliberalism. The Golden Era of financialization is well and truly over, despite the sustained rise of stock markets in the previous decade. Yet, economic performance was also mediocre in China, reflecting an underlying weakness of productive accumulation across the world.

When COVID-19 struck, it became crystal clear that contemporary capitalism is entirely dependent on massive state intervention. Core Western states were able to intervene on an unprecedented scale mostly because of monopoly command by central banks over fiat money. Unlike 2007-2009, however, the state also deployed fiat money to relax austerity, thus engaging in the unspoken nationalization of the wage bill and the income statements of thousands of enterprises.

It is a misunderstanding that neoliberalism necessarily means marginalizing the state and imposing austerity. Rather, it is about using the state selectively to

defend the interests of a small elite, an oligarchy, associated with big business and the financial sector. Fundamentally, it stands for shifting the balance of power in favor of capital by removing controls on its activities. When the pandemic shock threatened the foundations of class rule, austerity and forbearing from direct economic intervention were abandoned in the blink of an eye. The neoliberal ideologists rapidly adapted to the new reality, though it is always possible that austerity will return. What has not taken place is an institutional shift in favor of workers' interests that would limit the freedom of capital. It is primarily in this sense that the old is refusing to die.

The pandemic also made it clear that there is great variety in the relationship between powerful states and domestic capitalist accumulation. Core Western states, in the grip of neoliberal ideology, derive their strength primarily from command over fiat money. In contrast, the Chinese state remains directly involved in both productive accumulation and finance as well as having possession over vast resources. Their respective responses to the pandemic differed greatly.

Inevitably there has been a tremendous escalation in the contest for global hegemony, including in the military field. For the first time since 1914, moreover, the hegemonic contest is also immediately economic. The Soviet Union was exclusively a political and military contestant to the U.S. — the Lada could never compete with Chrysler. But China can outcompete the U.S. economically, making the struggle considerably deeper and removing any obvious point of equilibrium. The U.S. ruling bloc realizes that it has made a strategic miscalculation, and this accounts for its current unrelenting aggressiveness. Conditions in the international arena are exceedingly dangerous.

Still, the global hegemonic struggle lacks entirely in ideological content. Western neoliberal democracies are exhausted, failed and bereft of new ideas. The attempts of the U.S. ruling bloc to present its aggressiveness as a defense of democracy are hollow and ludicrous. On the other hand, Chinese (and Russian) authoritarianism has considerable domestic support but no capacity to offer a globally appealing social and political perspective.

The characteristic feature of the interregnum since 2007-2009 is an ideological impasse. There is tremendous discontent with capitalism, particularly as the degradation of the environment and the warming of the planet have raised great concern among the young. But that concern has not translated into a broad-based

mobilization behind fresh socialist ideas and politics. This is the challenge ahead, particularly as the far right is already taking advantage.

Postcapitalism (defined broadly as a social system in which the power of markets is restricted, productive activity is premised on automation, work is delinked from wages, and the state provides universal basic services and a basic income) is possible because of changes in information technology, according to some pundits. Should the left spend political capital by envisioning a postcapitalist future?

Lapavistas: During the pandemic crisis, the domestic actions of nation states displaced the precepts and prescriptions of neoliberal capitalism, foisted invasive measures on social and personal life centering on public health and hygiene, and imposed severe restrictions on civil liberties and economic activity. The state inflamed political tensions, heightened social polarization and restricted freedoms.

Workers paid the greatest price through income loss, rising unemployment and worsening public provision. But the middle strata were also left out in the cold, thus delivering a major blow to the class alliances that supported the neoliberal project. Giant oligopolies in new technology emerged as the main beneficiaries — Google, Amazon, Microsoft and the rest. Their actions are steadily eclipsing the figure of the citizen as personal identities are increasingly organized around market links to the oligopolies. At the same time, the extreme right was strengthened, a trend that started before the pandemic and has accelerated through the agency of powerful oligarchies.

There has been no shortage of grassroots reactions to these developments. Heavy-handed state actions, official cultivation of fear, suspension of rights and liberties, the danger of permanent repression, and the crushing of workers and the middle strata during the lockdowns spurred various responses often in a libertarian direction.

Bear in mind that maintaining capitalist accumulation in the years to come will be exceedingly difficult across the world. The underlying weakness of accumulation is far from easy to confront. It is also clear that state intervention in the pandemic has created major difficulties with the disruption of supply chains, the rise of inflation eating into workers' incomes and the tremendous escalation of public

debt. And all that is without even mentioning the broader issues of environment and climate.

It is hardly possible that economic growth could be sustained without large-scale state intervention on the supply side through public investment that also involves profound distributional changes in income that benefit workers. It seems even less likely that this would happen without a major shift in property rights, redistributing wealth and productive resources in favor of workers and the poor.

Technology alone is never the answer for complex social problems. Indeed, one aspect of the technological revolution of the last four decades is its inability even to improve the economic conditions of accumulation since its effect on the average productivity of labor is modest. I see no reason at this stage to expect that artificial intelligence would prove dramatically different. Perhaps it will, but there are no guarantees.

Western neoliberal democracies are ideologically exhausted, and their capitalist economies are beset with problems. In this context, it is imperative for socialists and progressives to think of a postcapitalist future and ascertain its broad parameters. We need to think about the use of digital technologies, the greening of production and the protection of the environment. But all that should take place in social conditions that favor working people and not capitalists, with a new sociality, collective action and individual fulfilment through communal association. The rejuvenation of the socialist promise is the paramount need of the times.

Bob, during the neoliberal era, mainstream economics shaded easily into ideology. Indeed, it is rather easy to show that mainstream economic policy is full of misrepresentation of reality. The question is: How does an alleged science become ideology? And how likely it is that the coronavirus pandemic, in conjunction with the flaws of neoliberalism and the urgency of the climate crisis, will lead to an intellectual paradigm shift in "[dismal science](#)"?

Pollin: Let's recognize that all varieties of economists are heavily influenced by ideology, or what the great conservative economist Joseph Schumpeter more judiciously termed their "pre-analytic vision." Leftist economists, myself included, are as guilty as anyone else. Our ideology influences the questions that we decide are most important to ask. Ideology also provides us with some initial guesses as

to what the answers to these questions are likely to be. Still, if we are also attempting to be the least bit scientific, or even minimally honest, as economic researchers, we will put our hunches and our preferred answers to the test of evidence and be open to challenges.

I think it is fair to say that, not all, but a high percentage of mainstream economists have not been committed to these minimally objective scientific standards. They rather have been so fully immersed in their ideological biases that they are unable to even think about how they might ask questions differently. Their biases have been reinforced by the fact that these prejudices provide succor to policy regimes that, as noted above, shower benefits on the already overprivileged.

Joan Robinson, the renowned Cambridge University economist of the Great Depression and post-World War II era, [beautifully captured](#) this allure of orthodox economics as follows: “One of the main effects (I will not say purposes) of orthodox traditional economics was ... a plan for explaining to the privileged class that their position was morally right and was necessary for the welfare of society.”

At the same time, there has been no shortage of progressive economists over the neoliberal era who have stood up to mainstream orthodoxy, as represented, for example, by the 24 people you interviewed in the new book, [Economics and the Left: Interviews with Progressive Economists](#). In my view, how much influence economists such as these will have will depend primarily on how successful are the progressive movements in advancing the Green New Deal and related programs in the coming months and years.

There are hopeful signs. Just late last month, the Federal Reserve released [a paper](#) by Jeremy Rudd, a senior member of its own staff, which begins with the observation that “mainstream economics is replete with ideas that ‘everyone knows’ to be true, but that are actually arrant nonsense.”

Rudd also notes on page one that he is leaving aside in this paper “the deeper concern that the primary role of mainstream economics in our society is to provide apologetics for a criminally oppressive, unsustainable, and unjust social order.” There may well be more Jeremy Rudds out there, poised to spring from the shadows of the professional mainstream. This would be a most positive

development. But I would also say that it's about time.

Noam, it's been said by far too many that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. Given that capitalism is actually destroying the Earth, how, firstly, would you respond to the above statement, and, secondly, how do you envision economy and society after capitalism?

Chomsky: I'd prefer to rephrase the question to refer to state capitalism. Those whom Adam Smith called "the masters of mankind," the dominant business classes, would never tolerate capitalism, which would expose them to the ravages of the market. That's for the victims. For the masters, a powerful state is required — insofar as they can control it and reduce the "underlying population" (Thorstein Veblen's ironic term) to subordination and passivity.

It does not seem to me too difficult to imagine at least a serious mitigation of the destructive and repressive elements of this system, and its eventual transformation to a far more fair and just society. In fact, we must not only imagine but proceed to implement such programs, or we'll all be finished — the masters too.

It's even quite realistic to imagine — and implement — the overthrow of the basic state capitalist principle: renting oneself to a master (in a more anodyne formulation, having a job). After all, for millennia it's been recognized — in principle at least — that being subjected to the will of a master is an intolerable attack on human dignity and rights. The concept is not far back in our own history. In late 19th-century America, radical farmers and industrial workers were seeking to create a "cooperative commonwealth" in which they would be free of domination by illegitimate bosses robbing their labor and of northeast bankers and market managers. These powerful movements were so effectively crushed by state-corporate force that today even the highly popular ideas sound exotic. But they are not far below the surface and are even being revived in many important ways.

In short, there's reason to be hopeful that what must be done can be done.

Note: This interview has been lightly edited for clarity and concision.

Source:

<https://truthout.org/articles/chomsky-pollin-and-lapavitsas-are-we-witnessing-the->

[demise-of-neoliberalism/](#)

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: It's Life And Death - Intellectuals Can't Keep Serving The Status Quo



Noam Chomsky

The overwhelming majority of intellectuals have historically been servants of the status quo.

That was the case more than half a century ago, when Noam Chomsky pointed out as much in his classic essay "[The Responsibility of Intellectuals](#)," and it continues to be the case today, when oppositional public intellectuals continue to be a small minority.

Indeed, if anything, the number of critical/oppositional public intellectuals — in other words, thinkers who are versed to speak on a wide range of issues from an anti-establishment standpoint — has been in decline in recent decades, even as the public sphere has grown bigger and louder due to the dramatic expansion of the internet and social media. One factor in this trend may be universities' overwhelming emphasis on narrow, specialized and even arcane knowledge, and a resistance within academic culture to prioritizing making an impact on the public arena by addressing issues that affect directly people's lives and challenge the status quo. Another factor may be the rising tide of anti-intellectualism in the U.S. and beyond.

Yet, in a highly fragile world facing existential threats, we need the voice of critical intellectuals more than any other time in history. In the interview that follows, Noam Chomsky — the scholar, public thinker and activist who has been described as a "world treasure" and "[arguably the most important intellectual alive](#)" — discusses the urgent need for more intellectuals not to "speak truth to power" but to speak *with* the powerless.

C.J. Polychroniou: Long ago, in your celebrated essay "The Responsibility of Intellectuals," you argued that intellectuals must insist on truth and expose lies, but must also analyze events in their historical perspective. Now, while you never

implied that this is the only responsibility that intellectuals have, don't you think that the role of intellectuals has changed dramatically over the course of the last half century or so? I mean, true, critical/oppositional intellectuals were always few and far between in the modern Western era, but there were always giants in our midst whose voice and status were not only revered by a fair chunk of the citizenry, but, in some cases, produced fear and even awe among the members of the ruling class. Today, we have mainly functional/conformist "intellectuals" who focus on narrow, highly specialized and technical areas, and do not dare to challenge the status quo or speak out against social evils out of fear of losing their job, being denied tenure and promotion, or not having access to grants. Indeed, whatever happened to public intellectuals like Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre, and to iconic artists like Picasso with his fight against fascism?

Noam Chomsky: Well, what did happen to Bertrand Russell?

Russell was jailed during World War I along with the handful of others who dared to oppose that glorious enterprise: Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, Eugene Debs — who was even excluded from postwar amnesty by the vengeful Woodrow Wilson — to mention only the most famous. Some were treated more kindly, like Randolph Bourne, merely ostracized and barred from liberal intellectual circles and journals. Russell's later career had many ugly episodes, including his being declared by the courts to be too free-thinking to be allowed to teach at City College, a flood of vilification from high places because of his opposition to the Vietnam War, scurrilous treatment even after his death.

Not all that unusual for those who break ranks, no matter how distinguished their contributions, as Russell's surely were.

The term "intellectual" itself is a strange one. It is not applied to a Nobel laureate who devotes his life to physics, or to the janitor in his building who may have little formal education but deep insight and perceptive understanding of human affairs, history, culture. The term is used, usually, to refer to a category of people with a degree of privilege who are somehow regarded to be the guardians of society's intellectual and moral values. They are supposed to uphold and articulate those values and call upon others to adhere to them.

Within this category there is a small minority who challenge power, authority and received doctrine. It is sometimes held that their responsibility is "to speak truth

to power.” I’ve always found that troubling. The powerful typically know the truth quite well. They generally know what they are doing, and don’t need our instructions. They also will not benefit from moral lessons, not because they are necessarily bad people, but because they play a certain institutional role, and if they abandon that role, somebody else will fill it as long as the institutions persist. There is no point instructing CEOs of the fossil fuel industry that their activities are damaging communities and destroying the environment and our climate. They’ve known that for a long time. They also know that if they depart from dedication to profit and concern themselves with the human impact of what they are doing, they’ll be out on the streets and someone will replace them to carry out the institutionally required tasks.

There remains a range of options, but it is narrow.

It would make a lot more sense to speak truth not to power, but to its victims. If you speak truth to the powerless, it’s possible that it could benefit somebody. It might help people confront the problems in their lives more realistically. It might even help them to act and organize in such ways as to compel the powerful to modify institutions and practices; and, even more significantly, to challenge illegitimate structures of authority and the institutions on which they are realized and thereby expand the scope of freedom and justice. It won’t happen in any other way, and it’s often happened in that way in the past.

But I don’t think that’s right either. The task of a responsible person — anyone who wants to uphold intellectual and moral values — is not to speak what they regard as truth *to* anybody — the powerful or the powerless — but rather to speak *with* the powerless and to try to learn the truth. That’s always a collective endeavor and wisdom and understanding need not come from any particular turf.

But that’s quite rare in the history of intellectuals.

Let’s recall that the term “intellectual” came into use in its modern sense with the [Dreyfus trial](#) in France in the late 19th century. Today we admire and respect those who stood up for justice in their defense of Dreyfus, but if you look back at that time, they were a persecuted minority. The “immortals” of the French Academy bitterly condemned these preposterous writers and artists for daring to challenge the august leaders and institutions of the French State. The prominent figure of the Dreyfusards, Emile Zola, had to flee from France.

That's pretty typical. Take almost any society you like and you will find that there is a fringe of critical dissidents and that they are usually subjected to one or another form of punishment. Those I mentioned are no exception. In recent history, in Russian-run Eastern Europe, they could be jailed; if it was in our own domains, in Central or South America, they could be tortured and murdered. In both cases, there was harsh repression of people who are critical of established power.

That goes back as far as you like, all the way back to classical Greece. Who was the person who [drank the hemlock](#)? It was the person who was "corrupting" the youth of Athens by asking searching questions that are better hidden away. Take a look at the Biblical record, roughly about the same period. It's kind of oral history, but in what's reconstructed from it, there were people who by our standards might be called intellectuals — people who condemned the king and his crimes, called for mercy for widows and orphans, other subversive acts. How were they treated? They were imprisoned, driven into the desert, reviled. There were intellectuals who were respected, flatterers at the Court. Centuries later, they were called False Prophets, but not at the time. And if you think through history, that pattern is replicated quite consistently.

The basic operative principle was captured incisively by McGeorge Bundy, a leading liberal intellectual, noted scholar, former Harvard dean, national security adviser under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, then director of the Ford Foundation. In 1968, when protest against the Vietnam War was peaking, Bundy published an article in the main establishment journal *Foreign Affairs* in which he discussed protest against the war. Much of the protest was legitimate, he conceded: there had in retrospect been some mistakes in managing such a complex effort. But then there was a fringe of "wild men in the wings" who merit only contempt. The wild men actually descended so far as to look into motives. That is, they treated the U.S. political leadership by the standards applied to others, and hence must be excluded from polite company.

Bundy's analysis was in fact the norm among liberal intellectuals. Their publications soberly distinguished the "technocratic and policy-oriented intellectuals" from the "value-oriented intellectuals." The former are the good guys, who orchestrate and inform policy, and are duly honored for their constructive work — the Henry Kissingers, the kind who loyally transmit orders from their half-drunk boss for a massive bombing campaign in Cambodia,

“anything that flies against anything that moves.” A call for genocide that’s not easy to duplicate in the archival record. The latter are the wild men in the wings who prate about moral value, justice, international law and other sentimentalities.

The U.S. isn’t El Salvador. The wild men don’t have their brains blown out by elite battalions armed and trained in Washington, like the six leading Latin American intellectuals, Jesuit priests, who [suffered this fate](#) along with their housekeeper and her daughter on the eve of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Who even knows their names? Properly, one might argue, since there were many other religious martyrs among the hundreds of thousands slaughtered in Washington’s crusade in Central America in the 1980s, managed with the assistance of technocratic and policy-oriented intellectuals.

It is, regrettably, all too easy to continue.

I believe it would be of great interest if you talked about the historical context of “The Responsibility of Intellectuals,” but also if you elaborate on what you mean when you say intellectuals must see events from their historical perspective.

The essay was based on a talk given in 1966 to a student group at Harvard. It was published in the group’s journal. They’ve probably expunged it since. It was the Harvard Hillel Society. The journal is *Mosaic*. This was a year before Israel’s military victory in 1967, a great gift to the U.S., which led to a sharp re-orientation in U.S.-Israeli policies and major shifts in popular culture and attitudes in the U.S. — an interesting and important story, but not for here.

The *New York Review of Books* published an edited version.

Since the talk was at Harvard, it was particularly important to focus on intellectual elites and their special links to government. The Harvard faculty was quite prominent in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. [Camelot](#) mythology is in considerable part their creation. But as we’ve been discussing, it’s just one phase in a long history of intellectual service to power. It’s still unfolding without fundamental change, though the activism of the ‘60s and its aftermath has substantially changed much of the country, widening the wings in which “wild men” can pursue their value-oriented subversion.

This impact has also greatly broadened the historical perspective from which events of the world are perceived. No one today would write a major diplomatic

history of the U.S. recounting how after the British yoke was overthrown, the former colonists, in the words of Thomas Bailey, “concentrated on the task of felling trees and Indians and of rounding out their natural boundaries” — in “self-defense,” of course. Few in the ‘60s fully grasped the fact that our “forever wars” began in 1783. The horrendous 400-year record of torture of African Americans was also scarcely acknowledged by mainstream academics; more, and worse, is constantly being unearthed. The same is true in other areas. Dedicated and conscientious activism can open many windows for valuable historical perspective to be gained.

The world has changed a great deal since the era of the Vietnam War, and I think you would agree with me that we are facing greater challenges today than ever before. Moreover, we live in a much smaller world, and some of the challenges facing us are truly global in nature and scope. In that context, what should be the role of intellectuals and of social movements in a globalized world and with a shared future for humanity?

You’re quite right that we face far greater challenges today than during the Vietnam era. In 1968, when liberal intellectuals were excoriating the value-oriented “wild men,” the leading issue was that “Viet-Nam as a cultural and historic entity [was] threatened with extinction [as] the countryside literally dies under the blows of the largest military machine ever unleashed on an area of this size,” the judgment of the most respected Vietnam specialist, military historian Bernard Fall.

It is now organized human society worldwide that is “threatened with extinction” under the blows of environmental destruction, overwhelmingly by the rich, concentrated in the rich countries. That’s apart from the no less ominous and growing threat of nuclear holocaust, being stoked as we speak.

We are living in an era of confluence of crises that has no counterpart in human history. For each of these, feasible solutions are known, though time is short. There is no need to waste words on responsibility.

Who is undertaking the historic task of addressing these crises? Who carried out the Global Climate Strike on September 24, a desperate attempt to wake up the dithering leaders of global society, and citizens who have been lulled into passivity by elite treachery? We know the answer: the young, the inheritors of our

folly. It should be deeply painful to witness the scene at Davos, the annual gathering where the rich and powerful posture in their self-righteousness, and applaud politely when Greta Thunberg instructs them quietly and expertly on the catastrophe they have been blithely creating.

Nice little girl. Now go back to school where you belong and leave the serious problems to us, the enlightened political leaders, the soulful corporations working day and night for the common good, the responsible intellectuals. We'll take care of it, ensuring that the betrayal will be apocalyptic — as it will be, if we grant them the power to run the world in accord with the principles they have established and implemented.

The principles are not obscure. Right now, governments of the world, the U.S. foremost among them, are pressuring oil producers to increase production — having just been advised in the August IPCC report, by far the direst yet, that catastrophe is looming unless we begin right now to reduce fossil fuel use year by year, effectively phasing them out by mid-century. Petroleum industry journals are euphoric about the discovery of new fields to exploit as demand for oil increases. The business press debates whether the U.S. fracking industry or OPEC is best placed to increase production.

Congress is debating a bill that might have slightly slowed the race to destruction. The denialist party is 100 percent opposed, so the fate of legislation is in the hands of the “moderate” Democrats, particularly Joe Manchin. He has made his position on climate explicit: “[Spending on innovation, not elimination](#).” Straight out of the playbook of PR departments of the fossil fuel companies, no surprise from Congress’s leading recipient of fossil fuel compensation. Fossil fuel use must continue unimpeded, driving us to catastrophe in the interests of short-term profit for the very rich. Period.

On the rest of the Biden package, Manchin — the swing vote — has made it clear that he will accept only a trickle, also insisting on cumbersome and degrading means testing for what is standard practice in the civilized world. The posture is certainly not for the benefit of his constituents. As for other “moderates,” it is much the same. Without far more intense public pressure, there was never much hope that this Congress would allow the country to begin to beat back the cruel assault of overwhelming business power.

There is no need to tarry on what this entails about responsibility.

And again, we dare not neglect the cloud that was cast over the world by human intelligence 75 years ago and has been darkening in recent years. The arms control regime that had been laboriously constructed over many decades has been systematically dismantled by the last two Republican administrations, first Bush II and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, then Trump wielding his wrecking ball with abandon. He left office barely in time for Biden to salvage the New START Treaty, accepting Russia's pleas to extend it. Biden continues, however, to support the bloated military budget, to pursue the race to develop more dangerous weapons, and to carry out highly provocative acts where diplomacy and negotiations are surely possible.

A major point of contention right now is "freedom of navigation" in the South China Sea. More accurately, as Australian strategic analyst Clinton Fernandes [points out](#), the conflict concerns military/intelligence operations in China's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) extending 200 miles offshore. The U.S. holds that such operations are permissible in all EEZs. China holds that they are not. India agrees with China's interpretation, and vigorously protested [recent U.S. military operations](#) in its EEZ.

EEZs were established by the 1982 Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The U.S. is the only maritime power not to have ratified the Law, but asserts that it will not violate it. The relevant wording about military operations in the Law is not entirely precise. Surely this is a clear case where diplomacy is in order, not highly provocative actions in a region of considerable tension, with the threat of escalation, possibly without bounds.

All of this is part of the U.S. effort to "contain China." Or, to put it differently, [to establish](#) "The fact that somehow, the rise of 20 per cent of humanity from abject poverty into something approaching a modern state, is illegitimate — but more than that, by its mere presence, an affront to the United States. It is not that China presents a threat to the United States — something China has never articulated nor delivered — rather, its mere presence represents a challenge to United States pre-eminence."

This is the quite realistic assessment of former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating, reacting to the recent AUKUS (Australia-U.K.-U.S.) agreement to sell

eight advanced nuclear submarines to Australia, to be incorporated in the U.S. naval command in order to respond to the “threat of China.”

The agreement abrogates a France-Australia agreement for sale of conventional subs. With typical imperial arrogance, Washington did not even notify France, instructing the European Union on its place in the U.S.-run global order. In reaction, France recalled its ambassadors to the U.S. and Australia, ignoring the U.K., a mere vassal state.

Australian military correspondent Brian Toohey [observes](#) that Australia’s submission to the U.S. does not enhance its security — quite the contrary — and that AUKUS has no discernable strategic purpose. The subs will not be operational for over a decade, by which time China will surely have expanded its military forces to deal with this new military threat, just as it has done to deal with the fact that it is ringed by nuclear-armed missiles in some of the 800 military bases that the U.S. has around the world (China has one, Djibouti).

Toohey outlines the naval military balance that is disrupted further by AUKUS. It’s worth quoting directly to help understand how China threatens the U.S. — not in the Caribbean or the California coast, but on China’s borders:

China’s nuclear weapons are so inferior that it couldn’t be confident of deterring a retaliatory strike from the US. Take the example of nuclear-powered, ballistic missile-armed submarines (SSBNs). China has four Jin-class SSBNs. Each can carry 12 missiles, each with a single warhead. The subs are easy to detect because they’re noisy. According to the US Office of Naval Intelligence, each is noisier than a Soviet submarine first launched in 1976. Russian and US subs are now much quieter. China is expected to acquire another four SSBNs that are a little quieter by 2030. However, the missiles on the subs won’t have the range to reach the continental US from near their base on Hainan island in the South China Sea. To target the continental US, they would have to reach suitable locations in the Pacific Ocean. However, they are effectively bottled up inside the South China Sea. To escape, they have to pass through a series of chokepoints where they would be easily sunk by US hunter killer nuclear submarines of the type the [Australian] Morrison government wants to buy. In contrast, the US has 14 Ohio-class SSBNs. Each can launch 24 Trident missiles, each containing eight independently targetable warheads able to reach anywhere on the globe. This means a single US submarine can destroy 192 cities, or other targets, compared to 12 for the Chinese submarine. The Ohio class is now being replaced by the

bigger Columbia class. These [are being] constructed at the same time as new US hunter killer submarines.

That's before eight new advanced nuclear subs are built for Australia. In nuclear forces generally and other relevant military capacity, China is of course far behind the U.S., as are all potential U.S. adversaries combined.

AUKUS does serve a purpose, however: to establish more firmly that the U.S. intends to rule the world, even if that requires escalating the threat of war, possibly terminal nuclear war, in a highly volatile region. And eschewing such "sissified" measures as diplomacy.

It is not the only example. One of these should have been on the front pages in the past few weeks as the U.S. withdrew from Afghanistan, executing Trump's cynical sell-out of Afghans in his February 2020 deal with the Taliban.

The obvious question is: Why did the Bush administration invade 20 years ago? The U.S. had no interest in Afghanistan, as Bush's pronouncements at the time made explicit; the real prize was Iraq, then beyond. Bush also made it clear that the administration also had little interest in Osama bin Laden or al-Qaeda. That lack of concern was made fully explicit by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld when the Taliban offered surrender. "We do not negotiate surrenders," Rumsfeld stormed.

The only plausible explanation for the invasion was given by the most highly respected leader of the anti-Taliban resistance, Abdul Haq. He was [interviewed](#) shortly after the invasion by Asia scholar Anatol Lieven.

Haq said that the invasion will kill many Afghans and undermine promising Afghan efforts to undermine the Taliban regime from within, but that's not Washington's concern: "the US is trying to show its muscle, score a victory and scare everyone in the world. They don't care about the suffering of the Afghans or how many people we will lose."

That also seems a fair description of current U.S. strategy in "containing the China threat" by provocative escalation in place of diplomacy. It's no innovation in imperial history.

Returning to the responsibility of intellectuals and how it is being fulfilled, no

elaboration should be necessary.

Source:

<https://truthout.org/articles/chomsky-its-life-and-death-intellectuals-cant-keep-serving-the-status-quo/>

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).

Occupy Wall Street Was Good, But It Was Never Going To Be Good Enough



Social movements can create change, but need proper organizational structures to dismantle hegemonic power.

Ten years ago, the Occupy Wall Street movement was born with protests in Manhattan's financial district. Its aim was to draw attention to the huge gap that had grown between the super-rich and average Americans in the age of global neoliberalism.

While it is uncertain whether it even qualifies as an actual social movement, Wall Street Occupy was a smashing success: its powerful message of the richest 1 percent owning more of the country's wealth than any other time in recent history captured the public imagination, provided the impetus for the emergence of a new wave of social activism, both in the US and abroad, and eventually became a rallying point for the left-wing of the Democratic Party.

However, like most actual social movements, Occupy Wall Street was short-lived and its lack of specific demands did not change the realities on the ground: economic inequalities have continued to grow since and Wall Street remains a dominant player in the US and world economy alike.

Social movements emerge on account of the existence of dysfunction within a political or economic system. Systemic inequality and social and environmental injustice are the primary drives behind the rise of most forms of social activism in today's world, yet the decision for people to become politically active has simple psychological roots. Social movements emerge only when discontent has become quite prevalent among a sizable segment of the citizenry. Indeed, it was feelings of deprivation and discontent that gave rise to the anti-globalization movement of the 1990s, to the pro-democracy protests and uprisings that took place in the Middle East and North Africa in the early 2010s, and to the Russian protest movements in 2011-2012. Nonetheless, all of those movements also phased out rather quickly, without accomplishing their intended goals, although they did cause quite a stir at the time.

The problem with social movements is that they are informal groupings of individuals or organizations which, while they can generate significant attention

around an issue or cause, influence positively public opinion, and initiate some form of tangible change, they lack the instruments to dismantle hegemonic power. Put differently, social movements, generally speaking, do not last very long and ultimately fail to dismantle existing power structures because they do not invest in organizational structures.

From the above, one may be quick to jump to the conclusion that participation in political parties is the most effective way for citizens in contemporary societies to bring about structural change. Not so fast. While this may have been the case in the past, it is no longer so today because political parties, including those of left and radical ideological orientation, have undergone fundamental organizational changes. With rare exceptions, they have moved away from being mass parties and have abandoned any pretext of actually seeking to bring about profound social and economic changes. Party identification has also declined everywhere in the world, and even the distinction between Left and Right has broken down.

In sum, the best hope we have for reshaping the world is with social activism and protest movements. But sustainable activism requires implementing organizational structures which are currently missing from most social movements. It would be most helpful in this case if contemporary social movements looked to the history of the old radical Left and the way those parties managed to sustain organizational continuity while fighting for a new social and economic order under political and social conditions far more adverse than what exists today. And to the way the Austrian communist party of today has managed, through a steadfast course in old-fashioned class politics, to engage itself in community activism in the city of Graz, a strategy which led to its shocking victory last month in the city's municipal elections.

"Crown heads, wealth, and privilege may well tremble should ever again the black and red unite," Otto von Bismarck allegedly said in connection with the political environment of his time.

We might be able one day to express something along similar lines if social movements started to implement the organizational structures of the Old Left.

Our work is licensed under Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0). Feel free to republish and share widely.

Source:

<https://www.commondreams.org/occupy-wall-street-was-good-it-was-never-going-be-good-enough>

[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 [Optimism Over Despair: Noam Chomsky On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change](#)” and “[Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal: The Political Economy of Saving the Planet](#)” (with Noam Chomsky and Robert Pollin as primary authors).

De wegbereiders

Er moet een dag geweest zijn dat iemand bedacht dat er een parallel is tussen het ombrengen van miljoenen mensen en de gevolgen van de beslissing geen vaccin te nemen. De mens is in staat verstandeloze gedachten voort te brengen.

Het gebruik van een gele ster in de strijd tegen coronamaatregelen is geen gebrek aan historisch besef, het is de keuze voor een wereldbeeld waarbij achter de noemer globalistisch socialisme abjecte ideeën over de natiestaat, raszuiverheid en antisemitisme terug zijn in het politieke debat.

Tijdens de Algemene Beschouwingen deze week liet de denker van deze beweging geen twijfel bestaan over de omarming van dit gedachtegoed.

De wegbereiders voor een bruine toekomst zitten in ons parlement.

Aldus mijn tachtigjarige buurman vanochtend in een lange e-mail over de Algemene Beschouwingen.

So-Called Democratic “Moderates” Are Actually Right-Wingers Who Have Always Thrown Up Roadblocks To Social Progress



CJ

Polychroniou

The U.S. is the only liberal-democratic country in the world with a political system set up for two mainstream parties, a long and continuous history of union suppression, and without a major socialist party at the national level.

How is it possible that the world’s largest economy has a crumbling infrastructure (“shabby beyond belief” is how the CEO of Legal & General, a multinational financial services and asset management company, described it back in 2016), and ranks in the lower half of second tier countries, behind economic powerhouses Cyprus and Greece, on the [2020 Social Progress Index](#)?

It’s the politics, stupid!

The United States is the only liberal-democratic country in the world with a political system set up for two mainstream parties, a long and continuous history of union suppression, and without a major socialist party at the national level. Indeed, the countries that perform best on the Social Progress Index have multi-party systems, strong labor unions, a plethora of left-wing parties, and adhere to the social democratic model.

In other words, politics explains why the United States did not develop a European-style welfare state. Political factors also explain why economic inequalities are so huge in the US and the middle class is shrinking; why the quality of America’s health care system is dead last when compared with other western, industrialized nations; why there are millions of homeless people; and why the infrastructure resembles that of a third-world country.

However, for the first time in many decades, the country faces the prospect of the reshaping of federal government priorities, thanks to a large social spending package which includes an infrastructure bill with \$550 billion in new spending and a \$3.5 trillion budget blueprint intended for investments in social programs and combatting global warming. Sen. Bernie Sanders has described the \$3.5 trillion budget plan as “the most consequential piece of legislation for working people, the elderly, the children, the sick and the poor since FDR and the New Deal of the 1930s,” although it is highly questionable if the funding level of the reconciliation bill is sufficient enough to address the pressing needs of the country. [There Is a Problem With the Infrastructure and Budget Bills—They’re Too Small \(truthout.org\)](#) More importantly, poll after poll shows that the majority of the American people support Biden’s social spending package, [Most back Biden’s infrastructure bill and budget plan: Poll \(usatoday.com\)](#), even though the President’s approval rating is slipping fast [Polls show Biden’s approval rating sliding to new lows—POLITICO](#) and Republicans may very well flip the House in 2022.

But huge contradictions have become, after all, the centerpiece of US politics, as we will see below.

Now, in the event that the Democrats manage to pass the reconciliation bill (which they can do with a simple majority rule), America’s social safety net will undoubtedly be expanded, but it will still fall short of closing the gap with its liberal-democratic peers with respect to social protection policies. The reason is that the American welfare state is organized around different principles (it functions primarily around tax expenditures and public-private partnerships) than the welfare state in other advanced nations, thanks to the dominance of conservative modes of thinking with regard to the relationship between individual and society (partly due to the influence of the Protestant work ethic which looked with suspicion of anyone who is poor, and partly due to free-market economics which rejected outright the role of the government in promoting overall social well-being), but also due to the uniqueness of American federalism.

European governments, to be sure, and regardless of whether they are using the Nordic or the Christian-Democratic socioeconomic model, have far more generous social programs than those provided by the US government (total expenditure on social protection benefits in the EU is equivalent to approximately 27 percent of GDP, while in the US it is just over 18 percent of GDP) and they reach a

significantly larger share of citizens. Europeans spend several times more on unemployment insurance, and their governments engage in more direct regulations in order to protect workers against business interests.

Unsurprisingly therefore, even in the age of global neoliberalism, where social programs are under constant siege, the welfare state [remains](#) an ideal that most Europeans treasure regardless of partisanship. For instance, the National Health Service ranks consistently as the institution that brings more pride to British people, far more so than British history, the Armed Forces, and the Royal Family.

Indeed, why would anyone, other than the very rich, be opposed to the idea of universal health care, let alone vacation as a right guaranteed by law?

But let's return to Biden's \$3.5 trillion budget plan, which heralds a new era of "big" government in U.S politics. We already know that no Republican will support it. Republican lawmakers oppose expanding federal spending on social programs, but do support extra spending on immigration enforcement and defense. And they are unified in the effort to protect Trump tax cuts, which means they oppose Democrats' plan to increase taxes on corporations and the very rich.

When not reciting bogus arguments about deficits and debt in connection with increased federal spending, Republicans have always opposed every new social program targeted on the poor and average folks on purely ideological grounds. For them, the welfare state leads inevitably to socialism (and, for the grandfather of neoliberalism, F. A. Hayek, to totalitarianism), but naturally they keep silent about the massive government support that the corporate and financial industries receive when their fortunes turn sour. [Neoliberalism's Bailout Problem | Boston Review](#) So it's Ok to offer socialism to the rich. But for everyone else, brutal capitalism should be the order of the day.

Indeed, it is worth recalling why Ronald Reagan opposed the enactment of Medicare in the early 1960s. He [warned](#) that if it was enacted, "behind it will come other federal programs that will invade every area of freedom as we have known it in this country. Until, one day, as Norman Thomas said, we will awake to find that we have socialism."

However, it is not only Republican lawmakers who resist social welfare programs. So-called "moderate" Democrats also have an ugly history of throwing up

roadblocks. After all, it was Democratic President Bill Clinton who made the biggest reactionary shift in social policy since the Great Depression when he signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, which essentially put an end to welfare as an entitlement program.

Today, “moderate” Democrats are also [throwing up](#) roadblocks to Biden’s \$3.5 trillion budget plan, with Senator Joe Manchin leading the way. He considers the price tag of the reconciliation bill too big (of course, he would never express opposition to the humongous amount of money the US spends annually on the military—\$704 billion for the fiscal year 2021, which amounts to 11 percent of federal spending), and objects to efforts in the bill to combat the climate crisis by spending money for a transition to clean energy.

As things stand, “moderate” Senate Democrats like Manchin will most likely consent only to a much smaller price tag of the reconciliation bill and as long as there are no taxes on the superrich or corporations.

Why Manchin, who opposed the For the People Act, has taken a strong position against ending or even weakening the filibuster, and has always sided with business interests, is considered by the media and political pundits in this country as a centrist or so-called “moderate” Democrat will surely baffle anyone outside the United States. In the political culture of European states, Manchin’s stance on critical economic, social, political, and environmental issues places him squarely in the reactionary camp. He would be seen and treated as an outright right-winger.

In a similar vein, most so-called “progressive” lawmakers in the US would be regarded as “moderates” at best in the European political spectrum. Financial Times editor Rana Foroohar may have engaged in a slight exaggeration when she remarked in a recent video interview that Bernie Sanders’ policies place him “pretty close to your average German Christian Democrat,” [Age of Economics](#) but not by much at all when we consider the fact that Bernie Sanders is fighting for economic and social rights that already exist in most European countries.

A similar point can also be made with regard to the climate emergency. While most Europeans [believe](#) the climate crisis is real and caused by human activities, in the US there is still a debate about what is happening to the planet and why, which surely [explains](#) the reason why the US is lagging far behind Europe on climate change goals. Even Europe’s oil and gas companies are way ahead of their rivals in the US in [reducing](#) their reliance on fossil-fuel sales, and they are

investing far more on renewable energy, carbon capture, and other decarbonization undertakings.

All of the above are connected to the nature of the political spectrum that exists in Europe and, more specifically, to the European social model with its emphasis on social protection, pensions, public services, workers' rights, quality of jobs, working conditions, and environmental concerns, even though, it should be pointed out, the social model has been under attack since the early 1980s and has certainly been weakened as a result of European Union policies promoting market efficiencies, liberalization and competition law, privatization, and financialization.

Moreover, none of the above is meant to convey the idea that the US should necessarily try to imitate the European Social Model. At this historical juncture, the US should be leaning forward into a path of economic development, social justice, and environmental sustainability structured around a Green New Deal. This is a truly bold plan to reshape the US economy and eliminate the greenhouse gases responsible for global warming. The switch to 100 percent clean and renewable energy sources will surely change the face of "really existing capitalism."

In the meantime, it is vitally important that we keep in mind the reasons why the US has a third-world infrastructure and ranks far behind virtually all other advanced countries on the Social Progress Index. And let's stop using meaningless terms to describe the policies and ideological stance of people like Joe Manchin. So-called Democratic "moderates" are dark political forces that belong without the slightest doubt to the reactionary Right of the political spectrum.

Source:

<https://www.commondreams.org/so-called-democratic-moderates-are-actually-right-wingers-who-have-always-thrown>

Our work is licensed under Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0). Feel free to republish and share widely.

[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 [Optimism Over Despair: Noam Chomsky On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change](#) and ["Climate Crisis and the Global Green](#)

[*New Deal: The Political Economy of Saving the Planet*](#)“ (with Noam Chomsky and Robert Pollin as primary authors).

De huurder als dividendvoer

In een land waar institutionele beleggers uit bijvoorbeeld de VS aan mogen schuiven op een ministerie om uit te leggen dat ze graag duizenden huizen willen overnemen van woningcorporaties omdat ze rente moeten betalen aan bevriende bankiers over hun miljarden en de Nederlandse huurwet garant staat voor een alleszins redelijk rendement, moet je niet opkijken dat huurders worden gezien als dividendvoer

Deze handelswijze is illustratief voor de denkwereld van Ayn Randadept Mark Rutte.

In die denkwereld geldt egoïsme, vermomd als objectivisme, als een deugd.

In tegenstelling tot het gedachtegoed van Max Stirner, waarbij het begrip egoïsme waarde vrij moet worden gelezen, ontdaan van de negatieve connotatie, legaliseert de filosofie van RandRutte het recht van de sterkste. Kapitalisme als uitkomst van de evolutietheorie.

Aldus mijn tachtigjarige buurman vanochtend in een lange e-mail over de woningnood in dit land.