

Video sobre la propuesta del Congreso Nacional Indígena

“La propuesta no es ir a votar por una candidata...la propuesta es, no es a las elecciones, no es ir a votar a una urna...la propuesta es que les tiremos la fiesta y que ocupemos ese lugar y que aprovechemos ese lugar para denunciar todo lo que esta pasando, que ocupemos ese lugar que esta vetado para nosotros para decir la verdad...Pero no es solamente denunciar, es una oportunidad para llegar a todos esos lugares que no hemos podido llegar...y organizarnos...ese es el objetivo de esto, la meta de esto que cada uno desde su lugar...se organice. “

Victor M. Toledo: “La Batalla Final Es Civilizatoria” Parte I, II, III y IV

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“La batalla de escala civilizatoria es también un rudo encuentro de proyectos. De proyectos de vida contra proyectos de muerte. En ese sentido es probable que el territorio mexicano sea...el laboratorio de una batalla que se reproducirá y multiplicará por todos los rincones del planeta en el futuro próximo.”

Los enlaces al texto completo se encuentran aquí abajo:

[Parte I](#)

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Murray Bookchin: The Communalist Project

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PAUL NASH. WE ARE MAKING A NEW WORLD. 1918

Whether the twenty-first century will be the most radical of times or the most reactionary—or will simply lapse into a gray era of dismal mediocrity—will depend overwhelmingly upon the kind of social movement and program that social radicals create out of the theoretical, organizational, and political wealth that has accumulated during the past two centuries of the revolutionary era. The direction we select, from among several intersecting roads of human development, may well determine the future of our species for centuries to come. As long as this irrational society endangers us with nuclear and

biological weapons, we cannot ignore the possibility that the entire human enterprise may come to a devastating end. Given the exquisitely elaborate technical plans that the military-industrial complex has devised, the self-extermination of the human species must be included in the futuristic scenarios that, at the turn of the millennium, the mass media are projecting—the end of a human future as such.

Lest these remarks seem too apocalyptic, I should emphasize that we also live in an era when human creativity, technology, and imagination have the capability to produce extraordinary material achievements and to endow us with societies that allow for a degree of freedom that far and away exceeds the most dramatic and emancipatory visions projected by social theorists such as Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, Karl Marx, and Peter Kropotkin.¹ Many thinkers of the postmodern age have obtusely singled out science and technology as the principal threats to human well-being, yet few disciplines have imparted to humanity such a stupendous knowledge of the innermost secrets of matter and life, or provided our species better with the ability to alter every important feature of reality and to improve the well-being of human and nonhuman life-forms.

We are thus in a position either to follow a path toward a grim “end of history,” in which a banal succession of vacuous events replaces genuine progress, or to move on to a path toward the true making of history, in which humanity genuinely progresses toward a rational world. We are in a position to choose between an ignominious finale, possibly including the catastrophic nuclear oblivion of history itself, and history’s rational fulfillment in a free, materially abundant society in an aesthetically crafted environment.

Notwithstanding the technological marvels that competing enterprises of the ruling class (that is, the bourgeoisie) are developing in order to achieve hegemony over one another, little of a subjective nature that exists in the existing society can redeem it. Precisely at a time when we, as a species, are capable of producing the means for amazing objective advances and improvements in the human condition and in the nonhuman natural world—advances that could make for a free and rational society— we stand almost naked morally before the onslaught of social forces that may very well lead to our physical immolation. Prognoses about the future are understandably very fragile and are easily distrusted. Pessimism has become very widespread, as capitalist social relations become more deeply entrenched in the human mind than ever before, and as culture regresses appallingly, almost to a vanishing point. To most people today, the hopeful and very radical certainties of the twenty-year period between the Russian Revolution of 1917-18 and the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939 seem almost naïve.

Yet our decision to create a better society, and our choice of the way to do it, must come from within ourselves, without the aid of a deity, still less a mystical “force of nature” or a charismatic leader. If we choose the road toward a better future, our choice must be the

consequence of our ability—and ours alone—to learn from the material lessons of the past and to appreciate the real prospects of the future. We will need to have recourse, not to ghostly vagaries conjured up from the murky hell of superstition or, absurdly, from the couloirs of the academy, but to the innovative attributes that make up our very humanity and the essential features that account for natural and social development, as opposed to the social pathologies and accidental events that have sidetracked humanity from its self-fulfillment in consciousness and reason. Having brought history to a point where nearly everything is possible, at least of a material nature—and having left behind a past that was permeated ideologically by mystical and religious elements produced by the human imagination—we are faced with a new challenge, one that has never before confronted humanity. We must consciously create our own world, not according to demonic fantasies, mindless customs, and destructive prejudices, but according to the canons of reason, reflection, and discourse that uniquely belong to our own species.

What factors should be decisive in making our choice? First, of great significance is the immense accumulation of social and political experience that is available to revolutionaries today, a storehouse of knowledge that, properly conceived, could be used to avoid the terrible errors that our predecessors made and to spare humanity the terrible plagues of failed revolutions in the past. Of indispensable importance is the potential for a new theoretical springboard that has been created by the history of ideas, one that provides the means to catapult an emerging radical movement beyond existing social conditions into a future that fosters humanity's emancipation.

But we must also be fully aware of the scope of the problems that we face. We must understand with complete clarity where we stand in the development of the prevailing capitalist order, and we have to grasp emergent social problems and address them in the program of a new movement. Capitalism is unquestionably the most dynamic society ever to appear in history. By definition, to be sure, it always remains a system of commodity exchange in which objects that are made for sale and profit pervade and mediate most human relations. Yet capitalism is also a highly mutable system, continually advancing the brutal maxim that whatever enterprise does not grow at the expense of its rivals must die. Hence "growth" and perpetual change become the very laws of life of capitalist existence. This means that capitalism never remains permanently in only one form; it must always transform the institutions that arise from its basic social relations.

Although capitalism became a dominant society only in the past few centuries, it long existed on the periphery of earlier societies: in a largely commercial form, structured around trade between cities and empires; in a craft form throughout the European Middle Ages; in a hugely industrial form in our own time; and if we are to believe recent seers, in an informational form in the coming period. It has created not only new technologies but also a great variety of economic and social structures, such as the small shop, the factory, the

huge mill, and the industrial and commercial complex. Certainly the capitalism of the Industrial Revolution has not completely disappeared, any more than the isolated peasant family and small craftsman of a still earlier period have been consigned to complete oblivion. Much of the past is always incorporated into the present; indeed, as Marx insistently warned, there is no “pure capitalism,” and none of the earlier forms of capitalism fade away until radically new social relations are established and become overwhelmingly dominant. But today capitalism, even as it coexists with and utilizes precapitalist institutions for its own ends (see Marx’s *Grundrisse* for this dialectic), now reaches into the suburbs and the countryside with its shopping malls and newly styled factories. Indeed, it is by no means inconceivable that one day it will reach beyond our planet. In any case, it has produced not only new commodities to create and feed new wants but new social and cultural issues, which in turn have given rise to new supporters and antagonists of the existing system. The famous first part of Marx and Engels’s *Communist Manifesto*, in which they celebrate capitalism’s wonders, would have to be periodically rewritten to keep pace with the achievements—as well as the horrors—produced by the bourgeoisie’s development.

One of the most striking features of capitalism today is that in the Western world the highly simplified two-class structure—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat—that Marx and Engels, in *The Communist Manifesto*, predicted would become dominant under “mature” capitalism (and we have yet to determine what “mature,” still less “late” or “moribund” capitalism actually is) has undergone a process of reconfiguration. The conflict between wage labor and capital, while it has by no means disappeared, nonetheless lacks the all-embracing importance that it possessed in the past. Contrary to Marx’s expectations, the industrial working class is now dwindling in numbers and is steadily losing its traditional identity as a class—which by no means excludes it from a potentially broader and perhaps more extensive conflict of society as a whole against capitalist social relations. Present-day culture, social relations, cityscapes, modes of production, agriculture, and transportation have remade the traditional proletariat, upon which syndicalists and Marxists were overwhelmingly, indeed almost mystically focused, into a largely petty-bourgeois stratum whose mentality is marked by its own bourgeois utopianism of “consumption for the sake of consumption.” We can foresee a time when the proletarian, whatever the color of his or her collar or place on the assembly line, will be completely replaced by automated and even miniaturized means of production that are operated by a few white-coated manipulators of machines and by computers.

By the same token, the living standards of the traditional proletariat and its material expectations (no small factor in the shaping of social consciousness!) have changed enormously, soaring within only a generation or two from near poverty to a comparatively high degree of material affluence. Among the children and grandchildren of former steel and automobile workers and coal miners, who have no proletarian class identity, a college education has replaced the high school diploma as emblematic of a new class status. In the

United States once-opposing class interests have converged to a point that almost 50 percent of American households own stocks and bonds, while a huge number are proprietors of one kind or another, possessing their own homes, gardens, and rural summer retreats.

Given these changes, the stern working man or woman, portrayed in radical posters of the past with a flexed, highly muscular arm holding a bone-crushing hammer, has been replaced by the genteel and well-mannered (so-called) “working middle class.” The traditional cry “Workers of the world, unite!” in its old historical sense becomes ever more meaningless. The class-consciousness of the proletariat, which Marx tried to awaken in *The Communist Manifesto*, has been hemorrhaging steadily and in many places has virtually disappeared. The more existential class struggle has not been eliminated, to be sure, any more than the bourgeoisie could eliminate gravity from the existing human condition, but unless radicals today become aware of the fact that it has been narrowed down largely to the individual factory or office, they will fail to see that a new, perhaps more expansive form of social consciousness can emerge in the generalized struggles that face us. Indeed, this form of social consciousness can be given a refreshingly new meaning as the concept of the rebirth of the citizen—a concept so important to the Great Revolution of 1789 and its more broadly humanistic sentiment of sociality that it became the form of address among later revolutionaries summoned to the barricades by the heraldic crowing of the red French rooster.

Seen as a whole, the social condition that capitalism has produced today stands very much at odds with the simplistic class prognoses advanced by Marx and by the revolutionary French syndicalists. After the Second World War, capitalism underwent an enormous transformation, creating broad new social issues with extraordinary rapidity, issues that went beyond traditional proletarian demands for improved wages, hours, and working conditions: notably environmental, gender, hierarchical, civic, and democratic issues. Capitalism, in effect, has generalized its threats to humanity, particularly with climatic changes that may alter the very face of the planet, oligarchical institutions of a global scope, and rampant urbanization that radically corrodes the civic life basic to grassroots politics.

Hierarchy, today, is becoming as pronounced an issue as class—as witness the extent to which many social analyses have singled out managers, bureaucrats, scientists, and the like as emerging, ostensibly dominant groups. New and elaborate gradations of status and interests count today to an extent that they did not in the recent past; they blur the conflict between wage labor and capital that was once so central, clearly defined, and militantly waged by traditional socialists. Class categories are now intermingled with hierarchical categories based on race, gender, sexual preference, and certainly national or regional differences. Status differentiations, characteristic of hierarchy, tend to converge with class differentiations, and a more all-inclusive capitalistic world is emerging in which ethnic,

national, and gender differences often surpass the importance of class differences in the public eye. This phenomenon is not entirely new: in the First World War countless German socialist workers cast aside their earlier commitment to the red flags of proletarian unity in favor of the national flags of their well-fed and parasitic rulers and went on to plunge bayonets into the bodies of French and Russian socialist workers—as they did, in turn, under the national flags of their own oppressors.

At the same time capitalism has produced a new, perhaps paramount contradiction: the clash between an economy based on unending growth and the desiccation of the natural environment.² This issue and its vast ramifications can no more be minimized, let alone dismissed, than the need of human beings for food or air. At present the most promising struggles in the West, where socialism was born, seem to be waged less around income and working conditions than around nuclear power, pollution, deforestation, urban blight, education, health care, community life, and the oppression of people in underdeveloped countries—as witness the (albeit sporadic) antiglobalization upsurges, in which blue- and white-collar “workers” march in the same ranks with middle-class humanitarians and are motivated by common social concerns. Proletarian combatants become indistinguishable from middle-class ones. Burly workers, whose hallmark is a combative militancy, now march behind “bread and puppet” theater performers, often with a considerable measure of shared playfulness. Members of the working and middle classes now wear many different social hats, so to speak, challenging capitalism obliquely as well as directly on cultural as well as economic grounds.

Nor can we ignore, in deciding what direction we are to follow, the fact that capitalism, if it is not checked, will in the future—and not necessarily the very distant future—differ appreciably from the system we know today. Capitalist development can be expected to vastly alter the social horizon in the years ahead. Can we suppose that factories, offices, cities, residential areas, industry, commerce, and agriculture, let alone moral values, aesthetics, media, popular desires, and the like will not change immensely before the twenty-first century is out? In the past century, capitalism, above all else, has broadened social issues—indeed, the historical social question of how a humanity, divided by classes and exploitation, will create a society based on equality, the development of authentic harmony, and freedom—to include those whose resolution was barely foreseen by the liberatory social theorists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Our age, with its endless array of “bottom lines” and “investment choices,” now threatens to turn society itself into a vast and exploitative marketplace.³

The public with which the progressive socialist had to deal is also changing radically and will continue to do so in the coming decades. To lag in understanding behind the changes that capitalism is introducing and the new or broader contradictions it is producing would be to commit the recurrently disastrous error that led to the defeat of nearly all

revolutionary upsurges in the past two centuries. Foremost among the lessons that a new revolutionary movement must learn from the past is that it must win over broad sectors of the middle class to its new populist program. No attempt to replace capitalism with socialism ever had or will have the remotest chance of success without the aid of the discontented petty bourgeoisie, whether it was the intelligentsia and peasantry-in-uniform of the Russian Revolution or the intellectuals, farmers, shopkeepers, clerks, and managers in industry and even in government in the German upheavals of 1918-21. Even during the most promising periods of past revolutionary cycles, the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, the German Social Democrats, and Russian Communists never acquired absolute majorities in their respective legislative bodies. So-called “proletarian revolutions” were invariably minority revolutions, usually even within the proletariat itself, and those that succeeded (often briefly, before they were subdued or drifted historically out of the revolutionary movement) depended overwhelmingly on the fact that the bourgeoisie lacked active support among its own military forces or was simply socially demoralized.

Given the changes that we are witnessing and those that are still taking form, social radicals can no longer oppose the predatory (as well as immensely creative) capitalist system by using the ideologies and methods that were born in the first Industrial Revolution, when a factory proletariat seemed to be the principal antagonist of a textile plant owner. (Nor can we use ideologies that were spawned by conflicts that an impoverished peasantry used to oppose feudal and semifeudal landowners.) None of the professedly anticapitalist ideologies of the past—Marxism, anarchism, syndicalism, and more generic forms of socialism—retain the same relevance that they had at an earlier stage of capitalist development and in an earlier period of technological advance. Nor can any of them hope to encompass the multitude of new issues, opportunities, problems, and interests that capitalism has repeatedly created over time.

Marxism was the most comprehensive and coherent effort to produce a systematic form of socialism, emphasizing the material as well as the subjective historical preconditions of a new society. This project, in the present era of precapitalist economic decomposition and of intellectual confusion, relativism, and subjectivism, must never surrender to the new barbarians, many of whom find their home in what was once a barrier to ideological regression—the academy. We owe much to Marx’s attempt to provide us with a coherent and stimulating analysis of the commodity and commodity relations, to an activist philosophy, a systematic social theory, an objectively grounded or “scientific” concept of historical development, and a flexible political strategy. Marxist political ideas were eminently relevant to the needs of a terribly disoriented proletariat and to the particular oppressions that the industrial bourgeoisie inflicted upon it in England in the 1840s, somewhat later in France, Italy, and Germany, and very presciently in Russia in the last decade of Marx’s life. Until the rise of the populist movement in Russia (most famously, the *Narodnaya Volya*), Marx expected the emerging proletariat to become the great majority of

the population in Europe and North America, and to inevitably engage in revolutionary class war as a result of capitalist exploitation and immiseration. And especially between 1917 and 1939, long after Marx's death, Europe was indeed beleaguered by a mounting class war that reached the point of outright workers' insurrections. In 1917, owing to an extraordinary confluence of circumstances—particularly with the outbreak of the First World War, which rendered several quasi-feudal European social systems terribly unstable—Lenin and the Bolsheviks tried to use (but greatly altered) Marx's writings in order to take power in an economically backward empire, whose size spanned eleven time zones across Europe and Asia.⁴

But for the most part, as we have seen, Marxism's economic insights belonged to an era of emerging factory capitalism in the nineteenth century. Brilliant as a theory of the material preconditions for socialism, it did not address the ecological, civic, and subjective forces or the efficient causes that could impel humanity into a movement for revolutionary social change. On the contrary, for nearly a century Marxism stagnated theoretically. Its theorists were often puzzled by developments that have passed it by and, since the 1960s, have mechanically appended environmentalist and feminist ideas to its formulaic *ouvrierist* outlook.

By the same token, anarchism—which, I believe, represents in its authentic form a highly individualistic outlook that fosters a radically unfettered lifestyle, often as a substitute for mass action—is far better suited to articulate a Proudhonian single-family peasant and craft world than a modern urban and industrial environment. I myself once used this political label, but further thought has obliged me to conclude that, its often-refreshing aphorisms and insights notwithstanding, it is simply not a social theory. Its foremost theorists celebrate its seeming openness to eclecticism and the liberatory effects of “paradox” or even “contradiction,” to use Proudhonian hyperbole. Accordingly, and without prejudice to the earnestness of many anarchistic practices, a case can be made that many of the ideas of social and economic reconstruction that in the past have been advanced in the name of “anarchy” were often drawn from Marxism (including my own concept of “post-scarcity,” which understandably infuriated many anarchists who read my essays on the subject). Regrettably, the use of socialistic terms has often prevented anarchists from telling us or even understanding clearly what they are: individualists whose concepts of autonomy originate in a strong commitment to personal liberty rather than to social freedom, or socialists committed to a structured, institutionalized, and responsible form of social organization. Anarchism's idea of self-regulation (*auto nomos*) led to a radical celebration of Nietzsche's all-absorbing will. Indeed the history of this “ideology” is peppered with idiosyncratic acts of defiance that verge on the eccentric, which not surprisingly have attracted many young people and aesthetes.

In fact anarchism represents the most extreme formulation of liberalism's ideology of

unfettered autonomy, culminating in a celebration of heroic acts of defiance of the state. Anarchism's mythos of self-regulation (*auto nomos*)—the radical assertion of the individual over or even against society and the personalistic absence of responsibility for the collective welfare—leads to a radical affirmation of the all-powerful will so central to Nietzsche's ideological peregrinations. Some self-professed anarchists have even denounced mass social action as futile and alien to their private concerns and made a fetish of what the Spanish anarchists called *grupismo*, a small-group mode of action that is highly personal rather than social.

Anarchism has often been confused with revolutionary syndicalism, a highly structured and well-developed mass form of libertarian trade unionism that, unlike anarchism, was long committed to democratic procedures,⁵ to discipline in action, and to organized, long-range revolutionary practice to eliminate capitalism. Its affinity with anarchism stems from its strong libertarian bias, but bitter antagonisms between anarchists and syndicalists have a long history in nearly every country in Western Europe and North America, as witness the tensions between the Spanish CNT and the anarchist groups associated with *Tierra y Libertad* early in the twentieth century; between the revolutionary syndicalist and anarchist groups in Russia during the 1917 revolution; and between the IWW in the United States and Sweden, to cite the more illustrative cases in the history of the libertarian labor movement. More than one American anarchist was affronted by Joe Hill's defiant maxim on the eve of his execution in Utah: "Don't mourn—Organize!" Alas, small groups were not quite the "organizations" that Joe Hill, or the grossly misunderstood idol of the Spanish libertarian movement, Salvador Seguí, had in mind. It was largely the shared word libertarian that made it possible for somewhat confused anarchists to coexist in the same organization with revolutionary syndicalists. It was often verbal confusion rather than ideological clarity that made possible the coexistence in Spain of the FAI, as represented by the anarchist Federica Montseny, with the syndicalists, as represented by Juan Prieto, in the CNT-FAI, a truly confused organization if ever there was one.

Revolutionary syndicalism's destiny has been tied in varying degrees to a pathology called *ouvrierisme*, or "workerism," and whatever philosophy, theory of history, or political economy it possesses has been borrowed, often piecemeal and indirectly, from Marx—indeed, Georges Sorel and many other professed revolutionary syndicalists in the early twentieth century expressly regarded themselves as Marxists and even more expressly eschewed anarchism. Moreover, revolutionary syndicalism lacks a strategy for social change beyond the general strike, which revolutionary uprisings such as the famous October and November general strikes in Russia during 1905 proved to be stirring but ultimately ineffectual. Indeed, as invaluable as the general strike may be as a prelude to direct confrontation with the state, they decidedly do not have the mystical capacity that revolutionary syndicalists assigned to them as means for social change. Their limitations are striking evidence that, as episodic forms of direct action, general strikes are not equatable

with revolution nor even with profound social changes, which presuppose a mass movement and require years of gestation and a clear sense of direction. Indeed, revolutionary syndicalism exudes a typical *ouvrierist* anti-intellectualism that disdains attempts to formulate a purposive revolutionary direction and a reverence for proletarian “spontaneity” that, at times, has led it into highly self-destructive situations. Lacking the means for an analysis of their situation, the Spanish syndicalists (and anarchists) revealed only a minimal capacity to understand the situation in which they found themselves after their victory over Franco’s forces in the summer of 1936 and no capacity to take “the next step” to institutionalize a workers’ and peasants’ form of government.

What these observations add up to is that Marxists, revolutionary syndicalists, and authentic anarchists all have a fallacious understanding of politics, which should be conceived as the civic arena and the institutions by which people democratically and directly manage their community affairs. Indeed the Left has repeatedly mistaken statecraft for politics by its persistent failure to understand that the two are not only radically different but exist in radical tension—in fact, opposition—to each other.⁶ As I have written elsewhere, historically politics did not emerge from the state—an apparatus whose professional machinery is designed to dominate and facilitate the exploitation of the citizenry in the interests of a privileged class. Rather, politics, almost by definition, is the active engagement of free citizens in the handling their municipal affairs and in their defense of its freedom. One can almost say that politics is the “embodiment” of what the French revolutionaries of the 1790s called *civisme*. Quite properly, in fact, the word politics itself contains the Greek word for “city” or *polis*, and its use in classical Athens, together with democracy, connoted the direct governing of the city by its citizens. Centuries of civic degradation, marked particularly by the formation of classes, were necessary to produce the state and its corrosive absorption of the political realm.

A defining feature of the Left is precisely the Marxist, anarchist, and revolutionary syndicalist belief that no distinction exists, in principle, between the political realm and the statist realm. By emphasizing the nation-state—including a “workers’ state”—as the locus of economic as well as political power, Marx (as well as libertarians) notoriously failed to demonstrate how workers could fully and directly control such a state without the mediation of an empowered bureaucracy and essentially statist (or equivalently, in the case of libertarians, governmental) institutions. As a result, the Marxists unavoidably saw the political realm, which it designated a “workers’ state,” as a repressive entity, ostensibly based on the interests of a single class, the proletariat.

Revolutionary syndicalism, for its part, emphasized factory control by workers’ committees and confederal economic councils as the locus of social authority, thereby simply bypassing any popular institutions that existed outside the economy. Oddly, this was economic determinism with a vengeance, which, tested by the experiences of the Spanish revolution

of 1936, proved completely ineffectual. A vast domain of real governmental power, from military affairs to the administration of justice, fell to the Stalinists and the liberals of Spain, who used their authority to subvert the libertarian movement—and with it, the revolutionary achievements of the syndicalist workers in July 1936, or what was dourly called by one novelist “The Brief Summer of Spanish Anarchism.”

As for anarchism, Bakunin expressed the typical view of its adherents in 1871 when he wrote that the new social order could be created “only through the development and organization of the nonpolitical or antipolitical social power of the working class in city and country,” thereby rejecting with characteristic inconsistency the very municipal politics which he sanctioned in Italy around the same year. Accordingly, anarchists have long regarded every government as a state and condemned it accordingly—a view that is a recipe for the elimination of any organized social life whatever. While the state is the instrument by which an oppressive and exploitative class regulates and coercively controls the behavior of an exploited class by a ruling class, a government—or better still, a polity—is an ensemble of institutions designed to deal with the problems of consociational life in an orderly and hopefully fair manner. Every institutionalized association that constitutes a system for handling public affairs—with or without the presence of a state—is necessarily a government. By contrast, every state, although necessarily a form of government, is a force for class repression and control. Annoying as it must seem to Marxists and anarchist alike, the cry for a constitution, for a responsible and a responsive government, and even for law or *nomos* has been clearly articulated—and committed to print!—by the oppressed for centuries against the capricious rule exercised by monarchs, nobles, and bureaucrats. The libertarian opposition to law, not to speak of government as such, has been as silly as the image of a snake swallowing its tail. What remains in the end is nothing but a retinal afterimage that has no existential reality.

The issues raised in the preceding pages are of more than academic interest. As we enter the twenty-first century, social radicals need a socialism—libertarian and revolutionary—that is neither an extension of the peasant-craft “associationism” that lies at the core of anarchism nor the proletarianism that lies at the core of revolutionary syndicalism and Marxism. However fashionable the traditional ideologies (particularly anarchism) may be among young people today, a truly progressive socialism that is informed by libertarian as well as Marxian ideas but transcends these older ideologies must provide intellectual leadership. For political radicals today to simply resuscitate Marxism, anarchism, or revolutionary syndicalism and endow them with ideological immortality would be obstructive to the development of a relevant radical movement. A new and comprehensive revolutionary outlook is needed, one that is capable of systematically addressing the generalized issues that may potentially bring most of society into opposition to an ever-evolving and changing capitalist system.

The clash between a predatory society based on indefinite expansion and nonhuman nature has given rise to an ensemble of ideas that has emerged as the explication of the present social crisis and meaningful radical change. Social ecology, a coherent vision of social development that intertwines the mutual impact of hierarchy and class on the civilizing of humanity, has for decades argued that we must reorder social relations so that humanity can live in a protective balance with the natural world.⁷

Contrary to the simplistic ideology of “eco-anarchism,” social ecology maintains that an ecologically oriented society can be progressive rather than regressive, placing a strong emphasis not on primitivism, austerity, and denial but on material pleasure and ease. If a society is to be capable of making life not only vastly enjoyable for its members but also leisurely enough that they can engage in the intellectual and cultural self-cultivation that is necessary for creating civilization and a vibrant political life, it must not denigrate technics and science but bring them into accord with visions human happiness and leisure. Social ecology is an ecology not of hunger and material deprivation but of plenty; it seeks the creation of a rational society in which waste, indeed excess, will be controlled by a new system of values; and when or if shortages arise as a result of irrational behavior, popular assemblies will establish rational standards of consumption by democratic processes. In short, social ecology favors management, plans, and regulations formulated democratically by popular assemblies, not freewheeling forms of behavior that have their origin in individual eccentricities.

It is my contention that Communalism is the overarching political category most suitable to encompass the fully thought out and systematic views of social ecology, including libertarian municipalism and dialectical naturalism.⁸ As an ideology, Communalism draws on the best of the older Left ideologies—Marxism and anarchism, more properly the libertarian socialist tradition—while offering a wider and more relevant scope for our time. From Marxism, it draws the basic project of formulating a rationally systematic and coherent socialism that integrates philosophy, history, economics, and politics. Avowedly dialectical, it attempts to infuse theory with practice. From anarchism, it draws its commitment to antistatism and confederalism, as well as its recognition that hierarchy is a basic problem that can be overcome only by a libertarian socialist society.⁹

The choice of the term Communalism to encompass the philosophical, historical, political, and organizational components of a socialism for the twenty-first century has not been a flippant one. The word originated in the Paris Commune of 1871, when the armed people of the French capital raised barricades not only to defend the city council of Paris and its administrative substructures but also to create a nationwide confederation of cities and towns to replace the republican nation-state. Communalism as an ideology is not sullied by the individualism and the often explicit antirationalism of anarchism; nor does it carry the historical burden of Marxism’s authoritarianism as embodied in Bolshevism. It does not

focus on the factory as its principal social arena or on the industrial proletariat as its main historical agent; and it does not reduce the free community of the future to a fanciful medieval village. Its most important goal is clearly spelled out in a conventional dictionary definition: Communalism, according to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, is "a theory or system of government in which virtually autonomous local communities are loosely bound in a federation."¹⁰

Communalism seeks to recapture the meaning of politics in its broadest, most emancipatory sense, indeed, to fulfill the historic potential of the municipality as the developmental arena of mind and discourse. It conceptualizes the municipality, potentially at least, as a transformative development beyond organic evolution into the domain of social evolution. The city is the domain where the archaic blood-tie that was once limited to the unification of families and tribes, to the exclusion of outsiders, was—juridically, at least—dissolved. It became the domain where hierarchies based on parochial and sociobiological attributes of kinship, gender, and age could be eliminated and replaced by a free society based on a shared common humanity. Potentially, it remains the domain where the once-feared stranger can be fully absorbed into the community—initially as a protected resident of a common territory and eventually as a citizen, engaged in making policy decisions in the public arena. It is above all the domain where institutions and values have their roots not in zoology but in civil human activity.

Looking beyond these historical functions, the municipality constitutes the only domain for an association based on the free exchange of ideas and a creative endeavor to bring the capacities of consciousness to the service of freedom. It is the domain where a mere animalistic adaptation to an existing and pre-given environment can be radically supplanted by proactive, rational intervention into the world—indeed, a world yet to be made and molded by reason—with a view toward ending the environmental, social, and political insults to which humanity and the biosphere have been subjected by classes and hierarchies. Freed of domination as well as material exploitation—indeed, recreated as a rational arena for human creativity in all spheres of life—the municipality becomes the ethical space for the good life. Communalism is thus no contrived product of mere fancy: it expresses an abiding concept and practice of political life, formed by a dialectic of social development and reason.

As an explicitly political body of ideas, Communalism seeks to recover and advance the development of the city (or commune) in a form that accords with its greatest potentialities and historical traditions. This is not to say that Communalism accepts the municipality as it is today. Quite to the contrary, the modern municipality is infused with many statist features and often functions as an agent of the bourgeois nation-state. Today, when the nation-state still seems supreme, the rights that modern municipalities possess cannot be dismissed as the epiphenomena of more basic economic relations. Indeed, to a great degree, they are the

hard-won gains of commoners, who long defended them against assaults by ruling classes over the course of history—even against the bourgeoisie itself.

The concrete political dimension of Communalism is known as libertarian municipalism, about which I have previously written extensively.¹¹ In its libertarian municipalist program, Communalism resolutely seeks to eliminate statist municipal structures and replace them with the institutions of a libertarian polity. It seeks to radically restructure cities' governing institutions into popular democratic assemblies based on neighborhoods, towns, and villages. In these popular assemblies, citizens—including the middle classes as well as the working classes—deal with community affairs on a face-to-face basis, making policy decisions in a direct democracy, and giving reality to the ideal of a humanistic, rational society.

Minimally, if we are to have the kind of free social life to which we aspire, democracy should be our form of a shared political life. To address problems and issues that transcend the boundaries of a single municipality, in turn, the democratized municipalities should join together to form a broader confederation. These assemblies and confederations, by their very existence, could then challenge the legitimacy of the state and statist forms of power. They could expressly be aimed at replacing state power and statecraft with popular power and a socially rational transformative politics. And they would become arenas where class conflicts could be played out and where classes could be eliminated.

Libertarian municipalists do not delude themselves that the state will view with equanimity their attempts to replace professionalized power with popular power. They harbor no illusions that the ruling classes will indifferently allow a Communalist movement to demand rights that infringe on the state's sovereignty over towns and cities. Historically, regions, localities, and above all towns and cities have desperately struggled to reclaim their local sovereignty from the state (albeit not always for high-minded purposes). Communalists' attempt to restore the powers of towns and cities and to knit them together into confederations can be expected to evoke increasing resistance from national institutions. That the new popular-assemblyist municipal confederations will embody a dual power against the state that becomes a source of growing political tension is obvious. Either a Communalist movement will be radicalized by this tension and will resolutely face all its consequences, or it will surely sink into a morass of compromises that absorb it back into the social order that it once sought to change. How the movement meets this challenge is a clear measure of its seriousness in seeking to change the existing political system and the social consciousness it develops as a source of public education and leadership.

Communalism constitutes a critique of hierarchical and capitalist society as a whole. It seeks to alter not only the political life of society but also its economic life. On this score, its aim is not to nationalize the economy or retain private ownership of the means of production

but to municipalize the economy. It seeks to integrate the means of production into the existential life of the municipality, such that every productive enterprise falls under the purview of the local assembly, which decides how it will function to meet the interests of the community as a whole. The separation between life and work, so prevalent in the modern capitalist economy, must be overcome so that citizens' desires and needs, the artful challenges of creation in the course of production, and role of production in fashioning thought and self-definition are not lost. "Humanity makes itself," to cite the title of V. Gordon Childe's book on the urban revolution at the end of the Neolithic age and the rise of cities, and it does so not only intellectually and esthetically, but by expanding human needs as well as the productive methods for satisfying them. We discover ourselves—our potentialities and their actualization—through creative and useful work that not only transforms the natural world but leads to our self-formation and self-definition.

We must also avoid the parochialism and ultimately the desires for proprietorship that have afflicted so many self-managed enterprises, such as the "collectives" in the Russian and Spanish revolutions. Not enough has been written about the drift among many "socialistic" self-managed enterprises, even under the red and red-and-black flags, respectively, of revolutionary Russia and revolutionary Spain, toward forms of collective capitalism that ultimately led many of these concerns to compete with one another for raw materials and markets.¹²

Most importantly, in Communalist political life, workers of different occupations would take their seats in popular assemblies not as workers—printers, plumbers, foundry workers and the like, with special occupational interests to advance—but as citizens, whose overriding concern should be the general interest of the society in which they live. Citizens should be freed of their particularistic identity as workers, specialists, and individuals concerned primarily with their own particularistic interests. Municipal life should become a school for the formation of citizens, both by absorbing new citizens and by educating the young, while the assemblies themselves should function not only as permanent decision-making institutions but as arenas for educating the people in handling complex civic and regional affairs.¹³

In a Communalist way of life, conventional economics, with its focus on prices and scarce resources, would be replaced by ethics, with its concern for human needs and the good life. Human solidarity—or *philia*, as the Greeks called it—would replace material gain and egotism. Municipal assemblies would become not only vital arenas for civic life and decision-making but centers where the shadowy world of economic logistics, properly coordinated production, and civic operations would be demystified and opened to the scrutiny and participation of the citizenry as a whole. The emergence of the new citizen would mark a transcendence of the particularistic class being of traditional socialism and the formation of the "new man" which the Russian revolutionaries hoped they could

eventually achieve. Humanity would now be able to rise to the universal state of consciousness and rationality that the great utopians of the nineteenth century and the Marxists hoped their efforts would create, opening the way to humanity's fulfillment as a species that embodies reason rather than material interest and that affords material post-scarcity rather than an austere harmony enforced by a morality of scarcity and material deprivation.¹⁴

Classical Athenian democracy of the fifth century B.C.E., the source of the Western democratic tradition, was based on face-to-face decision-making in communal assemblies of the people and confederations of those municipal assemblies. For more than two millennia, the political writings of Aristotle recurrently served to heighten our awareness of the city as the arena for the fulfillment of human potentialities for reason, self-consciousness, and the good life. Appropriately, Aristotle traced the emergence of the polis from the family or oikos—i.e., the realm of necessity, where human beings satisfied their basically animalistic needs, and where authority rested with the eldest male. But the association of several families, he observed, “aim[ed] at something more than the supply of daily needs”¹⁵; this aim initiated the earliest political formation, the village. Aristotle famously described man (by which he meant the adult Greek male¹⁶) as a “political animal” (politikon zoon) who presided over family members not only to meet their material needs but as the material precondition for his participation in political life, in which discourse and reason replaced mindless deeds, custom, and violence. Thus, “[w]hen several villages are united in a single complete community (koinonon), large enough to be nearly or quite self-sufficing,” he continued, “the polis comes into existence, originating in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life.”¹⁷

For Aristotle, and we may assume also for the ancient Athenians, the municipality's proper functions were thus not strictly instrumental or even economic. As the locale of human consociation, the municipality, and the social and political arrangements that people living there constructed, was humanity's telos, the arena par excellence where human beings, over the course of history, could actualize their potentiality for reason, self-consciousness, and creativity. Thus for the ancient Athenians, politics denoted not only the handling of the practical affairs of a polity but civic activities that were charged with moral obligation to one's community. All citizens of a city were expected to participate in civic activities as ethical beings.

Examples of municipal democracy were not limited to ancient Athens. Quite to the contrary, long before class differentiations gave rise to the state, many relatively secular towns produced the earliest institutional structures of local democracy. Assemblies of the people may have existed in ancient Sumer, at the very beginning of the so-called “urban revolution” some seven or eight thousand years ago. They clearly appeared among the Greeks, and until the defeat of the Gracchus brothers, they were popular centers of power in republican

Rome. They were nearly ubiquitous in the medieval towns of Europe and even in Russia, notably in Novgorod and Pskov, which, for a time, were among the most democratic cities in the Slavic world. The assembly, it should be emphasized, began to approximate its truly modern form in the neighborhood Parisian sections of 1793, when they became the authentic motive forces of the Great Revolution and conscious agents for the making of a new body politic. That they were never given the consideration they deserve in the literature on democracy, particularly democratic Marxist tendencies and revolutionary syndicalists, is dramatic evidence of the flaws that existed in the revolutionary tradition.

These democratic municipal institutions normally existed in combative tension with grasping monarchs, feudal lords, wealthy families, and freebooting invaders until they were crushed, frequently in bloody struggles. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that every great revolution in modern history had a civic dimension that has been smothered in radical histories by an emphasis on class antagonisms, however important these antagonisms have been. Thus it is unthinkable that the English Revolution of the 1640s can be understood without singling out London as its terrain; or, by the same token, any discussions of the various French Revolutions without focusing on Paris, or the Russian Revolutions without dwelling on Petrograd, or the Spanish Revolution of 1936 without citing Barcelona as its most advanced social center. This centrality of the city is not a mere geographic fact; it is, above all, a profoundly political one, which involved the ways in which revolutionary masses aggregated and debated, the civic traditions that nourished them, and the environment that fostered their revolutionary views.

Libertarian municipalism is an integral part of the Communalist framework, indeed its praxis, just as Communalism as a systematic body of revolutionary thought is meaningless without libertarian municipalism. The differences between Communalism and authentic or “pure” anarchism, let alone Marxism, are much too great to be spanned by a prefix such as anarcho-, social, neo-, or even libertarian. Any attempt to reduce Communalism to a mere variant of anarchism would be to deny the integrity of both ideas—indeed, to ignore their conflicting concepts of democracy, organization, elections, government, and the like. Gustave Lefrancais, the Paris Commune who may have coined this political term, adamantly declared that he was “a Communalist, not an anarchist.”¹⁸

Above all, Communalism is engaged with the problem of power.¹⁹ In marked contrast to the various kinds of communitarian enterprises favored by many self-designated anarchists, such as “people’s” garages, print shops, food coops, and backyard gardens, adherents of Communalism mobilize themselves to electorally engage in a potentially important center of power—the municipal council—and try to compel it to create legislatively potent neighborhood assemblies. These assemblies, it should be emphasized, would make every effort to delegitimize and depose the statist organs that currently control their villages, towns, or cities and thereafter act as the real engines in the exercise of power. Once a

number of municipalities are democratized along communalist lines, they would methodically confederate into municipal leagues and challenge the role of the nation-state and, through popular assemblies and confederal councils, try to acquire control over economic and political life.

Finally, Communalism, in contrast to anarchism, decidedly calls for decision-making by majority voting as the only equitable way for a large number of people to make decisions. Authentic anarchists claim that this principle—the “rule” of the minority by the majority—is authoritarian and propose instead to make decisions by consensus. Consensus, in which single individuals can veto majority decisions, threatens to abolish society as such. A free society is not one in which its members, like Homer’s lotus-eaters, live in a state of bliss without memory, temptation, or knowledge. Like it or not, humanity has eaten of the fruit of knowledge, and its memories are laden with history and experience. In a lived mode of freedom—contrary to mere café chatter—the rights of minorities to express their dissenting views will always be protected as fully as the rights of majorities. Any abridgements of those rights would be instantly corrected by the community—hopefully gently, but if unavoidable, forcefully—lest social life collapse into sheer chaos. Indeed, the views of a minority would be treasured as potential source of new insights and nascent truths that, if abridged, would deny society the sources of creativity and developmental advances—for new ideas generally emerge from inspired minorities that gradually gain the centrality they deserve at a given time and place—until, again, they too are challenged as the conventional wisdom of a period that is beginning to pass away and requires new (minority) views to replace frozen orthodoxies.

It remains to ask: how are we to achieve this rational society? One anarchist writer would have it that the good society (or a true “natural” disposition of affairs, including a “natural man”) exists beneath the oppressive burdens of civilization like fertile soil beneath the snow. It follows from this mentality that all we are obliged to do to achieve the good society is to somehow eliminate the snow, which is to say capitalism, nation-states, churches, conventional schools, and other almost endless types of institutions that perversely embody domination in one form or another. Presumably an anarchist society—once state, governmental, and cultural institutions are merely removed—would emerge intact, ready to function and thrive as a free society. Such a “society,” if one can even call it such, would not require that we proactively create it: we would simply let the snow above it melt away. The process of rationally creating a free Communalist society, alas, will require substantially more thought and work than embracing a mystified concept of aboriginal innocence and bliss.

A Communalist society should rest, above all, on the efforts of a new radical organization to change the world, one that has a new political vocabulary to explain its goals, and a new program and theoretical framework to make those goals coherent. It would, above all,

require dedicated individuals who are willing to take on the responsibilities of education and, yes, leadership. Unless words are not to become completely mystified and obscure a reality that exists before our very eyes, it should minimally be acknowledged that leadership always exists and does not disappear because it is clouded by euphemisms such as “militants” or, as in Spain, “influential militants.” It must also be acknowledge that many individuals in earlier groups like the CNT were not just “influential militants” but outright leaders, whose views were given more consideration—and deservedly so!—than those of others because they were based on more experience, knowledge, and wisdom, as well as the psychological traits that were needed to provide effective guidance. A serious libertarian approach to leadership would indeed acknowledge the reality and crucial importance of leaders—all the more to establish the greatly needed formal structures and regulations that can effectively control and modify the activities of leaders and recall them when the membership decides their respect is being misused or when leadership becomes an exercise in the abusive exercise of power.

A libertarian municipalist movement should function, not with the adherence of flippant and tentative members, but with people who have been schooled in the movement’s ideas, procedures and activities. They should, in effect, demonstrate a serious commitment to their organization—an organization whose structure is laid out explicitly in a formal constitution and appropriate bylaws. Without a democratically formulated and approved institutional framework whose members and leaders can be held accountable, clearly articulated standards of responsibility cease to exist. Indeed, it is precisely when a membership is no longer responsible to its constitutional and regulatory provisions that authoritarianism develops and eventually leads to the movement’s immolation. Freedom from authoritarianism can best be assured only by the clear, concise, and detailed allocation of power, not by pretensions that power and leadership are forms of “rule” or by libertarian metaphors that conceal their reality. It has been precisely when an organization fails to articulate these regulatory details that the conditions emerge for its degeneration and decay.

Ironically, no stratum has been more insistent in demanding its freedom to exercise its will against regulation than chiefs, monarchs, nobles, and the bourgeoisie; similarly even well-meaning anarchists have seen individual autonomy as the true expression of freedom from the “artificialities” of civilization. In the realm of true freedom—that is, freedom that has been actualized as the result of consciousness, knowledge, and necessity—to know what we can and cannot do is more cleanly honest and true to reality than to avert the responsibility of knowing the limits of the lived world. Said a very wise man more than a century and a half ago: “Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please.”

Huey Newton: Speech At Boston College

Speech originally given at Boston College on November 18, 1970.



Power to the people, brothers and sisters. I would like to thank you for my presence here tonight because you are responsible for it. I would be in a maximum-security penitentiary if it were not for the power of the people.

Chairman, for Ericka Huggins, for Angela Davis, for the New York 21 and the Soledad Brothers. For all political prisoners and prisoners of war. On the 28th and 29th of November we will have a People's Revolutionary Constitutional convention in Washington, D.C. We cannot have that convention if the people do not come. After all, the people are the makers of world history and responsible for everything.

How can we have a convention if we have no people? Some believe a people's convention is possible without the people being there. As I recall, that was the case in 1777.

Tonight, I would like to outline for you the Black Panther Party's program and explain how we arrived at our ideological position and why we feel it necessary to institute a Ten-Point Program. A Ten-Point Program is not revolutionary in itself, nor is it reformist. It is a survival program. We, the people, are threatened with genocide because racism and fascism are rampant in this country and throughout the world. And the ruling circle in North America is responsible. We intend to change all of that, and in order to change it, there must be a total transformation. But until we can achieve that total transformation, we must exist. In order to exist, we must survive; therefore, we need a survival kit: the Ten-Point Program. It is necessary for our children to grow up healthy with functional and creative minds. They cannot do this if they do not get the correct nutrition. That is why we have a breakfast program for children. We also have community health programs. We have a busing program. We call it "The Bus for Relatives and Parents of Prisoners," We realize that the fascist regime that operates the prisons throughout America would like to do their treachery in the dark. But if we get the relatives, parents, and friends to the prisons they can expose the treachery of the fascists. This too is a survival program.

We must not regard our survival programs as an answer to the whole problem of oppression. We don't even claim it to be a revolutionary program. Revolutions are made of sterner stuff. We do say that if the people are not here revolution cannot be achieved, for the people and only the people make revolutions.

The theme of our Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention is "Survival Through Service to the People." At our convention we will present our total survival program. It is a program that works very much like the first-aid kit that is used when a plane falls and you find yourself in the middle of the sea on a rubber raft. You need a few things to last until you can get to the shore, until you can get to that oasis where you can be happy and healthy. If you do not have the things necessary to get you to that shore, then you will probably not exist. At this time the ruling circle threatens us to the extent that we are afraid that we might not exist to see the next day or see the revolution. The Black Panther Party will not accept the total destruction of the people. As a matter of fact, we have drawn a line of demarcation and we will no longer tolerate fascism, aggression, brutality, and murder of any kind. We will not sit around and allow ourselves to be murdered. Each person has an obligation to preserve himself. If he does not preserve himself then I accuse him of suicide: reactionary suicide because reactionary conditions will have caused his death. If we do nothing we are accepting the situation and allowing ourselves to die. We will not accept that. If the alternatives are very narrow we still will not sit around, we will not die the death of the Jews in Germany. We would rather die the death of the Jews in Warsaw!

Where there is courage, where there is self-respect and dignity, there is a possibility that we can change the conditions and win. This is a possibility that we can change the conditions and win. This is called revolutionary enthusiasm and it is the kind of struggle that is needed

in order to guarantee a victory. If we must die, then we will die the death of a revolutionary suicide that says, "If I am put down, if I am driven out, I refuse to be swept out with a broom. I would much rather be driven out with a stick because if I am swept out with the broom it will humiliate me and I will lose my self-respect. But if I am driven out with the stick, then, at least, I can claim the dignity of a man and die the death of a man rather than the death of a dog."

Of course, our real desire is to live, but we will not be cowed, we will not be intimidated.

I would like to explain to you the method that the Black Panther Party used to arrive at our ideological position, and more than that, I would like to give to you a framework or a process of thinking that might help us solve the problems and the contradictions that exist today. Before we approach the problem we must get a clear picture of what is really going on; a clear image divorced from the attitudes and emotions that we usually project into a situation. We must be as objective as possible without accepting dogma, letting the facts speak for themselves. But we will not remain totally objective; we will become subjective in the application of the knowledge received from the external world. We will use the scientific method to acquire this knowledge, but we will openly acknowledge our ultimate subjectivity. Once we apply knowledge in order to will a certain outcome our objectivity ends and our subjectivity begins. We call this integrating theory with practice, and this is what the Black Panther Party is all about.

In order to understand a group of forces operating at the same time, science developed what is called the scientific method. One of the characteristics or properties of this method is disinterest. Not uninterest, but disinterest: no special interest in the outcome. In other words, the scientist does not promote an outcome, he just collects the facts. Nevertheless, in acquiring his facts he must begin with a basic premise. Most basic premises stem from a set of assumptions because it is very difficult to test a first premise without these assumptions. After an agreement is reached on certain assumptions, an intelligent argument can follow, for then logic and consistency are all that is required to reach a valid conclusion.

Tonight I ask you to assume that an external world exists. An external world that exists independently of us. The second assumption I would like for you to make is that things are in a constant state of change, transformation, or flux. With agreement on these two assumptions we can go on with our discussion.

The scientific method relies heavily on empiricism. But the problem with empiricism is that it tells you very little about the future; it tells you only about the past, about information which you have already discovered through observation and experience. It always refers to past experience.

Long after the rules of empirical knowledge had been ascertained, a man by the name of Karl Marx integrated these rules with a theory developed by Immanuel Kant called rationale. Kant called his process of reasoning pure reason because it did not depend on the external world. Instead it only depended on consistency in manipulating symbols in order to come up with a conclusion based upon reason. For example, in this sentence "If the sky is above my head when I turn my head upwards, I will see the sky" there is nothing wrong with the conclusion. As a matter of fact, it is accurate. But I haven't said anything about the existence of the sky. I said "if" With rationale we are not dependent upon the external world. With empiricism we can tell very little about the future. So what will we do? What Marx did. In order to understand what was happening in the world Marx found it necessary to integrate rationale with empiricism. He called his concept dialectical materialism. If, like Marx, we integrate these two concepts or these two ways of thinking, not only are we in touch with the world outside us but we can also explain the constant state of transformation. Therefore, we can also make some predictions about the outcome of certain social phenomena that is not only in constant change but also in conflict.

Marx, as a social scientist, criticized other social scientists for attempting to explain phenomena, or one phenomenon, by taking it out of its environment, isolating it, putting it into a category, and not acknowledging the fact that once it was taken out of its environment the phenomenon was transformed. For example, if in a discipline such as sociology we study the activity of groups - how they hold together and why they fall apart - without understanding everything else related to that group, we may arrive at a false conclusion about the nature of the group. What Marx attempted to do was to develop a way of thinking that would explain phenomena realistically.

When atoms collide, in physics, they divide into electrons, protons, and neutrons, if I remember correctly. What happened to the atom? It was transformed. In the social world a similar thing happens. We can apply the same principle. When two cultures collide a process or condition occurs which the sociologists call acculturation: the modification of cultures as a result of their contact with each other. Marx called the collision of social forces or classes a contradiction. In the physical world, when forces collide we sometimes call it just that - a collision. For example, when two cars meet head on, trying to occupy the same space at the same time, both are transformed. Sometimes other things happen. Had those two cars been turned back to back and sped off in opposite directions they would not be a contradiction; they would be contrary, covering different spaces at different times. Sometimes when people meet they argue and misunderstand each other because they think they are having a contradiction when they are only being contrary. For example, I can say the wall is ten feet tall and you can say the wall is red, and we can argue all day thinking we are having a contradiction when actually we are only being contrary. When people argue, when one offers a thesis and the other offers an anti-thesis, we say there is a contradiction and hope that if we argue long enough, provided that we agree on one premise, we can have some

kind of synthesis. Tonight I hope I can have some form of agreement or synthesis with those who have criticized the Black Panther Party.

I think that the mistake is that some people have taken the apparent as the actual fact in spite of their claims of scholarly research and following the discipline of dialectical materialism. They fail to search deeper, as the scientist is required to do, to get beyond the apparent and come up with the more significant. Let me explain how this relates to the Black Panther Party. The Black Panther Party is a Marxist-Leninist party because we follow the dialectical method and we also integrate theory with practice. We are not mechanical Marxists and we are not historical materialists. Some people think they are Marxists when actually they are following the thoughts of Hegel. Some people think they are Marxist-Leninists but they refuse to be creative, and are, therefore, tied to the past. They are tied to a rhetoric that does not apply to the present set of conditions. They are tied to a set of thoughts that approaches dogma - what we call flunkeyism.

Marx attempted to set up a framework which could be applied to a number of conditions. And in applying this framework we cannot be afraid of the outcome because things change and we must be willing to acknowledge that change because we are objective. If we are using the method of dialectical materialism we don't expect to find anything the same even one minute later because "one minute later" is history. If things are in a constant state of change, we cannot expect them to be the same. Words used to describe old phenomena may be useless to describe the new. And if we use the old words to describe new events we run the risk of confusing people and misleading them into thinking that things are static.

In 1917 an event occurred in the Soviet Union that was called a revolution. Two classes had a contradiction and the whole country was transformed. In this country, 1970, the Black Panther Party issued a document. Our Minister of Information, Eldridge Cleaver, who now is in Algeria, wrote a pamphlet called "On the Ideology of the Black Panther Party." In that work Eldridge Cleaver stated that neither the proletarians nor the industrial workers carry the potentialities for revolution in this country at this time. He claimed that the left wing of the proletarians, the lumpen proletarians, have that revolutionary potential, and in fact, acting as the vanguard, they would carry the people of the world to the final climax of the transformation of society. It has been stated by some people, by some parties, by some organizations, by the Progressive Labor Party, that revolution is impossible. How can the lumpen proletarians carry out a successful socialist transformation when they are only a minority? And in fact how can they do it when history shows that only the proletarians have carried out a successful social revolution? I agree that it is necessary for the people who carry out a social revolution to represent the popular majority's interests. It is necessary for this group to represent the broad masses of the people. We analyzed what happened in the Soviet Union in 1917. I also agree that the lumpen proletarians are the minority in this country. No disagreement. Have I contradicted myself? It only goes to show that what's

apparent might not actually be a fact. What appears to be a contradiction may be only a paradox. Let's examine this apparent contradiction.

The Soviet Union, in 1917, was basically an agricultural society with very large peasantry. A set of social conditions existing there at that time was responsible for the development of a small industrial base. The people who worked in this industrial base were called proletarians. Lenin, using Marx's theory, saw the trends. He was not a historical materialist, but a dialectical materialist, and therefore very interested in the ever-changing status of things. He saw that while the proletarians were a minority in 1917, they had the potential to carry out a revolution because their class was increasing and the peasantry was declining. That was one of the conditions. The proletarians were destined to be a popular force. They also had access to the properties necessary for carrying out a socialist revolution.

In this country the Black Panther Party, taking careful note of the dialectical method, taking careful note of the social trends and the ever-changing nature of things, sees that while the lumpen proletarians are the minority and the proletarians are the majority, technology is developing at such a rapid rate that automation will progress to cybernation, and cybernation probably to technocracy. As I came into town I saw MIT over the way. If the ruling circle remains in power it seems to me that capitalists will continue to develop their technological machinery because they are not interested in the people. Therefore, I expect from them the logic that they have always followed: to make as much money as possible, and pay the people as little as possible - until the people demand more, and finally demand their heads. If revolution does not occur almost immediately, and I say almost immediately because technology is making leaps (it made a leap all the way to the moon), and if the ruling circle remains in power the proletarian working class will definitely be on the decline because they will be unemployables and therefore swell the ranks of the lumpens, who are the present unemployables. Every worker is in jeopardy because of the ruling circle, which is why we say that the lumpen proletarians have the potential for revolution, will probably carry out the revolution, and in the near future will be the popular majority. Of course, I would not like to see more of my people unemployed or become unemployables, but being objective, because we're dialectical materialists, we must acknowledge the facts.

Marx outlined a rough process of the development of society. He said that society goes from a slave class to a feudalistic class structure to a capitalistic class structure to a socialistic class structure and finally to communism. Or in other words, from capitalist state to socialist state to nonstate: communism. I think we can all agree that the slave class in the world has virtually been transformed into the wage slave. In other words, the slave class in the world no longer exists as a significant force, and if we agree to that we can agree that classes can be transformed literally out of existence. If this is so, if the slave class can disappear and become something else - or not disappear but just be transformed - and take on other characteristics, then it is also true that the proletarians or the industrial working class can

possibly be transformed out of existence. Of course the people themselves would not disappear; they would only take on other attributes. The attribute that I am interested in is the fact that soon the ruling circle will not need the workers, and if the ruling circle is in control of the means of production the working class will become unemployables or lumpens. That is logical; that is dialectical. I think it would be wrong to say that only the slave class could disappear.

Marx was a very intelligent man. He was not a dogmatist. Once he said, "One thing I'm not, I'm not a Marxist." In those words, he was trying to tell the Progressive Labor Party and others not to accept the past as the present or the future, but to understand it and be able to predict what might happen in the future and therefore act in an intelligent way to bring about the revolution that we all want.

After taking those things into consideration we see that as time changes and the world is transformed we need some new definitions, for if we keep using the old terms people might think the old situation still exists. I would be amazed if the same conditions that existed in 1917 were still existing today.

You know Marx and Lenin were pretty lazy dudes when it came to working for somebody. They looked at toil, working for your necessities, as something of a curse. And Lenin's whole theory, after he put Marx's analysis into practice, was geared to get rid of the proletarians. In other words, when the proletarian class or the working class seized the means of production, they would plan their society in such a way as to be free from toil. As a matter of fact, Lenin saw a time in which man could stand in one place, push buttons and move mountains. It sounds to me as though he saw a proletarian working class transformed and in possession of a free block of time, to indulge in productive creativity, to think about developing their universe, so that they could have the happiness, the freedom, and the pleasure that all men seek and value.

Today's capitalist has developed machinery to such a point that he can hire a group of specialized people called technocrats. In the near future he will certainly do more of this, and the technocrat will be too specialized to be identified as a proletarian. In fact that group of technocrats will be so vital we will have to do something to explain the presence of other people; we will have to come up with another definition and reason for existing.

But we must not confine our discussion to theory; we must have practical application of our theory to come up with anything worthwhile. In spite of the criticism that we have received from certain people, the Party has a practical application of its theories. Many of our activities provide the working class and the unemployed with a reason and a means for existing in the future. The people will not disappear-not with our survival programs they will not. They will still be around.

The Black Panther Party says it is perfectly correct to organize the proletarians because after they are kicked out of the factory and are called unemployable or lumpen, they still want to live, and in order to live they have to eat. It is in the proletarian's own best interest to seize the machinery that he has made in order to produce in abundance, so he and his brethren can live. We will not wait until the proletarian becomes the lumpen proletarian to educate him. Today we must lift the consciousness of the people. The wind is rising and the rivers flowing, times are getting hard and we can't go home again. We can't go back to our mother's womb, nor can we go back to 1917.

The United States, or what I like to call North America, was transformed at the hands of the ruling circle from a nation to an empire. This caused a total change in the world, because no part of an interrelated thing can change and leave everything else the same. So when the United States, or North America, became an empire it changed the whole composition of the world. There were other nations in the world. But "empire" means that the ruling circle who lives in the empire (the imperialists) control other nations. Now some time ago there existed a phenomenon we called-well, I call - primitive empire. An example of that would be the Roman Empire because the Romans controlled all of what was thought to be the known world. In fact they did not know all of the world, therefore some nations still existed independent of it. Now, probably all of the world is known. The United States as an empire necessarily controls the whole world either directly or indirectly.

If we understand dialectics we know that every determination brings about a limitation and every limitation brings about a determination. In other words, while one force may give rise to one thing it might crush other things, including itself. We might call this concept "the negation of the negation." So, while in 1917 the ruling circle created an industrial base and used the system of capitalism they were also creating the necessary conditions for socialism. They were doing this because in a socialist society it is necessary to have some centralization of the wealth, some equal distribution of the wealth, and some harmony among the people.

Now, I will give you roughly some characteristics that any people who call themselves a nation should have. These are economic independence, cultural determination, control of the political institutions, territorial integrity, and safety.

In 1966 we called our Party a Black Nationalist Party. We called ourselves Black Nationalists because we thought that nationhood was the answer. Shortly after that we decided that what was really needed was revolutionary nationalism, that is, nationalism plus socialism. After analyzing conditions a little more, we found that it was impractical and even contradictory. Therefore, we went to a higher level of consciousness. We saw that in order to be free we had to crush the ruling circle and therefore we had to unite with the peoples of the world. So we called ourselves Internationalists. We sought solidarity with the peoples

of the world. We sought solidarity with what we thought were the nations of the world. But then what happened? We found that because everything is in a constant state of transformation, because of the development of technology, because of the development of the mass media, because of the fire power of the imperialist, and because of the fact that the United States is no longer a nation but an empire, nations could not exist, for they did not have the criteria for nationhood. Their self-determination, economic determination, and cultural determination has been transformed by the imperialists and the ruling circle. They were no longer nations. We found that in order to be Internationalists we had to be also Nationalists, or at least acknowledge nationhood. Internationalism, if I understand the word, means the interrelationship among a group of nations. But since no nation exists, and since the United States is in fact an empire, it is impossible for us to be Internationalists.

These transformations and phenomena require us to call ourselves "intercommunalists" because nations have been transformed into communities of the world. The Black Panther Party now disclaims internationalism and supports intercommunalism.

Marx and Lenin felt, with the information they had, that when the non-state finally came to be a reality, it would be caused or ushered in by the people and by communism. A strange thing happened. The ruling reactionary circle, through the consequence of being imperialists, transformed the world into what we call "Reactionary Intercommunalism." They laid siege upon all the communities of the world, dominating the institutions to such an extent that the people were not served by the institutions in their own land. The Black Panther Party would like to reverse that trend and lead the people of the world into the age of "Revolutionary Intercommunalism." This would be the time when the people seize the means of production and distribute the wealth and the technology in an egalitarian way to the many communities of the world.

We see very little difference in what happens to a community here in North America and what happens to a community in Vietnam. We see very little difference in what happens, even culturally, to a Chinese community in San Francisco and a Chinese community in Hong Kong. We see very little difference in what happens to a Black community in Harlem and a Black community in South America, a Black community in Angola and one in Mozambique. We see very little difference.

So, what has actually happened, is that the non-state has already been accomplished, but it is reactionary. A community by way of definition is a comprehensive collection of institutions that serve the people who live there. It differs from a nation because a community evolves around a greater structure that we usually call the state, and the state has certain control over the community if the administration represents the people or if the administration happens to be the people's commissar. It is not so at this time, so there's still something to be done. I mentioned earlier the "negation of the negation," I mentioned earlier the

necessity for the redistribution of wealth. We think that it is very important to know that as things are in the world today socialism in the United States will never exist. Why? It will not exist because it cannot exist. It cannot at this time exist anywhere in the world. Socialism would require a socialist state, and if a state does not exist how could socialism exist? So how do we define certain progressive countries such as the People's Republic of China? How do we describe certain progressive countries, or communities as we call them, as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea?

How do we define certain communities such as North Vietnam and the provisional government in the South? How do we explain these communities if in fact they too cannot claim nationhood? We say this: we say they represent the people's liberated territory. They represent a community liberated. But that community is not sufficient, it is not satisfied, just as the National Liberation Front is not satisfied with the liberated territory in the South. It is only the groundwork and preparation for the liberation of the world-seizing the wealth from the ruling circle, equal distribution and proportional representation in an intercommunal framework. This is what the Black Panther Party would like to achieve with the help of the power of the people, because without the people nothing can be achieved.

I stated that in the United States socialism would never exist. In order for a revolution to occur in the United States you would have to have a redistribution of wealth not on a national or an international level, but on an intercommunal level. Because how can we say that we have accomplished revolution if we redistribute the wealth just to the people here in North America when the ruling circle itself is guilty of trespass de bonis asportatis. That is, they have taken away the goods of the people of the world, transported them to America and used them as their very own.

In 1917, when the revolution occurred, there could be a redistribution of wealth on a national level because nations existed. Now, if you talk in terms of planning an economy on a world-wide level, on an intercommunal level, you are saying something important: that the people have been ripped off very much like one country being ripped off. Simple reparation is not enough because the people have not only been robbed of their raw materials, but of the wealth accrued from the investment of those materials-an investment which has created the technological machine. The people of the world will have to have control - not a limited share of control for "X" amount of time, but total control forever.

In order to plan a real intercommunal economy we will have to acknowledge how the world is hooked up. We will also have to acknowledge that nations have not existed for some time. Some people will argue that nations still exist because of the cultural differences. By way of definition, just for practical argument, culture is a collection of learned patterns of behavior. Here in the United States Black people, Africans, were raped from the mother country, and consequently we have literally lost most of our African values. Perhaps we still hold on to

some surviving Africanisms, but by and large you can see the transformation which was achieved by time and the highly technological society whose tremendous mass media functions as an indoctrination center. The ruling circle has launched satellites in order to project a beam across the earth and indoctrinate the world, and while there might be some cultural differences, these differences are not qualitative but quantitative. In other words, if technology and the ruling circle go on as they are now the people of the world will be conditioned to adopt Western values. (I think Japan is a good example.) The differences between people are getting very small, but again that is in the interest of the ruling circle. I do not believe that history can be backtracked. If the world is really that interconnected then we have to acknowledge that and say that in order for the people to be free, they will have to control the institutions of their community, and have some form of representation in the technological center that they have produced. The United States, in order to correct its robbery of the world, will have to first return much of which it has stolen. I don't see how we can talk about socialism when the problem is world distribution. I think this is what Marx meant when he talked about the non-state.

I was at Alex Haley's house some time ago and he talked to me about his search for his past. He found it in Africa but when he returned there shortly afterward, he was in a state of panic. His village hadn't changed very much, but when he went there he saw an old man walking down the road, holding something that he cherished to his car. It was a small transistor radio that was zeroed in on the British broadcasting network. What I'm trying to say is that mass media plus the development of transportation make it impossible for us to think of ourselves in terms of separate entities, as nations. Do you realize that it only took me approximately five hours to get from San Francisco to here? It only takes ten hours to get from here to Vietnam. The ruling circle no longer even acknowledges wars; they call them "police actions." They call the riots of the Vietnamese people "domestic disturbance." What I am saying is that the ruling circle must realize and accept the consequences of what they have done. They know that there is only one world, but they are determined to follow the logic of their exploitation.

A short time ago in Detroit, the community was under siege, and now sixteen members of the Party are in prison. The local police laid siege on that community and that house, and they used the same weapons they use in Vietnam (as a matter of fact, two tanks rolled up). The same thing happens in Vietnam because the "police" are there also. The "police" are everywhere and they all wear the same uniform and use the same tools, and have the same purpose: the protection of the ruling circle here in North America. It is true that the world is one community, but we are not satisfied with the concentration of its power. We want the power for the people.

I said earlier (but I strayed away) that the theory of the "negation of the negation" is valid. Some scholars have been wondering why in Asia, Africa, and Latin America the resistance

always seeks the goal of a collective society. They seem not to institute the economy of the capitalist. They seem to jump all the way from feudalism to a collective society, and some people can't understand why. Why won't they follow historical Marxism, or historical materialism? Why won't they go from feudalism to the development of a capitalistic base and finally to socialism? They don't do it because they can't do it. They don't do it for the same reason that the Black community in Harlem cannot develop capitalism, that the Black community in Oakland or San Francisco cannot develop capitalism, because the imperialists have already pre-empted the field. They have already centralized the wealth. Therefore, in order to deal with them all we can do is liberate our community and then move on them as a collective force.

We've had long arguments with people about our convictions. Before we became conscious we used to call ourselves a dispersed collection of colonies here in North America. And people argued with me all day and all night, asking, "How can you possibly be a colony? In order to be a colony you have to have a nation, and you're not a nation, you're a community. You're a dispersed collection of communities." Because the Black Panther Party is not embarrassed to change or admit error, tonight I would like to accept the criticism and say that those critics were absolutely right. We are a collection of communities just as the Korean people, the Vietnamese people, and the Chinese people are a collection of communities—a dispersed collection of communities because we have no superstructure of our own. The superstructure we have is the superstructure of Wall Street, which all of our labor produced. This is a distorted form of collectivity. Everything's been collected but it's used exclusively in the interest of the ruling circle. This is why the Black Panther Party denounces Black capitalism and says that all we can do is liberate our community, not only in Vietnam but here, not only in Cambodia and the People's Republics of China and Korea but the communities of the world. We must unite as one community and then transform the world into a place where people will be happy, wars will end, the state itself will no longer exist, and we will have communism. But we cannot do this right away. When transformation takes place, when structural change takes place, the result is usually cultural lag. After the people possess the means of production we will probably not move directly into communism but linger with Revolutionary Intercommunalism until such time as we can wash away bourgeois thought, until such time as we can wash away racism and reactionary thinking, until such time as people are not attached to their nation as a peasant is attached to the soil, until such time as that people can gain their sanity and develop a culture that is "essentially human," that will serve the people instead of some god. Because we cannot avoid contact with each other we will have to develop a value system that will help us function together in harmony.

Eric Draitser: A Crisis In Black Politics? A Conversation With Pascal Robert

Originally published on stopimperialism.org on March 29, 2017.

“Eric Draitser sits down with political commentator Pascal Robert to discuss what he describes as the crisis of Black politics in America. Eric and Pascal examine the legacy of Obama on Black politics, and how that legacy negatively impacts Black America in the Age of Trump. This and so much more in this in depth conversation.” Listen to the full conversation below.

Gerald Horne and Paul Jay: Trump Attack on Syria a Deadly Political Game and Reflection of Deep Systemic Crisis

Interview originally published on [The Real News](http://TheRealNews.com).

“...Unfortunately, we’re not finished, I’m afraid. As noted, North Korea is certainly in the crosshairs. The problem there, of course, is that North Korea is rapidly developing the capability to have missiles that it can reach Hawaii at least, if not the west coast of the United States of America. And likewise, I think that Washington may be under-estimating the ability of Iran, to organize and resist an attack. That if launched, could open the gates of

hell.”

Watch the full interview below.

Sarah Leonard and Nancy Fraser: Capitalism’s Crisis of Care

This article was originally published in [Dissent Magazine](#).



Nancy Fraser is a professor of philosophy and politics at The New School for Social Research and one of the most respected critical theorists working today. In her latest book *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*, Fraser contends with liberal feminism’s troubling convergence with capitalism, and the ways in which feminism can provide a veneer of liberation for a system of relentless exploitation. Advancing a critique of capitalism and a radically different vision of feminism, she shows how gender justice must lie at the heart of any struggle for an egalitarian society. Lately, Fraser has turned to address what she calls a “crisis of care.” Her essay of that title appears in issue 100 of *New Left Review* (July/August).

Sarah Leonard: What is social reproduction, and why does it lie at the core of your feminist analysis?

Nancy Fraser: Social reproduction is about the creation and maintenance of social bonds. One part of this has to do with the ties between the generations—so, birthing and raising children and caring for the elderly. Another part is about sustaining horizontal ties among friends, family, neighborhoods, and community. This sort of activity is absolutely essential to society. Simultaneously affective and material, it supplies the “social glue” that underpins social cooperation. Without it, there would be no social organization—no economy, no polity, no culture. Historically, social reproduction has been gendered. The lion’s share of responsibility for it has been assigned to women, although men have always performed some of it too.

The rise of capitalism intensified this gender division—by splitting economic production off from social reproduction, treating them as two separate things, located in two distinct institutions and coordinated in two different ways. Production moved into factories and offices, where it was considered “economic” and remunerated with cash wages. Reproduction was left behind, relegated to a new private domestic sphere, where it was sentimentalized and naturalized, performed for the sake of “love” and “virtue,” as opposed to money. Well, that was the theory at least. In fact, social reproduction was never situated exclusively within the confines of the private household, but has been located as well in neighborhoods, public institutions, and civil society; and some of it has been commodified. Nevertheless, the gendered separation of social reproduction from economic production constitutes the principal institutional basis for women’s subordination in capitalist societies. So for feminism, there can be no more central issue than this.

Leonard: In your judgment, we have entered a crisis of care. What does that mean and how have we arrived here?

Fraser: In capitalist societies, the capacities available for social reproduction are accorded no monetized value. They are taken for granted, treated as free and infinitely available “gifts,” which require no attention or replenishment. It’s assumed that there will always be sufficient energies to sustain the social connections on which economic production, and society more generally, depend. This is very similar to the way that nature is treated in capitalist societies, as an infinite reservoir from which we can take as much as we want and into which we can dump any amount of waste. In fact, neither nature nor social reproductive capacities are infinite; both of them can be stretched to the breaking point. Many people already appreciate this in the case of nature, and we are starting to understand it as well in the case of “care.” When a society simultaneously withdraws public support for social reproduction and conscripts the chief providers of it into long and grueling hours of paid work, it depletes the very social capacities on which it depends. This is exactly our situation

today. The current, financialized form of capitalism is systematically consuming our capacities to sustain social bonds, like a tiger that eats its own tail. The result is a “crisis of care” that is every bit as serious and systemic as the current ecological crisis, with which it is, in any case, intertwined.

To understand how we got here, I would contrast this form of capitalism with previous forms. It is a common idea that the history of capitalism consists of a succession of different regimes of accumulation—for example, liberal capitalism, state-managed (or social-democratic) capitalism, and neoliberal financialized capitalism. Scholars usually distinguish between these regimes in terms of the distinctive ways in which states and markets are related in each. But they have neglected the relation between production and reproduction, which is equally consequential. That relation is a defining feature of capitalist society and belongs at the center of our analysis of it. We can go a long way toward understanding capitalism’s history by focusing on how social reproduction is organized in each of its phases: for any given era, how much of “care work” is commodified? How much is supported through state or corporate provision? How much is located in households? In neighborhoods? In civil society?

On this basis, we can trace a historical path from the so-called liberal capitalism of the nineteenth century to the state-managed regime of the mid-twentieth and on to the financialized capitalism of the present day. In a nutshell: liberal capitalism *privatized* social reproduction; state-managed capitalism partially *socialized* it; financialized capitalism is increasingly *commodifying* it. In each case, a specific organization of social reproduction went with a distinctive set of gender and family ideals: from the liberal-capitalist vision of “separate spheres” to the social-democratic model of the “family wage” to the neoliberal financialized norm of the “two-earner family.” Let me explain.

The case of liberal capitalism is pretty clear. States largely looked on from the sidelines as industrialists dragooned newly proletarianized people, including women and children, into the factories and mines. The result was a crisis of social reproduction, which prompted a public outcry and campaigns for “protective legislation.” But such policies could not possibly solve the problem, and their effect was to leave working-class and peasant communities to fend for themselves as best they could. Nevertheless, this form of capitalism was culturally generative. Recasting social reproduction as the province of women within the private family, it invented the new, bourgeois imaginary of domesticity, “separate spheres,” “the haven in the heartless world,” and “the angel in the house,” even as it deprived most people of the conditions needed to realize those ideals.

Wracked by crisis, the liberal regime gave way in the twentieth century to a new, state-managed variant of capitalist society. In this phase, which was based on mass production and mass consumption, social reproduction was partially socialized, through state and

corporate provision of “social welfare.” And the increasingly quaint model of “separate spheres” gave way to the new, more “modern” norm of the “family wage.” According to that norm, which had the strong support of labor movements, the industrial workingman should be paid enough to support his whole family, enabling his wife to devote herself full-time to their children and household. Again, only a relatively privileged minority achieved this ideal; but it was aspirational for many more—at least, in the wealthy North Atlantic states of the capitalist core. The colonies and post-colonies were excluded from these arrangements, which rested on continuing predation of the global South. And there were built-in racial asymmetries in the United States, where domestic and agricultural workers were excluded from social security and other forms of public provision. And of course, the family wage institutionalized women’s dependency and heteronormativity. So state-managed capitalism was no golden age, but still quite different from what we have today.

Today, of course, the family wage ideal is dead. It’s a casualty, on the one hand, of the fall in real wages, which makes it impossible to support a family on a single salary (unless one belongs to the 1 percent); and on the other hand, of the success of feminism, which delegitimized the idea of women’s dependency that was built into the family wage. As a result of this one-two punch, we now have the new norm of the “two-earner family.” Sounds lovely, doesn’t it—assuming you’re not single? Like the family wage ideal, however, this too is an obfuscation. It mystifies the steep rise in the number of hours of paid work now required to support a household, and if the household includes children or elderly relatives or people who are sick or disabled and cannot function as full-time wage earners, then so much the worse. And if it’s a single-parent family, it’s even worse than that. Now add to this that the two-earner ideal is being promoted at a time of cutbacks in state provision. Between the need for increased working hours and the cutback in public services, the financialized capitalist regime is systematically depleting our capacities for sustaining social bonds. This form of capitalism is stretching our “caring” energies to the breaking point. This “crisis of care” should be understood structurally. By no means contingent or accidental, it is the expression, under current conditions, of a tendency to social-reproductive crisis that is inherent in capitalist society, but that takes an especially acute form in the present regime of financialized capitalism.

Leonard: Can you talk more about feminism’s role in this crisis? Feminists were not aiming for a struggling two-earner household.

Fraser: No, of course not. But there’s still a deep and disturbing question about what role feminism has played in all of this. Feminists rejected the ideal of the family wage as an institutionalization of female dependency—and rightly so. But we did so at just the moment when the relocation of manufacturing kicked the bucket out from under the idea economically. In another world, feminism and shifts in industry might not have reinforced one another, but in this world they did. As a result, even though feminist movements did not

in any way *cause* that economic shift, we ended up unwittingly supplying some legitimation for it. We provided some charisma, some ideological ballast to others' agendas.

But let's not forget, meanwhile, that there really are neoliberal feminists who are completely on board with this agenda, who represent the 1 percent. Dare I say it looks like we're about to elect one of them as president of the United States. Neoliberal feminists *are* feminists, by the way; we can't say they're not. But in that strand of feminism we see feminist ideas simplified, truncated, and reinterpreted in market-friendly terms, as for example, when we come to think of women's subordination in terms of discrimination that prevents talented women from rising to the top. Such thinking validates the entire hierarchical corporate imaginary. It legitimates a worldview that is fundamentally hostile to the interests of the majority of women, indeed of all people throughout the world. And this version of feminism provides an emancipatory veneer for neoliberal predation.

Leonard: Can you say more about how the distribution of care work in our financialized economy pits women against one another?

Fraser: Absolutely. We now have a dual organization of care work in which those who can afford domestic help simply pay for it, while those who cannot scramble to take care of their families, often by doing the paid care work for the first group, and often at very, very low wages with virtually no protections. We're starting to see campaigns for rights and living wages in this sector. So clearly, that is a direct pitting of interests against one another. I always thought that Sheryl Sandberg's "lean in" idea was ironic; it is only possible for her readership to envision leaning in at the corporate boardroom in so far as they can lean *on* the low-paid care workers who clean their toilets and their homes, diaper their children, care for their aging parents, and so on.

And we have to talk about race here. It is, after all, chiefly immigrant women of color, African-American women, and Latino women who are doing this work. You need only go to any park in a middle-class neighborhood of New York City to see this—it's crystal clear. There are countries whose entire so-called "development" strategy is to facilitate emigration of women to wealthy countries and regions for this purpose. The Philippines, for instance, depends very heavily on remittances from the domestic workers it sends abroad. And this is a state-organized labor exchange—it's the state strategy of development. The states in question have been subjected to structural adjustment. They are indebted, cash-strapped, and in need of hard currency, and they have no way to get it other than sending their women out to do this work, leaving their own kids and families behind in the care of other poor people. I'm not suggesting, by the way, that care work should never be a paid job, but it makes a big difference how it's paid, how it's organized, and by whom.

Leonard: Is there specific organizing work that you see addressing these problems in a way

that gets to their root?

Fraser: There's a tremendous amount of organizing and activism going on, a lot of creativity, a lot of energy. But it remains rather dispersed and doesn't rise to the level of a counter-hegemonic project to change the organization of social reproduction. If you put together struggles for a shorter work week, for an unconditional basic income, for public child care, for the rights of migrant domestic workers and workers who do care work in for-profit nursing homes, hospitals, child care centers—then add struggles over clean water, housing, and environmental degradation, especially in the global South—what it adds up to, in my opinion, is a demand for some new way of organizing social reproduction.

Struggles over social reproduction are virtually ubiquitous. They just don't carry that label. But if it came to pass that these struggles did understand themselves in this way, there would be a powerful basis for linking them together in a broad movement for social transformation. And if they also understood that the structural basis of today's crisis of care is capitalism's inherent drive to subordinate reproduction to production, then things could get really interesting.

Leonard: Given the growing interest in socialism among young Americans, do you relate a struggle over social reproduction to a struggle for socialism?

Fraser: Absolutely. I call myself a democratic socialist, just as Bernie Sanders does, but we're living in a time where we have to frankly admit that we don't know exactly what that means. We know that it doesn't mean anything like the authoritarian command economy, single-party model of Communism. We know it means something deeper and more robust and egalitarian than social democracy. We know that it can't be nation-state bounded in a world where exploitation and expropriation and extraction are thoroughly transnational. We know all the things that it can't be, in other words, but we have a hard time defining the positive program.

One piece that I would insist on is that reimagining social reproduction must be central to any form of socialism that we could claim as desirable in the twenty-first century. How should the reproduction/production distinction be reinvented today, and what can replace the two-earner family? It's interesting—if you look at the history of socialism, even the old utopian socialism that Marx and Engels famously rejected, there was a great focus on what I'm calling social reproduction: how to organize family and community life and so on. It was utopian in ways that are not workable for us, but the problematic was there, and even in the history of modern industrial socialism, Marxian socialism, and non-Marxian industrial socialism, this problematic has flitted in and out of view. For the most part it has been treated as secondary to the problem of how to organize industrialization and plan production. But if you focus on one pole of the production/reproduction dyad alone the other

will come back and bite you in ways that are unintended and that will vitiate the whole project.

Leonard: Many of the questions that you raise about social life and the family have come to seem utopian again, like some remnant of the 1960s, and not necessarily central to a socialist program. And yet, you argue that we're actually at a crisis point—these issues *must* be central. The challenge of social reproduction is so fundamental to everyone's lived day-to-day experience that it's been surprising to me that it's often absent in the current revival of socialism.

Fraser: I agree very strongly with that. Given the acuteness of this crisis of social reproduction, it would be utopian, in the bad sense, for the left not to be focusing on this. The idea that we could somehow bring back manufacturing, that's what's utopian—again, in the bad sense. Unlike the idea that you could build a society that assumes every adult is a person with primary care responsibilities, community engagements, and social commitments. *That's* not utopian. It's a vision based on what human life is really like.

Leonard: Do you see a positive role for technology in all this, or does mechanizing domestic labor just lead to more leaning in? We've heard a lot lately about egg freezing at Google, which is designed to allow women to work longer before having kids. Since we tend to think that lots of mundane industrial work should be mechanized, do you see care work in a similar way? Or is it too intimate for that?

Fraser: I'm certainly not a Luddite. I very much appreciate having an electric light to read by at night, being able to Skype with you from far away, and so on and so forth. I'm not against even those technologies that I've written critically about, like egg freezing or mechanical breast milk pumps. The question is context: how they're produced and used, by whom, and for whose benefit. So I could easily imagine a context in which the availability of those things could be a legitimate choice. I'm not at all in the business of trying to shame anybody for the very constrained choices that we make between very bad and limited options.

I also think that activities oriented to sustaining social connection contain an ineliminable personal element. They are by definition interpersonal, involving intersubjective communication and in some cases, physical touching. And that militates against the idea of a total mechanization of care. But then again, I doubt we can envision the total automation of anything, if that means the elimination of all human input.

Leonard: Right, because in a way we're just talking about time. We mechanize things like care to save ourselves time, because we don't have enough. And only in a situation in which you have ample time do you really figure out what you want to mechanize anyway.

Fraser: I feel quite sure that I don't want to be washing all of my laundry by hand and I already know there are lots of things I don't want to spend my time doing. I'd love to have more time to do other things, including have talks like this.

Wolfgang Streeck: How Will Capitalism End? (¿Cómo terminará el capitalismo? - incluido en Español)

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There is a widespread sense today that capitalism is in critical condition, more so than at

any time since the end of the Second World War. [1] Looking back, the crash of 2008 was only the latest in a long sequence of political and economic disorders that began with the end of postwar prosperity in the mid-1970s. Successive crises have proved to be ever more severe, spreading more widely and rapidly through an increasingly interconnected global economy. Global inflation in the 1970s was followed by rising public debt in the 1980s, and fiscal consolidation in the 1990s was accompanied by a steep increase in private-sector indebtedness. [2] For four decades now, disequilibrium has more or less been the normal condition of the 'advanced' industrial world, at both the national and the global levels. In fact, with time, the crises of postwar oecd capitalism have become so pervasive that they have increasingly been perceived as more than just economic in nature, resulting in a rediscovery of the older notion of a capitalist society—of capitalism as a social order and way of life, vitally dependent on the uninterrupted progress of private capital accumulation.

Crisis symptoms are many, but prominent among them are three long-term trends in the trajectories of rich, highly industrialized—or better, increasingly deindustrialized—capitalist countries. The first is a persistent decline in the rate of economic growth, recently aggravated by the events of 2008 (Figure 1, below). The second, associated with the first, is an equally persistent rise in overall indebtedness in leading capitalist states, where governments, private households and non-financial as well as financial firms have, over forty years, continued to pile up financial obligations (for the us, see Figure 2, below). Third, economic inequality, of both income and wealth, has been on the ascent for several decades now (Figure 3, below), alongside rising debt and declining growth.



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Steady growth, sound money and a modicum of social equity, spreading some of the benefits of capitalism to those without capital, were long considered prerequisites for a capitalist political economy to command the legitimacy it needs. What must be most alarming from this perspective is that the three critical trends I have mentioned may be mutually reinforcing. There is mounting evidence that increasing inequality may be one of the causes of declining growth, as inequality both impedes improvements in productivity and weakens demand. Low growth, in turn, reinforces inequality by intensifying distributional conflict, making concessions to the poor more costly for the rich, and making the rich insist more than before on strict observance of the 'Matthew principle' governing free markets: 'For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath.' [3] Furthermore, rising debt, while failing

to halt the decline of economic growth, compounds inequality through the structural changes associated with financialization—which in turn aimed to compensate wage earners and consumers for the growing income inequality caused by stagnant wages and cutbacks in public services.

Can what appears to be a vicious circle of harmful trends continue forever? Are there counterforces that might break it—and what will happen if they fail to materialize, as they have for almost four decades now? Historians inform us that crises are nothing new under capitalism, and may in fact be required for its longer-term health. But what they are talking about are cyclical movements or random shocks, after which capitalist economies can move into a new equilibrium, at least temporarily. What we are seeing today, however, appears in retrospect to be a continuous process of gradual decay, protracted but apparently all the more inexorable. Recovery from the occasional *Reinigungskrise* is one thing; interrupting a concatenation of intertwined, long-term trends quite another. Assuming that ever lower growth, ever higher inequality and ever rising debt are not indefinitely sustainable, and may together issue in a crisis that is systemic in nature—one whose character we have difficulty imagining—can we see signs of an impending reversal?

Another stopgap

Here the news is not good. Six years have passed since 2008, the culmination so far of the postwar crisis sequence. While memory of the abyss was still fresh, demands and blueprints for 'reform' to protect the world from a replay abounded. International conferences and summit meetings of all kinds followed hot on each other's heels, but half a decade later hardly anything has come from them. In the meantime, the financial industry, where the disaster originated, has staged a full recovery: profits, dividends, salaries and bonuses are back where they were, while re-regulation became mired in international negotiations and domestic lobbying. Governments, first and foremost that of the United States, have remained firmly in the grip of the money-making industries. These, in turn, are being generously provided with cheap cash, created out of thin air on their behalf by their friends in the central banks—prominent among them the former Goldman Sachs man Mario Draghi at the helm of the ecb—money which they then sit on or invest in government debt. Growth remains anaemic, as do labour markets; unprecedented liquidity has failed to jumpstart the economy; and inequality is reaching ever more astonishing heights, as what little growth there is has been appropriated by the top one per cent of income earners—the lion's share by a small fraction of them. [4]

There would seem to be little reason indeed to be optimistic. For some time now, oecd capitalism has been kept going by liberal injections of fiat money, under a policy of monetary expansion whose architects know better than anyone else that it cannot continue forever. In fact, several attempts were made in 2013 to kick the habit, in Japan as well as in

the us, but when stock prices plunged in response, ‘tapering’, as it came to be called, was postponed for the time being. In mid-June, the Bank for International Settlements (bis) in Basel—the mother of all central banks—declared that ‘quantitative easing’ must come to an end. In its Annual Report, the Bank pointed out that central banks had, in reaction to the crisis and the slow recovery, expanded their balance sheets, ‘which are now collectively at roughly three times their pre-crisis level—and rising’. [5] While this had been necessary to ‘prevent financial collapse’, now the goal had to be ‘to return still-sluggish economies to strong and sustainable growth’. This, however, was beyond the capacities of central banks, which:

cannot enact the structural economic and financial reforms needed to return economies to the real growth paths authorities and their publics both want and expect. What central-bank accommodation has done during the recovery is to borrow time . . . But the time has not been well used, as continued low interest rates and unconventional policies have made it easy for the private sector to postpone deleveraging, easy for the government to finance deficits, and easy for the authorities to delay needed reforms in the real economy and in the financial system. After all, cheap money makes it easier to borrow than to save, easier to spend than to tax, easier to remain the same than to change.

Apparently this view was shared even by the Federal Reserve under Bernanke. By the late summer of 2013, it seemed once more to be signalling that the time of easy money was coming to an end. In September, however, the expected return to higher interest rates was again put off. The reason given was that ‘the economy’ looked less ‘strong’ than was hoped. Global stock prices immediately went up. The real reason, of course, why a return to more conventional monetary policies is so difficult is one that an international institution like bis is freer to spell out than a—for the time being—more politically exposed national central bank. This is that as things stand, the only alternative to sustaining capitalism by means of

an unlimited money supply is trying to revive it through neoliberal economic reform, as neatly encapsulated in the second subtitle of the bis's 2012-13 Annual Report: 'Enhancing Flexibility: A Key to Growth.' In other words, bitter medicine for the many, combined with higher incentives for the few. [6]

A problem with democracy

It is here that discussion of the crisis and the future of modern capitalism must turn to democratic politics. Capitalism and democracy had long been considered adversaries, until the postwar settlement seemed to have accomplished their reconciliation. Well into the twentieth century, owners of capital had been afraid of democratic majorities abolishing private property, while workers and their organizations expected capitalists to finance a return to authoritarian rule in defence of their privileges. Only in the Cold War world did capitalism and democracy seem to become aligned with one another, as economic progress made it possible for working-class majorities to accept a free-market, private-property regime, in turn making it appear that democratic freedom was inseparable from, and indeed depended on, the freedom of markets and profit-making. Today, however, doubts about the compatibility of a capitalist economy with a democratic polity have powerfully returned. Among ordinary people, there is now a pervasive sense that politics can no longer make a difference in their lives, as reflected in common perceptions of deadlock, incompetence and corruption among what seems an increasingly self-contained and self-serving political class, united in their claim that 'there is no alternative' to them and their policies. One result is declining electoral turnout combined with high voter volatility, producing ever greater electoral fragmentation, due to the rise of 'populist' protest parties, and pervasive government instability. [7]

The legitimacy of postwar democracy was based on the premise that states had a capacity to intervene in markets and correct their outcomes in the interest of citizens. Decades of rising inequality have cast doubt on this, as has the impotence of governments before, during and after the crisis of 2008. In response to their growing irrelevance in a global market economy, governments and political parties in oecd democracies more or less happily looked on as the 'democratic class struggle' turned into post-democratic politainment. [8] In the meantime, the transformation of the capitalist political economy from postwar Keynesianism to neoliberal Hayekianism progressed smoothly: from a political formula for economic growth through redistribution from the top to the bottom, to one expecting growth through redistribution from the bottom to the top. Egalitarian democracy, regarded under Keynesianism as economically productive, is considered a drag on efficiency under contemporary Hayekianism, where growth is to derive from insulation of markets—and of the cumulative advantage they entail—against redistributive political distortions.

A central topic of current anti-democratic rhetoric is the fiscal crisis of the contemporary

state, as reflected in the astonishing increase in public debt since the 1970s (Figure 4, below). Growing public indebtedness is put down to electoral majorities living beyond their means by exploiting their societies' 'common pool', and to opportunistic politicians buying the support of myopic voters with money they do not have. [9] However, that the fiscal crisis was unlikely to have been caused by an excess of redistributive democracy can be seen from the fact that the buildup of government debt coincided with a decline in electoral participation, especially at the lower end of the income scale, and marched in lockstep with shrinking unionization, the disappearance of strikes, welfare-state cutbacks and exploding income inequality. What the deterioration of public finances was related to was declining overall levels of taxation (Figure 5) and the increasingly regressive character of tax systems, as a result of 'reforms' of top income and corporate tax rates (Figure 6). Moreover, by replacing tax revenue with debt, governments contributed further to inequality, in that they offered secure investment opportunities to those whose money they would or could no longer confiscate and had to borrow instead. Unlike taxpayers, buyers of government bonds continue to own what they pay to the state, and in fact collect interest on it, typically paid out of ever less progressive taxation; they can also pass it on to their children. Moreover, rising public debt can be and is being utilized politically to argue for cutbacks in state spending and for privatization of public services, further constraining redistributive democratic intervention in the capitalist economy.



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Institutional protection of the market economy from democratic interference has advanced greatly in recent decades. Trade unions are on the decline everywhere and have in many countries been all but rooted out, especially in the us. Economic policy has widely been turned over to independent—i.e., democratically unaccountable—central banks concerned above all with the health and goodwill of financial markets. [10] In Europe, national economic policies, including wage-setting and budget-making, are increasingly governed by

supranational agencies like the European Commission and the European Central Bank that lie beyond the reach of popular democracy. This effectively de-democratizes European capitalism—without, of course, de-politicizing it.

Still, doubts remain among the profit-dependent classes as to whether democracy will, even in its emasculated contemporary version, allow for the neoliberal ‘structural reforms’ necessary for their regime to recover. Like ordinary citizens, although for the opposite reasons, elites are losing faith in democratic government and its suitability for reshaping societies in line with market imperatives. Public Choice’s disparaging view of democratic politics as a corruption of market justice, in the service of opportunistic politicians and their clientele, has become common sense among elite publics—as has the belief that market capitalism cleansed of democratic politics will not only be more efficient but also virtuous and responsible. [11] Countries like China are complimented for their authoritarian political systems being so much better equipped than majoritarian democracy, with its egalitarian bent, to deal with what are claimed to be the challenges of ‘globalization’—a rhetoric that is beginning conspicuously to resemble the celebration by capitalist elites during the interwar years of German and Italian fascism (and even Stalinist communism) for their apparently superior economic governance. [12]

For the time being, the neoliberal mainstream’s political utopia is a ‘market-conforming democracy’, devoid of market-correcting powers and supportive of ‘incentive-compatible’ redistribution from the bottom to the top. [13] Although that project is already far advanced in both Western Europe and the United States, its promoters continue to worry that the political institutions inherited from the postwar compromise may at some point be repossessed by popular majorities, in a last-minute effort to block progress toward a neoliberal solution to the crisis. Elite pressures for economic neutralization of egalitarian democracy therefore continue unabated; in Europe this takes the form of a continuing relocation of political-economic decision-making to supranational institutions such as the European Central Bank and summit meetings of government leaders.

Capitalism on the brink?

Has capitalism seen its day? In the 1980s, the idea that ‘modern capitalism’ could be run as a ‘mixed economy’, both technocratically managed and democratically controlled, was abandoned. Later, in the neoliberal revolution, social and economic order was reconceived as benevolently emerging from the ‘free play of market forces’. But with the crash of 2008, the promise of self-regulating markets attaining equilibrium on their own was discredited as well, without a plausible new formula for political-economic governance coming into view. This alone may be regarded as a symptom of a crisis that has become systemic, the more so the longer it lasts.

In my view it is high time, in the light of decades of declining growth, rising inequality and increasing indebtedness—as well as of the successive agonies of inflation, public debt and financial implosion since the 1970s—to think again about capitalism as a historical phenomenon, one that has not just a beginning, but also an end. For this, we need to part company with misleading models of social and institutional change. As long as we imagine the end of capitalism being decreed, Leninist-style, by some government or central committee, we cannot but consider capitalism eternal. (In fact it was communism, centralized as it was in Moscow, that could be and was terminated by decree.) Matters are different if, instead of imagining it being replaced by collective decision with some providentially designed new order, we allow for capitalism to collapse by itself.

I suggest that we learn to think about capitalism coming to an end without assuming responsibility for answering the question of what one proposes to put in its place. It is a Marxist—or better: modernist—prejudice that capitalism as a historical epoch will end only when a new, better society is in sight, and a revolutionary subject ready to implement it for the advancement of mankind. This presupposes a degree of political control over our common fate of which we cannot even dream after the destruction of collective agency, and indeed the hope for it, in the neoliberal-globalist revolution. Neither a utopian vision of an alternative future nor superhuman foresight should be required to validate the claim that capitalism is facing its *Götterdämmerung*. I am willing to make exactly this claim, although I am aware of how many times capitalism has been declared dead in the past. In fact, all of the main theorists of capitalism have predicted its impending expiry, ever since the concept came into use in the mid-1800s. This includes not just radical critics like Marx or Polanyi, but also bourgeois theorists such as Weber, Schumpeter, Sombart and Keynes. [14]

That something has failed to happen, in spite of reasonable predictions that it would, does not mean that it will never happen; here, too, there is no inductive proof. I believe that this time is different, one symptom being that even capitalism's master technicians have no clue today how to make the system whole again—see, for example, the recently published minutes of the deliberations of the Federal Reserve's board in 2008, [15] or the desperate search of central bankers, mentioned above, for the right moment to end 'quantitative easing'. This, however, is only the surface of the problem. Beneath it is the stark fact that capitalist progress has by now more or less destroyed any agency that could stabilize it by limiting it; the point being that the stability of capitalism as a socio-economic system depends on its *Eigendynamik* being contained by countervailing forces—by collective interests and institutions subjecting capital accumulation to social checks and balances. The implication is that capitalism may undermine itself by being too successful. I will argue this point in more detail below.

The image I have of the end of capitalism—an end that I believe is already under way—is one of a social system in chronic disrepair, for reasons of its own and regardless of the

absence of a viable alternative. While we cannot know when and how exactly capitalism will disappear and what will succeed it, what matters is that no force is on hand that could be expected to reverse the three downward trends in economic growth, social equality and financial stability and end their mutual reinforcement. In contrast to the 1930s, there is today no political-economic formula on the horizon, left or right, that might provide capitalist societies with a coherent new regime of regulation, or *régulation*. Social integration as well as system integration seem irreversibly damaged and set to deteriorate further. [16] What is most likely to happen as time passes is a continuous accumulation of small and not-so-small dysfunctions; none necessarily deadly as such, but most beyond repair, all the more so as they become too many for individual address. In the process, the parts of the whole will fit together less and less; frictions of all kinds will multiply; unanticipated consequences will spread, along ever more obscure lines of causation. Uncertainty will proliferate; crises of every sort—of legitimacy, productivity or both—will follow each other in quick succession while predictability and governability will decline further (as they have for decades now). Eventually, the myriad provisional fixes devised for short-term crisis management will collapse under the weight of the daily disasters produced by a social order in profound, anomic disarray.

Conceiving of the end of capitalism as a process rather than an event raises the issue of how to define capitalism. Societies are complex entities that do not die in the way organisms do: with the rare exception of total extinction, discontinuity is always embedded in some continuity. If we say that a society has ended, we mean that certain features of its organization that we consider essential to it have disappeared; others may well have survived. I propose that to determine if capitalism is alive, dying or dead, we define it as a modern society [17] that secures its collective reproduction as an unintended side-effect of individually rational, competitive profit maximization in pursuit of capital accumulation, through a 'labour process' combining privately owned capital with commodified labour power, fulfilling the Mandevillean promise of private vices turning into public benefits. [18] It is this promise, I maintain, that contemporary capitalism can no longer keep—ending its historical existence as a self-reproducing, sustainable, predictable and legitimate social order.

The demise of capitalism so defined is unlikely to follow anyone's blueprint. As the decay progresses, it is bound to provoke political protests and manifold attempts at collective intervention. But for a long time, these are likely to remain of the Luddite sort: local, dispersed, uncoordinated, 'primitive'—adding to the disorder while unable to create a new order, at best unintentionally helping it to come about. One might think that a long-lasting crisis of this sort would open up more than a few windows of opportunity for reformist or revolutionary agency. It seems, however, that disorganized capitalism is disorganizing not only itself but its opposition as well, depriving it of the capacity either to defeat capitalism or to rescue it. For capitalism to end, then, it must provide for its own destruction—which, I

would argue, is exactly what we are witnessing today.

A Pyrrhic victory

But why should capitalism, whatever its deficiencies, be in crisis at all if it no longer has any opposition worthy of the name? When communism imploded in 1989, this was widely viewed as capitalism's final triumph, as the 'end of history'. Even today, after 2008, the Old Left remains on the brink of extinction everywhere, while a new New Left has up to now failed to appear. The masses, the poor and powerless as much as the relatively well-to-do, seem firmly in the grip of consumerism, with collective goods, collective action and collective organization thoroughly out of fashion. As the only game in town, why should capitalism not carry on, by default if for no other reason? At first glance, there is indeed much that speaks against pronouncing capitalism dead, regardless of all the ominous writing on the historical wall. As far as inequality is concerned, people may get used to it, especially with the help of public entertainment and political repression. Furthermore, examples abound of governments being re-elected that cut social spending and privatize public services, in pursuit of sound money for the owners of money. Concerning environmental deterioration, it proceeds only slowly compared to the human lifespan, so one can deny it while learning to live with it. Technological advances with which to buy time, such as fracking, can never be ruled out, and if there are limits to the pacifying powers of consumerism, we clearly are nowhere near them. Moreover, adapting to more time-consuming and life-consuming work regimes can be taken as a competitive challenge, an opportunity for personal achievement. Cultural definitions of the good life have always been highly malleable and might well be stretched further to match the onward march of commodification, at least as long as radical or religious challenges to pro-capitalist re-education can be suppressed, ridiculed or otherwise marginalized. Finally, most of today's stagnation theories apply only to the West, or just to the us, not to China, Russia, India or Brazil—countries to which the frontier of economic growth may be about to migrate, with vast virgin lands waiting to be made available for capitalist progress. [19]

My answer is that having no opposition may actually be more of a liability for capitalism than an asset. Social systems thrive on internal heterogeneity, on a pluralism of organizing principles protecting them from dedicating themselves entirely to a single purpose, crowding out other goals that must also be attended to if the system is to be sustainable. Capitalism as we know it has benefited greatly from the rise of countermovements against the rule of profit and of the market. Socialism and trade unionism, by putting a brake on commodification, prevented capitalism from destroying its non-capitalist foundations—trust, good faith, altruism, solidarity within families and communities, and the like. Under Keynesianism and Fordism, capitalism's more or less loyal opposition secured and helped stabilize aggregate demand, especially in recessions. Where circumstances were favourable, working-class organization even served as a 'productivity whip', by forcing capital to

embark on more advanced production concepts. It is in this sense that Geoffrey Hodgson has argued that capitalism can survive only as long as it is not completely capitalist—as it has not yet rid itself, or the society in which it resides, of ‘necessary impurities’. [20] Seen this way, capitalism’s defeat of its opposition may actually have been a Pyrrhic victory, freeing it from countervailing powers which, while sometimes inconvenient, had in fact supported it. Could it be that victorious capitalism has become its own worst enemy?

Frontiers of commodification

In exploring this possibility, we might wish to turn to Karl Polanyi’s idea of social limits to market expansion, as underlying his concept of the three ‘fictitious commodities’: labour, land (or nature) and money. [21] A fictitious commodity is defined as a resource to which the laws of supply and demand apply only partially and awkwardly if at all; it can therefore only be treated as a commodity in a carefully circumscribed, regulated way, since complete commodification will destroy it or make it unusable. Markets, however, have an inherent tendency to expand beyond their original domain, the trading of material goods, to all other spheres of life, regardless of their suitability for commodification—or, in Marxian terms, for subsumption under the logic of capital accumulation. Unless held back by constraining institutions, market expansion is thus at permanent risk of undermining itself, and with it the viability of the capitalist economic and social system.

In fact, the indications are that market expansion has today reached a critical threshold with respect to all three of Polanyi’s fictitious commodities, as institutional safeguards that served to protect them from full marketization have been eroded on a number of fronts. This is what seems to be behind the search currently under way in all advanced capitalist societies for a new time regime with respect to labour, in particular a new allocation of time between social and economic relations and pursuits; for a sustainable energy regime in relation to nature; and for a stable financial regime for the production and allocation of money. In all three areas, societies are today groping for more effective limitations on the logic of expansion, [22] institutionalized as one of private enrichment, that is fundamental to the capitalist social order. These limitations centre on the increasingly demanding claims made by the employment system on human labour, by capitalist production and consumption systems on finite natural resources, and by the financial and banking system on people’s confidence in ever more complex pyramids of money, credit and debt.

Looking at each of the three Polanyian crisis zones in turn, we may note that it was an excessive commodification of money that brought down the global economy in 2008: the transformation of a limitless supply of cheap credit into ever more sophisticated financial ‘products’ gave rise to a real-estate bubble of a size unimaginable at the time. As of the 1980s, deregulation of us financial markets had abolished the restrictions on the private production and marketization of money devised after the Great Depression.

'Financialization', as the process came to be known, seemed the last remaining way to restore growth and profitability to the economy of the overextended hegemon of global capitalism. Once let loose, however, the money-making industry invested a good part of its enormous resources in lobbying for a further removal of prudential regulation, not to mention in circumventing whatever rules were left. With hindsight, the enormous risks that came with the move from the old regime of $m-c-m'$ to a new one of $m-m'$ are easy to see, as is the trend toward ever-increasing inequality associated with the disproportionate growth of the banking sector. [23]

Concerning nature, there is growing unease over the tension, now widely perceived, between the capitalist principle of infinite expansion and the finite supply of natural resources. Neo-Malthusian discourses of various denominations became popular in the 1970s. Whatever one may think of them, and although some are now considered prematurely alarmist, no one seriously denies that the energy consumption patterns of rich capitalist societies cannot be extended to the rest of the world without destroying essential preconditions of human life. What seems to be taking shape is a race between the advancing exhaustion of nature on the one hand and technological innovation on the other—substituting artificial materials for natural ones, preventing or repairing environmental damage, devising shelters against unavoidable degradation of the biosphere. One question that no one seems able to answer is how the enormous collective resources potentially required for this may be mobilized in societies governed by what C. B. MacPherson termed 'possessive individualism'. [24] What actors and institutions are to secure the collective good of a liveable environment in a world of competitive production and consumption?

Thirdly, the commodification of human labour may have reached a critical point. Deregulation of labour markets under international competition has undone whatever prospects there might once have been for a general limitation of working hours. [25] It has also made employment more precarious for a growing share of the population. [26] With the rising labour-market participation of women, due in part to the disappearance of the 'family wage', hours per month sold by families to employers have increased while wages have lagged behind productivity, most dramatically in the capitalist heartland, the us (see Figure 7). At the same time, deregulation and the destruction of trade unions notwithstanding, labour markets typically fail to clear, and residual unemployment on the order of 7 to 8 per cent has become the new normal, even in a country like Sweden. Sweatshops have expanded in many industries including services, but mostly on the global periphery, beyond the reach of the authorities and what remains of trade unions in the capitalist centre, and out of view of consumers. As sweated labour competes with workers in countries with historically strong labour protections, working conditions for the former deteriorate while unemployment becomes endemic for the latter. Meanwhile, complaints multiply about the penetration of work into family life, alongside pressures from labour markets to join an

unending race to upgrade one's 'human capital'. Moreover, global mobility enables employers to replace unwilling local workers with willing immigrant ones. It also compensates for sub-replacement fertility, itself due in part to a changed balance between unpaid and paid work and between non-market and market consumption. The result is a secular weakening of social counter-movements, caused by a loss of class and social solidarity and accompanied by crippling political conflicts over ethnic diversity, even in traditionally liberal countries such as the Netherlands, Sweden or Norway.



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The question of how and where capital accumulation must be restrained in order to protect the three fictitious commodities from total commodification has been contested throughout the history of capitalism. But the present worldwide disorder in all three border zones at the same time is something different: it results from a spectacularly successful onslaught of markets, expanding more rapidly than ever, on a wide range of institutions and actors that, whether inherited from the past or built up in long political struggles, had for a time kept capitalism's advance to some extent socially embedded. Labour, land and money have simultaneously become crisis zones after 'globalization' endowed market relations and production chains with an unprecedented capacity to cross the boundaries of national political and legal jurisdictions. The result is a fundamental disorganization of the agencies that have, in the modern era, more or less successfully domesticated capitalist 'animal spirits', for the sake of society as a whole as well as of capitalism itself.

It is not only with respect to fictitious commodities that capital accumulation may be hitting its limits. On the surface, consumption of goods and services continues to grow, and the implicit premise of modern economics—that the human desire and capacity to consume are unlimited—would seem to be easily vindicated by a visit to any large shopping mall. Still, fears that markets for consumer goods may at some point become saturated—perhaps in the course of a post-materialist decoupling of human aspirations from the purchase of commodities—are endemic among profit-dependent producers. This in itself reflects the fact that consumption in mature capitalist societies has long become dissociated from material need. [27] The lion's share of consumption expenditure today—and a rapidly growing one—is spent not on the use value of goods, but on their symbolic value, their aura or halo. This is why industry practitioners find themselves paying more than ever for marketing, including not just advertising but also product design and innovation. Nevertheless, in spite of the growing sophistication of sales promotion, the intangibles of culture make commercial success difficult to predict—certainly more so than in an era when growth could be achieved by gradually supplying all households in a country with a washing machine. [28]

Five disorders

Capitalism without opposition is left to its own devices, which do not include self-restraint. The capitalist pursuit of profit is open-ended, and cannot be otherwise. The idea that less could be more is not a principle a capitalist society could honour; it must be imposed upon it, or else there will be no end to its progress, self-consuming as it may ultimately be. At present, I claim, we are already in a position to observe capitalism passing away as a result of having destroyed its opposition—dying, as it were, from an overdose of itself. For illustration I will point to five systemic disorders of today's advanced capitalism; all of them result in various ways from the weakening of traditional institutional and political restraints on capitalist advance. I call them stagnation, oligarchic redistribution, the plundering of the public domain, corruption and global anarchy.

Six years after Lehman, predictions of long-lasting economic stagnation are *en vogue*. A prominent example is a much-discussed paper by Robert Gordon, who argues that the main innovations that have driven productivity and economic growth since the 1800s could happen only once, like the increase in the speed of transportation or the installation of running water in cities. [29] Compared to them, the recent spread of information technology has produced only minor productivity effects, if any. While Gordon's argument may seem somewhat technologically deterministic, it appears plausible that capitalism can hope to attain the level of growth needed to compensate a non-capitalist working class for helping others accumulate capital only if technology opens up ever new opportunities for increasing productivity. In any case, in what looks like an afterthought Gordon supports his prediction of low or no growth by listing six non-technological factors—he calls them 'headwinds'—which would make for long-term stagnation 'even if innovation were to continue . . . at the rate of the two decades before 2007'. [30] Among these factors he includes two that I argue have for some time been intertwined with low growth: inequality and 'the overhang of consumer and government debt'. [31]

What is astonishing is how close current stagnation theories come to the Marxist underconsumption theories of the 1970s and 1980s. [32] Recently, none other than Lawrence 'Larry' Summers—friend of Wall Street, chief architect of financial deregulation under Clinton, and Obama's first choice for president of the Federal Reserve, until he had to give way in face of congressional opposition [33]—has joined the stagnation theorists. At the IMF Economic Forum on November 8 last year, Summers confessed to having given up hope that close-to-zero interest rates would produce significant economic growth in the foreseeable future, in a world he felt was suffering from an excess of capital. [34] Summers' prediction of 'secular stagnation' as the 'new normal' met with surprisingly broad approval among his fellow economists, including Paul Krugman. [35] What Summers mentioned only in passing was that the conspicuous failure of even negative real interest rates to revive investment coincided with a long-term increase in inequality, in the US and elsewhere. As

Keynes would have known, concentration of income at the top must detract from effective demand and make capital owners look for speculative profit opportunities outside the 'real economy'. This may in fact have been one of the causes of the 'financialization' of capitalism that began in the 1980s.

The power elites of global capitalism would seem to be resigning themselves to low or no growth on aggregate for the foreseeable future. This does not preclude high profits in the financial sector, essentially from speculative trading with cheap money supplied by central banks. Few seem to fear that the money generated to prevent stagnation from turning into deflation will cause inflation, as the unions that could claim a share in it no longer exist. [36] In fact the concern now is with too little rather than too much inflation, the emerging received wisdom being that a healthy economy requires a yearly inflation rate of at least 2 per cent, if not more. The only inflation in sight, however, is that of asset-price bubbles, and Summers took pains to prepare his audience for a lot of them.

For capitalists and their retainers, the future looks like a decidedly bumpy ride. Low growth will refuse them additional resources with which to settle distributional conflicts and pacify discontent. Bubbles are waiting to burst, out of the blue, and it is not certain whether states will regain the capacity to take care of the victims in time. The stagnant economy that is shaping up will be far from a stationary or steady-state economy; as growth declines and risks increase, the struggle for survival will become more intense. Rather than restoring the protective limits to commodification that were rendered obsolete by globalization, ever new ways will be sought to exploit nature, extend and intensify working time, and encourage what the jargon calls creative finance, in a desperate effort to keep profits up and capital accumulation going. The scenario of 'stagnation with a chance of bubbles' may most plausibly be imagined as a battle of all against all, punctured by occasional panics and with the playing of endgames becoming a popular pastime.

Plutocrats and plunder

Turning to the second disorder, there is no indication that the long-term trend towards greater economic inequality will be broken any time soon, or indeed ever. Inequality depresses growth, for Keynesian and other reasons. But the easy money currently provided by central banks to restore growth—easy for capital but not, of course, for labour—further adds to inequality, by blowing up the financial sector and inviting speculative rather than productive investment. Redistribution to the top thus becomes oligarchic: rather than serving a collective interest in economic progress, as promised by neoclassical economics, it turns into extraction of resources from increasingly impoverished, declining societies. Countries that come to mind here are Russia and Ukraine, but also Greece and Spain, and increasingly the United States. Under oligarchic redistribution, the Keynesian bond which tied the profits of the rich to the wages of the poor is severed, cutting the fate of economic

elites loose from that of the masses. [37] This was anticipated in the infamous 'plutonomy' memorandums distributed by Citibank in 2005 and 2006 to a select circle of its richest clients, to assure them that their prosperity no longer depended on that of wage earners. [38]

Oligarchic redistribution and the trend toward plutonomy, even in countries that are still considered democracies, conjure up the nightmare of elites confident that they will outlive the social system that is making them rich. Plutonomic capitalists may no longer have to worry about national economic growth because their transnational fortunes grow without it; hence the exit of the super-rich from countries like Russia or Greece, who take their money—or that of their fellow-citizens—and run, preferably to Switzerland, Britain or the United States. The possibility, as provided by a global capital market, of rescuing yourself and your family by exiting together with your possessions offers the strongest possible temptation for the rich to move into endgame mode—cash in, burn bridges, and leave nothing behind but scorched earth.

Closely related to this is the third disorder, the plundering of the public domain through underfunding and privatization. I have elsewhere traced its origin to the twofold transition since the 1970s from the tax state to the debt state to, finally, the consolidation or austerity state. Foremost among the causes of this shift were the new opportunities offered by global capital markets since the 1980s for tax flight, tax evasion, tax-regime shopping, and the extortion of tax cuts from governments by corporations and earners of high incomes. Attempts to close public deficits relied almost exclusively on cuts in government spending—both to social security and to investment in physical infrastructures and human capital. As income gains accrued increasingly to the top one per cent, the public domain of capitalist economies shrank, often dramatically, starved in favour of internationally mobile oligarchic wealth. Part of the process was privatization, carried out regardless of the contribution public investment in productivity and social cohesion might have made to economic growth and social equity.

Even before 2008, it was generally taken for granted that the fiscal crisis of the postwar state had to be resolved by lowering spending instead of raising taxes, especially on the rich. Consolidation of public finances by way of austerity was and is being imposed on societies even though it is likely to depress growth. This would seem to be another indication that the economy of the oligarchs has been decoupled from that of ordinary people, as the rich no longer expect to pay a price for maximizing their income at the expense of the non-rich, or for pursuing their interests at the expense of the economy as a whole. What may be surfacing here is the fundamental tension described by Marx between, on the one hand, the increasingly social nature of production in an advanced economy and society, and private ownership of the means of production on the other. As productivity growth requires more public provision, it tends to become incompatible with private

accumulation of profits, forcing capitalist elites to choose between the two. The result is what we are seeing already today: economic stagnation combined with oligarchic redistribution. [39]

Corrosions of the iron cage

Along with declining economic growth, rising inequality and the transferral of the public domain to private ownership, corruption is the fourth disorder of contemporary capitalism. In his attempt to rehabilitate it by reclaiming its ethical foundations, Max Weber drew a sharp line between capitalism and greed, pointing to what he believed were its origins in the religious tradition of Protestantism. According to Weber, greed had existed everywhere and at all times; not only was it not distinctive of capitalism, it was even apt to subvert it. Capitalism was based not on a desire to get rich, but on self-discipline, methodical effort, responsible stewardship, sober devotion to a calling and to a rational organization of life. Weber did expect the cultural values of capitalism to fade as it matured and turned into an 'iron cage', where bureaucratic regulation and the constraints of competition would take the place of the cultural ideas that had originally served to disconnect capital accumulation from both hedonistic-materialistic consumption and primitive hoarding instincts. What he could not anticipate, however, was the neoliberal revolution in the last third of the twentieth century and the unprecedented opportunities it provided to get very rich.

Pace Weber, fraud and corruption have forever been companions of capitalism. But there are good reasons to believe that with the rise of the financial sector to economic dominance, they have become so pervasive that Weber's ethical vindication of capitalism now seems to apply to an altogether different world. Finance is an 'industry' where innovation is hard to distinguish from rule-bending or rule-breaking; where the payoffs from semi-legal and illegal activities are particularly high; where the gradient in expertise and pay between firms and regulatory authorities is extreme; where revolving doors between the two offer unending possibilities for subtle and not-so-subtle corruption; [40] where the largest firms are not just too big to fail, but also too big to jail, given their importance for national economic policy and tax revenue; and where the borderline between private companies and the state is more blurred than anywhere else, as indicated by the 2008 bailout or by the huge number of former and future employees of financial firms in the American government. After Enron and WorldCom, it was observed that fraud and corruption had reached all-time highs in the us economy. But what came to light after 2008 beat everything: rating agencies being paid by the producers of toxic securities to award them top grades; offshore shadow banking, money laundering and assistance in large-scale tax evasion as the normal business of the biggest banks with the best addresses; the sale to unsuspecting customers of securities constructed so that other customers could bet against them; the leading banks worldwide fraudulently fixing interest rates and the gold price, and so on. In recent years, several large banks have had to pay billions of dollars in fines for

activities of this sort, and more developments of this kind seem to be in the offing. What at first glance may look like quite significant sanctions, however, appear minuscule when compared to the banks' balance sheets—not to mention the fact that all of these were out-of-court settlements of cases that governments didn't want or dare to prosecute. [41]

Capitalism's moral decline may have to do with its economic decline, the struggle for the last remaining profit opportunities becoming uglier by the day and turning into asset-stripping on a truly gigantic scale. However that may be, public perceptions of capitalism are now deeply cynical, the whole system commonly perceived as a world of dirty tricks for ensuring the further enrichment of the already rich. Nobody believes any more in a moral revival of capitalism. The Weberian attempt to prevent it from being confounded with greed has finally failed, as it has more than ever become synonymous with corruption.

A world out of joint

We come, finally, to the fifth disorder. Global capitalism needs a centre to secure its periphery and provide it with a credible monetary regime. Until the 1920s, this role was performed by Britain, and from 1945 until the 1970s by the United States; the years in between, when a centre was missing, and different powers aspired to take on the role, were a time of chaos, economically as well as politically. Stable relations between the currencies of the countries participating in the capitalist world economy are essential for trade and capital flows across national borders, which are in turn essential for capital accumulation; they need to be underwritten by a global banker of last resort. An effective centre is also required to support regimes on the periphery willing to condone the low-price extraction of raw materials. Moreover, local collaboration is needed to hold down traditionalist opposition to capitalist *Landnahme* outside the developed world.

Contemporary capitalism increasingly suffers from global anarchy, as the United States is no longer able to serve in its postwar role, and a multipolar world order is nowhere on the horizon. While there are (still?) no great-power clashes, the dollar's function as international reserve currency is contested—and cannot be otherwise, given the declining performance of the American economy, its rising levels of public and private debt, and the recent experience of several highly destructive financial crises. The search for an international alternative, perhaps in the form of a currency basket, is getting nowhere since the us cannot afford to give up the privilege of indebting itself in its own currency. Moreover, stabilizing measures taken by international organizations at Washington's behest have increasingly tended to have destabilizing effects on the periphery of the system, as in the case of the inflationary bubbles caused in countries like Brazil and Turkey by 'quantitative easing' in the centre.

Militarily, the us has now been either defeated or deadlocked in three major land wars since

the 1970s, and will in future probably be more reluctant to intervene in local conflicts with 'boots on the ground'. New, sophisticated means of violence are being deployed to reassure collaborating governments and inspire confidence in the us as a global enforcer of oligarchic property rights, and as a safe haven for oligarchic families and their treasure. They include the use of highly secretive 'special forces' to seek out potential enemies for individualized destruction; unmanned aircraft capable of killing anybody at almost any place on the globe; confinement and torture of unknown numbers of people in a worldwide system of secret prison camps; and comprehensive surveillance of potential opposition everywhere with the help of 'big data' technology. Whether this will be enough to restore global order, especially in light of China's rise as an effective economic and, to a lesser extent, military rival to the us may, however, be doubted.

In summary, capitalism, as a social order held together by a promise of boundless collective progress, is in critical condition. Growth is giving way to secular stagnation; what economic progress remains is less and less shared; and confidence in the capitalist money economy is leveraged on a rising mountain of promises that are ever less likely to be kept. Since the 1970s, the capitalist centre has undergone three successive crises, of inflation, public finances and private debt. Today, in an uneasy phase of transition, its survival depends on central banks providing it with unlimited synthetic liquidity. Step by step, capitalism's shotgun marriage with democracy since 1945 is breaking up. On the three frontiers of commodification—labour, nature and money—regulatory institutions restraining the advance of capitalism for its own good have collapsed, and after the final victory of capitalism over its enemies no political agency capable of rebuilding them is in sight. The capitalist system is at present stricken with at least five worsening disorders for which no cure is at hand: declining growth, oligarchy, starvation of the public sphere, corruption and international anarchy. What is to be expected, on the basis of capitalism's recent historical record, is a long and painful period of cumulative decay: of intensifying frictions, of fragility and uncertainty, and of a steady succession of 'normal accidents'—not necessarily but quite possibly on the scale of the global breakdown of the 1930s.

[1] A version of this text was delivered as the Anglo-German Foundation Lecture at the British Academy on 23 January 2014.

[2] I have explored these arguments more fully in *Buying Time: The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism*, London and New York 2014.

[3] Matthew 25:29. This was first described as a social mechanism by Robert Merton in 'The Matthew Effect in Science', *Science*, vol. 159, no. 3810, pp. 56–63. The technical term is cumulative advantage.

[4] See Emmanuel Saez, 'Striking It Richer: The Evolution of Top Incomes in the United States', 2 March 2012, available via Saez's personal web page at uc Berkeley; and Facundo Alvaredo, Anthony Atkinson, Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez, 'The Top 1 per cent in International and Historical Perspective', *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2013, pp. 3-20.

[5] Bank for International Settlements, *83rd Annual Report, 1 April 2012-31 March 2013*, Basel 2013, p. 5.

[6] Even that may be less than promising in countries like the us and uk, where it is hard to see what neoliberal 'reforms' still remain to be implemented.

[7] See Armin Schäfer and Wolfgang Streeck, eds, *Politics in the Age of Austerity*, Cambridge 2013.

[8] Walter Korpi, *The Democratic Class Struggle*, London 1983; and Colin Crouch, *Post-Democracy*, Cambridge 2004.

[9] This is the Public Choice view of fiscal crisis, as powerfully put forward by James Buchanan and his school; see for example Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, *The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy*, Ann Arbor 1962.

[10] One often forgets that most central banks, including the bis, have long been or still are partly under private ownership. For example, the Bank of England and the Bank of France were nationalized only after 1945. Central bank 'independence', as introduced by many countries in the 1990s, may be seen as a form of re-privatization.

[11] Of course, as Colin Crouch has pointed out, neoliberalism in its actually existing form is a politically deeply entrenched oligarchy of giant multinational firms; see Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*, Cambridge 2011.

[12] See Daniel A. Bell, *Beyond Liberal Democracy: Political Thinking for an East Asian Context*, Princeton 2006; and Nicolas Berggruen and Nathan Gardels, eds, *Intelligent Governance for the 21st Century: A Middle Way between West and East*, London 2012.

[13] The expression 'market-conforming' is from Angela Merkel. The Chancellor's public rhetoric appears deliberately designed to obfuscate and mystify. Here is her September 2011 statement on the subject in original Merckelspeak: 'Wir leben ja in einer Demokratie und sind auch froh darüber. Das ist eine parlamentarische Demokratie. Deshalb ist das Budgetrecht ein Kernrecht des Parlaments. Insofern werden wir Wege finden, die parlamentarische Mitbestimmung so zu gestalten, dass sie trotzdem auch marktkonform ist,

also dass sich auf den Märkten die entsprechenden Signale ergeben.’ A rough translation might run: ‘We certainly live in a democracy and are also glad about this. This is a parliamentary democracy. Therefore the budget right is a core right of parliament. To this extent we will find ways to shape parliamentary co-decision in such a way that it is nevertheless also market-conforming, so that the respective signals emerge on the market.’

[14] So, if history proves me wrong, I will at least be in good company.

[15] As reported by Gretchen Morgenson, ‘A New Light on Regulators in the Dark’, *New York Times*, 23 April 2014. The article presents ‘a disturbing picture of a central bank that was in the dark about each looming disaster throughout 2008’.

[16] On these terms, see David Lockwood, ‘Social Integration and System Integration’, in George Zollschan and Walter Hirsch, eds, *Explorations in Social Change*, London 1964, pp. 244-57.

[17] Or, as Adam Smith has it, a ‘progressive’ society—one aiming at growth of its productivity and prosperity that is in principle boundless, as measured by the size of its money economy.

[18] Other definitions of capitalism emphasize, for example, the peaceful nature of capitalist commercial market exchange: see Albert Hirschman, ‘Rival Interpretations of Market Society: Civilizing, Destructive or Feeble?’, *Journal of Economic Literature*, vol. 20, no. 4, 1982, pp. 1463-84. This neglects the fact that non-violent ‘free trade’ is typically confined to the centre of the capitalist system, whereas on its historical and spatial periphery violence is rampant. For example, illegal markets (drugs, prostitution, arms etc.) governed by private violence raise huge sums of money for legal investment—a version of primitive accumulation. Moreover, legitimate public and illegal private violence often blend into one another, not only on the capitalist frontier but also in the support provided by the centre to its collaborators on the periphery. One also needs to include public violence in the centre against dissenters and, when they still meaningfully existed, trade unions.

[19] Although recent assessments of their economic performance and prospects are much less enthusiastic than they were two or three years ago. Lately the euphoric ‘bric’ discourse has been succeeded by anxious questioning of the economic prospects of the ‘Fragile Five’ (Turkey, Brazil, India, South Africa and Indonesia; *New York Times*, 28 January 2014). Reports on accumulating problems in Chinese capitalism have also become more frequent, pointing, among other things, to the extensive indebtedness of local and regional governments. Since the Crimean crisis, we have also been hearing about the structural weaknesses of the Russian economy.

[20] 'Every socio-economic system must rely on at least one structurally dissimilar subsystem to function. There must always be a coexistent plurality of modes of production, so that the social formation as a whole has the requisite structural variety to cope with change': Hodgson, 'The Evolution of Capitalism from the Perspective of Institutional and Evolutionary Economics', in Hodgson et al., eds, *Capitalism in Evolution: Global Contentions, East and West*, Cheltenham 2001, pp. 71ff. For a less functionalist formulation of the same idea see my concept of 'beneficial constraint': 'Beneficial Constraints: On the Economic Limits of Rational Voluntarism', in Rogers Hollingsworth and Robert Boyer, eds, *Contemporary Capitalism: The Embeddedness of Institutions*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 197-219.

[21] Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* [1944], Boston 1957, pp. 68-76.

[22] Or even 'transgression', if we go by the German: *Steigerungslogik*.

[23] Donald Tomaskovic-Devey and Ken-Hou Lin, 'Income Dynamics, Economic Rents and the Financialization of the us Economy', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 76, no. 4, 2011, pp. 538-59.

[24] C. B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*, Oxford 1962.

[25] Consider the attack on the last remnants of the 35-hour week in France, under the auspices of a Socialist president and his party.

[26] From the capitalist frontier, it is reported that leading investment banks have begun suggesting to their lowest-level employees that they 'should try to spend four weekend days away from the office each month, part of a broader effort to improve working conditions': 'Wall St Shock: Take a Day Off, Even a Sunday', *New York Times*, 10 January 2014.

[27] Think of the gigantic potlatch organized every year before Christmas by the consumer-goods and retail industries, or of the day after Thanksgiving, ominously referred to in the us as 'Black Friday' because of the ubiquitous price reductions and the collective shopping hysteria it inaugurates. Imagine the desperation if nobody showed up!

[28] The vital importance of a consumerist culture for the reproduction of contemporary capitalism cannot be underestimated. Consumers are the ultimate allies of capital in its distributional conflict with producers, even though producers and consumers tend to be the same people. By hunting for the best bargain, consumers defeat themselves as producers, driving their own jobs abroad; as they take up consumer credit to replenish their reduced

purchasing power, they supplement consumerist incentives with legal obligations to work, entered into as debtors and enforced by lenders. See Lendol Calder, *Financing the American Dream: A Cultural History of Consumer Credit*, Princeton 1999.

[29] Robert Gordon, 'Is us Economic Growth Over? Faltering Innovation Confronts the Six Headwinds', nber *Working Paper* no. 18315, August 2012.

[30] According to Gordon, that rate amounted to 1.8 per cent per annum. Under the impact of the six adverse forces, it would, in the future, fall to 0.2 per cent per annum for the bottom 99 per cent of the American population: Gordon, 'Is us Economic Growth Over?', pp. 18 ff. (Growth for the top one per cent is of course a different matter.) Note that Gordon believes that, in fact, the basic growth rate will be lower than 1.8 per cent.

[31] Gordon's exercise in forecasting was and is widely debated. Doubts have been raised in particular with respect to future technological progress in artificial intelligence and robotics. While progress on this front seems likely, however, it is unlikely that its fruits will be equitably shared. Without social protection, technological advances in these areas would be destructive of employment and would give rise to further social polarization. Whatever technological progress would add to growth would probably be cancelled out by what it would add to inequality.

[32] See, among many others, Harry Magdoff and Paul Sweezy, *Stagnation and the Financial Explosion*, New York 1987. For an interesting assessment of the applicability of underconsumption theory to post-2008 capitalism, see John Bellamy Foster and Fred Magdoff, *The Great Financial Crisis: Causes and Consequences*, New York 2009.

[33] Presumably also because he would have had to declare the substantial income he received from Wall Street firms after his resignation from the Obama administration at the end of 2010. See 'The Fed, Lawrence Summers, and Money', *New York Times*, 11 August 2013.

[34] The same idea had been put forward in 2005 when Ben Bernanke, soon to follow Alan Greenspan at the Fed, invoked a 'savings glut' to account for the failure of the Fed's 'flooding the markets with liquidity' to stimulate investment. Today Summers casually subscribes to the view of Left stagnation theorists that the 'boom' of the 1990s and early 2000s was a chimera: 'Too easy money, too much borrowing, too much wealth. Was there a great boom? Capacity utilization wasn't under any great pressure, unemployment wasn't under any remarkably low level. Inflation was entirely quiescent. So somehow even a great bubble wasn't enough to produce any excess in aggregate demand.' A video of Summers' speech is available on the imf website.

[35] Paul Krugman, 'A Permanent Slump?', *New York Times*, 18 November 2013.

[36] Their absence, of course, was one of the reasons why excess profits could come about and depress demand in the first place.

[37] In the us and elsewhere, the rich mobilize against trade unions and minimum-wage statutes, although low wages weaken aggregate demand. Apparently they can do so because the abundant supply of fresh money replaces mass purchasing power, by enabling those who have access to it to make their profit in the financial sector. Demand from below would make it attractive for the 'savings' of the rich to be invested in services and manufacturing. See, in this context, the call late last year by the director-general of the Confederation of British Industry, which represents manufacturing firms, for members to pay their workers better, as too many people are stuck in low-pay employment. See 'Companies urged to spread benefits widely', *Financial Times*, 30 December 2013.

[38] Citigroup Research, 'Plutonomy: Buying Luxury, Explaining Global Imbalances', 16 October 2005; 'Revisiting Plutonomy: The Rich Getting Richer', 5 March 2006.

[39] *Nota bene* that capitalism is about profit, not about productivity. While the two may sometimes go together, they are likely to part company when economic growth begins to require a disproportionate expansion of the public domain, as envisaged early on in 'Wagner's law': Adolph Wagner, *Grundlegung der politischen Oekonomie*, 3rd edn, Leipzig 1892. Capitalist preferences for profit over productivity, and with them the regime of capitalist private property as a whole, may then get in the way of economic and social progress.

[40] Including at the highest level: both Blair and Sarkozy are now working for hedge funds, their time as elected national leaders apparently considered by them and their new employers as a sort of apprenticeship for a much better-paid position in the financial sector.

[41] Reports on banks having to pay fines for wrongdoings of various kinds can be found almost daily in quality newspapers. On 23 March 2014, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reported that since the beginning of the financial crisis, American banks alone have been fined around one hundred billion dollars.

Maurizio Lazzarato and Éric Alliez: To Our Enemies (A Nuestros Enemigos - incluido en Español)

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1. We are living in the time of the subjectivation of civil wars. We did not leave the period of triumph of the market, automation of governmentality, and depoliticization of the economy of debt to go back to the era of “world views” and the conflicts between them. We have entered a time of building new war machines.

2. Capitalism and neoliberalism carry wars within them like clouds carry storms. While the financialization of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries led to total war and the Russian Revolution, the 1929 crash and European civil wars, contemporary financialization is at the helm of global civil war and controls all its polarizations.

3. Since 2011, the multiple forms of subjectivation of civil wars have deeply altered both the semiology of capital and the pragmatics of the struggle to keep the manifold powers of war from being the perpetual framework of life. Among the experiments with anticapitalist machines, Occupy Wall Street in the US, the Indignados in Spain, the student movements in Chile and Quebec, and Greece in 2015 all fought with unequal arms against the debt economy and austerity policies. The “Arab Spring,” the major protests in Brazil, and the Gezi Park clashes in Turkey circulated the same watchwords of organization and disorder throughout the Global South. Nuit Debout in France is the latest development in a cycle of conflict and occupation that may have started with Tiananmen Square in 1989. On the side of power, neoliberalism promotes an authoritarian and policed post-democracy managed by market technicians to stoke the flames of its predatory economic policies, while the new right (or “strong right”) declares war on foreigners, immigrants, Muslims, and the underclasses in the name of the “de-demonized” extreme right. This extreme right openly comes to occupy the terrain of civil wars, which it subjectivizes by rekindling *racial class warfare*. Neofascist hegemony over the processes of subjectivation is confirmed by the renewed war on the autonomy of women and the becoming-minor of sexuality (in France, “La Manif pour tous”) as an *extension of the endocolonial domain of civil war*.

The era of limitless deterritorialization under Thatcher and Reagan is now followed by the racist, nationalist, sexist, and xenophobic reterritorialization of Trump, who has already become the leader of the new fascisms. The American Dream has been transformed into the nightmare of an insomniac planet.

4. There is a flagrant imbalance between the war machines of Capital and the new fascisms on the one hand, and the multiform struggles against the world-system of new capitalism on the other. It is a political imbalance but also an *intellectual* one. This text focuses on a void, a blank, a theoretical and practical repressed which is, however, always at the heart of the power and powerlessness of revolutionary movements: the concept of “war” and “civil war.”

5. “It’s like being in a war,” was heard in Athens during the weekend of July 11-12, 2015. And for good reason. The population was faced with a large-scale strategy of continuing war by means of debt: it completed the destruction of Greece and, at the same time, triggered the self-destruction of the “construction of Europe.” The goal of the European Commission, the ECB, and the IMF was never mediation or finding compromise but defeating the adversary on an open field.

The statement “It’s like being in a war” should be immediately corrected: *it is a war*. The reversibility of war and economy is at the very basis of capitalism. And it has been a long time since Carl Schmitt revealed the “pacifist” hypocrisy of neoliberalism by reestablishing the continuity between economy and war: the economy pursues the objectives of war through other means (“blocking credit, embargo on raw materials, devaluation of foreign

currency”).

Two superior officers in the Chinese Air Force, Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, define financial offensives as “bloodless wars”; a *cold* violence, just as cruel and effective as “bloody wars.” With globalization, as they explain, “while constricting the battlespace in the narrow sense, at the same time we have turned the entire world into a battlefield in the broad sense.”

The expansion of war and the multiplication of its domain names has led to the establishment of a continuum between war, economy, and politics. Yet from the beginning, liberalism has been a *philosophy of total war*.

(Pope Francis seems to be preaching in the desert when he asserts, with a clarity that is lacking in politicians, experts of all stripes, and even the most hardened critics of capitalism, “Let’s recognize it. *The world is in a state of war in bits and pieces* ... When I speak of war, I talk about real war. Not a war of religion. No. There is a war of interests. There is a war for money. There is a war for natural resources. There is a war for domination of peoples. This is the war.”)

6. During that same year of 2015, a few months after the defeat of the Greek “radical left,” the president of the French Republic announced on the evening of November 13 that France was “at war” and declared a state of emergency. The law authorizing him to do so and authorizing the suspension of “democratic freedoms” to grant “extraordinary” powers to the administration of public security had been passed in 1955 during the colonial war in Algeria. Implemented in New Caledonia in 1984 and during the “suburban riots” in 2005, the state of emergency brought colonial and postcolonial war back into the spotlight.

What happened in Paris on an awful night in November is what occurs daily in cities in the Middle East. This is the horror that the millions of refugees “pouring” into Europe are fleeing. They are visible evidence of the oldest colonialist technology to regulate migratory movement by its “apocalyptic” extension in the “infinite wars” started by Christian fundamentalist George Bush and his cabinet of neocons. Neocolonial war is no longer taking place only in the “margins” of the world. In every way possible, it moves through the “center” by taking on the figure of the “internal Islamist enemy,” immigrants, refugees, and migrants. The eternal outcasts are not left out: the poor and impoverished workers, those in unstable jobs and long-term unemployment, and the “endocolonized” on both sides of the Atlantic ...

7. The “stability pact” (“financial” state of emergency in Greece) and the “security pact” (“political” state of emergency in France) are two sides of the same coin. Constantly dismantling and restructuring the world-economy, the flows of credit and the flows of war

are, with the States that *integrate* them, the condition of existence, production, and reproduction of contemporary capitalism.

Money and war are the global market's military police, which is still referred to as the "governance" of the world-economy. In Europe, it is incarnated in the financial state of emergency that shrinks workers' rights and social security rights (health, education, housing, and so forth.) to nothing while the antiterrorist state of emergency suspends their already emptied "democratic" rights.

8. Our first thesis is that war, money, and the State are constitutive or constituent forces, in other words the ontological forces of capitalism. The critique of political economy is insufficient to the extent that the economy does not replace war but continues it by other means, ones that go necessarily through the State: monetary regulation and the legitimate monopoly on force for internal and external wars. To produce the genealogy of capitalism and reconstruct its "development," we must always engage and articulate together the critique of political economy, critique of war, and critique of the State.

The accumulation of and monopoly on property titles by Capital, and the accumulation of and monopoly on force by the State feed off of each other. Without the external exercise of war, and without the exercise of civil war by the State inside its borders, it would never have been possible to amass capital. And inversely: without the capture and valorization of wealth carried out by capital, the State would never have been able to exercise its administrative, legal, and governmental functions or organize armies of ever growing power. The expropriation of the means of production and the appropriation of the means of exercising force are the conditions of the formation of Capital and the constitution of the State that develop in parallel. Military proletarianization goes hand in hand with industrial proletarianization.

9. But what "war" are we talking about? Does the concept of "global civil war," advanced at the same time (1961) by Carl Schmitt and Hannah Arendt, impose itself at the end of the Cold War as the most appropriate form? Do the categories of "infinite war," "just war," and "war on terrorism" correspond to the new conflicts of globalization?

And is it possible to use the syntagma of "the" war without immediately assuming the point of view of the State? The history of capitalism, since its origin, is crisscrossed and constituted by a multiplicity of wars: wars of class(es), race(s), sex(es),

wars of subjectivity(ies), wars of civilization (the singular gave its capital letter to History). "*Wars*" and not *the* war is our second thesis. "*Wars*" as the foundation of internal and external order, as organizing principle of society. Wars, not only wars of class, but also military, civil, sex, and race wars are integrated so constitutively in the definition of Capital

that *Das Kapital* should be rewritten from start to finish to account for their dynamic in its most real functioning. At all of the major turning points in capitalism, we do not find the “creative destruction” of Schumpeter carried out by entrepreneurial innovation, but always the enterprise of civil wars.

10. Since 1492, Year One of Capital, the formation of capital has unfolded through this multiplicity of wars on both sides of the Atlantic. Internal colonization (Europe) and external colonization (Americas) are parallel, mutually reinforcing, and together define the world-economy. This dual colonization defines what Marx called primitive accumulation. Unlike, if not Marx, then at least a certain long-dominant Marxism, we do not restrict primitive accumulation to a mere phase in the development of capital destined to be surpassed in and through the “specific mode of production” of capital. We consider that it constitutes a condition of existence that constantly accompanies the development of capital, such that if primitive accumulation is pursued in all of the forms of expropriation of a continued accumulation, then *the wars* of class, race, sex, and subjectivity are *endless*. The conjunction of the these wars, and in particular the wars against the poor and women in the internal colonization of Europe, and the wars against the “first” peoples in external colonization, precede and make possible the “class struggles” of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by projecting them into a common war against *productive pacification*. Pacification obtained by any means (“bloody” and “not bloody”) is the goal of the war of capital as “social relationship.”

11. “By focusing exclusively on the relationship between capitalism and industrialism, in the end, Marx gives no attention to the close connection between these two phenomena and militarism.”

War and the arms race have been conditions for both economic development and technological and scientific innovation since the start of capitalism. Each stage in the development of capital invents its own “Keynesianism of war.” The only fault in this thesis by Giovanni Arrighi is in limiting itself to “the” war between States and paying “no attention to the close connection” that Capital, technology, and science maintain with civil wars. A colonel in the French army sums up the directly economic functions of war as follows: “We are producers like any other.” He reveals one of the most troubling aspects of the concept of production and work, an aspect that economists, unions, and Marxist recruits avoid thematizing.

12. Since primitive accumulation, the strategic force of destructure/restructure of the world-economy is Capital in its most deterritorialized form: financial Capital (which had to be expressed as such before receiving its letters of credit from Balzac). Foucault critiques the Marxist conception of Capital because there will never be “the” capitalism but always a historically qualified “political-institutional ensemble” (an argument that received much

attention).

Although Marx never in fact used the concept of capitalism, we must still maintain the distinction between it and “the” capital, because “its” logic, the logic of financial Capital (M-M’), is (still historically) the most operational one. What has been called the “financial crisis” shows it at work even in its most “innovative” post-critical performances. The multiplicity of State forms and transnational organizations of power, the plurality of political-institutional ensembles defining the variety of national “capitalisms,” are violently centralized, subordinated, and commanded by globalized financial Capital in its aim of “growth.” The multiplicity of power formations submits, more or less docilely (albeit more rather than less), to the logic of the most abstract property, that of the creditors. “The” Capital, with “its” logic (M-M’) of planetary reconfiguration of space through the constant acceleration of time, is an historical category, a “real abstraction” as Marx would say, producing the most real effects of universal privatization of “human” and “nonhuman” Earth, and removal of the “commons” of the world. (Think here of the land grabbing which is both a direct consequence of the “food crisis” of 2007–08 and one of the *exit strategies* from the “worst financial crisis in Global History.”) We are using the “historical-transcendental” concept of Capital in this way by pulling it (and dropping the capitalization as often as possible) towards the systematic colonization of the world of which it is the long-distance agent.

13. Why doesn’t the development of capitalism go through cities, which have long served as its vectors, but instead through the State? Because only the State, throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, was capable of achieving the expropriation/appropriation of the multiplicity of war machines of the feudal period (turned towards “private” wars), to centralize them and institutionalize them in a war machine transformed into an army with the legitimate monopoly on public force. The division of labor does not only take place in production, but also in the specialization of war and the professional soldier. While centralization and the exercise of force in a “regulated army” is the work of the State, it is also the condition for the accumulation of “wealth” by “civilized and opulent” nations at the expense of poor nations (Adam Smith)—which, in truth, are not nations at all but “wastelands” (John Locke).

14. The constitution of the State as a “megamachine” of power thus relied on the capture, centralization, and institutionalization of the means of exercising force. Starting in the 1870s, however, and especially under the effect of the brutal acceleration imposed by “total war,” Capital was no longer satisfied with maintaining a relationship of alliance with the State and its war machine. It started to appropriate it *directly* by integrating its instruments of polarization. The construction of this new capitalist war machine integrated the State, its sovereignty (political and military), and all its “administrative” functions by profoundly modifying them under the direction of financial Capital. Starting with the First World War,

the model of scientific organization of labor and the military model of organization and execution of war deeply penetrated the political functioning of the State by reconfiguring the liberal division of powers under the hegemony of the executive, while inversely the politics, not of the State but of Capital, were imposed on the organization, execution, and aims of war. With neoliberalism, this process of capture of the war machine and the State was fully realized in the axiomatics of Integrated Global Capitalism. In this way, we bring in Félix Guattari's IGC to serve our third thesis: Integrated Global Capitalism is the axiomatic of the war machine of Capital that was able to submit the military deterritorialization of the State to the superior deterritorialization of Capital. The machine of production is no longer distinguishable from the war machine integrating civilian and military, peace and war, in the single process of a continuum of isomorphic power in all its forms of valuation.

15. In the *longue durée* of the capital/war relationship, the outbreak of "economic war" between imperialisms at the end of the nineteenth century represented a turning point, a process of irreversible transformation of war and the economy, the State and society. *Financial capital transmits the unlimitedness (of its valuation) to war by making it into a power without limits (total war)*. The conjunction of the unlimited flows of war and the unlimited flows of financial capital during the First World War pushed back the limits of both production and war by raising the terrifying specter of *unlimited production for unlimited war*. The two World Wars are responsible for realizing, for the first time, "total" subordination (or "real subsumption") of society and its "productive forces" to the war economy through the organization and planning of production, labor and technology, science and consumption, at a hitherto unheard-of scale. Implicating the entire population in "production" was accompanied by the constitution of processes of mass subjectivation through the management of communications techniques and opinion creation. From the establishment of unprecedented research programs with the aim of "destruction" came scientific and technological discoveries that, transferred to the production of the means of production of "goods," would constitute the new generations of constant capital. This entire process was missed by workerism (and post-workerism) in the short-circuit which made it situate the Great Bifurcation of Capital in the 1960s-70s, combined in this way with the critical movement of self-affirmation of workerism *in the factory* (it would take the arrival of post-Fordism to reach the "diffuse factory").

16. The origin of *welfare* cannot be found solely within a logic of insurance against the risks of "work" and the risks of "life" (the Foucauldian school under managerial influence), but first and foremost in the logic of war. *Warfare* largely anticipated and prepared *welfare*. Starting in the 1930s, the two became indistinguishable.

The enormous militarization of total war, which transformed internationalist workers into sixty million nationalist soldiers, was "democratically" reterritorialized by and in welfare. The conversion of the war economy into the liberal economy, the conversion of the science

and technology of the instruments of death into the means of production of “goods,” and the subjective conversion of the militarized population into “workers” took place thanks to the enormous apparatus of state intervention along with the active participation of “companies” (corporate capitalism). Warfare pursued its logic by other means in welfare. Keynes himself recognized that the policy of effective demand had no other model of realization than a regime of war.

17. Inserted in 1951 into his “Overcoming Metaphysics” (the overcoming in question was conceived during the Second World War), this passage by Heidegger defines exactly what the concepts of “war” and “peace” became at the end of the two total wars:

Changed into their deformation of essence, “war” and “peace” are taken up into erring, and disappear into the mere course of the escalating manufacture of what can be manufactured, because they have become unrecognizable with regard to any distinction. The question of when and where there will be peace cannot be answered not because the duration of war is unfathomable, but rather because the question already asks about something which no longer exists, since war is no longer anything which could terminate in peace. War has become a distortion of the consumption of beings which is continued in peace ... This long war in its length slowly eventuated not in a peace of the traditional kind, but rather in a condition in which warlike characteristics are no longer as such at all and peaceful characteristics have become meaningless and without content.

This passage was later rewritten at the end of *A Thousand Plateaus* to indicate how

technical-scientific “capitalization” (referring to what we call the “military-industrial, scientific-university complex”) creates “a new conception of security as materialized war, as organized insecurity or molecularized, distributed, programmed catastrophe.”¹⁸ The Cold War is intensive socialization and capitalization of the real subsumption of society and populations in the war economy of the first half of the twentieth century. It constitutes a fundamental passage in the formation of the war machine of Capital, which does not appropriate the State and war without subordinating “knowledge” to its process. The Cold War stoked the hearth of technological and scientific production that had been lit by the total wars. Practically all contemporary technologies, and in particular cybernetics, computer, and information technologies, are, directly or indirectly, the fruits of total war re-totalized by the Cold War. What Marx called “General Intellect” was born of/in the “production for destruction” of total wars before being reorganized by the Operational Research (OR) of the Cold War into an instrument (R&D) of command and control of the world-economy. The war history of Capital constrains us to this other major displacement in relation to workerism and post-workerism. The order of labor (“*Arbeit macht frei*”) established by the total wars is transformed into a liberal-democratic order of full employment as an instrument of social regulation of the “mass-worker” *and of his or her entire domestic environment.*

19. '68 is situated under the sign of the political reemergence of wars of class, race, sex, and subjectivity that the “working class” could no longer subordinate to its “interests” and its forms of organization (party-unions). While labor struggles “reached the highest absolute level of their development” in the United States (“Marx in Detroit”), they were also defeated there after the major postwar strikes. The destruction of the “order of labor” resulting from the total wars and continuing in and through the Cold War as “order of the wage system” was not only the objective of a new working class rediscovering its political autonomy; it is also the effect of the multiplicity of all these wars which, somewhat all at the same time, were inflamed by tracing back from the singular experiences of “group-subjects” that carried them towards their common conditions of subjective rupture. The wars of decolonization and of all the racial minorities, women, students, homosexuals, alternatives, antinuclear protesters, “*lumpen*,” and so on. thus define new modalities of struggle, organization, and especially the delegitimation of all “power-knowledge” throughout the 1960s and 1970s. We not only read the history of capital through war, but we also read war through '68, which is the only possible way to make the theoretical and political passage from “war” to “wars.”

20. War and strategy occupy a central place in the revolutionary theory and practices of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Lenin, Mao, and General Giap conscientiously annotated Clausewitz's *On War*. '68 Thought refrained from theorizing war, with the notable exception of Foucault and Deleuze-Guattari. They not only proposed a reversal of Clausewitz's celebrated formula (“war is the continuation of politics by other

means”) by analyzing the modalities through which “politics” can be seen as war continued by other means: *they especially and radically transformed the concepts of war and politics*. Their problematization of war is strictly dependent on the mutations of capitalism and the struggles against it in the so-called postwar period, before crystallizing in the strange revolution of 1968: the “microphysics” of power advanced by Foucault is a critical actualization of “generalized civil war”; the “micropolitics” of Deleuze and Guattari is inseparable from the concept of “war machine” (its construction relies on the activist history of one of the pair). If we isolate the analysis of power relations from generalized civil war, like Foucauldian critique does, the theory of governmentality is nothing more than a variant of neoliberal “governance”; and if we cut micropolitics from the war machine, like Deleuzian critique does (it also undertakes an aestheticization of the war machine), only “minorities” remain that are powerless in the face of Capital, which keeps the initiative.

21. Siliconed by new technologies that they developed into a strike force, the military combined technological machines with war machines. The political consequences were formidable.

The USA planned and led the war in Afghanistan (2001) and in Iraq (2003) based on the principle “Clausewitz out, computer in” (the same operation is oddly enough used by the defenders of cognitive capitalism who dissolve the omni-reality of wars into computers and the “algorithms” that had served in the first place to wage them). Believing they could dissipate the “fog” and uncertainty of war by nothing less than the primitive accumulation of information, the strategists of hyper-technological, digital, and “network-centered” war quickly changed their tune: the victory that was so rapidly attained turned into a political-military disaster that triggered the disaster in the Middle East *in situ*, without sparing the Free World that had arrived bringing its values like a remake of *Dr. Strangelove*. The technical machine explains nothing and can do little without mobilizing all the other “machines.” Its efficacy and its very existence depend on the social machine and the war machine, which most often outline the technological avatar according to a model of society based on divisions, dominations, and exploitations (*Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, to use the title of Kristin Ross’s fine work).

22. If the fall of the Wall delivered the death certificate of a mummy whose Communist prehistory ’68 made us forget, and if it is to be considered a nonevent (as the thesis of the *End of History* states in its melancholic way), the bloody fiasco of the imperial war machine’s first post-Communist wars made history. In part because of the debate that it started *inside the military*, where a new paradigm of war appeared. An antithesis of the industrial wars of the twentieth century, the new paradigm is defined as a “war amongst the population.” This concept, which inspired an improbable “military humanism,” is one we make our own by returning its meaning to the source and real terrain of wars of capital, and by rewriting this “war within the population” in the plural of *our wars*. The population is the

battlefield in which counter-insurrectional operations of all kinds are underway. At the same time, and indistinguishably, they are both military and nonmilitary because they also carry the new identity of “bloody wars” and “non-bloody wars.”

Under Fordism, the State not only guaranteed State territorialization of Capital but also of war. As a result, globalization cannot not free capital from State control without also freeing war, which passes to a superior power of continuity by integrating the *plane of capital*. Deterritorialized war is no longer inter-State war at all, but an uninterrupted succession of multiple wars against populations, definitively sending “governmentality” to the side of governance in a common enterprise of denial of global civil wars. What is governed and what allows governing are the *divisions* that project wars into the heart of the population at the level of the real content of biopolitics. A biopolitical governmentality of war as differential distribution of instability and norm of “daily life.” The complete opposite of the Great Narrative of the liberal birth of biopolitics taking place in a famous course at the Collège de France in the break between the 1970s and 1980s.

23. Accentuating divisions, aggravating the polarization of every capitalist society, the debt economy transforms “global civil war” (Schmitt, Arendt) into interconnected civil wars: class wars, neocolonialist wars on “minorities,” wars on women, wars of subjectivity. The matrix of these civil wars is the colonial war. Colonial war was never a war between States but, in essence, a war *in and against* the population, where the distinctions between war and peace, between combatants and noncombatants, between economy, politics, and military were never used. Colonial war in and against populations is the model of the war that financial Capital unleashed starting in the 1970s in the name of a neoliberalism of combat. Its war is both fractal and transversal: fractal, because it indefinitely produces its invariance by constant changes of scale (its “irregularity” and the “cracks” it introduces operate at different scales of reality); and transversal, because it is simultaneously deployed at the macropolitical level (by playing on all of the major binary oppositions: social classes, whites and nonwhites, men and women) and the micropolitical level (by molecular “engineering” privileging the highest interactions). It can also connect the civilian and military levels in the Global South and North, in the Souths and Norths of *everyone* (or almost everyone). Its first characteristic is therefore to be less *indiscriminate* war than *irregular* war.

The war machine of capital which, in the early 1970s, definitively integrated the State, war, science, and technology, clearly declares the strategy of contemporary globalization: to bring to an end the very short history of reforming capital—*Full Employment in a Free Society*, according to the manifesto of Lord Beveridge published in 1944—by attacking everywhere and with all means available the conditions of reality of the power struggle that imposed it. An infernal creativity is deployed by the neoliberal political project in pretending to grant the “market” superhuman qualities of *information processing*: the market as the ultimate cyborg.

24. The newfound consistency of neofascisms starting with the financial “crisis” in 2008 represents a turning point in the waging of wars amongst populations. Their dimensions, both fractal and transversal, take on a new and formidable effectiveness in dividing and polarizing. The new fascisms challenge all of the resources of the “war machine,” because if the “war machine” is not necessarily identified with the State, it can also escape the control of Capital. While the war machine of Capital governs through an “inclusive” differentiation of property and wealth, the new fascist war machines function through exclusion based on racial, sexual, and national identity. The two logics seem incompatible. In reality, they inevitably converge (see “national preference”) as the state of economic and political emergency takes residence in the coercive time of *global flow*.

If the capitalist machine continues to be wary of the new fascisms, it is not because of its democratic principles (Capital is ontologically antidemocratic!) or the *rule of law*, but because, as it happened with Nazism, post-fascism can claim its “autonomy” from the war machine of Capital and escape its control. Isn’t this exactly the same thing that has happened with Islamic fascisms? Trained, armed, and financed by the US, they turned their weapons against the superpower and its allies who had instrumentalized them. From the West to the lands of the Caliphate *and back*, the neo-Nazis of all allegiances embody the suicidal subjectivation of the capitalist “mode of destruction.” It is also the final scene of the return of the colonial repressed: the jihadists of generation 2.0 haunt Western cities like their most internal enemy. Endocolonization also becomes the generalized conjugation of “topical” violence of the most intense domination of capitalism over populations. As for the process of convergence or divergence between the capitalist and neofascist war machines, it will depend on the evolution of the civil wars now underway and the risks that a future revolutionary process could run for private property, and more generally for the power of Capital.

25. Prohibiting the reduction of Capital and capitalism to a system or a structure, and of the economy to a history of self-enclosed cycles, wars of class, race, sex, and subjectivity also challenge every principle of autonomy in science and technology, every highway to “complexity” or emancipation forged by the progressive (and now accelerationist) idea of the movement of History.

Wars constantly inject the indeterminacy of conflict into open strategic relationships, making inoperable every mechanism of self-regulation (of the market) or every regulation by feedback (“man-machine systems” open their “complexity” to the future). The strategic “opening” of war is radically other than the systematic opening of cybernetics, which was not born in/of war for nothing. Capital is not structure or system; it is “machine” and *war machine*, of which the economy, politics, technology, the State, the media, and so forth are only the articulations informed by strategic relations. In the Marxist/Marxian definition of *General Intellect*, the war machine integrating science, technology, and communication into

its functioning is curiously neglected for the sake of a hardly credible “communism of capital.”

26. Capital is not a mode of production without being at the same time a mode of destruction. The infinite accumulation that constantly moves its limits to recreate them again is at the same time unlimited, widespread destruction. The gains in productivity and gains of destructiveness progress in parallel. They manifest themselves in the generalized war that scientists prefer to call “Anthropocene” rather than “Capitalocene,” even if, in all evidence, the destruction of the environments in and through which we live does not begin with “humans” and their growing needs, but with Capital. The “ecological crisis” is not the result of a modernity and humanity blinded to the negative effects of technological development but the “fruit of the will” of some people to exercise absolute domination over other people through a global geopolitical strategy of unlimited exploitation of all human and nonhuman resources.

Capitalism is not only the deadliest civilization in the history of humanity, the one that introduced us to the “shame of being human”; it is also the civilization through which labor, science, and technology have created—another (absolute) privilege in the history of humanity—the possibility of (absolute) annihilation of all species and the planet that houses them. In the meantime, the “complexity” of (saving) “nature” still offers the prospect of healthy profits combining the *techno* utopia of *geoengineering* and the reality of the new markets of “polluting rights.” At the confluence of one and the other, the Capitalocene does not send capitalism to the Moon (it has been there and back); it completes the global merchandizing of the planet by asserting its rights to the well-named troposphere.

27. The logic of Capital is the logistics of an infinite valuation. It implies the accumulation of a power that is not merely economic for the simple reason that it is complicated by strategic power and knowledge of the *strength* and *weakness* of the classes struggling, to which it is applied and with which they are in constant explanation. Foucault tells us that the Marxists turned their attention to the concept of “class” to the detriment of the concept of “struggle.” Knowledge of strategy is thus evacuated in favor of an alternative enterprise of pacification (Tronti offers the most *epic* version of this). Who is strong and who is weak? In what way did the strong become weak, and why did the weak become strong? How to strengthen oneself and weaken the other to dominate and exploit it? We propose to follow and reinvent the anticapitalist path of French Nietzscheism.

28. Capital came out the victor in the total wars and in the confrontation with global revolution, for which the number for us is 1968. Since then, it has gone from victory to victory, perfecting its *self-cooled motor*, where it verifies that the first function of power is to deny the existence of civil wars by erasing even the memory of them (pacification is a *scorched earth* policy). Walter Benjamin is there to remind us that reactivating the memory

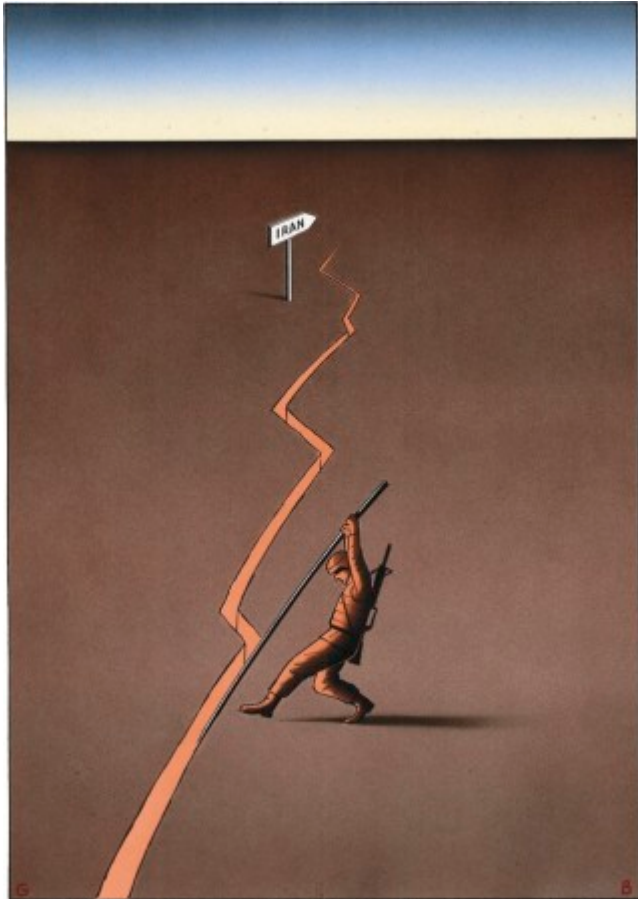
of the victories and defeats from which the victors take their domination can only come from the “defeated.” Problem: the “defeated” of ’68 threw out the bath water of civil wars with the old Leninist baby at the end of the “Hot Autumn” sealed by the failure of the dialectic of the “party of autonomy.” Entry into the “winter years” on the edge of a second Cold War that ensures the triumph of the “people of capitalism” (“*People’s Capitalism—This IS America!*”), the End of History will take the relay without stopping at a Gulf War that “did not take place.” Except there is a constellation of new wars, revolutionary machines, or mutant militants (Chiapas, Birmingham, Seattle, Washington, Genoa ...) and new defeats. The new writing generations describe “the missing people” dreaming of insomnia and destituent processes unfortunately reserved *for their friends*.

29. We will cut it short, in addressing *our enemies*. Because this text has no other object, under the economy and its “democracy,” behind the technological revolutions and “mass intellectuality” of the General Intellect, than to make heard the “rumble” of real wars now underway in all of their multiplicity. A multiplicity which is not to be made but *unmade and remade* to charge the “masses or flows,” which are doubly *subjects*, with new possibilities. On the side of relations of power as subject *to* war or/and on the side of strategic relationships that are capable of projecting them to the rank of subjects *of* wars, with “their mutations, their quanta of deterritorialization, their connections, their precipitations.” In short, it is a question of drawing the lessons from what seems to us like the failure of the thought of ’68 which we have inherited, even in our inability to think and construct a collective war machine equal to the civil war unleashed in the name of neoliberalism and the absolute primacy of the economy as exclusive policy of capital. Everything is taking place as if ’68 was unable *to think all the way*, not its defeat (there are, since the New Philosophers, professionals in the matter), but the warring order of reasons that broke its insistence through a *continuous destruction*, placed in the present infinitive of the struggles of “resistance.”

30. It is not a question, it is not at all a question of *stopping resistance*. It is a question of dropping a “theoricism” satisfied with a strategic discourse that is powerless in the face of what is happening. And what has happened to us. Because if the mechanisms of power are constitutive, to the detriment of strategic relationships and the wars taking place there, there can only be phenomena of “resistance” against them. With the success we all know. *Graecia docet*.

Seymour M. Hersh: The Redirection

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GUY BILLOUT

A STRATEGIC SHIFT

In the past few months, as the situation in Iraq has deteriorated, the Bush Administration, in both its public diplomacy and its covert operations, has significantly shifted its Middle East strategy. The “redirection,” as some inside the White House have called the new strategy, has brought the United States closer to an open confrontation with Iran and, in parts of the region, propelled it into a widening sectarian conflict between Shiite and Sunni Muslims.

To undermine Iran, which is predominantly Shiite, the Bush Administration has decided, in effect, to reconfigure its priorities in the Middle East. In Lebanon, the Administration has cooperated with Saudi Arabia’s government, which is Sunni, in clandestine operations that

are intended to weaken Hezbollah, the Shiite organization that is backed by Iran. The U.S. has also taken part in clandestine operations aimed at Iran and its ally Syria. A by-product of these activities has been the bolstering of Sunni extremist groups that espouse a militant vision of Islam and are hostile to America and sympathetic to Al Qaeda.

One contradictory aspect of the new strategy is that, in Iraq, most of the insurgent violence directed at the American military has come from Sunni forces, and not from Shiites. But, from the Administration's perspective, the most profound—and unintended—strategic consequence of the Iraq war is the empowerment of Iran. Its President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has made defiant pronouncements about the destruction of Israel and his country's right to pursue its nuclear program, and last week its supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said on state television that "realities in the region show that the arrogant front, headed by the U.S. and its allies, will be the principal loser in the region."

After the revolution of 1979 brought a religious government to power, the United States broke with Iran and cultivated closer relations with the leaders of Sunni Arab states such as Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. That calculation became more complex after the September 11th attacks, especially with regard to the Saudis. Al Qaeda is Sunni, and many of its operatives came from extremist religious circles inside Saudi Arabia. Before the invasion of Iraq, in 2003, Administration officials, influenced by neoconservative ideologues, assumed that a Shiite government there could provide a pro-American balance to Sunni extremists, since Iraq's Shiite majority had been oppressed under Saddam Hussein. They ignored warnings from the intelligence community about the ties between Iraqi Shiite leaders and Iran, where some had lived in exile for years. Now, to the distress of the White House, Iran has forged a close relationship with the Shiite-dominated government of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki.

The new American policy, in its broad outlines, has been discussed publicly. In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in January, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that there is "a new strategic alignment in the Middle East," separating "reformers" and "extremists"; she pointed to the Sunni states as centers of moderation, and said that Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah were "on the other side of that divide." (Syria's Sunni majority is dominated by the Alawi sect.) Iran and Syria, she said, "have made their choice and their choice is to destabilize."

Some of the core tactics of the redirection are not public, however. The clandestine operations have been kept secret, in some cases, by leaving the execution or the funding to the Saudis, or by finding other ways to work around the normal congressional appropriations process, current and former officials close to the Administration said.

A senior member of the House Appropriations Committee told me that he had heard about the new strategy, but felt that he and his colleagues had not been adequately briefed. "We haven't got any of this," he said. "We ask for anything going on, and they say there's

nothing. And when we ask specific questions they say, 'We're going to get back to you.' It's so frustrating."

The key players behind the redirection are Vice-President Dick Cheney, the deputy national-security adviser Elliott Abrams, the departing Ambassador to Iraq (and nominee for United Nations Ambassador), Zalmay Khalilzad, and Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi national-security adviser. While Rice has been deeply involved in shaping the public policy, former and current officials said that the clandestine side has been guided by Cheney. (Cheney's office and the White House declined to comment for this story; the Pentagon did not respond to specific queries but said, "The United States is not planning to go to war with Iran.")

The policy shift has brought Saudi Arabia and Israel into a new strategic embrace, largely because both countries see Iran as an existential threat. They have been involved in direct talks, and the Saudis, who believe that greater stability in Israel and Palestine will give Iran less leverage in the region, have become more involved in Arab-Israeli negotiations.

The new strategy "is a major shift in American policy—it's a sea change," a U.S. government consultant with close ties to Israel said. The Sunni states "were petrified of a Shiite resurgence, and there was growing resentment with our gambling on the moderate Shiites in Iraq," he said. "We cannot reverse the Shiite gain in Iraq, but we can contain it."

"It seems there has been a debate inside the government over what's the biggest danger—Iran or Sunni radicals," Vali Nasr, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, who has written widely on Shiites, Iran, and Iraq, told me. "The Saudis and some in the Administration have been arguing that the biggest threat is Iran and the Sunni radicals are the lesser enemies. This is a victory for the Saudi line."

Martin Indyk, a senior State Department official in the Clinton Administration who also served as Ambassador to Israel, said that "the Middle East is heading into a serious Sunni-Shiite Cold War." Indyk, who is the director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, added that, in his opinion, it was not clear whether the White House was fully aware of the strategic implications of its new policy. "The White House is not just doubling the bet in Iraq," he said. "It's doubling the bet across the region. This could get very complicated. Everything is upside down."

The Administration's new policy for containing Iran seems to complicate its strategy for winning the war in Iraq. Patrick Clawson, an expert on Iran and the deputy director for research at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, argued, however, that closer ties between the United States and moderate or even radical Sunnis could put "fear" into the government of Prime Minister Maliki and "make him worry that the Sunnis could actually

win” the civil war there. Clawson said that this might give Maliki an incentive to cooperate with the United States in suppressing radical Shiite militias, such as Moqtada al-Sadr’s Mahdi Army.

Even so, for the moment, the U.S. remains dependent on the cooperation of Iraqi Shiite leaders. The Mahdi Army may be openly hostile to American interests, but other Shiite militias are counted as U.S. allies. Both Moqtada al-Sadr and the White House back Maliki. A memorandum written late last year by Stephen Hadley, the national-security adviser, suggested that the Administration try to separate Maliki from his more radical Shiite allies by building his base among moderate Sunnis and Kurds, but so far the trends have been in the opposite direction. As the Iraqi Army continues to founder in its confrontations with insurgents, the power of the Shiite militias has steadily increased.

Flynt Leverett, a former Bush Administration National Security Council official, told me that “there is nothing coincidental or ironic” about the new strategy with regard to Iraq. “The Administration is trying to make a case that Iran is more dangerous and more provocative than the Sunni insurgents to American interests in Iraq, when—if you look at the actual casualty numbers—the punishment inflicted on America by the Sunnis is greater by an order of magnitude,” Leverett said. “This is all part of the campaign of provocative steps to increase the pressure on Iran. The idea is that at some point the Iranians will respond and then the Administration will have an open door to strike at them.”

President George W. Bush, in a speech on January 10th, partially spelled out this approach. “These two regimes”—Iran and Syria—“are allowing terrorists and insurgents to use their territory to move in and out of Iraq,” Bush said. “Iran is providing material support for attacks on American troops. We will disrupt the attacks on our forces. We’ll interrupt the flow of support from Iran and Syria. And we will seek out and destroy the networks providing advanced weaponry and training to our enemies in Iraq.”

In the following weeks, there was a wave of allegations from the Administration about Iranian involvement in the Iraq war. On February 11th, reporters were shown sophisticated explosive devices, captured in Iraq, that the Administration claimed had come from Iran. The Administration’s message was, in essence, that the bleak situation in Iraq was the result not of its own failures of planning and execution but of Iran’s interference.

The U.S. military also has arrested and interrogated hundreds of Iranians in Iraq. “The word went out last August for the military to snatch as many Iranians in Iraq as they can,” a former senior intelligence official said. “They had five hundred locked up at one time. We’re working these guys and getting information from them. The White House goal is to build a case that the Iranians have been fomenting the insurgency and they’ve been doing it all along—that Iran is, in fact, supporting the killing of Americans.” The Pentagon consultant

confirmed that hundreds of Iranians have been captured by American forces in recent months. But he told me that that total includes many Iranian humanitarian and aid workers who “get scooped up and released in a short time,” after they have been interrogated.

“We are not planning for a war with Iran,” Robert Gates, the new Defense Secretary, announced on February 2nd, and yet the atmosphere of confrontation has deepened. According to current and former American intelligence and military officials, secret operations in Lebanon have been accompanied by clandestine operations targeting Iran. American military and special-operations teams have escalated their activities in Iran to gather intelligence and, according to a Pentagon consultant on terrorism and the former senior intelligence official, have also crossed the border in pursuit of Iranian operatives from Iraq.

At Rice’s Senate appearance in January, Democratic Senator Joseph Biden, of Delaware, pointedly asked her whether the U.S. planned to cross the Iranian or the Syrian border in the course of a pursuit. “Obviously, the President isn’t going to rule anything out to protect our troops, but the plan is to take down these networks in Iraq,” Rice said, adding, “I do think that everyone will understand that—the American people and I assume the Congress expect the President to do what is necessary to protect our forces.”

The ambiguity of Rice’s reply prompted a response from Nebraska Senator Chuck Hagel, a Republican, who has been critical of the Administration:

Some of us remember 1970, Madam Secretary. And that was Cambodia. And when our government lied to the American people and said, “We didn’t cross the border going into Cambodia,” in fact we did.

I happen to know something about that, as do some on this committee. So, Madam Secretary, when you set in motion the kind of policy that the President is talking about here, it’s very, very dangerous.

The Administration’s concern about Iran’s role in Iraq is coupled with its long-standing

alarm over Iran's nuclear program. On Fox News on January 14th, Cheney warned of the possibility, in a few years, "of a nuclear-armed Iran, astride the world's supply of oil, able to affect adversely the global economy, prepared to use terrorist organizations and/or their nuclear weapons to threaten their neighbors and others around the world." He also said, "If you go and talk with the Gulf states or if you talk with the Saudis or if you talk with the Israelis or the Jordanians, the entire region is worried. . . . The threat Iran represents is growing."

The Administration is now examining a wave of new intelligence on Iran's weapons programs. Current and former American officials told me that the intelligence, which came from Israeli agents operating in Iran, includes a claim that Iran has developed a three-stage solid-fuelled intercontinental missile capable of delivering several small warheads—each with limited accuracy—inside Europe. The validity of this human intelligence is still being debated.

A similar argument about an imminent threat posed by weapons of mass destruction—and questions about the intelligence used to make that case—formed the prelude to the invasion of Iraq. Many in Congress have greeted the claims about Iran with wariness; in the Senate on February 14th, Hillary Clinton said, "We have all learned lessons from the conflict in Iraq, and we have to apply those lessons to any allegations that are being raised about Iran. Because, Mr. President, what we are hearing has too familiar a ring and we must be on guard that we never again make decisions on the basis of intelligence that turns out to be faulty."

Still, the Pentagon is continuing intensive planning for a possible bombing attack on Iran, a process that began last year, at the direction of the President. In recent months, the former intelligence official told me, a special planning group has been established in the offices of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, charged with creating a contingency bombing plan for Iran that can be implemented, upon orders from the President, within twenty-four hours.

In the past month, I was told by an Air Force adviser on targeting and the Pentagon consultant on terrorism, the Iran planning group has been handed a new assignment: to identify targets in Iran that may be involved in supplying or aiding militants in Iraq. Previously, the focus had been on the destruction of Iran's nuclear facilities and possible regime change.

Two carrier strike groups—the Eisenhower and the Stennis—are now in the Arabian Sea. One plan is for them to be relieved early in the spring, but there is worry within the military that they may be ordered to stay in the area after the new carriers arrive, according to several sources. (Among other concerns, war games have shown that the carriers could be vulnerable to swarming tactics involving large numbers of small boats, a technique that the

Iranians have practiced in the past; carriers have limited maneuverability in the narrow Strait of Hormuz, off Iran's southern coast.) The former senior intelligence official said that the current contingency plans allow for an attack order this spring. He added, however, that senior officers on the Joint Chiefs were counting on the White House's not being "foolish enough to do this in the face of Iraq, and the problems it would give the Republicans in 2008."

PRINCE BANDAR'S GAME

The Administration's effort to diminish Iranian authority in the Middle East has relied heavily on Saudi Arabia and on Prince Bandar, the Saudi national-security adviser. Bandar served as the Ambassador to the United States for twenty-two years, until 2005, and has maintained a friendship with President Bush and Vice-President Cheney. In his new post, he continues to meet privately with them. Senior White House officials have made several visits to Saudi Arabia recently, some of them not disclosed.

Last November, Cheney flew to Saudi Arabia for a surprise meeting with King Abdullah and Bandar. The *Times* reported that the King warned Cheney that Saudi Arabia would back its fellow-Sunnis in Iraq if the United States were to withdraw. A European intelligence official told me that the meeting also focussed on more general Saudi fears about "the rise of the Shiites." In response, "The Saudis are starting to use their leverage—money."

In a royal family rife with competition, Bandar has, over the years, built a power base that relies largely on his close relationship with the U.S., which is crucial to the Saudis. Bandar was succeeded as Ambassador by Prince Turki al-Faisal; Turki resigned after eighteen months and was replaced by Adel A. al-Jubeir, a bureaucrat who has worked with Bandar. A former Saudi diplomat told me that during Turki's tenure he became aware of private meetings involving Bandar and senior White House officials, including Cheney and Abrams. "I assume Turki was not happy with that," the Saudi said. But, he added, "I don't think that Bandar is going off on his own." Although Turki dislikes Bandar, the Saudi said, he shared his goal of challenging the spread of Shiite power in the Middle East.

The split between Shiites and Sunnis goes back to a bitter divide, in the seventh century, over who should succeed the Prophet Muhammad. Sunnis dominated the medieval caliphate and the Ottoman Empire, and Shiites, traditionally, have been regarded more as outsiders. Worldwide, ninety per cent of Muslims are Sunni, but Shiites are a majority in Iran, Iraq, and Bahrain, and are the largest Muslim group in Lebanon. Their concentration in a volatile, oil-rich region has led to concern in the West and among Sunnis about the emergence of a "Shiite crescent"—especially given Iran's increased geopolitical weight.

"The Saudis still see the world through the days of the Ottoman Empire, when Sunni

Muslims ruled the roost and the Shiites were the lowest class,” Frederic Hof, a retired military officer who is an expert on the Middle East, told me. If Bandar was seen as bringing about a shift in U.S. policy in favor of the Sunnis, he added, it would greatly enhance his standing within the royal family.

The Saudis are driven by their fear that Iran could tilt the balance of power not only in the region but within their own country. Saudi Arabia has a significant Shiite minority in its Eastern Province, a region of major oil fields; sectarian tensions are high in the province. The royal family believes that Iranian operatives, working with local Shiites, have been behind many terrorist attacks inside the kingdom, according to Vali Nasr. “Today, the only army capable of containing Iran”—the Iraqi Army—“has been destroyed by the United States. You’re now dealing with an Iran that could be nuclear-capable and has a standing army of four hundred and fifty thousand soldiers.” (Saudi Arabia has seventy-five thousand troops in its standing army.)

Nasr went on, “The Saudis have considerable financial means, and have deep relations with the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis”—Sunni extremists who view Shiites as apostates. “The last time Iran was a threat, the Saudis were able to mobilize the worst kinds of Islamic radicals. Once you get them out of the box, you can’t put them back.”

The Saudi royal family has been, by turns, both a sponsor and a target of Sunni extremists, who object to the corruption and decadence among the family’s myriad princes. The princes are gambling that they will not be overthrown as long as they continue to support religious schools and charities linked to the extremists. The Administration’s new strategy is heavily dependent on this bargain.

Nasr compared the current situation to the period in which Al Qaeda first emerged. In the nineteen-eighties and the early nineties, the Saudi government offered to subsidize the covert American C.I.A. proxy war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Hundreds of young Saudis were sent into the border areas of Pakistan, where they set up religious schools, training bases, and recruiting facilities. Then, as now, many of the operatives who were paid with Saudi money were Salafis. Among them, of course, were Osama bin Laden and his associates, who founded Al Qaeda, in 1988.

This time, the U.S. government consultant told me, Bandar and other Saudis have assured the White House that “they will keep a very close eye on the religious fundamentalists. Their message to us was ‘We’ve created this movement, and we can control it.’ It’s not that we don’t want the Salafis to throw bombs; it’s *who* they throw them at—Hezbollah, Moqtada al-Sadr, Iran, and at the Syrians, if they continue to work with Hezbollah and Iran.”

The Saudi said that, in his country’s view, it was taking a political risk by joining the U.S. in

challenging Iran: Bandar is already seen in the Arab world as being too close to the Bush Administration. “We have two nightmares,” the former diplomat told me. “For Iran to acquire the bomb and for the United States to attack Iran. I’d rather the Israelis bomb the Iranians, so we can blame them. If America does it, we will be blamed.”

In the past year, the Saudis, the Israelis, and the Bush Administration have developed a series of informal understandings about their new strategic direction. At least four main elements were involved, the U.S. government consultant told me. First, Israel would be assured that its security was paramount and that Washington and Saudi Arabia and other Sunni states shared its concern about Iran.

Second, the Saudis would urge Hamas, the Islamist Palestinian party that has received support from Iran, to curtail its anti-Israeli aggression and to begin serious talks about sharing leadership with Fatah, the more secular Palestinian group. (In February, the Saudis brokered a deal at Mecca between the two factions. However, Israel and the U.S. have expressed dissatisfaction with the terms.)

The third component was that the Bush Administration would work directly with Sunni nations to counteract Shiite ascendance in the region.

Fourth, the Saudi government, with Washington’s approval, would provide funds and logistical aid to weaken the government of President Bashir Assad, of Syria. The Israelis believe that putting such pressure on the Assad government will make it more conciliatory and open to negotiations. Syria is a major conduit of arms to Hezbollah. The Saudi government is also at odds with the Syrians over the assassination of Rafik Hariri, the former Lebanese Prime Minister, in Beirut in 2005, for which it believes the Assad government was responsible. Hariri, a billionaire Sunni, was closely associated with the Saudi regime and with Prince Bandar. (A U.N. inquiry strongly suggested that the Syrians were involved, but offered no direct evidence; there are plans for another investigation, by an international tribunal.)

Patrick Clawson, of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, depicted the Saudis’ coöperation with the White House as a significant breakthrough. “The Saudis understand that if they want the Administration to make a more generous political offer to the Palestinians they have to persuade the Arab states to make a more generous offer to the Israelis,” Clawson told me. The new diplomatic approach, he added, “shows a real degree of effort and sophistication as well as a deftness of touch not always associated with this Administration. Who’s running the greater risk—we or the Saudis? At a time when America’s standing in the Middle East is extremely low, the Saudis are actually embracing us. We should count our blessings.”

The Pentagon consultant had a different view. He said that the Administration had turned to Bandar as a “fallback,” because it had realized that the failing war in Iraq could leave the Middle East “up for grabs.”

JIHADIS IN LEBANON

The focus of the U.S.-Saudi relationship, after Iran, is Lebanon, where the Saudis have been deeply involved in efforts by the Administration to support the Lebanese government. Prime Minister Fouad Siniora is struggling to stay in power against a persistent opposition led by Hezbollah, the Shiite organization, and its leader, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah. Hezbollah has an extensive infrastructure, an estimated two to three thousand active fighters, and thousands of additional members.

Hezbollah has been on the State Department’s terrorist list since 1997. The organization has been implicated in the 1983 bombing of a Marine barracks in Beirut that killed two hundred and forty-one military men. It has also been accused of complicity in the kidnapping of Americans, including the C.I.A. station chief in Lebanon, who died in captivity, and a Marine colonel serving on a U.N. peacekeeping mission, who was killed. (Nasrallah has denied that the group was involved in these incidents.) Nasrallah is seen by many as a staunch terrorist, who has said that he regards Israel as a state that has no right to exist. Many in the Arab world, however, especially Shiites, view him as a resistance leader who withstood Israel in last summer’s thirty-three-day war, and Siniora as a weak politician who relies on America’s support but was unable to persuade President Bush to call for an end to the Israeli bombing of Lebanon. (Photographs of Siniora kissing Condoleezza Rice on the cheek when she visited during the war were prominently displayed during street protests in Beirut.)

The Bush Administration has publicly pledged the Siniora government a billion dollars in aid since last summer. A donors’ conference in Paris, in January, which the U.S. helped organize, yielded pledges of almost eight billion more, including a promise of more than a billion from the Saudis. The American pledge includes more than two hundred million dollars in military aid, and forty million dollars for internal security.

The United States has also given clandestine support to the Siniora government, according to the former senior intelligence official and the U.S. government consultant. “We are in a program to enhance the Sunni capability to resist Shiite influence, and we’re spreading the money around as much as we can,” the former senior intelligence official said. The problem was that such money “always gets in more pockets than you think it will,” he said. “In this process, we’re financing a lot of bad guys with some serious potential unintended consequences. We don’t have the ability to determine and get pay vouchers signed by the people we like and avoid the people we don’t like. It’s a very high-risk venture.”

American, European, and Arab officials I spoke to told me that the Siniora government and its allies had allowed some aid to end up in the hands of emerging Sunni radical groups in northern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and around Palestinian refugee camps in the south. These groups, though small, are seen as a buffer to Hezbollah; at the same time, their ideological ties are with Al Qaeda.

During a conversation with me, the former Saudi diplomat accused Nasrallah of attempting “to hijack the state,” but he also objected to the Lebanese and Saudi sponsorship of Sunni jihadists in Lebanon. “Salafis are sick and hateful, and I’m very much against the idea of flirting with them,” he said. “They hate the Shiites, but they hate Americans more. If you try to outsmart them, they will outsmart us. It will be ugly.”

Alastair Crooke, who spent nearly thirty years in MI6, the British intelligence service, and now works for Conflicts Forum, a think tank in Beirut, told me, “The Lebanese government is opening space for these people to come in. It could be very dangerous.” Crooke said that one Sunni extremist group, Fatah al-Islam, had splintered from its pro-Syrian parent group, Fatah al-Intifada, in the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp, in northern Lebanon. Its membership at the time was less than two hundred. “I was told that within twenty-four hours they were being offered weapons and money by people presenting themselves as representatives of the Lebanese government’s interests—presumably to take on Hezbollah,” Crooke said.

The largest of the groups, Asbat al-Ansar, is situated in the Ain al-Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp. Asbat al-Ansar has received arms and supplies from Lebanese internal-security forces and militias associated with the Siniora government.

In 2005, according to a report by the U.S.-based International Crisis Group, Saad Hariri, the Sunni majority leader of the Lebanese parliament and the son of the slain former Prime Minister—Saad inherited more than four billion dollars after his father’s assassination—paid forty-eight thousand dollars in bail for four members of an Islamic militant group from Dinniyeh. The men had been arrested while trying to establish an Islamic mini-state in northern Lebanon. The Crisis Group noted that many of the militants “had trained in al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan.”

According to the Crisis Group report, Saad Hariri later used his parliamentary majority to obtain amnesty for twenty-two of the Dinniyeh Islamists, as well as for seven militants suspected of plotting to bomb the Italian and Ukrainian embassies in Beirut, the previous year. (He also arranged a pardon for Samir Geagea, a Maronite Christian militia leader, who had been convicted of four political murders, including the assassination, in 1987, of Prime Minister Rashid Karami.) Hariri described his actions to reporters as humanitarian.

In an interview in Beirut, a senior official in the Siniora government acknowledged that

there were Sunni jihadists operating inside Lebanon. “We have a liberal attitude that allows Al Qaeda types to have a presence here,” he said. He related this to concerns that Iran or Syria might decide to turn Lebanon into a “theatre of conflict.”

The official said that his government was in a no-win situation. Without a political settlement with Hezbollah, he said, Lebanon could “slide into a conflict,” in which Hezbollah fought openly with Sunni forces, with potentially horrific consequences. But if Hezbollah agreed to a settlement yet still maintained a separate army, allied with Iran and Syria, “Lebanon could become a target. In both cases, we become a target.”

The Bush Administration has portrayed its support of the Siniora government as an example of the President’s belief in democracy, and his desire to prevent other powers from interfering in Lebanon. When Hezbollah led street demonstrations in Beirut in December, John Bolton, who was then the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., called them “part of the Iran-Syria-inspired coup.”

Leslie H. Gelb, a past president of the Council on Foreign Relations, said that the Administration’s policy was less pro democracy than “pro American national security. The fact is that it would be terribly dangerous if Hezbollah ran Lebanon.” The fall of the Siniora government would be seen, Gelb said, “as a signal in the Middle East of the decline of the United States and the ascendancy of the terrorism threat. And so any change in the distribution of political power in Lebanon has to be opposed by the United States—and we’re justified in helping any non-Shiite parties resist that change. We should say this publicly, instead of talking about democracy.”

Martin Indyk, of the Saban Center, said, however, that the United States “does not have enough pull to stop the moderates in Lebanon from dealing with the extremists.” He added, “The President sees the region as divided between moderates and extremists, but our regional friends see it as divided between Sunnis and Shia. The Sunnis that we view as extremists are regarded by our Sunni allies simply as Sunnis.”

In January, after an outburst of street violence in Beirut involving supporters of both the Siniora government and Hezbollah, Prince Bandar flew to Tehran to discuss the political impasse in Lebanon and to meet with Ali Larijani, the Iranians’ negotiator on nuclear issues. According to a Middle Eastern ambassador, Bandar’s mission—which the ambassador said was endorsed by the White House—also aimed “to create problems between the Iranians and Syria.” There had been tensions between the two countries about Syrian talks with Israel, and the Saudis’ goal was to encourage a breach. However, the ambassador said, “It did not work. Syria and Iran are not going to betray each other. Bandar’s approach is very unlikely to succeed.”

Walid Jumblatt, who is the leader of the Druze minority in Lebanon and a strong Siniora supporter, has attacked Nasrallah as an agent of Syria, and has repeatedly told foreign journalists that Hezbollah is under the direct control of the religious leadership in Iran. In a conversation with me last December, he depicted Bashar Assad, the Syrian President, as a “serial killer.” Nasrallah, he said, was “morally guilty” of the assassination of Rafik Hariri and the murder, last November, of Pierre Gemayel, a member of the Siniora Cabinet, because of his support for the Syrians.

Jumblatt then told me that he had met with Vice-President Cheney in Washington last fall to discuss, among other issues, the possibility of undermining Assad. He and his colleagues advised Cheney that, if the United States does try to move against Syria, members of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood would be “the ones to talk to,” Jumblatt said.

The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, a branch of a radical Sunni movement founded in Egypt in 1928, engaged in more than a decade of violent opposition to the regime of Hafez Assad, Bashar’s father. In 1982, the Brotherhood took control of the city of Hama; Assad bombarded the city for a week, killing between six thousand and twenty thousand people. Membership in the Brotherhood is punishable by death in Syria. The Brotherhood is also an avowed enemy of the U.S. and of Israel. Nevertheless, Jumblatt said, “We told Cheney that the basic link between Iran and Lebanon is Syria—and to weaken Iran you need to open the door to effective Syrian opposition.”

There is evidence that the Administration’s redirection strategy has already benefitted the Brotherhood. The Syrian National Salvation Front is a coalition of opposition groups whose principal members are a faction led by Abdul Halim Khaddam, a former Syrian Vice-President who defected in 2005, and the Brotherhood. A former high-ranking C.I.A. officer told me, “The Americans have provided both political and financial support. The Saudis are taking the lead with financial support, but there is American involvement.” He said that Khaddam, who now lives in Paris, was getting money from Saudi Arabia, with the knowledge of the White House. (In 2005, a delegation of the Front’s members met with officials from the National Security Council, according to press reports.) A former White House official told me that the Saudis had provided members of the Front with travel documents.

Jumblatt said he understood that the issue was a sensitive one for the White House. “I told Cheney that some people in the Arab world, mainly the Egyptians”—whose moderate Sunni leadership has been fighting the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood for decades—“won’t like it if the United States helps the Brotherhood. But if you don’t take on Syria we will be face to face in Lebanon with Hezbollah in a long fight, and one we might not win.”

THE SHEIKH

On a warm, clear night early last December, in a bombed-out suburb a few miles south of downtown Beirut, I got a preview of how the Administration's new strategy might play out in Lebanon. Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, the Hezbollah leader, who has been in hiding, had agreed to an interview. Security arrangements for the meeting were secretive and elaborate. I was driven, in the back seat of a darkened car, to a damaged underground garage somewhere in Beirut, searched with a handheld scanner, placed in a second car to be driven to yet another bomb-scarred underground garage, and transferred again. Last summer, it was reported that Israel was trying to kill Nasrallah, but the extraordinary precautions were not due only to that threat. Nasrallah's aides told me that they believe he is a prime target of fellow-Arabs, primarily Jordanian intelligence operatives, as well as Sunni jihadists who they believe are affiliated with Al Qaeda. (The government consultant and a retired four-star general said that Jordanian intelligence, with support from the U.S. and Israel, had been trying to infiltrate Shiite groups, to work against Hezbollah. Jordan's King Abdullah II has warned that a Shiite government in Iraq that was close to Iran would lead to the emergence of a Shiite crescent.) This is something of an ironic turn: Nasrallah's battle with Israel last summer turned him—a Shiite—into the most popular and influential figure among Sunnis and Shiites throughout the region. In recent months, however, he has increasingly been seen by many Sunnis not as a symbol of Arab unity but as a participant in a sectarian war.

Nasrallah, dressed, as usual, in religious garb, was waiting for me in an unremarkable apartment. One of his advisers said that he was not likely to remain there overnight; he has been on the move since his decision, last July, to order the kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers in a cross-border raid set off the thirty-three-day war. Nasrallah has since said publicly—and repeated to me—that he misjudged the Israeli response. "We just wanted to capture prisoners for exchange purposes," he told me. "We never wanted to drag the region into war."

Nasrallah accused the Bush Administration of working with Israel to deliberately instigate *fitna*, an Arabic word that is used to mean "insurrection and fragmentation within Islam." "In my opinion, there is a huge campaign through the media throughout the world to put each side up against the other," he said. "I believe that all this is being run by American and Israeli intelligence." (He did not provide any specific evidence for this.) He said that the U.S. war in Iraq had increased sectarian tensions, but argued that Hezbollah had tried to prevent them from spreading into Lebanon. (Sunn-Shiite confrontations increased, along with violence, in the weeks after we talked.)

Nasrallah said he believed that President Bush's goal was "the drawing of a new map for the region. They want the partition of Iraq. Iraq is not on the edge of a civil war—there *is* a civil war. There is ethnic and sectarian cleansing. The daily killing and displacement which is taking place in Iraq aims at achieving three Iraqi parts, which will be sectarian and

ethnically pure as a prelude to the partition of Iraq. Within one or two years at the most, there will be total Sunni areas, total Shiite areas, and total Kurdish areas. Even in Baghdad, there is a fear that it might be divided into two areas, one Sunni and one Shiite.”

He went on, “I can say that President Bush is lying when he says he does not want Iraq to be partitioned. All the facts occurring now on the ground make you swear he is dragging Iraq to partition. And a day will come when he will say, ‘I cannot do anything, since the Iraqis want the partition of their country and I honor the wishes of the people of Iraq.’ “

Nasrallah said he believed that America also wanted to bring about the partition of Lebanon and of Syria. In Syria, he said, the result would be to push the country “into chaos and internal battles like in Iraq.” In Lebanon, “There will be a Sunni state, an Alawi state, a Christian state, and a Druze state.” But, he said, “I do not know if there will be a Shiite state.” Nasrallah told me that he suspected that one aim of the Israeli bombing of Lebanon last summer was “the destruction of Shiite areas and the displacement of Shiites from Lebanon. The idea was to have the Shiites of Lebanon and Syria flee to southern Iraq,” which is dominated by Shiites. “I am not sure, but I smell this,” he told me.

Partition would leave Israel surrounded by “small tranquil states,” he said. “I can assure you that the Saudi kingdom will also be divided, and the issue will reach to North African states. There will be small ethnic and confessional states,” he said. “In other words, Israel will be the most important and the strongest state in a region that has been partitioned into ethnic and confessional states that are in agreement with each other. This is the new Middle East.”

In fact, the Bush Administration has adamantly resisted talk of partitioning Iraq, and its public stances suggest that the White House sees a future Lebanon that is intact, with a weak, disarmed Hezbollah playing, at most, a minor political role. There is also no evidence to support Nasrallah’s belief that the Israelis were seeking to drive the Shiites into southern Iraq. Nevertheless, Nasrallah’s vision of a larger sectarian conflict in which the United States is implicated suggests a possible consequence of the White House’s new strategy.

In the interview, Nasrallah made mollifying gestures and promises that would likely be met with skepticism by his opponents. “If the United States says that discussions with the likes of us can be useful and influential in determining American policy in the region, we have no objection to talks or meetings,” he said. “But, if their aim through this meeting is to impose their policy on us, it will be a waste of time.” He said that the Hezbollah militia, unless attacked, would operate only within the borders of Lebanon, and pledged to disarm it when the Lebanese Army was able to stand up. Nasrallah said that he had no interest in initiating another war with Israel. However, he added that he was anticipating, and preparing for, another Israeli attack, later this year.

Nasrallah further insisted that the street demonstrations in Beirut would continue until the Siniora government fell or met his coalition's political demands. "Practically speaking, this government cannot rule," he told me. "It might issue orders, but the majority of the Lebanese people will not abide and will not recognize the legitimacy of this government. Siniora remains in office because of international support, but this does not mean that Siniora can rule Lebanon."

President Bush's repeated praise of the Siniora government, Nasrallah said, "is the best service to the Lebanese opposition he can give, because it weakens their position vis-à-vis the Lebanese people and the Arab and Islamic populations. They are betting on us getting tired. We did not get tired during the war, so how could we get tired in a demonstration?"

There is sharp division inside and outside the Bush Administration about how best to deal with Nasrallah, and whether he could, in fact, be a partner in a political settlement. The outgoing director of National Intelligence, John Negroponte, in a farewell briefing to the Senate Intelligence Committee, in January, said that Hezbollah "lies at the center of Iran's terrorist strategy. . . . It could decide to conduct attacks against U.S. interests in the event it feels its survival or that of Iran is threatened. . . . Lebanese Hezbollah sees itself as Tehran's partner."

In 2002, Richard Armitage, then the Deputy Secretary of State, called Hezbollah "the A-team" of terrorists. In a recent interview, however, Armitage acknowledged that the issue has become somewhat more complicated. Nasrallah, Armitage told me, has emerged as "a political force of some note, with a political role to play inside Lebanon if he chooses to do so." In terms of public relations and political gamesmanship, Armitage said, Nasrallah "is the smartest man in the Middle East." But, he added, Nasrallah "has got to make it clear that he wants to play an appropriate role as the loyal opposition. For me, there's still a blood debt to pay"—a reference to the murdered colonel and the Marine barracks bombing.

Robert Baer, a former longtime C.I.A. agent in Lebanon, has been a severe critic of Hezbollah and has warned of its links to Iranian-sponsored terrorism. But now, he told me, "we've got Sunni Arabs preparing for cataclysmic conflict, and we will need somebody to protect the Christians in Lebanon. It used to be the French and the United States who would do it, and now it's going to be Nasrallah and the Shiites.

"The most important story in the Middle East is the growth of Nasrallah from a street guy to a leader—from a terrorist to a statesman," Baer added. "The dog that didn't bark this summer"—during the war with Israel—"is Shiite terrorism." Baer was referring to fears that Nasrallah, in addition to firing rockets into Israel and kidnapping its soldiers, might set in motion a wave of terror attacks on Israeli and American targets around the world. "He could have pulled the trigger, but he did not," Baer said.

Most members of the intelligence and diplomatic communities acknowledge Hezbollah's ongoing ties to Iran. But there is disagreement about the extent to which Nasrallah would put aside Hezbollah's interests in favor of Iran's. A former C.I.A. officer who also served in Lebanon called Nasrallah "a Lebanese phenomenon," adding, "Yes, he's aided by Iran and Syria, but Hezbollah's gone beyond that." He told me that there was a period in the late eighties and early nineties when the C.I.A. station in Beirut was able to clandestinely monitor Nasrallah's conversations. He described Nasrallah as "a gang leader who was able to make deals with the other gangs. He had contacts with everybody."

TELLING CONGRESS

The Bush Administration's reliance on clandestine operations that have not been reported to Congress and its dealings with intermediaries with questionable agendas have recalled, for some in Washington, an earlier chapter in history. Two decades ago, the Reagan Administration attempted to fund the Nicaraguan contras illegally, with the help of secret arms sales to Iran. Saudi money was involved in what became known as the Iran-Contra scandal, and a few of the players back then—notably Prince Bandar and Elliott Abrams—are involved in today's dealings.

Iran-Contra was the subject of an informal "lessons learned" discussion two years ago among veterans of the scandal. Abrams led the discussion. One conclusion was that even though the program was eventually exposed, it had been possible to execute it without telling Congress. As to what the experience taught them, in terms of future covert operations, the participants found: "One, you can't trust our friends. Two, the C.I.A. has got to be totally out of it. Three, you can't trust the uniformed military, and four, it's got to be run out of the Vice-President's office"—a reference to Cheney's role, the former senior intelligence official said.

I was subsequently told by the two government consultants and the former senior intelligence official that the echoes of Iran-Contra were a factor in Negroponte's decision to resign from the National Intelligence directorship and accept a sub-Cabinet position of Deputy Secretary of State. (Negroponte declined to comment.)

The former senior intelligence official also told me that Negroponte did not want a repeat of his experience in the Reagan Administration, when he served as Ambassador to Honduras. "Negroponte said, 'No way. I'm not going down that road again, with the N.S.C. running operations off the books, with no finding.' " (In the case of covert C.I.A. operations, the President must issue a written finding and inform Congress.) Negroponte stayed on as Deputy Secretary of State, he added, because "he believes he can influence the government in a positive way."

The government consultant said that Negroponte shared the White House's policy goals but "wanted to do it by the book." The Pentagon consultant also told me that "there was a sense at the senior-ranks level that he wasn't fully on board with the more adventurous clandestine initiatives." It was also true, he said, that Negroponte "had problems with this Rube Goldberg policy contraption for fixing the Middle East."

The Pentagon consultant added that one difficulty, in terms of oversight, was accounting for covert funds. "There are many, many pots of black money, scattered in many places and used all over the world on a variety of missions," he said. The budgetary chaos in Iraq, where billions of dollars are unaccounted for, has made it a vehicle for such transactions, according to the former senior intelligence official and the retired four-star general.

"This goes back to Iran-Contra," a former National Security Council aide told me. "And much of what they're doing is to keep the agency out of it." He said that Congress was not being briefed on the full extent of the U.S.-Saudi operations. And, he said, "The C.I.A. is asking, 'What's going on?' They're concerned, because they think it's amateur hour."

The issue of oversight is beginning to get more attention from Congress. Last November, the Congressional Research Service issued a report for Congress on what it depicted as the Administration's blurring of the line between C.I.A. activities and strictly military ones, which do not have the same reporting requirements. And the Senate Intelligence Committee, headed by Senator Jay Rockefeller, has scheduled a hearing for March 8th on Defense Department intelligence activities.

Senator Ron Wyden, of Oregon, a Democrat who is a member of the Intelligence Committee, told me, "The Bush Administration has frequently failed to meet its legal obligation to keep the Intelligence Committee fully and currently informed. Time and again, the answer has been 'Trust us.'" Wyden said, "It is hard for me to trust the Administration."