

Noam Chomsky: Another World Is Possible. Let's Bring It To Reality



Noam Chomsky

It's a truism that the world is in a dismal state; indeed, there are too many great challenges facing our world and the planet is in fact at a breaking point, as Noam Chomsky elaborates on an exclusive interview below for *Truthout*. What's less widely recognized is that another world is possible because the present one is simply not sustainable, says one of the world's greatest public intellectuals.

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

C.J. Polychroniou: Noam, as we enter a new year, I want to start this interview by asking you to highlight the biggest challenges facing our world today and whether you would agree with the claim that human progress, while real and substantial in some regards, is neither even nor inevitable?

Noam Chomsky: The easiest way to respond is with the Doomsday Clock, now set at 100 seconds to midnight, likely to advance closer to termination when it is reset in a few weeks. As it should, considering what's been happening in the past year. The challenges it highlighted last January remain at the top of the list: nuclear war, global heating, and other environmental destruction, and the collapse of the arena of rational discourse that offers the only hope for addressing the existential challenges. There are others, but let's look at these.

Washington has just agreed to provide Ukraine with Patriot missiles. Whether they work or not is an open question, but Russia will assume a worst-case analysis and consider them a target. We have few details, but it's likely that U.S. trainers come with the missiles, hence are targets for Russian attack, which might move us a few steps up the escalation ladder.

That's not the only possible ominous scenario in Ukraine, but the threats of escalation to unthinkable war are not just there. It's dangerous enough off the coast of China, particularly as Biden has declared virtual war on China and Congress is seething at the bit to break the "strategic ambiguity" that has maintained peace regarding Taiwan for 50 years, all matters we've discussed before.

Without proceeding, the threat of terminal war has increased, along with foolish and ignorant assurances that it need not concern us.

Let's turn to the environment. On global warming, the news ranges from awful to horrendous, but there are some bright spots. The Biodiversity Convention is a major step toward limiting the lethal destruction of the environment. Support is almost universal, though not total. One state refused to sign, the usual outlier, the most powerful state in world history. The GOP, true to its principles, refuses to support anything that might interfere with private power and profit. For similar reasons, the U.S. refused to sign the Kyoto Protocols on global warming (joined in this case by Andorra), setting in motion a disastrous failure to act that has sharply reduced the prospects for escape from catastrophe.

I don't mean to suggest that the world is saintly. Far from it. But the global hegemon stands out.

Let's turn to the third factor driving the Doomsday Clock toward midnight: the collapse of the arena of rational discourse. Most discussion of this deeply

troubling phenomenon focuses on outbursts in social media, wild conspiracy theories, QAnon and stolen elections, and other dangerous developments that can be traced in large part to the breakdown of the social order under the hammer blows of the class war of the past 40 years. But at least we have the sober and reasoned domain of liberal intellectual opinion that offers some hope of rational discourse.

Or do we?

What we see in this domain often defies belief — and evokes ridicule outside of disciplined Western circles. For example, the leading establishment journal of international affairs soberly informs us that a Russian defeat “[would reinforce the principle](#) that an attack on another country cannot go unpunished.”

The journal is referring to the principle that has been upheld so conscientiously when we are the agents of aggression — a thought that surfaces only among those who commit the unpardonable crime of applying to ourselves the principles that we valiantly uphold for others. It’s hard to imagine that the thought has never surfaced in the mainstream. But it’s not easy to find.

Sometimes what appears is so outlandish that one is entitled to wonder what may lie behind it, since the authors can’t believe what they are saying. How, for example, can someone react to a story headlined “[No conclusive evidence Russia is behind Nord Stream attack](#),” going on to explain that, “World leaders were quick to blame Moscow for explosions along the undersea natural gas pipelines. But some Western officials now doubt the Kremlin was responsible,” even though the Russians probably did it in order to “strangle the flow of energy to millions across the continent”?

It’s true enough that much of the West was quick to blame Russia, but that’s as informative as the fact that when something goes wrong, Russian apparatchiks are quick to blame the U.S. In fact, as most of the world recognized at once, Russia is about the least likely culprit. They gain nothing from destroying a valuable asset of theirs; Russian state-owned Gazprom is the major owner and developer of the pipelines, and Russia is counting on them for revenue and influence. If they wanted to “strangle the flow of energy,” all they would have to do is to close some valves.

As the sane parts of the world also recognized at once, the most likely culprit is

the only one that had both motive and capability. U.S. motive is not in question. It has been publicly proclaimed for years. President Biden explicitly informed his German counterparts, quite publicly, that if Russia invaded Ukraine the pipeline would be destroyed. U.S. capability is of course not in question, even apart from the huge U.S. naval maneuvers in the area of the sabotage just before it took place.

But to draw the obvious conclusion is as ludicrous as holding that the noble “principle that an attack on another country cannot go unpunished” might apply when the U.S. attacks Iraq or anyone else. Unspeakable.

What then lies beyond the comical headline “No conclusive evidence Russia is behind Nord Stream attack” — the Orwellian translation of the statement that we have overwhelming evidence that Russia was not behind the attack and that the U.S. was.

The most plausible answer is the “thief, thief” technique, a familiar propaganda device: When you’re caught with your hands in someone’s pocket, don’t deny it and be easily refuted. Rather, point somewhere else and shout “thief, thief,” acknowledging that there is a robbery while shifting attention to some imagined perpetrator. It works very well. The fossil fuel industry has been practicing it effectively for years, as we’ve discussed. It works even better when embellished by the standard techniques that make U.S. propaganda so much more effective than the heavy-handed totalitarian variety: foster debate to show our openness, but within narrow constraints that instill the propaganda message by presupposition, which is much more effective than assertion. So, highlight the fact that there is skepticism about Russian depravity, showing what a free and open society we are while establishing more deeply the ludicrous claim that the propaganda system is seeking to instill.

There is, to be sure, another possibility: Perhaps segments of the intellectual classes are so deeply immersed in the propaganda system that they actually can’t perceive the absurdity of what they are saying.

Either way, it’s a stark reminder of the collapse of the arena of rational discourse, right where we might hope that it could be defended.

Unfortunately, it’s all too easy to continue.

In short, all three of the reasons why the Clock had been moved to 100 seconds to midnight have been strongly reinforced in the past year. Not a comforting conclusion, but inescapable.

Scientists are warning us that global warming is such an existential threat to the point that civilization is headed toward a major catastrophe. Are apocalyptic claims or views about global warming helpful? Indeed, what will it take to achieve successful climate action, considering that the most powerful nation in history is actually “a rogue state leading the world toward ecological collapse,” as George Monbiot aptly put it in a [recent op-ed](#) in The Guardian?

The Yale University Climate [program on climate and communication](#) has been conducting studies on how best to bring people to understand the reality of the crisis facing humanity. [There are others, from various perspectives.](#)

It is a task of particular importance in the “rogue state leading the world toward ecological collapse.” It is also a task of difficulty, given that denialism not only exists in some circles but has been close to official policy in the Republican Party ever since this extremist organization succumbed to the offensive of the Koch energy conglomerate, launched when the party seemed to be veering toward sanity during the 2008 McCain campaign. When party loyalists hear their leaders, and their media echo chamber, assuring them “not to worry,” it’s not easy to reach them. And though extreme, the GOP is not alone.

It seems to be generally agreed that apocalyptic pronouncements are not helpful. People either tune off or listen and give up: “*It’s too big for me.*” What seems to be more successful is focusing on direct experience and on steps that can be taken, even if small. All of this is familiar to organizers generally. It’s a hard path to follow for those who are aware of the enormity of the crisis. But efforts to reach people have to be tailored to their understanding and concerns. Otherwise, they can descend to self-serving preaching to a void.

Recently, we discussed in another interview [the aims and effects of neoliberal capitalism](#). Now, neoliberalism is often enough conflated with globalization, but it is rather obvious that the latter is a multidimensional process that has existed long before the rise of neoliberalism. Of course, the dominant form of globalization today is neoliberal globalization, but this is not to say that globalization must be structured around neoliberal policies and values, or to think

that “there is no alternative.” There are indeed continuous struggles across the world for democratic control over states, markets and corporations. My question thus is this: Is it utopian thinking to believe that the status quo can be challenged and that another world is possible?

Globalization simply means international integration. It can take many forms. The neoliberal globalization crafted mostly during the Clinton years was designed in the interest of private capital, with an array of highly protectionist investor-rights agreements masked as “free trade.” That was by no means inevitable. Both the labor movement, and Congress’s own research bureau (the Office of Technology Assessment, or OTA) proposed alternatives geared to the interests of working people in the U.S. and abroad. They were summarily dismissed. The OTA was disbanded, according to reports, because [Newt Gingrich’s GOP regarded it](#) as biased against them, though it may be that Clintonite New Democrats shared the sentiment about fact and reason. Capital flourished, including the mostly predatory financial system. Labor was severely weakened, with consequences that reverberate to the present.

Globalization could take a very different form, just as economic arrangements can quite generally. There is a long history of efforts to separate the political from the economic domain, the latter conceived as purely objective, like astronomy, guided by specialists in the economics profession and immune to the agency of ordinary citizens, labor in particular. [One very impressive recent study](#), by Clara Mattei, argues persuasively that this dichotomy, typically taking the form of austerity programs, has been a major instrument of class war for a century, paving the way to fascism, which was indeed welcomed by Western elite opinion, with enthusiasm by “libertarians.”

There is, however, no reason to accept the mythology. The political domain in a broad sense, including labor and other popular activism, can shape the economic system in ways that will benefit people, not profit and private power. The rise of social democracy illustrates that well, but there is also no reason to accept its tacit assumption that capitalist autocracy is a law of nature. To quote Mattei, “either the organizations of people can move beyond capitalist relations [to economic democracy], or the ruling class will reimpose its rule.”

The status quo can certainly be challenged. A far better world is surely within reach. There is every reason to honor the slogan of the World Social Forum that

“Another world is possible,” a far better one, and to devote our efforts to bring it to reality.

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We Can’t Combat Inequality Without First Valuing Care Work



*Nancy Folbre - Photo:
wikipedia*

A feminist political economy addresses gender inequalities, but also seeks to rectify inequalities in labor division

Patriarchy and capitalism are class-based systems that serve to compound inequalities of all sorts, including gender inequality. A feminist political economy not only addresses gender inequalities, but also seeks to rectify inequalities in the division of labor. Of course, there are different branches of feminism, but a strong case can be made that a socialist feminist perspective of political economy, such as that adopted by renowned feminist economist Nancy Folbre, is best equipped to combine theory and praxis for understanding and overcoming capitalist inequalities of class, gender and race. Indeed, Folbre's work is defined by the construction of an intersectional socialist feminist perspective.

Nancy Folbre is professor emerita of economics and director of the Program on Gender and Care Work at the Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She is the author of scores of academic articles and numerous books, including *For Love and Money: Care Provision in the U.S.* and, most recently, *The Rise and Decline of Patriarchal Systems: An Intersectional Political Economy*.

C.J. Polychroniou: I want to start this interview by asking you to elaborate a bit on the socialist feminist perspective of political economy, which you essentially helped to institutionalize, and explain how it differs from mainstream feminist political economy. Indeed, why bring socialism into feminism?

Nancy Folbre: I wish I could agree that a socialist feminist perspective has been “institutionalized.” I do think it has gained some visibility, and with that, some political leverage. I am also convinced that it is gaining traction and will ultimately shape the political future.

Socialist feminism is not a newcomer to political economy. Many of its principles were laid out in the early 19th century by two Irish radicals who are often lumped in with the pre-Marxian “utopian socialists,” William Thompson and Anna Wheeler. They are sometimes mentioned in history books as early advocates of women’s right to vote, famous for their *Appeal of One Half of the Human Race, Women, Against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men, to Retain Them in Political, and Thence in Civil and Domestic Slavery* in 1825. Yet they reached far beyond the issue of women’s rights to insist that no economic system based primarily on individual competition could ever achieve gender equality, because tasks of child-rearing and family care require social cooperation and commitment to the well-being of future generations.

This claim lies, implicitly or explicitly, at the heart of socialist feminism. It helps explain the economic vulnerability of those who specialize in care provision in a capitalist society and the need to collectively invest in sustainable forms of development that do not prioritize profit maximization. Socialist feminists are closely aligned with ecological and climate activists in their emphasis on the need to develop more cooperative institutions. Socialist feminist political economy suggests that inequality can be a serious impediment to what might be termed (to evoke a Marxian term) “socially necessary” cooperation — or (to apply neoclassical economic jargon) “socially optimal” cooperation.

Socialist feminist political economy also suggests that capitalist societies are headed for intensified crises, not because of a falling rate of profit or a rising rate of exploitation, but because they encourage disregard for the physical and social environment in the pursuit of short-term self-interest. The degradation of human capabilities through violence, exploitation and poverty is one example of the many forms of pollution that are fouling our nest.

Gender inequality has existed throughout human history, and U.S. capitalism clearly perpetuates gender inequality. Why is gender inequality so pervasive and how does social class figure into gender discrimination?

I wouldn't universalize gender inequality to the same extent you imply here. Yes, it is a persistent theme of recorded human history, but it has often taken different forms, linked to and crosscut by differences based on race, ethnicity and class.

The historical record suggests that some early gatherer-hunter societies were relatively nonhierarchical, egalitarian groups, even with respect to gender differences. Some such societies — such as the Hadza of Tanzania — persist today. Likewise, some societies today follow matriarchal practices — not the mirror image of patriarchal practices, but ones in which women and mothers control significant property — such as the Khasi of India.

Anthropologist Sarah Hrdy argues that the advantages of cooperative child-rearing were an important impetus to the evolution of other forms of in-group cooperation.

Sadly, patriarchal groups who sent young men into combat to claim new territory and capture young women successfully preyed on more peaceful and egalitarian groups, a dynamic intensified by the development of private property and new hierarchies based on race and class.

Gerda Lerner has argued persuasively that the institution of slavery evolved from the seizure of women. Plutarch's account of the founding of Rome fits this story, which also features in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible: Deuteronomy 21 specifies that women captured during war could be "taken as wives" after one month.

Once firmly established, patriarchal institutions proved remarkably persistent: A division of labor that disempowered women was imposed upon young people at an early age, enforced by physical force as well as religious doctrine. It is entirely possible that these exploitative institutions conferred some military and demographic advantages on the groups that adopted them, facilitating their expansion.

The emergence of class differences based on property ownership had contradictory effects on gender inequality. The two dimensions of inequality reinforced each other in some respects. By offering distinct economic privileges to women family members, while keeping them under tight sexual control, male rulers kept women divided. At the same time, their guarantees of patriarchal power offered lower-class men at least a semblance of compensation for class

exploitation. One of the most memorable illustrations of this is Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha* published in 1680, which explicitly based the divine right of kings on the divine right of fathers. And indeed, many fathers in that day enjoyed considerable legal and economic power over their adult children.

On the other hand, the emergence of intensified differences based on race and class weakened patriarchal institutions in some respects, putting some women and young adults in contradictory positions, where they enjoyed privileges as members of elite families and gained at least some cultural voice. John Locke wrote a scathing attack on Sir Robert Filmer, and while his liberal theories provided an ideological justification for private property and wage employment, they also undermined allegiance to the divine right of fathers.

Historically, I see a complex dialectic between class, race and nationality, and gender, age and sexuality, sometimes leading to uneven but significant weakening of patriarchal institutions. I lay out some evidence pertaining to western Europe in my book *The Rise and Decline of Patriarchal Institutions*, emphasizing the perverse consequences of colonization and slavery.

You have produced an enormous amount of work on the care economy. How do we define care work and how does it contribute to gender inequality? Moreover, what policy solutions do you propose for dealing with the problem of unpaid care work?

“Care” is a big, complicated word that can mean a lot of things, and “care work” gets defined in many different ways by different people. So let me start by saying that I propose a very broad definition — it goes beyond child care to include the care of other people, especially (but not exclusively) people who need help taking care of themselves (which is actually, most of us, at one time or another). While a lot of care work is unpaid, a fairly large number of paid jobs in health, education and social welfare also involve care provision. And care work can take different forms: Direct care typically involves face-to-face, hands-on, personal interaction. Indirect care is less interactive, but supplies the environment in which direct care is provided, such as providing food, cleaning up messes and guaranteeing safety. Supervisory care is less an activity than a responsibility — being on call, physically and emotionally available to provide assistance if needed.

So, what makes care work distinctive? First of all, it has a distinctive “output” —

the production, development and maintenance of human capabilities. The concept of capabilities, developed by Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum, and others, goes way beyond economists' typical use of the term "human capital," because capabilities don't necessarily "pay off" in the labor market. They encompass a range of capacities and contribute to many forms of social well-being through cooperative contributions to families, communities and the polity. Capabilities also have intrinsic value as means of self-realization and creative expression.

This definition of capabilities fits under the rubric of what is sometimes called "social reproduction" that is necessary for capitalism (or any other system) to reproduce itself over time. Yet the production of capabilities can't be reduced to the "production of labor power" because its implications reach far beyond the realm of wage employment. Direct care work is literally embodied in care recipients. Indirect care work develops and protects the opportunities for care recipients to successfully protect, exercise and expand their capabilities. Both direct and indirect care work can be interpreted as a form of investment that generates large personal and social returns.

The distinctive features of care "output" help explain why it involves a distinctive labor process that is also central to the definition of care work. Since care providers seldom have a direct claim on the value of capabilities they create — and since care recipients don't always know ahead of time what they want or need — care provision can seldom be squeezed into a process of impersonal exchange dictated by the forces of supply and demand. The quality of care provision often depends on some level of concern for the well-being of the care recipient — something biologists tend to call altruism and economists sometimes refer to as prosocial preferences.

The importance of concern for others is an obvious element of successful family and community life. Yet it is also apparent, though often in less personal forms, in the provision of paid care services. We value health care providers who care about their patients, educators who care about their students and social workers who care about their clients precisely because if they don't care, they're not likely to do a great job — especially since they are not paid by the market value of what they produce.

The distinctive features of both its output and its labor process help explain why care work tends to be economically devalued or undervalued by a capitalist

marketplace. The social benefits that it produces pay off enormously in the long run, but they are difficult to measure or to individually capture. And because commitments to provide care are deeply embedded in very gendered social norms and preferences, it is easy to take them for granted. Care workers can ask for reciprocity and respect, but it is difficult for them to threaten to withdraw their services if they aren't paid more — after all, they are, almost by definition, committed to helping others. As a result, they are often short on individual and collective bargaining power.

To resort to econo-speak, both unpaid and paid care providers are typically disadvantaged by a big gap between social contribution and private reward, especially in an economic and cultural environment in which private rewards are commonly interpreted as a measure of social contribution. In the world we live, it's not hard to hear people thinking: "You earn a lot of money? Wow, you must be really productive! You don't earn a lot of money? You must not be producing much."

The most common objection that I hear to this argument is "What about doctors? They are care workers, according to your definition, and yet they are among the most well-paid people in the country." Good point. It's important not to overgeneralize. A lot of specific personal and institutional factors influence earnings in the U.S. economy. Doctors overall have gained significant bargaining power in a very unhealthy health care system driven by a combination of market forces and bureaucratic collusion.

Still, the relative pay of different kinds of doctors illustrates my point: The most [highly paid](#) medical specialty in the U.S. is cosmetic surgery, where upscale patients are willing to pay enormous sums out-of-pocket to improve their personal appearance. The least highly paid medical specialty in the U.S. is public health, which includes prevention of infectious disease. Hardly anyone pays out of pocket for this enormous benefit, and it generates few profits of the type that investors can pocket for themselves.

So, to come back to your question about policy solutions, whether we're talking about unpaid or paid care, we need more public support for the provision of public benefits. We also need more equitable sharing of both the private and the public costs. Even a quick look at the Build Back Better legislation proposed by the Biden administration in the fall of 2022 — which would have extended public

support for families *and* raised wages for child care and elder care workers — shows that at least some Democrats are trying to help out the care economy.

In contemporary social, economic and political struggles in the U.S., gender, class, race and ethnicity do not intersect often enough, and surely not with enough energy and dynamism. Is this a case of theory running ahead of praxis? How do we bring intersectionality to the fight against capitalism and patriarchy?

This is such a crucial question and top priority — linking intersectionality to political strategy. Yet my take on it is almost the opposite of yours — I think that praxis has been running ahead of theory. Most progressive activists in the U.S. are very committed to challenging many dimensions of oppression, ranging from racism to reproductive rights, sexual harassment to homophobia to exploitation in employment. However, there is a lingering tendency to put issues related to race, gender and sexuality in a box called “identity” and issues related to exploitation in employment in a box called “class.”

The “identity” box highlights attitudes and language — what people say and who they side with. The “class” box highlights structural economic differences — real wages, unemployment, family income. This categorization causes problems — it pushes “identity” into furious debates about attitudes and language, and pushes “class” into something that can be reduced to economics. Instead, I think we need to acknowledge the economic consequences of group identity and the cultural construction of class.

There are two ways to put this — first, that class is an “identity” and, second, that socially assigned identities such as race or gender have very significant economic consequences (including exploitation, and not just by employers). This leads to a more complex picture of social division, one that helps explain why it is so difficult to overcome.

Let me put this in a less abstract way. As a feminist economist, I have argued, for years, that women have some common economic interests as women. Many critics (including feminists) have retorted that women can’t be categorized as an economic group because so many of them pool income with men. My response is, “Yes, but so what?” Everyone belongs to more than one economic group. Members of the U.S. working class enjoy significant benefits as citizens of the most economically powerful country in the world. (Marx and Lenin recognized the

importance of the “aristocracy of labor” long ago.) Also, many members of the working class enjoy significant benefits based on their race, their gender and their level of “human capital” in the form of educational credentials. This does not imply that they lack common interests based on class.

It does imply that many people inhabit somewhat contradictory positions, making it difficult for them to assess political strategies: Wins for one of the groups they belong to can mean losses for other groups they belong to, and it is not easy to figure out the net effects. “Make America Great Again” sounds like an empty (and hypocritical) slogan to me, but it effectively signals promises to restrict free trade and immigration that are both feasible (they have been implemented successfully in the past), and tangible (less competition for me and my kids in the workplace), even if they won’t really pay off in the long run.

I think this is what you are getting at when you say “struggles ... do not intersect enough.” Another way of putting it is that we are living through a period in which group interests don’t overlap enough — that is, enough to effectively mobilize progressive change. This problem doesn’t result from the theory of intersectionality; it’s a real-world problem that intersectional political economy tries to explain.

Of course, this explanation can be used to justify a fatalistic, even nihilist stance. But it should be used to think creatively about the need to better explain multidimensional inequalities without simply attributing them to bad attitudes. Most importantly, it should be used to develop political coalitions around principles of economic justice that emphasize the perverse consequences of the global concentration of capitalist power, but go beyond simple prescriptions like “end capitalism.”

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South Africans Are Fighting For Crumbs: A Conversation With Trade Union Leader Irvin Jim



Zoe Alexandra & Vijay Prashad - Photo: Twitter

In mid-December, the African National Congress (ANC) held its national conference where South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa was [reelected](#) as leader of his party, which means that he will lead the ANC into the 2024 general

elections. A few delegates at the Johannesburg Expo Center in Nasrec, Gauteng—where the party conference was held—shouted at Ramaphosa asking him to resign because of a scandal called [Farmgate](#) (Ramaphosa [survived](#) a parliamentary vote against his impeachment following the scandal).

Irvin Jim, the general secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa ([NUMSA](#)), told us that his country “is sitting on a tinderbox.” A series of crises are wracking South Africa presently: an unemployment crisis, an electricity crisis, and a crisis of xenophobia. The context behind the ANC national conference is stark. “The situation is brutal and harsh,” Irvin Jim said. “The social illness that people experience each day is terrible. The rate of crime has become very high. The gender-based violence experienced by women is very high. The statistics show us that basically people are fighting for crumbs.”

At the ANC conference, five of the top seven posts—from the president to treasurer general—[went](#) to Ramaphosa’s supporters. With the Ramaphosa team in place, and with Ramaphosa himself to be the presidential candidate in 2024, it is unlikely that the ANC will propose dramatic changes to its policy orientation or provide a new outlook for the country’s future to the South African people. The ANC has governed the country for almost 30 years beginning in 1994 after apartheid ended, and the party has won a commanding [62.65](#) percent of the total vote share since then before the 2014 general elections. In the last general election in 2019, Ramaphosa [won](#) with 57.5 percent of the vote, still ahead of any of its opponents. This grip on electoral power has created a sense of complacency in the upper ranks of the ANC. However, at the grassroots, there is anxiety. In the municipal elections of 2021, the ANC support fell [below 50 percent](#) for the first time. A national opinion poll in August 2022 [showed](#) that the ANC would get 42 percent of the vote in the 2024 elections if they were held then.

Negotiated Settlement

Irvin Jim is no stranger to the ANC. Born in South Africa’s Eastern Cape in 1968, Jim threw himself into the anti-apartheid movement as a young man. Forced by poverty to leave his education, he worked at Firestone Tire in Port Elizabeth. In 1991, Jim became a NUMSA union shop steward. As part of the communist movement and the ANC, Jim observed that the new government led by former South African President Nelson Mandela agreed to a “negotiated settlement” with the old apartheid elite. This “settlement,” Irvin Jim argued, “left intact the

structure of white monopoly capital,” which included their private ownership of the country’s minerals and energy as well as finance. The South African Reserve Bank committed itself, he told us, “to protect the value of white wealth.” In the new South Africa, he said, “Africans can go to the beach. They can take their children to the school of their choice. They can choose where to live. But access to these rights is determined by their economic position in society. If you have no access to economic power, then you have none of these liberties.”

In 1996, the ANC did make changes to the economic structure, but without harming the “negotiated settlement.” The policy known as [GEAR](#) (Growth, Employment, and Redistribution) created growth for the owners of wealth, but [failed](#) to create a long-term process of employment and redistribution. Due to the ANC’s failure to address the problem of unemployment—[catastrophically](#) the unemployment rate was 63.9 percent during the first quarter of 2022 for those between the ages of 15 and 24—the social distress being faced by South Africans has further been aggravated. The ANC, Irvin Jim said, “has exposed the country to serious vulnerability.”

Solidarity Not Hate

Even if the ANC wins less than 50 percent of the vote in the next general elections, it will still be able to form a government since no other party will attract even comparable support (in the 2019 elections, the Democratic Alliance won merely [20.77 percent](#) of the vote). Irvin Jim told us that there is a need for progressive forces in South Africa to fight and “revisit the negotiated settlement” and create a new policy outline for South Africa. The 2013 [National Development Plan 2030](#) is a pale shadow of the kind of policy required to define South Africa’s future. “It barely talked about jobs,” Jim said. “The only jobs it talked about were window office cleaning and hairdressing. There was no drive to champion manufacturing and industrialization.”

A new program—which would revitalize the freedom agenda in South Africa—must seek “economic power alongside political power,” said Jim. This means that “there is a genuine need to take ownership and control of all the commanding heights of the economy.” South Africa’s non-energy mineral reserves are [estimated](#) to be worth \$2.4 trillion to \$3 trillion. The country is the world’s [largest](#) producer of chrome, manganese, platinum, vanadium, and vermiculite, as well as [one of the largest](#) producers of gold, iron ore, and uranium. How a country

with so much wealth can be so poor is answered by the lack of public control South Africa has over its metals and minerals. “South Africa needs to take public ownership of these minerals and metals, develop the processing of these through industrialization, and provide the benefits to the marginalized, landless, and dispossessed South Africans, most of whom are Black,” said Jim.

No program like this will be taken seriously if the working class and the urban poor remain fragmented and powerless. Jim told us that his union—NUMSA—is working with others to link “shop floor struggles with community struggles,” the “employed with the unemployed,” and are building an atmosphere of “solidarity rather than the spirit of hate.” The answers for South Africa will have to come from these struggles, says the veteran trade union leader. “The people,” he said, “have to lead the leaders.”

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This article was produced by [Globetrotter](#)

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Source: Globetrotter

Chomsky: Advanced US Weaponry

In Ukraine Is Sustaining Battlefield Stalemate



Noam Chomsky

It's now more than 300 days since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the conflict has intensified rather than subsided, with Ukrainian leaders [expressing fears of impending mass infantry attacks from Russia](#) and U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken announcing this week that the U.S. will send Ukraine \$1.8 billion in military aid, including a Patriot missile battery.

On December 21, in greeting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the White House and considering his appeal for nearly \$50 billion in additional aid for Ukraine, U.S. President Joe Biden made clear his intention to continue sending weaponry to Ukraine until Russia is defeated in the battlefield, [saying](#), "The American people have been with you every step of the way, and we will stay with you."

As Noam Chomsky alludes to in the exclusive interview that follows for *Truthout*, those driven to see Russia disappear from the world map as a major power appear determined to ensure that the war continues, damn the consequences for Ukrainians and Russians alike. Indeed, one wonders if the Cold War ever ended.

C. J. Polychroniou: Noam, with every passing month, the conflict in Ukraine looks much grimmer. Both the U.S. and the EU are now deeply involved in the war, and Biden has already pledged to support Ukraine for "as long as it takes" to defeat Russia on the battlefield. In the meantime, Zelenskyy has made some new

demands for peace, but they were quickly rejected by Moscow with the argument that Kyev must take into account the current reality. Are there any historical analogies that could be useful in seeing how this war might possibly end?

Noam Chomsky: There are all too many analogues: Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya, Gaza, Eastern Congo, Somalia — just keeping to ongoing horrors where the U.S. and its allies have a primary or at least substantial role in perpetrating and sustaining them. Such examples, however, are not relevant to discussion of Ukraine in polite circles. They suffer from the fallacy of wrong agency: us not them. Therefore, benign intent gone awry and not reincarnation of Hitler. Since this is all a priori truth, it is not subject to discussion any more than $2+2 = 4$.

The analogues do offer some unhappy suggestions as to how this war might possibly end: by not ending until devastation is so extreme that we wouldn't want to think about it. That unfortunately seems more than likely with each passing day.

I claim no military expertise. I do follow military analysts, and find most of them supremely confident, with opposing conclusions — not for the first time. My suspicion is that General Milley, former chair of the joint chiefs, is probably right in concluding that neither side can win a decisive military victory and that the cost of continuing warfare is enormous for both sides, with many repercussions beyond.

If the war goes on, Ukraine will be the primary victim. Advanced U.S. weapons may sustain a battlefield stalemate as Russia pours in more troops and equipment, but how much can Ukrainian society tolerate now that Russia, after many months, has turned to the U.S.-U.K. style of war, directly attacking infrastructure, energy, communications, anything that allows the society to function? Ukraine is already facing a major [economic and humanitarian crisis](#). As the war persists, Ukrainian central bank officials fear that “People could flee Ukraine in droves, taking their money with them, potentially crashing the national currency as they seek to exchange their Ukrainian hryvnia for euros or dollars.”

Fortunately, ethnic Ukrainians who flee are likely to be accepted in the West. They are considered to be (almost) white, unlike those left to drown by the thousands in the Mediterranean while fleeing from Europe's destruction of Africa, or forcefully returned to U.S.-backed terrorist states. While many may be able to

flee, as matters now stand destruction of a viable society in Ukraine is likely to continue on its gruesome path.

Talk of nuclear weapons is almost all in the West, though it's all too easy to think of steps up the escalation ladder. The casual talk about nuclear war in the U.S. is shocking, disastrous.

So is the now standard line about a cosmic struggle between democracy and autocracy — eliciting ridicule outside of Western educated circles. Elsewhere, people are capable of looking at the glaringly obvious facts of past and current history and are not so deeply immersed in doctrinal fabrications that they are rendered blind.

The same is true of the tales concocted in Western propaganda about Putin's plans to conquer Europe, if not beyond, eliciting fears that coexist easily with gloating over the demonstration of Russia's military incompetence and inability even to conquer towns a few miles from its borders. Orwell called it "doublethink": the ability to hold two contradictory ideas in mind and firmly believe them both. Western doublethink is buttressed by the industry of tea leaf-reading that seeks to penetrate Putin's twisted mind, discerning all sorts of perversities and grand ambitions. The industry reverses George W. Bush's discoveries when he looked into Putin's eyes, saw his soul and recognized it to be good. And it is about as well-grounded as Bush's insights.

But reality doesn't go away. Apart from the destruction of Ukraine, there is an ever-growing possibility of nuclear war. Millions are facing starvation from disruption of grain and fertilizer shipments from the Black Sea region. Precious resources that are desperately needed to avert climate catastrophe are being wasted in destruction and sharply increased preparation for more. Europe is taking a beating, with its very natural complementary relation with Russia broken, and links to the emerging China-based system harmed as well. It's an open question whether Europe — in particular the German-based industrial system — will agree to decline by subordinating itself to Washington, a topic of far-reaching importance.

That prospect goes beyond Ukraine-Russia. Biden's virtual declaration of war against China, with sanctions against exports to China of technology that makes use of U.S. components or designs, hits European industry hard, particularly the

advanced chip-manufacturing industry in the Netherlands. So far it is not clear whether European industry will be willing to pay the costs of the U.S. effort to prevent China's economic development — framed, as usual, in terms of national security, but only the most loyal partisans can take that claim seriously.

Meanwhile the U.S. is gaining enormously in multiple ways: geopolitically by Putin's self-destructive decision to drive Europe into Washington's pocket by ignoring very real possibilities for avoiding criminal aggression, but also in other ways. It is not, of course, the U.S. population that is gaining. Rather, those in charge: fossil fuel industries, financial institutions that invest in them, military producers, the agribusiness semi-monopolies, and masters of the economy generally, who can scarcely control their euphoria over bulging profits (which are feeding inflation with markups) and great prospects for moving on to destroy human society on earth more expeditiously.

It's easy to understand why almost the whole world is calling for negotiations and a diplomatic settlement, including most of Europe, as polls indicate. Ukrainians will decide for themselves. As to what they prefer, we have clear statements by the government, but know little about the general population. The highly regarded correspondent Jonathan Steele brings to our [attention](#) a Gallup telephone poll of Ukrainians in September. It found that "Although 76 per cent of men wanted the war to continue until Russia is forced to leave all occupied territory including Crimea, and 64 per cent of women had the same view, the rest — a substantial number of people — wanted negotiations." Regional analysis showed that "In areas closest to the front lines where the horror of war is felt most keenly people's doubts about the wisdom of fighting until victory are highest. Only 58 per cent support it in southern Ukraine. In the east the figure is as low as 56 per cent."

Are there possibilities for diplomacy? The U.S. and the U.K., the two traditional warrior states, are still insisting that the war must be fought to severely weaken Russia, hence no negotiations, but even in their inner circles there is some [softening](#) in this regard.

Right now, the positions of the two adversaries seem irreconcilable, having predictably hardened as hostilities escalate. We don't know whether it is possible to return to the positions of last March, when, according to [Ukrainian left sources](#), "Ukraine had publicly announced proposals to the Istanbul meeting on

March 29, which included the withdrawal of Russian troops to the line on February 23 and the postponement of discussion about Crimea and Donbas. At the same time, the Ukrainian side insisted that all disputes should be resolved through transparent referendums held under the supervision of international observers and after the return of all forcibly displaced persons.”

The Istanbul negotiations collapsed. The source just quoted places the blame totally on Russia. Little is known, since coverage of diplomatic efforts is so scanty. In particular, we do not know whether a factor in the collapse was Britain’s opposition to negotiations, apparently backed by the U.S. Do possibilities remain? The only way to find out is to facilitate efforts to try.

At the very least we can remove obstacles to diplomacy that the U.S. has placed, topics we’ve reviewed in detail. And we can try to foster an arena of open discussion about these topics, free from tantrums and heroic posturing about high principles that dismisses the factual record and human consequences.

There are many pitfalls and dangers, but it’s hard to see what other course can save Ukraine, and far beyond, from catastrophe.

German Chancellor Scholz has described the war in Ukraine as a strategic attempt on the part of Vladimir Putin to recreate the Russian empire and stated that relations with Moscow will be reestablished once the conflict is over and Russia has been defeated. Is there any evidence that Putin’s regime is interested in reviving the Russian empire? And what happens if Russia is not defeated in the battlefield? Will Europe be dragged into a new Cold War? Indeed, does the U.S./NATO-Russia conflict over Ukraine prove that the Cold War perhaps never ended?

Scholz surely knows better. Whatever one thinks of Russian war aims, they were explicit and far narrower, and Scholz, who is well-informed, cannot fail to be aware of that.

The tea leaf-reading industry has seized on occasional comments by Putin, generally taken out of context, to conjure up the frightening images of Russia on the march. That requires an impressive subordination to doublethink, as just described.

The Cold War briefly ended when the Soviet Union collapsed. The Gorbachev-

Bush I negotiations, supported by Germany, provided a basis for escaping its legacy. The hopes did not long survive.

We should not overlook the fact that the end of the Cold War also lifted the ideological clouds — briefly. Government documents recognized, indirectly, that the Cold War was in large part a tacit agreement between the superpowers to allow each to use violence when necessary to control its own domains: for Russia, eastern Europe; for the U.S., much of the world. Thus, the Bush I administration officially recognized that we have to maintain intervention forces aimed at the Middle East, where the serious problems “could not be laid at the Kremlin’s door,” contrary to decades of prevarication. Rather, they were the usual threat: independent nationalism. That didn’t change, apart from the need to design new pretexts, the menacing Russian hordes having evaporated: “humanitarian intervention” and other concoctions, lauded at home and bitterly denounced by the Global South, the traditional victims. All reviewed in detail elsewhere.

The official Cold War briefly ended. Bush I lived up to his promises to Gorbachev, but Clinton almost immediately rescinded them, initiating the expansion of NATO to Russia’s borders in violation of firm and unambiguous promises. He did so for domestic political reasons (the Polish vote etc.) as he explained to his friend Boris Yeltsin. There should be no need to review again the rest of the sordid story until today. The hope for a “common European home” with no military alliances — Gorbachev’s vision, tolerated by Bush I — was undermined by Clinton, and a form of Cold War then developed, now becoming extremely dangerous.

Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel made some revealing remarks in an interview with the newspaper Die Zeit. She stated that the 2014 Minsk agreements were intended to “give Ukraine time” to make the country stronger, thus admitting that Kyev was not going to implement the peace deal and that the plan was to arm Ukraine for a large-scale conflict with Russia. Is this a case of diplomatic fraud? If so, is it a legitimate claim for launching an international tribunal?

What Merkel had in mind we do not know. We do know that there is no basis in the historical or diplomatic record for her claims. I am inclined to agree with the astute commentator who posts under the name “[Moon of Alabama](#).” He points out that “Merkel is under very harsh critique not only in the U.S. but also in her own conservative party. She is now out to justify her previous decisions as well as the

current bad outcome in Ukraine. My hunch is that she is making things up. Unfortunately she also creates serious damage.”

He proceeds to a close analysis of the texts to justify this conclusion, which is the most plausible one I’ve seen. I don’t think there’s a basis for an international tribunal. More likely it is just a case of a political figure seeking to justify herself in a highly toxic climate.

For the last couple of months or so, Russia has been launching massive attacks on Ukraine’s energy infrastructure. What’s the strategic incentive behind these hideous types of military operations, which must surely qualify as war crimes? And what might be the implications of Ukrainian strikes inside Russia insofar as diplomatic efforts to end the war are concerned?

As we have discussed before, U.S.-U.K. strategists expected that Putin would occupy Kyev in a few days, as Russia did as well, it seems. There were plans reported to set up a Ukrainian government-in-exile. Both sides seriously underestimated Ukrainian will and capacity to resist the aggression, and radically overestimated Russian military power. U.S.-U.K. military analysts also expressed their surprise that Russia was not launching their kind of war, with immediate resort to the “hideous types of military operations” you mention. It was not hard to predict, as we did over the months, that sooner or later Russia would resort to U.S.-U.K.-Israeli tactics: Quickly destroy everything that sustains a viable society. So they are now doing, arousing justified horror among decent people — joined by those who implement or justify these tactics with the “right agency”: us. The strategic incentive is clear enough, especially after Russia’s battlefield setbacks: Destroy the economy and the will to resist. All familiar to us.

Quite definitely war crimes, whether in Iraq, or Gaza, or Ukraine.

It’s not surprising that Ukraine is seeking to strike back against Russia. So far, the U.S. government, apparently under Pentagon advice, is seeking to restrict those reactions, not sharing the willingness to see the world go up in flames expressed by many commentators in the current crazed environment.

Things could easily go wrong. One new twist is that the U.S. is planning to send Patriot anti-missile systems to Ukraine. Whether they work seems to be an [open question](#). They require a substantial military cohort, I think about 80 people, which will presumably include American trainers. Work or not, they’re a natural

target for Russian attack, even during installation. What then?

Any escalation is very dangerous in itself and can only impede whatever fading chances there may be for diplomatic efforts to fend off worse catastrophe.

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Moscow's Leverage In The Balkans



John P. Ruehl

Since [September](#), Kosovo's fragile stability that has endured since 1999, following

[intervention](#) by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), has grown progressively precarious. [Clashes between](#) ethnic Serbians and Kosovo security forces saw Serbia's military placed on [high alert](#) in November. [Several high-profile Serbian officials](#), including President Aleksandar Vučić, announced that the Serbian military could be deployed to northern Kosovo to protect the ethnic Serbs, who make up the majority of the population in the region.

Moscow has [natural incentives](#) to provoke the crisis. An unraveling of regional security would create more obstacles for Serbia's EU aspirations, optimistically [slated for 2025](#). The West's support for Kosovo has [historically undermined](#) Serbia's European integration effort, and [51 percent of Serbs](#) polled by Belgrade-based pollster Demostat in June 2022 said they would vote against EU membership in a national referendum.

But by escalating tensions, Russia can also [prevent](#) further EU and NATO expansion in the region, and potentially reduce Western pressure on Russian forces in Ukraine by diverging resources from Kyiv to the Balkans.

Throughout the 1990s, NATO [took a leading role](#) in the breakup of Yugoslavia, [perceived to be dominated by Serbia](#). While [the West supported](#) Bosnian and Croatian independence initiatives and Kosovan autonomy, Serbia was [supported](#) by Russia. These policies led to considerable tension between NATO and Russia, with the Kremlin's occupation of [Kosovo's Slatina airport in 1999](#) leading to "one of the most tense standoffs between Russia and the West since the end of the Cold War."

However, Russia was too weak to adequately support Serbia in the 1990s. And after then-Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milošević was overthrown [in 2000](#) and Russian forces withdrew from Kosovo [in 2003](#), Serbian political elites instead pursued cautious integration with Europe while keeping the U.S. at arm's length. At the same time, [Serbia and Russia forged closer relations](#) through growing economic ties, embracing their common Slavic Orthodox heritage, and sharing resentment toward NATO's role in their affairs.

Territories under Serbian control continued to [secede](#) in the 2000s, with Montenegro [peacefully voting for independence](#) in 2006 and [Kosovo in 2008](#). Yet unlike other secession initiatives in the former Yugoslavia, Kosovo's failed to gain universal recognition. Almost half of the UN General Assembly [refused to](#)

[recognize Kosovo's independence](#), with NATO/EU members [Spain, Greece, Slovakia, and Romania among them](#).

Moscow was firmly against Kosovo's independence, and prior to the February 2008 declaration of independence, the Kremlin [warned of geopolitical consequences](#) if it were to move forward. Six months later, Russia invoked the "[Kosovo Precedent](#)" to invade Georgia and recognized the separatist territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent. The Kremlin is now using the same paradigm [to justify its support](#) for Russian-backed separatist territories in Ukraine.

Currently bogged down in Ukraine, the Kremlin is exploring [fomenting](#) additional unrest in the Balkans by exploiting Serbian nationalist sentiment. Doing so will undoubtedly redirect some Western political, economic, and military efforts away from Ukraine.

Russia's influence over Serbia has grown in recent years, and Serbian politicians [have become more assertive](#) regarding northern Kosovo. Though overall trade between Russia and Serbia [is negligible](#) in comparison to the EU, Russia provides [one-quarter of the oil imported to Serbia](#), while Gazprom [finalized 51 percent share](#) in Serbia's major oil and gas company, Naftna Industrija Srbije (NIS), in 2009.

Russia's veto power at the UN Security Council has prevented [greater international recognition of Kosovo](#), demonstrating Moscow's usefulness as a diplomatic ally. [Putin has, meanwhile, become Serbians' most admired international leader](#), with pro-Putin and pro-Russia [rallies having been held](#) in Serbia since the invasion of Ukraine. According to recent polling, [almost 70 percent](#) of Serbians hold NATO responsible for the conflict.

Balancing Putin's popularity and Serbia's relations with Europe has been [a delicate task for Serbian President Vučić](#). Though he condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine, he refused to implement sanctions against the Kremlin, prompting German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to signal that Vučić [had to make a choice](#) between Europe and Russia in June.

But the Serbian leader had already [signed a three-year gas deal](#) with Russia in May, and in September agreed [to "consult" with Moscow on foreign policy issues](#). Other ventures, [such as doubling flights from Moscow to Belgrade](#), have

demonstrated Serbia's willingness to assist Russia in undermining Western sanctions.

More concerning to Western officials is Russia's attempts over the last decade to alter the military balance between Serbia and Kosovo. A Russian humanitarian center located in the Serbian city of Niš, which is close to the Kosovo border and [opened in 2012](#), is suspected of being a secret Russian military base "set up by the Kremlin to spy on U.S. interests in the Balkans." Additionally, Serbia has [increased imports of Russian weaponry](#), while joint military exercises between Russia, Belarus, and Serbia (labeled "Slavic Brotherhood") [have been held annually since 2015](#).

Russian-backed non-state actors have in turn become increasingly present in Serbia. [In 2009](#), Russian private military and security companies, as well as organizations composed of Russian military veterans, began conducting, in coordination with Serbian counterparts, [military youth camps](#) in Zlatibor, Serbia. These were seen as attempts to develop the next generation of fighters and were eventually shut down by the local police in 2018.

Russia's Night Wolves biker gang, which has [played a pivotal role](#) in the 2014 seizure of Crimea and the unrest that has followed in Ukraine since, also [opened a Serbian chapter](#) and conducted road trips in the region for years. And in December, a cultural center was opened [by the Russian private military company Wagner](#)—which is similarly [fighting in Ukraine](#)—in Serbia, "to strengthen and develop friendly relations between Russia and Serbia with the help of 'soft power.'"

Using these forces to threaten a low-level insurgency in Kosovo would cause enormous alarm in NATO and the EU. But Russia's efforts to fan the flames of Serbian nationalism will also be directed toward Bosnia and Herzegovina. The country's Serb-dominated territory, Republika Srpska, [accepted power-sharing stipulations as part of the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995](#), and Russian forces similarly [withdrew](#) from the country in 2003.

Nonetheless, Milorad Dodik, president of Republika Srpska (who was also the president from 2010-2018), has increasingly allied himself with the Kremlin and has taken greater steps toward [declaring](#) his region's independence from the rest of Bosnia and Herzegovina over the last decade. Republika Srpska security forces

are now [well-equipped with Russian weaponry](#), while Moscow has given subtle approval [to supporting and developing Republika Srpska paramilitary groups](#). A Bosnian-Serb militia group called Serbian Honor is believed to have received training [at the humanitarian center in Niš](#) and the Night Wolves have also repeatedly [held rallies in the territory](#).

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, [Dodik has expressed his support for](#) Russia, raising alarm over his ability to instigate unrest in Bosnia and Herzegovina with limited Russian state and non-state support. In response, the EU's peacekeeping mission in the country, EUFOR or Operation Althea, almost doubled [its presence from 600 to 1,100 since the invasion in February](#).

Yet this still pales compared to the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR), [which has roughly 3,700 troops](#) in a country with a smaller population and less territory [than](#) Bosnia and Herzegovina, and is [further aided](#) by the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). Pushing [Republika Srpska's independence initiative](#) to a point where Russia can officially recognize and support it may in turn rapidly overwhelm the smaller international force there. It would also provoke calls for independence among Bosnia and Herzegovina's ethnic Croatian minority, [whose leaders have close relations with Moscow](#).

Disagreements in the Western alliance over the collective approach to the Balkans have been revealed in recent months. While the UK and the U.S. [placed sanctions on "various Bosnian politicians who are threatening the country's territorial integrity,"](#) the EU chose not to, notably due to opposition by Slovenia, Croatia, and Hungary. And while Croatia was accepted into the Schengen area in [December](#), Romania, and Bulgaria, already EU members since 2007, [were denied entry by Austria](#), while the Netherlands similarly opposed Bulgaria being part of the Schengen area.

Effectively managing potential violence in the former Yugoslavia while continuing the integration efforts of other Balkan EU/NATO members would prove to be a difficult procedure for the Western alliance. Billions of dollars in [aid and assistance](#) have already been provided to Ukraine in 2022. Confronting additional instability in the Balkans would also highlight the flaws of NATO policy in the region since the 1990s and the lack of a viable, long-term solution to confront the issues plaguing the Balkans.

Yet regional integration efforts have picked up in recent months. In July, the EU [restarted](#) membership talks of bringing Albania and North Macedonia into the organization, Bosnia and Herzegovina was [officially accepted](#) as a candidate on December 15, and Kosovo applied [for EU membership](#) on December 14. NATO membership for both Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina remains largely on [hold](#), however, and is currently out of the question for Serbia, which considers NATO its “enemy.”

Considerable work will be required to integrate these divided states into the Western alliance, and recent attempts to speed up this process have been largely unsuccessful. The scheme by former President Donald Trump’s administration to [change the Serbia-Kosovo border](#) amounted to little, while the proposed Association of Serb Municipalities in Kosovo has been criticized for outlining [the creation of another Republika Srpska](#).

The role of [Russian intelligence and Serbian nationalists](#) in the attempted coup in Montenegro in 2016, which sought to derail the country’s NATO accession, reveals the lengths to which Moscow will go to achieve its aims. Western officials must, therefore, remain wary of Russia’s potential in the region. Escalating unresolved Balkan conflicts is now a major part of the Kremlin’s attempts to stall Western integration in Europe and take pressure off its war with Ukraine.

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Source: Globetrotter

Iran Punished For Treatment Of Women



Photo: Independent Media Institute

The Islamic Republic of Iran was the first UN member ever to be expelled from the prestigious Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), tasked with protecting women's rights and promoting gender equality.

In response to Iran's crackdown on protests, following the death of a young woman in police custody, Tehran's four-year term on the CSW came to an end on December 14 after the adoption of a resolution [introduced](#) by the United States, with 29 members voting in favor of the resolution, eight against, and 16 abstaining.

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield called the vote "historic" and [told](#) reporters, "I think we sent a strong message to the Iranian government, and we sent a strong message to Iranian women."

The 45-member commission is nearly as old as the United Nations itself and was formed in 1946. The 54-member UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) that oversees the CSW, and which had previously elected Iran in [April 2021](#) for a four-year term to the CSW beginning [March 2022](#), adopted the resolution to oust it from the commission.

Based on increasing [evidence](#) gathered in the 1960s that women were disproportionately affected by poverty, the work of the commission centered on

the needs of women in community and rural development, agricultural work and family planning, and scientific and technological advances. The commission also encouraged the UN to provide greater technical assistance to ensure further advancement of women, especially in developing countries, according to "[A Short History of the Commission on the Status of Women](#)."

It is unusual to oust any government from a United Nations body. And several states questioned the legality of the move, especially Iran and Russia. But Canada's Ambassador [Bob Rae](#) countered this opposition by saying a vote has to be taken first in order to request an opinion.

Death of Mahsa Amini

The resolution was sparked by Iran's brutality against protesters who took to the streets in September [after](#) the death of a 22-year-old woman, Mahsa Amini, arrested by the "morality police" for not wearing a hijab, a head covering. She died in custody. As street protests spread across the country, political stability is being put to a potential test for the politically inexperienced president of Iran, conservative cleric Ebrahim Raisi.

At least [488](#) people have been killed since the demonstrations began, according to a November 29 [tweet](#) by the Iran Human Rights (IHR) group, which is monitoring the protests. Another [18,200](#) people have been detained by authorities, IHR said. Iran recently publicly [executed](#) two male protestors.

Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield spoke of the young woman, [saying](#): "Mahsa Amini just wanted to finish her studies. She wanted to start a family. ... She was just a student. But now she is a martyr... We know she was killed for the crime of being a woman."

According to the [Council on Foreign Relations](#), the protestors have no interest in reforming Iran's theocracy but, instead, want to do away with it, and the women-focused demonstrations have been attacking the regime's legitimacy. "Chants of 'woman, life, freedom' and calls to end mandatory hijab-wearing challenge the Islamist ideology that Iran's government is based on. These protests have unusually widespread support, unbound by class, ethnicity, or gender," [stated](#) the article by CFR.

Iran Objects

Iran's UN ambassador, [Amir Saeid Iravani](#), has, meanwhile, denied all allegations leveled against the country. Castigating the United States, he [said](#) that Washington demonstrated hostile policy toward the Iranian people, particularly women, "pursued under the guise of defending human rights." He questioned the legality of the vote, [saying](#) that "terminating an elected member's participation in a functional commission for any alleged reason" is not supported by the ECOSOC's rules.

Russia's deputy ambassador, [Gennady Kuzmin](#), said the purpose of the meeting was to purge the Commission on the Status of Women of a sovereign player, adding that each state has the obligation to maintain public order. But he said the Iranian government should take measures to prevent such tragedies like the death of Mahsa Amini in the future. He also questioned the legality of the vote.

Ambassador Gilad Erdan of [Israel](#), now in a proxy war with Iran, told the ECOSOC delegates that "this resolution must receive the support of all of us and whoever doesn't support it is complicit in the oppression and murder of women."

Those not supporting the resolution [were](#) Bolivia, China, Kazakhstan, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Russia, and Zimbabwe.

According to [Richard Gowan](#), a UN expert at the International Crisis Group, lots of delegates had second thoughts when reports of the U.S. action became known. "I have heard a lot of diplomats say they think Iran's actions are vile, but they worry that the U.S. will use these exclusionary tactics more in future. One day it's Iran, the next day it could be you."

The text of the [resolution](#) voiced concern over Iran "administering policies flagrantly contrary to the human rights of women and girls and to the mandate of the Commission on the Status of Women," and decided "to remove with immediate effect" Iran from membership in the commission for the remainder of its 2022-2026 term.

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This article was produced by [Globetrotter](#).

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