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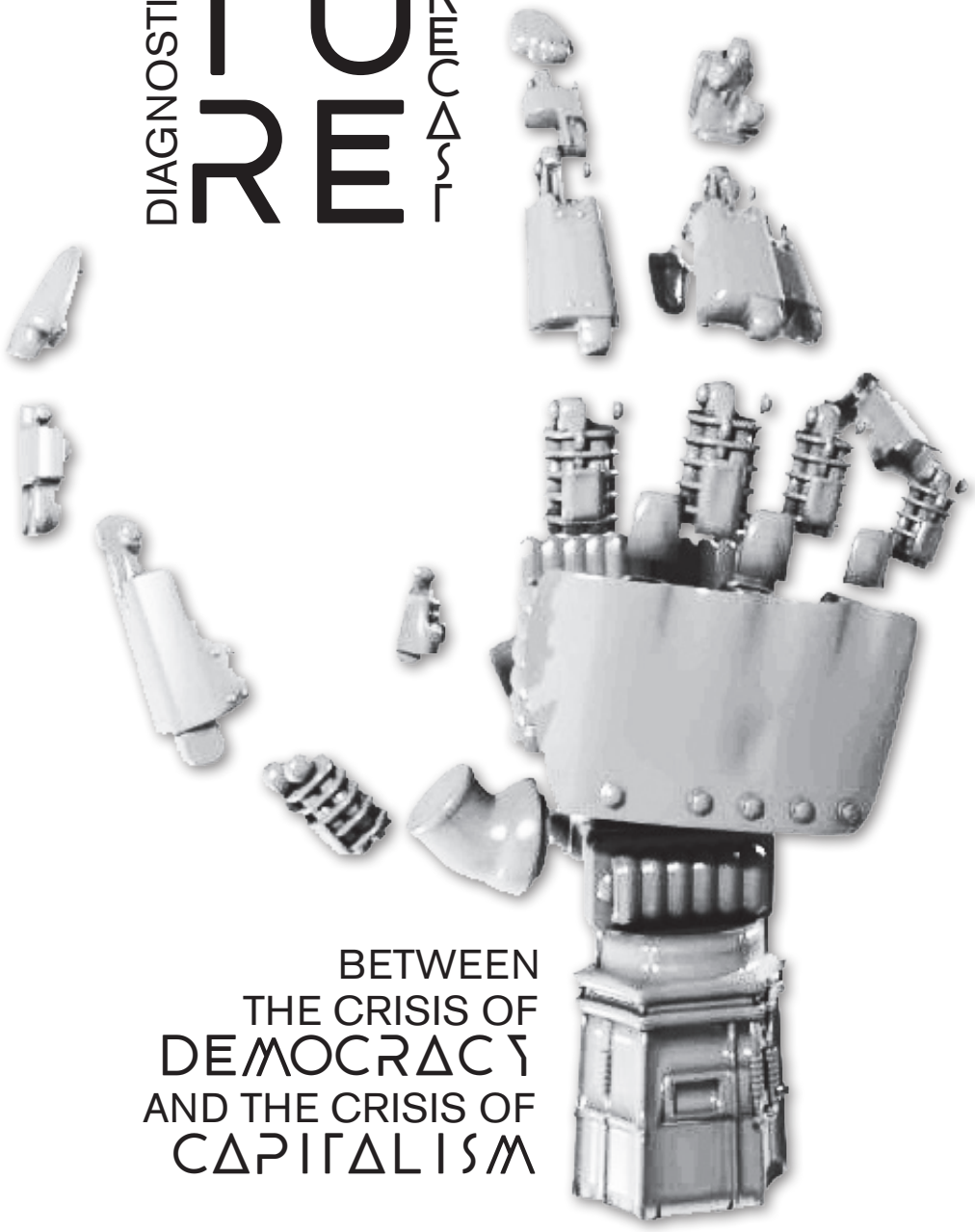
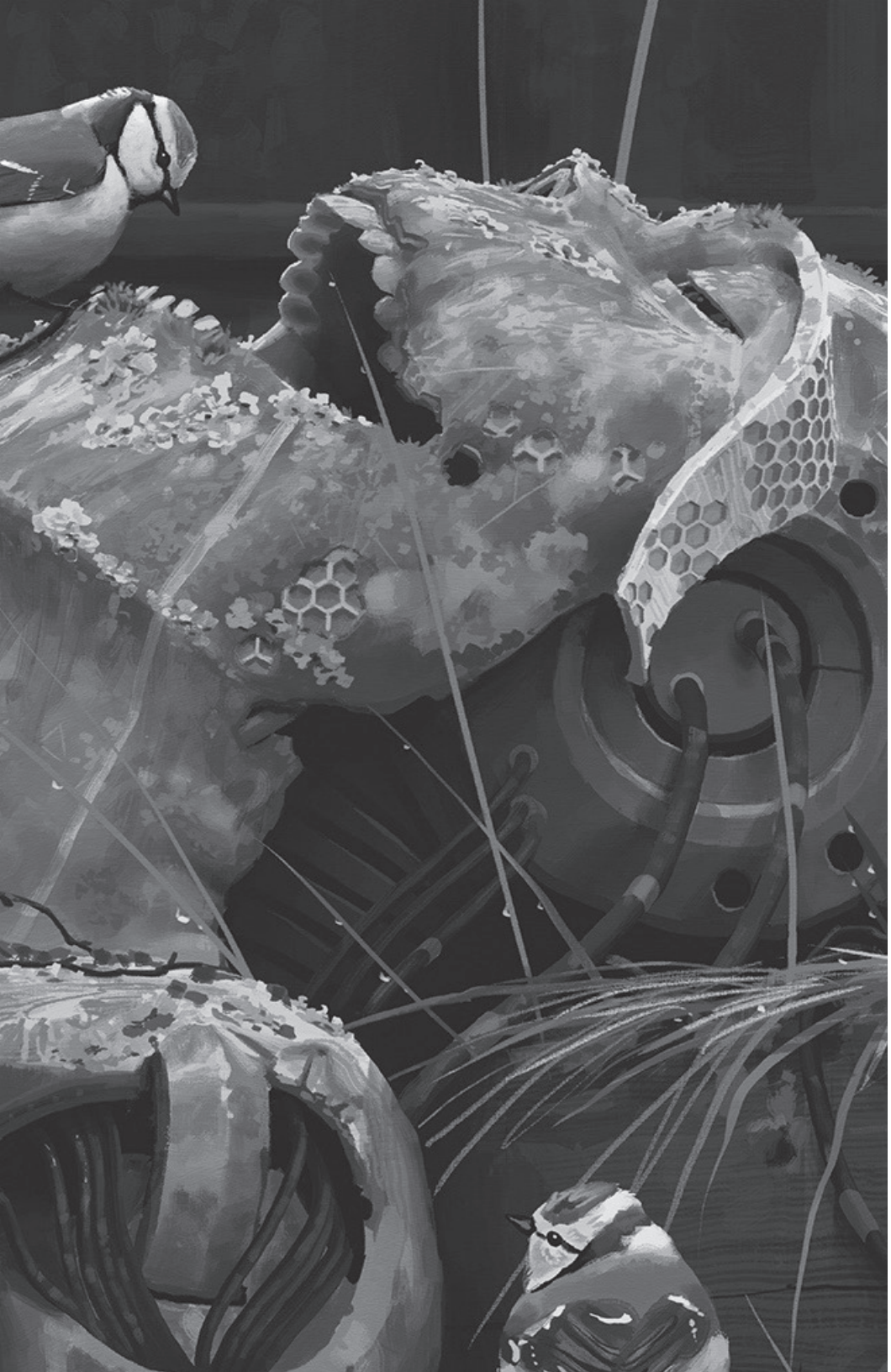


BETWEEN
THE CRISIS OF
DEMOCRACY
AND THE CRISIS OF
CAPITALISM

BY PETER GELDERLOOS



It is no secret that both democracy and capitalism are in crisis. For more than half a century, state planners and their pundits only had to justify democracy as "better than (state) communism." For the 1990s and most of the '00s, they didn't have to offer any justification at all. Democracy was the only possibility imaginable, the teleological destiny of all humankind.

Today, that is no longer the case. On the world stage, democratic institutions of interstate cooperation are in shambles, and the emergence of new alliances and new postures suggests that an alternative is beginning to coalesce. At the level of specific nation-states, the central ground that allowed for a broad social consensus for many decades has all but eroded. There are growing movements on the right to reformulate the social contract—and, at the farthest fringes, to do away with democracy entirely—while the left is preparing a groundswell to renew democracy and smooth out its contradictions by renewing the dream of universal inclusion and equality. Both of these movements suggest that democracy as it currently exists cannot continue.

Meanwhile, the global financial crisis of 2008 has not been resolved, but simply staved off through the massive privatization of public resources and the creation of new, even larger financial bubbles to temporarily absorb excess capital. Capitalism desperately needs a new territory to which to expand. Whatever strategy capitalists adopt will need to offer an exponential growth in profitable investment opportunities and a solution to the mass unemployment that could afflict more than half the global labor force as Artificial Intelligence and robotization renders them redundant.

These two crises are intimately connected. Capitalists will support the governmental models that protect their interests, whereas only the State can open new territories for capital accumulation and quell the resistance that always arises. Pulling at the seams exposed in this interstice, we can begin to conduct a diagnostic of the future that those in power are busily assembling in an attempt to bury the divergent and emancipatory possibilities that lay before us. If we do nothing, this Machine we are fighting will correct its malfunctions. If we analyze those malfunctions and the solutions being proposed, we can act more intelligently. Crisis offers us an opportunity for a revolution that could abolish the State and capitalism, but only if we understand how domination is evolving and set out to block

its advance, rather than paving the way for new forms of domination as so many revolutionaries have done in the past.

To accomplish this, we will examine the architecture of the current world system and pinpoint what exactly in this world system is failing. The diagnostic will tease out what capitalism needs to get out of the current crisis and what proposals offer it the most promising horizon, focusing on the possibility of a *bioeconomic expansion.* In parallel, we will analyze the crisis of democracy, both at the level of the nation-state and the level of interstate, global cooperation, comparing the prospects of fascist, progressive democratic, hybrid, and technocratic solutions to restore social peace and satisfy the needs of capitalists. Within this discussion, we will look at climate change, understanding it as a linchpin that conditions the governmental and economic crises and also suggests—or even requires—a synthesis in the responses to those two crises. Finally, we will address what all this means for us and our possibilities for action. —

THE ETHNO STATE

On July 20, 2018, with the signing of the "Jewish nation-state" law, Israel became the first explicit *ethno state.* Likud's actions, and the reactionary coalition they represent, throw into sharp relief the ongoing crisis of democracy.

An ethno-state is a recent reformulation of the *sovereign nation state,* that fundamental element of the liberal world order from the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia until today. *Ethnos* and *nation* have the same meaning—the former from a Greek root, the latter from a Latin root—so the difference is contextual. From 1648 to 1789, the nation-state evolved into its presently understood form as an institutional complex that purports to give political expression to a nation via the mechanism of representation, as modulated by the Enlightenment worldview and values of legal equality and universal rights.

A reactionary departure from this now dusty model, the ethno-state is a revision of the Enlightenment worldview based on 21st century understandings of the old political terms. In the 17th century, none of the Western nations existed as such; they were still carving themselves out of myriad linguistic and cultural expressions and inventing the social institutions that could assemble the cultural gravity needed to force disparate peoples into a common interclass identity. The most stable proto-nation at

This is a tall order. By all rights, we shouldn't even be on the stage anymore. Capitalism has invaded every corner of our lives, turning us against ourselves. The power of the State has grown exponentially and they have defeated us so many times before. Nonetheless, their system is failing once again. On both the left and the right, they will look for solutions. They will try to recruit us or silence us, unite us or divide us—but no matter what, they want to make sure that what happens next isn't up to us.

This is the Future, a machine busy producing a new version of the same old domination in order to bury all the unmapped possibilities suggested by the system's decay. We can destroy that Future and regain our lives, beginning the long task of turning the present wasteland into a garden—or we can succumb to it.

ENDNOTES

1. In case anyone is inclined to cite the pseudo-military structure of some militia groups, they should first compare it to the extensive chain of command that connected historical fascist movements to the actual military or a fascist political party
2. It is also an embarrassing argument to make for someone who claims fascism is making a resurgence, given that two of the major models for anti-democratic authoritarian states today—Israel and Turkey—made the shift during periods of economic growth. Even, ahem, Trump, was elected amidst a backdrop of economic growth, but it seems that at least some anti-fascists fell for the implicitly white supremacist media fable that increasingly impoverished "working class whites" were behind the Trump victory.
3. The legend goes that Eisenhower asked Franco what structure he had put in place to make sure that Spain wouldn't descend again into chaos, to which Franco replied, "the middle class."
4. Though this strays from the topic at hand, we have to applaud Myanmar as another triumph for nonviolence. I wonder if Gene Sharp is going to visit Rohingya?
5. Data analytics used by companies connected to reactionary mega-donor Robert Mercer were instrumental in both Trump's victory and the Brexit referendum win, both of which had been rejected by traditional media, opinion campaigns, and predictive metrics.
6. This is a sore point that liberals desperately try to avoid: from a statist point of view, most dictatorships were in fact necessary.

focus on how technology as it exists in global society functions as an all-or-nothing juggernaut. The one debate regarding technology that we cannot lose, and that is left out of the dominant framing, addresses the authoritarian nature of technology as it exists today. It is presented as a consumer choice, but each new advancement becomes obligatory within a matter of years. We are forced to adopt it or become totally excluded. Each new advancement rewrites social relations, progressively robbing us of control over our lives and giving control to the governments that surveil us and the corporations that exploit us. This loss of control is directly related to the destruction of the environment.

We are increasingly being sold a transhumanist narrative in which nature and the body are presented as limitations to be overcome. This is the same old Enlightenment ideology that anarchists have fallen for time and again, and it rests upon a hatred of the natural world and an implicit belief in (Western) human supremacy and unfettered entitlement. It is also being increasingly used to make the capitalist future enticing and attractive, at a time when one of the primary threats to capitalism is that many people do not see things improving. If anarchists cannot recover our imagination, if we cannot talk about the possibility of a joyful existence, not only in fleeting moments of negation but also in the kind of society we could create, in how we could relate to one another and to the planet, then I don't believe we have any chance of changing what happens next.

The system is entering a period of chaos. Social pillars long thought to be stable are trembling. Those who own and govern this world are looking for ways to hold onto power, or to use the crisis to get an edge on their opponents. The structures they have long built up are on a collision course and they cannot agree what correction to make, but they'll be damned if they let us off this suicidal ride. They may offer us jobs, organic food, and trips to the moon; they may terrorize us into submission.

It is a frightening moment and the stakes are high. Those in power are not in control. They don't know what's going to happen next, their interests are diverging, and they haven't agreed on a clear plan. Nonetheless, they'll throw everything they've got into holding onto power. Meanwhile, their failings are on display for everyone to see, and uncertainty is in the air. It is a moment that requires qualitatively more from us: communal practices of solidarity that can scale up from affinity groups to neighborhoods to society as a whole; visions of what we could do if we were in control of our own lives, and plans for how to get there; and practices of self-defense and sabotage that can enable us to stay on our feet and prevent those in power from getting away with murder again and again.

the time, the British, was still a hierarchical alliance of several nations. The creators of the nation-state (or interstate) system, those we would anachronistically refer to as the Dutch, were known as the United Provinces or the Low Countries, and what unity they had was based more on shared opposition to the imperial power of Hapsburg Spain than to shared national identity. They did not have a shared language or a shared religion.

Originally, Westphalian sovereignty was a system of segregation and minority rights: strong borders were drawn between political entities, ending the patchwork feudal system in which most land was inalienable and had multiple owners and users. Since feudal rulers had possessions in multiple countries, no country was subject to a uniform political hierarchy. Westphalia cemented such hierarchies, culminating in a supreme ruler in each land, and establishing the religion of the rulers as the religion of the land. However, members of religious minorities still had the right to practice in private as long as they were Catholics, Lutherans, or Calvinists (as only the United Provinces practiced a religious tolerance broad enough to include Anabaptists and Jews). In its inchoate phase, this system used religious identity to perform the segregating function the nation would later play.

Crisis offers us an opportunity for a revolution that could abolish the State and capitalism, but only if we understand how domination is evolving and set out to block its advance, rather than paving the way for new forms of domination as so many revolutionaries have done in the past.

As there was yet no science of the nation, the different strategies of nation-building that arose over the next two centuries were initially considered equally valid: the melting pot of the United States, the Enlightenment colonialism of France, the scientific essentialism with which the leading thinkers of academia and government across the Western world attempted to fix ethnicity as a biological reality.

The 21st century reactionary malcontents of the liberal world order appeal to an outdated scientific essentialism to contest the postmodern and transhumanist evolutions of the nation concept. These more adaptable ideological devices pair the increasing global integration of capitalism with a philosophical integration of humankind. The postmodernists unclothed the brute mechanisms of nation-building to portray an alienated sameness that putatively cuts across continents, while the transhumanists adapt liberal values to a cult of the bio-machine, in which the supposed differences between human communities become irrational

and an updated, progressive version of Western culture is proposed as the new universal.

Opposing these psycho-economic innovations, the reactionary proponents of the ethno-state use one fundamental pillar of modernity against another, conjuring up a notion of nationality that is simultaneously 19th and 21st century, reviving the white supremacist elements that were always present in Enlightenment thinking, and jettisoning what had been the integrally interconnected element of democratic equality.

In other words, today's ethno-state isn't just a reformulation of the classic nation-state: the ethno-state emerges from out the other side of democracy, attempting a break with the old Enlightenment synthesis. Yet, at the same time, the new formulation demands the ethno-state fulfill the ancient putative purpose of the nation-state: to take care of a people and give them political expression. The proponents of the ethno-state judge this task to be more important than what for centuries had been seen as inseparable, concomitant functions within Western thinking: the guarantee of equal rights and democratic participation.

If we look at it clearly, we see that the ethno-state is a reactionary response to a crisis of democracy and the nation-state that is, if not general, certainly global. Noting the first clue that could enable us to identify broader patterns, let us recall that it was the para-institutional left of the alter-globalization movement that first sounded the crisis of the nation-state and called on the State—as it still pathetically calls—to fulfill its duty and take care of its people.

The Israeli state has revealed its willingness to break with democratic equality in order to construct a new synthesis by legislating non-equal rights—explicitly denying Arabs, Muslims, and other non-Jews the right to self-determination or the right to land and housing, and specifically striking even a symbolic commitment to democracy from the language of the new law.

THE WORLD SYSTEM

The period between World War I and World War II represented an interregnum during which the UK fought to retain its dominance in an expiring world system, while Germany and the US vied for the role of architect of a new world system (after the USSR quickly abandoned its meager attempts at a global transformation). As Giovanni

to maintain social hierarchies (e.g., rape, lynchings), they can finally *share out* the behaviors and privileges previously reserved for heterosexual white men. In practice, equality means that everyone gets to act like the normative white male, once that normative subject is *demobilized* and its paramilitary functions are reabsorbed by professional bodies like the police, the medical establishment, advertising agencies, and so on.

Such a practice of equality neutralizes the threat that feminist and anti-colonial movements have posed to capitalism and the State. The only way out of this is to relate non-normative bodies with practices that are inherently subversive, rather than with identity labels that can be recuperated (essentialism). We don't criticize the State because there are not enough women leading it, but because it has always been patriarchal; not because its leaders are racists, but because the State itself is a colonial imposition, and colonialism will be alive in one form or another until the State is abolished. Such a view requires putting more emphasis on historical continuities of oppression rather than tokenistic indicators of oppression in the present moment.

As far as critiques of ecocide are concerned, capitalism very much needs to start *taking care of the environment.* Clearly, we must focus on contesting *what that means* rather than focusing on the reactionaries who still don't agree with some version of this sentiment. Capitalist concerns for the environment will necessarily involve managing and engineering nature. Anti-capitalist concern for the environment is meaningless unless it is ecocentric and anti-colonial.

What is being done to the planet is an atrocity. Those responsible should be stripped of all social power and made to answer for the hundreds of millions of deaths and extinctions they have caused; above all, they cannot be trusted with solving the problem they are profiting from. The root of the problem is not fossil fuel, but the longstanding idea that the planet—indeed, the entire universe—exists for human consumption. Unless we can achieve a paradigm shift and foreground the idea that our purpose is to help take care of the earth and be a respectful part of a community of life, there is no hope for saving wild nature, liberating humanity, or ending capitalism.

Technology sits at the crossroads of all of the escape routes from ecological crisis that lay open before capitalism. Technology is not a list of inventions. Rather, it is the reproduction of human society as seen through a technical lens: the *how* of social reproduction. Everything about how humans relate to the rest of the planet and how we structure our internal relations is modulated by our technology. Rather than wading into the typically idiotic framing of the debate—*techmology, good or whack?*—we have to

we must drive the final nails in its coffin before it develops a new narrative to justify its insatiable expansion.

To be able to do so, we have to develop an acute awareness of the escape routes still open for those who would preserve and renew capitalism, and undermine them before they can be reinforced and turned into load-bearing elements of the next global narrative structure. Mere critiques of poverty, inequality, and ecocide are not enough;. Divorced from an anarchist strategy, each of these lines of protest will only help to lubricate the tracks of a specific line of escape from the present contradictions into a capitalist future.

Once neoliberalism expires and a significant quantity of global value is destroyed by cascading debt defaults or warfare, something like universal basic income will likely become an attractive strategy for reintegration. It could reintegrate the poor and marginalized, provide a new pool for government-backed lending, and offer a solution to AI-exacerbated mass unemployment. What's more, versions of UBI are perfectly compatible with both a progressive, regenerative politics, and a right-wing, xenophobic politics that would attach such benefits to citizenship. UBI instead of welfare can be justified with both the rhetoric of social justice and the rhetoric of curtailing government bureaucracy. Such bipartisanship increases the possibilities for a new consensus politics. Corporate proponents of UBI—and these are on the rise—can make use of anti-capitalist critiques of poverty and inequality to urge governments to invest in the very forms of social financing and engineering that will ease the problems caused by those same corporations and maintain a viable consumer base that will continue to buy their products.

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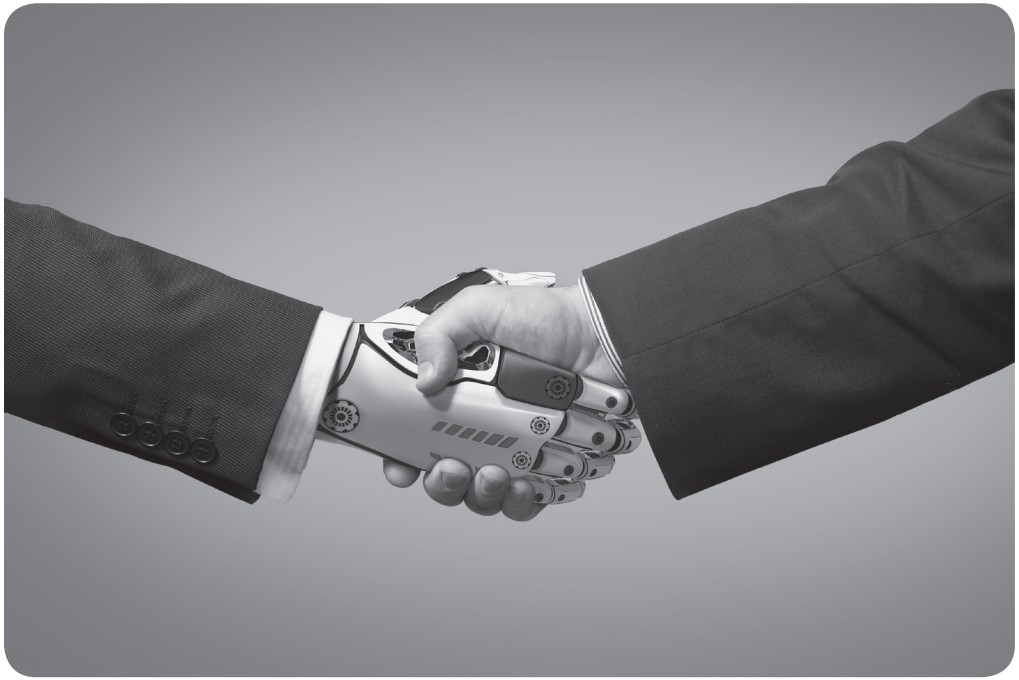
Critiques of inequality can be most easily answered with promises of greater participation: the aforementioned democratic renewal. As far as critiques of inequality relate to gender, race, and other axes of oppression tied to many of the social conflicts that undermine democratic peace, equality feminism and equality anti-racism have already triumphed. The former has modified dominant conceptions of gender, reinforcing binaries but *empowering* people to understand gender as yet another consumer choice of self-expression. They are on the way to fully integrating all identities within a patriarchal, white supremacist mode. By nominally rejecting the exercises of paramilitary power that have historically been necessary

Arrighi argues, the 1929 crash marked the *terminal crisis* of the British system. Since World War II, the US has engineered and led a world system of economic accumulation and interstate cooperation. The ostensible champion of decolonization, itself a nation of former colonies that won their independence, the US won the participation of practically the entire world population in its system by creating the UN and giving all the new nation-states a seat at the table. Through the Bretton Woods Institutions—the International Monetary Fund and later the GATT-cum-WTO—the US improved on the earlier British system and intensified global participation in the capitalist regime by creating a fair set of rules based on the ideology of free trade. The rules were fair insofar as they were supposed to be the same for everyone, in contrast to the earlier colonial system that



was explicitly based on supremacy and military might—the sort of naked practices that had been necessary to brutally force the world's population into a capitalist economy. And the rules were attractive to the dominant players because they removed the obstacles to capital accumulating more capital, so those who had the most would profit the most. Within this diabolical arrangement, the US maintained military superiority—the one element no one talked about equalizing—through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

It might have been an ironclad structure, but power is first and foremost a belief system, and the power of stupidity is such that nothing in the world is foolproof. We should never expect the State to be above the effects of stupidity; on multiple levels, the State is the institutionalization of human stupidity. Real wisdom never needed a State.

With such exceptional power, the US ruling class felt that they were above their own rules. It was the US, and especially its reactionaries, that sabotaged the UN, the WTO, and NATO. Of the three, the hamstringing of the UN was the most cooperative venture, involving Democrats and Republicans in near equal measure, though the Democrats did a better job of making the UN feel appreciated even as they prevented it from carrying out its mission in Vietnam, El Salvador, Nicaragua, South Africa, and above all, Israel.

It is fitting that the new synthesis that could sound the death knell for the US world system should find its first manifestation in Israel, its most costly ally and inopportune beneficiary. More than any other bloody client state, it was Israel's aggressive use of US support that turned the UN into a paper tiger incapable of addressing the most flagrant injustices in the world. Nor was this a necessary price to pay in order to achieve Machiavellian geopolitical interests in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and other Arabic states have proven more reliable allies, with more natural resources, than tiny, belligerent, destabilizing Israel. It is possible that this disastrous alliance is less the result of strategic thinking than of white supremacist and Christian thinking—the identification of the US political class with a *Judeo Christian culture.* Israeli white supremacy is much more developed than Saudi white supremacy. Not through any fault of the Saudis, who don't hold back in abusing and exploiting their own racialized underclasses, but because, a thousand years after the Crusades, Westerners still view Arabs and Muslims as a threat.

Granted, with more military aid per capita than any other country in the world (and the highest military expenditures per square kilometer), Israel has been highly useful to NATO as a military laboratory developing techniques not only for interstate warfare but also intra-state warfare of the kind most relevant to the likes of the US, the UK, and France: gated communities defending themselves against racialized ghettos. But other countries could have also served that role in a way that didn't destabilize a geopolitical hotspot.

World systems always fluctuate and eventually come to an end. The patterns of these changes are useful areas of study. Up until now, successive world systems have shown an alternation between expansion and intensification. The Dutch-led cycle of accumulation represented an

to win a war against the US, so long as it has military autonomy in its own corner of the world; all previous global architects won defensive wars against the earlier global leader decades before ascending to the role themselves, and China already did this in the Korean War. Rather, it would have to make itself the center for the organization of global capitalism.

The critical question might be, what country most effectively pulls itself out of the economic crisis and opens new directions and new strategies for the expansion of capitalism? And secondly, what will those strategies be?

AND THE ANARCHISTS?

One of the few certain things is that no one alive today has witnessed such a level of global uncertainty. A broken system may continue puttering along for another two or even three decades, wreaking havoc. A progressive rebirth might rescue that system through democratic socialism, eco-engineering, and transhumanism. A coalition of other states might inaugurate a more technocratic order of great states on the basis of institutions and social contracts yet to be articulated.

None of these possibilities, of course, contain the horizon of freedom, well-being, and the healing of the planet. All of them suppose the survival of the State. I have not spoken of anarchists in the preceding considerations because we are losing our ability to manifest as a social force in the changing circumstances. We have not succeeded in resisting technological convenience, overcoming the various addictions capitalism instills in us, abandoning the puritan habits that pass for politics, spreading revolutionary imaginaries, or communalizing daily life. Our ability to riot was enough to change the social discourse and open a few new possibilities for social movements over the last two decades. If the system does not repair itself quickly, however, our combative skills may become insufficient and invisible beside the far greater conflicts that will emerge. The skill that may be most important, and that seems to be most lacking, is the capacity to turn survival into a communal concern. Sadly, most people seem to be falling out the other side of individualism into the most extreme forms of alienation.

All of this can change, of course. In the meantime, it makes more sense to speak of what life might be like for us in the coming years of systemic disorder. We still have the ability to spread new ideas at the social scale, to play the role of society's conscience. Capitalism has little legitimacy left;

question of technology, and therefore AI, state planners would have to ease democracy's contradiction between political equality and economic inequality by introducing socialism in the form of universal basic income. All within the next decade or two.

In other words, Western governments would need to undergo a drastic paradigm shift in order to be able to continue shaping the world system. The challenge is probably too great for them. The few visionary progressives who can see what needs to be done are chained, by the very logic of democracy, to the dead weight of the center. It does not help things that China has taken over from Europe as the undisputed world leader in the production of solar cells and other renewable energies. (75% of solar panels worldwide are either made in China or by Chinese companies in industrial neo-colonies in Southeast Asia; this is thanks to an aggressive government campaign pushing state-owned banks to invest.) Meanwhile, the US is headed for another oil glut, opening untapped deposits in the Permian Basin in Texas, described as being even larger than Saudi Arabia's oilfields.

In other words, we can almost write the eulogy for the US-engineered global system. But what comes next isn't clear. China itself is headed to economic disaster. Its stock market is shaking, and the country has massive debt, especially its major companies. China avoided the recession of 2008 with a huge artificial stimulus campaign. Now Party leaders are pushing for a clampdown on riskier lending, but this is leading to a scarcity of credit that is causing economic growth to slow. Take the example of Australia, celebrated because the country hasn't had a technical recession in 27 years: this has also been in part because of major government spending. But households are slipping more and more into debt and therefore spending less, therefore causing a slowdown in domestic spending, and Australia's main trade partner is China, where the weakening of the yuan will also hurt the ability of Chinese consumers to buy imported goods such as those coming from Australia. With the economic slowdowns in Turkey and Brazil, where over-investment bubbles are also ready to pop, China is the last strong player standing. If it falls, the economic crash will probably be global, and probably much worse than 2008. All the contradictions of capitalism are converging right now.

To prop up the economy, China is following a similar path to the US: cutting taxes, spending more on infrastructure, and changing the rules so that commercial lenders can put out a greater amount of money in loans in comparison to their actual deposits.

The possibility that China might become the architect of a new global system is not based on economic growth or military power. It doesn't have

intensification of modes of colonial exploitation. That exploitation had already been spread throughout the Indian Ocean and as far as South America by the Portuguese and the Castillian-Genovese partnership, but the Dutch perfected the scorched earth engineering of new economies and new societies.

The British-led cycle of accumulation represented a geographical expansion that saw colonialism (still using what were largely Dutch economic and political models) absorb every last corner of the globe. And the US-led cycle of accumulation represented an intensification of capitalist and interstate relations that had obtained under the previous cycle, as colonies liberated themselves, politically, in order to participate more fully in Western capitalism and global democratic structures.

The accelerating pace of these changes suggests that we are due for a new cycle of accumulation. Arrighi hypothesized that the 1973 petroleum crisis was the *signal crisis* of the US cycle, signaling the switch from industrial to financial expansion and thus the inflating of a massive bubble, which should make the 2008 recession the *terminal crisis.* The apparent end of US hegemony, which future historians may date to 2018 unless 2020 brings extreme changes, suggests we may already be in the interregnum. Signs of this include Palestine's declaration, after the US embassy move to Jerusalem, that there was no place for the US in future peace negotiations; declarations that the EU is prepared to make do without close cooperation from the US; the expanding role of China in geopolitics through the Belt and Road Initiative; the launching of the Transpacific Partnership—the largest free trade area in the world—without the US; and finally the diplomatic end run that North Korea performed around the US, through bilateral negotiations with South Korea and China, and then negotiations with the US in which the latter had no leverage, effectively destroying the most effective international consensus and embargo on the North that the US had ever orchestrated.

Democracy, as the ideology underpinning the US-led world system, is in crisis because US hegemony is in crisis, and it is also in crisis because it is failing to deliver the political expression that will suffice to keep world populations integrated into a single economic and interstate system, from Greece to Hungary to Myanmar.

The reactionary coalition that was created by Netanyahu—not by Trump—does not represent the only way forward from liberal democracy. But the fact that an important state, followed by a growing body of others, is breaking apart an old and hallowed synthesis—turning the nation-state against universal equality—is incontrovertible evidence that the world system that has governed us up until now is falling apart.

THE REACTIONARY RIGHT

As political labels, left and right refer originally to the left and right benches of the Estates General at the beginning of the French Revolution, with different political tendencies clustering together in different rows. Properly speaking, anarchists have never belonged to the left, unless we count those shameful moments when a part of the movement joined the Bolsheviks in Russia or the Republican government in Spain. Rather than exemplars of effective anarchist action, these were mediocre opportunists and *possibilists* who were unable to temper the authoritarian tendencies of their erstwhile allies nor even to save their own sorry hides.

Nonetheless, anarchists have always participated in revolutionary movements and been staunch enemies to reactionary movements, and as such we have often found a great deal of affinity with the base—not in the leadership—of the left-wing organizations. The very first anarchists to take that name were those *enragés* of the French Revolution who were too irresponsible to join the Jacobins and Girondins in their power politics, sordid alliances, stifling bureaucracies, and massacres of the peasants on behalf of the bourgeoisie.

In this historical framing, the right is certainly the most repugnant arm of government, but not necessarily the most dangerous for the people at the bottom. In the case of the French Revolution, yes, the peasants were starving under the monarchy, but they were massacred by the Jacobins, and eventually stripped of the commons forever by various brands of progressive liberals.

Of all the tendencies of power, the reactionary right has been the least perspicacious in anticipating the changing winds of fortune. Every progressive change in the organization of global capitalism and the interstate system has taken much more from the Left than from the Right, but this does not mean the right is irrelevant. It is not forward thinking, it can even be described as the part of the ruling class that doesn't have any good ideas, but the conflicts that the right has pushed past the social boiling point time and again generally shape, if negatively, the regime to come. The future has rarely belonged to the Napoleons and the Hitlers, but they have left their bloody mark, decimating the underclasses and the social struggles of their times. And when the left has been most successful

cheap loans for largely unnecessary infrastructure on poor countries in Africa and the rest of the Global South, and then appropriating their entire public sector, their resources, and their future earnings when they can't pay back the debts.

The *New York Times* describes Chinese debt bondage in Malaysia and lauds the local government for supposedly standing up to the practice. They go so far as to speak of "a new version of colonialism." There's nothing inaccurate about this: there has only been one century out of the last twenty (1839-1949) when China wasn't an active colonial or imperial power with its own brand of ethnic superiority. Colonialism has taken many forms in addition to the particular race paradigm that evolved in the Triangular Trade of the Atlantic. A truly global anti-colonial practice cannot be limited to a Eurocentric understanding of race or a simplistic opposition that places all whites on one side and all people of color homogeneously on the other.

What is in fact inaccurate about the hand-wringing of the *New York Times* is that this "new version of colonialism" was developed by the United States in the decades immediately after World War II. Anyone familiar with the critiques of the anti- and alter-globalization movement knows that it was the Bretton Woods institutions created in the US that pioneered the practice of debt bondage and appropriation of public infrastructure. The corporate media is apparently hoping everyone has forgotten about those critiques by now.

If this too-late, too-hollow concern is the best that the proponents of Western democracy can whip up, the contest is lost already. It would take a major overhaul to rescue the current institutions of interstate cooperation and create the possibility for another American Century, or at least a US-European one. It would mean turning the UN into an organization that had to be taken seriously, an organization that could isolate countries that did not respect the common legal framework. To accomplish this, the US would have to end its role as the principal saboteur of the UN and make unmistakable gestures like ending military aid to Israel.

State planners would only take such drastic steps if they came to believe that an impartial respect for human rights would be essential for business and greater international cooperation. And in the 21st century, a meaningful respect for human rights would have to take ecological considerations into account, albeit from an anthropocentric perspective. This means nothing short of an intensive state intervention into economic processes to curtail the chasing of short-term interests and take on the humanitarian management of climate and all other geobiological systems. And since such an intervention would be inseparable from the

US is famous for systemic racism and injustice. With every Brixton and Tottenham, the UK shows it's in the same shape, and the growing wave of far-right movements throughout Europe shows that liberal democracies from Sweden to Italy were never less racist than the US, as they liked to believe. The moment that people of color gained visibility in these societies, supposedly enlightened citizens ran into the arms of xenophobic, far-right parties. Even the German far left has begun adopting openly anti-immigrant positions.

In the Global South, where Western powers have long preached democracy as a panacea even as they continue to support military dictatorships, the results of democracy have been disappointing. Across South America, democratic governance has only made manifest the underlying social polarization caused by capitalism and neo-colonialism, and brought back the levels of instability that required military dictatorships in the first place.6 In Myanmar, long the cause célèbre of democrats and pacifists, their Nobel Prize-winning State Counselor wasn't in power for more than a year before her government started carrying out genocide against the Rohingya and persecuting dissident journalists. But what democracy hasn't ever carried out a little genocide, amiright?

Elsewhere, the moral superiority Western media and government institutions have been trying to build up against the perceived Chinese threat has been equally hollow. In response to growing economic competition in Africa, long reserved as Europe's "backyard," article after article has appeared bemoaning China's practice of predatory lending, unloading

at engineering new, more effective regimes of domination and exploitation, it has been by co-opting the survival responses of the underclasses and smothering the most radical elements in progressive alliances that seemed to be necessary at the time to ensure survival in the face of right-wing assaults.

If the Future is a Machine for bending unknown outcomes in the interests of those who dominate a society, this interplay between Right and Left has long been one of its principal engines.

A historical analysis makes it clear that changes to models of government and exploitation do not occur in one country alone, but rather always in response to dynamics that have been global for centuries now.

The same is true of a new iteration of the reactionary right that across the center of the expiring world system—the anachronistic West—has found common ground in articulating the ethno-state program. Those who follow trends in neo-fascism have traced the international reach of this idea, but they have seldom enunciated the prime role occupied by the Israeli Right, an omission that is no longer tenable since the new law of July 20. The blind spot regarding Israel was ideologically inscribed, given the weight the German Left—influenced by the pro-Israel anti-Deutsch ideology—has had in the articulation of contemporary anti-fascism. But more on that later.

Netanyahu's Likud party is the leader of a new coalition that includes Hungary under Orban, governing since 2010, Poland, firmly right-wing since 2015, and the new far-right coalition that governs Austria since late 2017.

This political alliance concludes one of the most sterile debates of the 20th century, the one regarding Zionism, in which its many Jewish critics (such as Arendt, Chomsky, and Finkelstein) were delegitimized with that contrived caricature, "the self-hating Jew." Now that the defenders of Zionism no longer seek to justify their racist project in democratic terms, it is also becoming clear that it is the Israeli Right, not the Jewish Left, that has a politically expedient tolerance for anti-Semitism. Orban has not only made anti-Semitic comments about George Soros, he and his base regularly honor the Nazi collaborators that used to rule Hungary; Poland's right-wing government recently made Holocaust denial obligatory, criminalizing any mention of the fact of Poland's complicity with the Holocaust; and Austrian Chancellor Kurz's junior coalition partner is the neo-fascist Freedom Party, which has toned down their anti-Semitic rhetoric without changing their underlying views.

It makes short-term strategic sense for Israel to attempt to destabilize the European Union and the so-called international community at large,

because many within both alliances regard Israel as a pariah for its flagrant violations of international accords. By breaking that consensus, Israel opens up more opportunities to build bilateral alliances and reintegrate into global geopolitics. On another level, however, this strategy surely runs counter to their most basic interests. By driving out the entirety of the Israeli left in what has become a major diaspora, the right deprives the Israeli state of the possibility of a future democratic rejuvenation when things get bad, as they inevitably will. By showing no regard for Palestinian life, they make it increasingly unrealistic that they could expect any mercy from their neighbors the moment US military aid—not only to Israel but also to Saudi Arabia and Egypt—no longer affords an effective shield.

A clear-headed Israeli ruling class would have made concessions, pretended to respect the international order, and adapted its intrinsic white supremacy the way the US ruling class reformulated its own intrinsic white supremacy in the 1960s and '70s to restore its tarnished legitimacy. As mentioned before, the reactionary right frequently fails to prioritize a lucid understanding of its own long-term interests over the turbid ideologies with which they justify the inequalities and unstable contradictions they impose.

The Nazis effectively committed suicide by thinking they could restore Germany as a colonial power through military expansion, not only against Britain and its allies but also against the USSR. And the xenophobic right today has weakened the US and Europe economically in leaps and bounds. The cutting-edge economy requires global intellectual recruitment, and therefore relatively open immigration regimes, which is why Silicon Valley firms have been vociferously pro-immigrant and anti-Trump. Merkel's decision to welcome Syrian refugees was immediately preceded by an announcement from the largest association of Germany employers that the national economy faced a shortfall of millions of skilled laborers. Merkel never made any move to rescue Syria's lower classes from the refugee camps in Turkey where they rotted; her entire program was to regulate the entry of the college-educated, middle-class Syrians who could afford the several thousand euro journey into the EU.

The far right has absolutely no answer for this brain crunch, which currently threatens the strong advantage that Europe and North America have in the high tech sector over China as the emerging dominant world economic power. Through nationalist trade wars and populistic maneuvers like Brexit, they are actually hurting their home economies. By sowing dissension in what had been robust centers of neoliberal consensus—NAFTA and the EU—they are damaging the very confidence to which investors systematically peg economic growth.

milking the controversy for its own benefit, illustrates how everything is up for grabs in this situation: every alliance and every country can improve its standing, or lose it.

China's vociferous criticisms of Swedish racism, after the relatively minor humiliation of a small group of Chinese tourists, are likewise significant. The criticism is valid, but its actual content is irrelevant insofar as the Chinese state could have been making similar criticisms of far more serious attacks against Chinese travelers and immigrants across the West for well over a hundred years. What has changed is that a state from the global South is now challenging the West's moral high ground, striking at the very heart of self-satisfied Scandinavia, and it is pairing that critique with an economic threat: the Chinese state combined its rebuke with a warning advising its citizens against tourism in Sweden, and there have also been campaigns for the boycott of Swedish products.

If the Chinese state were to become the architect of a new global cycle of accumulation, it would need a system for governing interstate relations compatible with its technocratic model for the state regulation of domestic capitalism. All indications suggest it would seek global stability by explicitly putting state rights over any other kind. This would mean that if Turkey wanted to bulldoze all of Bakur, if Saudi Arabia wanted to virtually enslave its domestic workers, if China wanted to imprison a million Uighurs in concentration camps, that would be their prerogative, and no one else's business. This is a potentially effective strategy for creating more goodwill and unimpeded economic cooperation between states, with organized military might as the basis for right. It also does not shock us that such a philosophy comes out of the Communist Party, which long ago embraced the Jacobin idea that ends justify means.

The CIA has been intervening in public discourse to warn the world that China wants to replace the US as global superpower. To make this seem like a bad thing, they have to suggest that the world is better off as a US protectorate than as a Chinese protectorate. According to one agent, "I too am optimistic that in the battle for norms and rules and standards of behavior, that the liberal national order is stronger than the repressive standards that the Chinese promulgate. I'm confident others won't want to subscribe to that."

Transparently, the US needs to convince the world that the democratic model can provide a better interstate system. But despite more than a century of Western propaganda, this is a hard sell. Not only are populists like Trump willfully flaunting the weaknesses of the democratic system and undermining Western alliances at their most critical moment since 1940—even at its strongest, democracy has delivered disappointing results. The

themselves as the founders of civilization and thus apt tutors to the rest of the world's societies. Orientalist paranoias are based on the association of Eastern civilizations with autocracy and despotism. The Western sense of self-worth collapses without that opposition.

In fact, the Chinese state makes plenty of claims to democracy, justice, equality, and the common good, every bit as valid as the claims made by Western states. But these claims are validated within a paradigm that is different from the one Western elites use to justify their own imperfections. Chinese democracy draws in roughly equal parts from Leninism and a Confucian science of statecraft. In this model, the CP consults minority parties and interest groups before drafting a consensus position deemed to be in the general interest. This conception doesn't translate well into a Western liberal paradigm. Western ruling classes cannot be convinced by such a model; they feel threatened by the prospect of Chinese dominance, even as they believe in their own hypocrisy.

The competition between NATO and China is increasingly taking on these cultural overtones. But as geopolitical conflicts between the US, Russia, and China continue to erode existing interstate institutions, the current spats might come to represent a greater shift towards a confrontation between different models of governance on a world scale.

The aforementioned trend, in which multiple countries have changed their diplomatic relations from Taiwan to China, has a significance that extends beyond the fate of the island formerly known as Formosa. Many of the countries that have fallen in line with Beijing's demands are small Caribbean and Central American countries historically anchored to the US. The fact that they are backing away from US ally Taiwan also symbolizes a certain cooling of their relationship with the US itself. In the emerging system, they have alternatives, and these alternatives erode US dominance, not just in Central America but also in a number of geopolitical hotspots. As Turkey's Erdogan said in response to the usual attempts by the US to strong-arm foreign policy, "Before it is too late, Washington must give up the misguided notion that our relationship can be asymmetrical and come to terms with the fact that Turkey has alternatives."

Saudi Arabia has shown the same awareness of a new geopolitical situation by expelling Canada's ambassador and suspending trade deals after a routine human rights criticism, the typical hypocritical rebuke Western countries have always doled out before carrying on with business-as-usual. The Saudi crown's murder of dissident journalist Khashoggi and the response of Western governments also show that the rules are being rewritten. Some players are trying to change their prerogatives, while others are pushing back. The role that the Turkish state is playing, astutely

Reactionaries are products of their times. They are responding to an unraveling democratic consensus—in some ways anticipating it and in other ways hastening it—and proposing new syntheses. As reactionaries, they are willing to go to great lengths to shock the system in order to restore the elitist values they champion; often, the shocks that they provide galvanize a failing world system to promote a new organizational plan in order to exit the period of systemic chaos, when most actors still have not accepted that the old regime is obsolete. The problem for reactionaries is that the new organizational plan is rarely modeled on the synthesis they propose.

In other words, the rise of the ethno-state model will undoubtedly play a role in destabilizing the neoliberal consensus and threaten the existing configurations of power, but the probability of it representing the new organizational model for the future is small.

PROSPECTING THE FUTURE

The Future is also a discursive machine, building the narrative that draws coherence out of a chaos of conflicting events, reframing all, highlighting some, and misdirecting away from others. As a largely political strategy, this machine mobilizes immense state energies to produce desired outcomes, but the fluid horizon of what is techno-socially possible constitutes a primary limitation. At the moment of clarity in which the new narrative is discovered, there is a political identification of a certain development as a strategic breakthrough. At this moment, the enterprise accelerates to the pitch of a shared campaign, uniting planners and capitalists in a race *forward.* But before that moment, in the inchoate phase, tech companies and research agencies cast about the darkened frontiers like a slime mold, feeling out untapped possibilities that register as "profitable." The leitmotif of this phase is the admired intuition of the venture capitalist. Investment in an uncertain future that has not yet been subjected to scientific control must be hazarded blindly, like a gambler's wagers, rather than evaluated systematically, as in the calculations of the casino owner.

In this situation, vastly different ideas of profit are subjected to the same, stupefying metric. A casino is burning. Putting down the chips for another round of poker might be more profitable than putting out the fire. The

capitalist class is exhibiting just this same range of behaviors on the cusp of the end of the current cycle of accumulation.

Practically all the US capitalists besides the steel companies are getting hurt by the tariff war, but they took home hundreds of millions in tax cuts and they are salivating over the possibilities opened by the repeal of environmental regulations. Silicon Valley capitalists recognized that Trump's anti-immigration policies were a bad business strategy, but their protests have died down. After all, governments don't just restrict or enable access to markets, as liberal philosophy holds. They also create markets. Microsoft, Google, Amazon, and Accenture have been dipping their fingers into lucrative ICE and Pentagon contracts, supplying the profitable border regime. Trump's program is a clear lesson that capitalists don't simply dictate government agendas. The State is needed to tame social terrain for economic expansion, but states also command so many resources that they can get capitalists to invest in areas that contradict their long- and mid-range interests.

Capitalists don't know the future. Polling their predictions can be useful, but at best it gets us into the heads of people who are experts at turning a profit but blinded by their ideology to such an extent that they fail to see the contradictory nature of capitalism.

On the whole, what we can see from their behavior is an increase in systemic instability.

The US is still home to the largest or second largest market in the world, depending on how you measure it; however, the typical US investor now keeps 40% or even 50% of their portfolio in foreign stocks, between two and four times the rate in the 1980s. In 2017 alone, the total amount of US money invested overseas grew by 7.6% ($427 billion), mostly going to Europe, including $63 billion of investment in Swiss corporations plus $168 billion, not counted as investment, deposited in Swiss bank accounts), with even more going to Ireland. Foreign direct investment in the US took a nosedive in 2017, dropping 36%.

The ultra-rich are also investing in luxury doomsday bunkers, paying hundreds of millions of dollars for refurbished military facilities or missile silos in Europe and North America, equipped to support life for a year or more with autonomous air, water, and power systems, in addition to swimming pools, bowling allies, and cinemas. Sales of high-end bunkers by one major company went up 700% from 2015 to 2016, and continued to rise after the presidential elections.

To add to the bad news, experts in Artificial Intelligence, including many of the very people who profit off AI development, are warning that within ten to twenty years, AI could cause massive unemployment as robots and

accurate, it doesn't bode well for the ability of Chinese state-capitalism to create a climate that will favor more cutting-edge innovation than Western capitalist states.

The European Union is also experiencing problems due to technocratic management. Aside from the temporary rebellions caused by the heavy-handedness of the Central Bank, the EU's number one existential threat right now can be traced to the Dublin Regulation, an early EU agreement, subject to little scrutiny at the time of its signing, that stipulates that migrants can be deported back to the first EU country they entered. The core EU states (Germany, UK, France, Benelux) habitually bully the poorer states, protecting their key industries while dictating which industries poorer members have to expand or abandon. And while the Mediterranean countries were able to tolerate being turned into debt colonies and tourist hellholes, they have not been so tolerant of the immigration policy, which also gives leaders a scapegoat for the first two problems. The EU's immigration policy is an obvious dumping on Greece, Italy, and Spain, and to a lesser extent Poland and other border states. These are the countries that can least afford a greater burden to their social services, as Germany siphons off better educated immigrants and shunts the poorer ones back to the border states. This policy has been the major cause of all the right-wing threats to the EU's integrity. Though it is the product of technocratic planners, it reflects the same arrogance that accompanies all power politics.

There is also the question of resistance. The Chinese government is making the bet that it has the technological and military power to quash all resistance movements, permanently. If it is wrong, it risks total political collapse and revolution. Democratic governments enjoy a greater flexibility, because they can deflect dissident movements towards seeking reform, which rejuvenates the system, rather than forcing them to shut up or blow up. European democratic institutions have proven that this pressure-valve mechanism still works, with progressive parties forestalling the growth of revolutionary movements in Greece, Spain, and France. Then there is the problem of continuity. By concentrating so much power in the person of Xi Jinping, the Chinese state sets itself up for the age-old problem of succession; how to eventually hand off power to an equally capable leader.

So the technocratic model is not clearly superior. Even if it were, Western powers would have a hard time accepting it in more than hybrid form. This comes down to white supremacy and its centrality to the Western paradigm. Democracy plays a fundamental role in white supremacist mythology and the implicit claims of white progressives to superiority. Basing the mythical roots of democracy in ancient Greece, whites can think of

interests" is a contradiction in terms. Bare empiricism cannot recognize something as subjective as interests; this is why scientific bodies have to fabricate discreet ideologies masquerading as neutral presentations of fact, since there is no human activity, and certainly no coordinated research and development, without interests. Yet governments are nothing without interests. They are, at their most rudimentary, the concentration of a great deal of resources, power, and capacity for violence with the purpose of fulfilling the interests of a specific group of people. The relationship becomes more complex as governments become more complex, with different types of people developing different interests with regard to the government and with institutions producing subjectivities and therefore molding people's perceptions of their interests, but the centrality of interests remains, as does the fact that hierarchical power blinds people to everything outside of a very narrow reality, and such insensitivity combined with such great power is a sure recipe for unprecedented stupidity.

One example of this is the Three Gorges Dam, perhaps the greatest construction feat of the 20th Century, and certainly a symbol of the Communist Party's ability to carry out strategic planning that sacrifices local interests for a perceived greater good. But the dam has caused so many demographic, environmental, and geological problems that they may outweigh the benefits in energy production. The major motivation for building the dam was probably hubris—the state basking in its technocratic power—more than a measured estimation that the dam would be worth it.

Power politics may also play a role in China's lending crisis. Smaller businesses have a hard time securing loans from China's established banking system, which has traditionally favored state-owned companies and large or politically connected firms, so these businesses turned to newer peer-to-peer lending platforms, many of which were shut down by the government or otherwise collapsed, causing a huge loss of savings. The problem takes on additional dimensions when one considers how important new businesses have been in the US economy in the past couple decades: think Apple, Google, Amazon, Facebook. Arguably, it is only these companies that allow the US to maintain its top spot in the world economy. And while tech start-ups like Didi and Alibaba have been important to Chinese economic growth, and have also succeeded in climbing the ranks to receive vital state support, they have not yet demonstrated the capacity for cutting-edge innovation that would be required of a global leader. Perhaps they can be more accurately perceived as copies of established Western firms that were able to receive financing only after their Western analogues had demonstrated the importance of such companies. If this is

computer programs replace manufacturing, clerical, managerial, retail, and delivery jobs. Of the 50 largest job categories in the US, only 27 are not significantly threatened with replacement by AI. Of the top 15, only three are not threatened: nurses, waiters, and personal care aids. Retail salesperson, which sits in the number one spot, with 4,602,500 employed in 2016, is projected to decline considerably as online sales continue to grow. At the physical stores that will remain due to widely held preferences for purchasing certain products in person, retail staff will persist even after they are no longer technologically necessary, as their primary purpose is to provide a human touch to encourage sales, unlike cashiers (the number two position at three and a half million) who will continue to be replaced by machines.

In fact, most of the job categories that will not be replaced by machines are protected not by technological limits but by cultural limits. Our society would have to undergo a huge shift in values to permit lawyers (no. 44) or elementary school teachers (no. 22) to be replaced by robots. Take the example of waiters, the fastest growing job category. At no point in history has the job been technologically necessary. But having a person whose job is to wait, to be on call to carry your food from the kitchen to your table, creates an experience that people with means have long been willing to pay for.

Though the worst effects of AI and robotization have yet to be felt (outside of manufacturing, telecommunications, and postal services), underemployment is already high, with more and more people struggling to make ends meet. The rates of actual unemployment in the US are said to be historically low, but that is largely because growing numbers of people without jobs are no longer being counted as part of the workforce.

US credit card debt has reached $1 trillion and interest rates are only rising, significantly faster than wages, in fact. This is largely because Trump's major tax giveaway forced the Fed to raise rates to prevent runaway inflation. The proportion of debt service payments to disposable income per household has recently returned to the high levels seen just before the 2008 Great Recession; in simple language, people have to spend a larger share of their money paying off their debts. Meanwhile, the economic stimulus provided by Trump's tax cuts is expected to run out by 2020. Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister has also warned that by 2020, increasing demand for oil will outstrip falling supplies unless there is a major influx of investments to tap new supplies. And oil prices have already been going up, which tends to increase the prices of all other consumer goods.

Speaking of oil, the industry has largely decided that a carbon-emissions

tax is acceptable. Even some Republicans have proposed such a tax. Businesses would have to pay $24 per ton for the right to emit CO2, and that sum of money would go as a payout to poorer households and to upgrade transportation infrastructure. The catch in this proposal is that the government would loosen emissions regulations, so companies could basically do whatever they want to the atmosphere as long as they pay for it, and they would be shielded from the kind of civil responsibility that has been brought down on the tobacco industry and even on Monsanto. All this indicates that energy companies want incentives to develop alternative energies, they expect oil prices to keep rising, and they fear a backlash will force them to pay damages.

Corporate debt is at a new high. The value of corporate bonds outstanding rose from 16% of US GDP in 2007 to 25% in 2017. There is even more corporate borrowing going on in emerging markets, and more

risky loans. As long as interest rates are low, most corporations will be able to continue this practice, but if interest rates go up, as they are expected to in order to keep inflation in check, this could cause a cascade of defaults—the popping of the bubble—especially if it coincides with the slowdown in the global economy expected to begin between 2020 and 2022. Interest rates go up as business goes down: companies can't pay all their debts, or take out new loans to pay off the old ones.

This is not just a US problem. Though Indian and especially Chinese economic growth have been astronomic, China is slowing down and beginning to show signs that it might face a stock market crash, and India

control over those instruments is dependent on successfully appealing to a majority of the electorate through the elitist filters of the corporate media and campaign finance. For a long time, parties achieved this by distinguishing between popular and professional discourses. In other words, they regularly lied to the masses about what they were going to actually do, contributing year after year to the crisis of democracy. Populists like Trump signaled that they would break with this pattern by breaking all the other rules of respectable politics. The problem (from the perspective of the State) is that such a strategy is effective at winning a vote but not effective at pursuing the interests of the institutions of government.

Technocratic systems solve this problem by removing the irrelevant feedback loop of the electorate, basing access to power directly on the performance of the strategies that will amplify power. In doing so, technocrats also theoretically protect themselves from the risk of bad leaders. Stupid, charismatic leaders are a hallmark of democracy, but the danger they present to the system is neutralized by the intelligent, uncharismatic advisers who keep them on a tight leash. George W. Bush and Ronald Reagan were perfect, functioning examples of this model. In breaking the leash, Trump demonstrated that it is not a strong structural feature of democratic government, and thus a potential weak point.

Another advantage of technocratic systems is their ability to centralize interests. In any democratic system, there are many competing interests that make consensus difficult; this can lead to entrenched, polarized, partisan politics. During the Golden Age of democracy, there was elite consensus on the fundamental strategies of governance. Now we are increasingly seeing a divergence of elite interests and the incompatibility of different governing strategies. A technocratic system uses the massive power of the state not to create a terrain in which capitalists can prosper, but to strategically order the operations of capital in a convergent trajectory. In recent years, the Chinese state has been arresting, imprisoning, and disappearing billionaires it accuses of corruption, which means acting outside the Party's control over the market, engaging in alternate or autonomous market planning.

On the geopolitical stage, the Chinese technocratic model has a certain advantage. Country after country and company after company have bowed to Beijing's demands and stopped recognizing Taiwan as an independent country. Not only is China a major economy, it has a greater ability to leverage access to that economy for political purposes, combining greater centralization with a streamlined strategic approach that repudiates the division of politics and economics.

However, there is a great deal of myth around technocratic governance. You can't have a purely "scientific" government because "objective

first in line to apply advances in data analytics that more centrist politicians, sure of their victories, hadn't turned to yet.[5] The corporate elite uniformly see economic nationalism as a risk—a bad thing—and are currently hosting a conversation on how "multinational corporations have to overcome the protectionist sentiments among consumers and government regulators and reinvent their corporate social responsibility models."

There is just one important exception to this consensus, and actually the only real alternative being proposed to the current democratic order: technocracy, which is sometimes identified with a form of economic nationalism unrelated to that proposed by the likes of Bannon.

The Chinese state is the chief model and proponent of such a system, though there have also been frank discussions of such a model in the West. The European Union constitutes a hybrid between a technocratic and democratic model, though it cannot advocate such hybridization, because to acknowledge a gap between democracy and technocracy would contradict the EU's fundamental identity.

A technocratic system leaves policy decisions to appointed experts who climb the ranks, ostensibly based on performance; appointments are carried out by the institution itself, as in a university, not by consultation with the public. Most leading members of the Chinese Communist Party, for example, are engineers and other scientists. However, it would be naïve to ignore that they are first and foremost politicians. They simply have to respond to internal power dynamics rather than focusing on performing for the general public.

In the United States, the all-important Federal Reserve runs technocratically, although it is subordinated to democratic leadership. The technocratic elements of the European Union, such as the European Central Bank, enjoy far more policy-making power, and are often able to dictate terms to the democratic governments of member states. However, the EU has been careful to take advantage of the old liberal distinction between politics and economics: by relegating technocracy to a putatively economic sphere, the EU maintains its obligatory commitment to democracy.

One of the chief weaknesses of Western democracy that a technocratic system can shore up is the tendency towards sudden, irrational policy shifts that correspond to a populist attempt to seize power. Someone like Trump can make a claim based on misinformation that nonetheless resonates with the lived experiences of a part of the electorate—for example, NAFTA did hurt a great many people, but the reasons that it did, and the effects of his proposed alternative, are quite different than what Trump claimed. In government, the *sine qua non* for implementing one's program is to gain control over the instruments of power. Under a democratic system, winning

is running into the kind of currency problems that could soon put a stop to its growth.

By its very nature, capitalism creates bubbles and sets itself repeatedly on the course of financial collapse. However, these collapses can be very difficult to predict. One of the best retrospective models to date providing a long view of these cycles of accumulation, worked out by world systems theorist Giovanni Arrighi, is already lagging in its predictions. Arrighi charted an exponential acceleration in the frequency of past crises: as capitalism grows exponentially, capital accumulates and collapses more and more rapidly. However, for his model to maintain its geometric accuracy, the 2008 Great Recession should have been the terminal crisis of the American cycle of accumulation. Although according to some measures, that recession has just been staved off and not fully surpassed, the apparent recovery still breaks the pattern of past transitions from one cycle to another.

Part of this can be explained by capitalism's growing intelligence and institutional complexity, namely, in the growing role of state planning in the economy and increasingly robust and constant state economic interventions. This refutes neo-Marxists who seize any opportunity to announce the obsolescence of the State, no matter how many times they are shown to be wrong.

FDR's New Deal, a major investment of government money into public works in order to generate jobs, enabled the US to exit the Great Depression ahead of its European contemporaries, positioning it to be the economic savior of war-torn Europe and Asia and hence the architect of the next cycle of accumulation. Massive government spending as a constant economic stimulus has been a hallmark of the American system, tied to the Federal Reserve and a global network of central banks and monetary institutions that keep inflation within acceptable boundaries and bail out private banks or smaller governments that fail.

Paradoxically, this entire regime of economic stability is based on debt. To keep capitalism from falling apart, the US and a great many other states systematically spend far more money than they actually have. The US deficit—the amount it spends every year beyond its actual earnings—is now more than $1 trillion, and total debt is now $21 trillion, larger than the GDP (the total production of the US economy). The government will pay hundreds of billions of dollars in interest to its creditors this year.

However, the system is not as volatile as it seems. From a capitalist point of view, it's quite well organized (although, in contradiction to free market ideology, entirely dependent on the State). About a third of the debt is owed to other governmental agencies, primarily Social Security. This practice of

a government borrowing from itself stabilizes a huge chunk of the debt by keeping it out of the hands of private creditors who might cash in bonds or stop making loans. It also gives those capitalists an assurance: if the US defaults on its debt, it can choose to first default on the debt owed to its own ordinary citizens, so the ones who suffer are old retirees, not investors. This is similar to what went down in Puerto Rico recently.

About a quarter of the debt is held by mutual funds, banks, insurance companies, and other private investors, and over a third is held by foreign governments, primarily China and Japan. Both the private and the foreign state investors buy US government debt because it's considered a sure bet. Anyone with a lot of cash on hand probably wants to put a significant portion of that cash into a safe investment that will continuously bring modest but sure-fire interest payments. But that actually speaks very little to the mathematics of this wager. No one can explain how the US would ever be able to pay off its debt without massively devaluing its currency and thus destroying the global economy. And the more the debt grows, the more the interest grows, until the point when the interest payments due exceed the capacity of the US budget to pay them.

Basically, the favorable rating of US debt only means that within the current global economic system, investors cannot imagine the US not being able to pay interest on its debts. But the only way to avoid a default is if investors and foreign governments keep lending the US increasing amounts of money forever. And both China and Japan (the two largest lenders) have slowed down in their purchase of US debt, whereas Russia recently dumped its relatively minor share of US debt wholesale.

Capitalist crisis is often connected to warfare, as nation-states fight for control of the global system. Warfare is also useful to capitalism because it destroys a huge amount of excess value, wiping the slate clean for new investments. This is basically a way of saving capitalism from itself. The economic system is constantly generating an exponentially growing quantity of capital, until it has more than it can invest. This abundance—and it is not a human abundance, but a purely mathematical abundance, as people are still starving even in these Golden Ages—threatens to destroy the cumulative value of all capital. So a part of it is destroyed through warfare, those who bet on the losing side are removed from play, and the others continue the game.

However, since World War II, there has been no direct warfare between major powers, in large part because of the principle of Mutual Assured Destruction introduced by nuclear weaponry. The technological progress of warfare has outstripped its usefulness as a political tool, except at the scale of smaller proxy wars.

widely read but poorly connected idealists of political science, it has since migrated to the street, and it is now mostly articulated by people in the tech sector who think their new gadgets can revolutionize government—uncritically assuming that the bad outcomes of government have been the results of technological limitations—and by progressive parties in Europe and Latin America, mostly with influence at the municipal level.

Most politically connected researchers and think tanks take the opposite approach: mass civic participation is an unrealistic or undesirable goal, with many even blaming the plebs for democracy's downward spiral. One counter-proposal doubles down on representative democracy and solves the crisis through consultation with "mini-publics" that replace mass civic participation, no longer a realistic goal according to proponents, as an institutional check on elite power. Others speak of the need for more professionalism and structurally improved intermediaries political parties and interest groups), a sort of hybrid between democracy and more professionalized representational politics. But because the first crisis is every bit as much about perception as about outcomes, it is unlikely that stuffed shirt researchers with an ingrained distrust of the public will know how to solve it, regardless of the quality of their data.

However, there is no reason these two currents cannot be combined: more popular referendums and digital polls at the municipal scale; more professionalization, technocratic evaluations, and structural improvement of political parties at the country-wide scale. The former would improve public confidence and feelings of empowerment, the latter would decrease incompetence and prevent sudden disastrous populist shifts in policy. The greatest obstacle to such strategic changes is the political culture, the institutional inertia of a complex system that has already been in place for many decades. Look at the practical impossibility of going beyond a two-party system in the US, and consider that in most countries, any change to the structure of political parties and other intermediaries, beyond mere campaign finance reform (already implemented in many democracies), would require hard-to-achieve constitutional reforms.

As for the second crisis, there seems to be much less debate. Western financial journals evince a near complete consensus on the need to reject economic nationalism and restore "the rules-governed multilateral trading order that the US itself created." The only voices in favor of economic nationalism are those of some ecologists with little political clout; the leftovers of left Peronist anti-globalism in Latin America, long eclipsed by endogenous currents of neoliberalism following the cues of Lula and company; and some reactionary politicians in the Global North who understand nothing about economics and only came to power because they were

as a structure for interstate cooperation and capital accumulation is also facing a crisis at the global level.

Due to its domestic crisis, democracy is failing to capture the aspirations of its subjects. The kinds of equality it guarantees are mostly either irrelevant or pernicious, and the benefits decrease the further down the social ladder you go. Democratic government has failed to deliver just societies and failed to cover up the widening gap between the haves and the have-nots. It has ended up as another aristocratic system, no better than the ones it replaced.

This means that democracy is losing its innovative ability to recuperate resistance. But until roughly 2008, neoliberal elites barely cared about resistance. They thought that they had so defeated and buried revolutionary potentials that they had no need to pretend, no need to toss the crowd any peanuts. As the 1990s and 2000s dragged on, they became increasingly blatant in their crusade to concentrate wealth in fewer and fewer hands while despoiling the environment and marginalizing ever larger portions of the population. Now that they have revealed their true face, it will take some time for people to forget before they can use their siren song again, and this lack of trust in public institutions comes at a bad time for the once hegemonic NATO countries and their allies.

This underscores why it is so frustratingly myopic when radicals help to restore the seductive value of democracy by talking about what "real democracy" should look like: it's like the story of the engineer in the French Revolution whose life was spared at the last moment when the guillotine jammed—until he looked up and said, "I think I see your problem."

If the global crisis of the democratic order culminates before the seductive value of democracy is renewed, it will be that much harder for them to prevent revolutionary movements from growing into real threats. This second crisis revolves around the ongoing breakdown of interstate political mechanisms that are decreasingly able to mediate conflicts, and the impending economic collapse that threatens to close the buffet at which most of the world's states have been engorging themselves, willing to cooperate because they all have opportunities for economic growth.

The many and growing problems of the US-engineered global system have indeed led many state and market planners to talk about tweaking the current democratic system. Different proposals for solving democracy's domestic crisis include shifts to more deliberative or participatory democracy, to digital or e-democracy, as a way to recover mass civic participation; to re-link socio-economic with political equality; and to check the accumulative power of the elite. This current has decidedly little leverage on current political institutions and policy makers. Once advocated by the

In a debt-based economy, though, it is possible to destroy a tremendous amount of excess value without warfare. Wiping the US debt clean would hurt the Japanese and Chinese governments and hence their economies, it would wreck many a bank and mutual fund, and it would leave most of the US working class without health care or retirement benefits.

In that case, barring revolution, a robust economy capable of a high degree of industrial production and liquid capital for the necessary investments and loans would pick up the pieces, starting a new cycle of accumulation. The European Union or China might be in such a position. The former, because its policy of no-deficit spending gives it a measure of protection and might set it apart as a model of responsible economics should the US model collapse catastrophically; the latter because of its greater governmental ability to adjust the entire economy in a technocratic way, and its massive industrial capabilities.

Depending on how great the political chaos of the collapse and on their ability to project military force, the new global leaders would either repair and rebuild whatever institutional elements of the present system they found most useful to their strategic plans, such as the WTO or the UN, or—if the conflicts had grown into definitive ruptures with the old architecture—they would need to amass the political influence to bring enough players to the table to build a new complex of global institutions.

There's one problem here. For capitalism to continue, the new cycle of accumulation following the next collapse will have to be exponentially greater than the one that came before it. That seems to be one of the least variable features of the historical model in play. By its very nature, the amount of capital to be invested is always growing. This explains the historical variation between periods of geographical *expansion*, when new territories are brought in contact with capitalism through a basic relationship best characterized as primitive accumulation under some kind of colonial control, and periods of *intensification*, when the inhabitants of the zones colonized in the prior period are more fully integrated and reproduced as capitalist subjects, not just engaging in forced labor to produce raw materials for faraway markets and buying up a small portion of excess production from the metropolis, but living, breathing, and eating capitalism, becoming capitalists and wage workers in their own right.

The "American century" saw the intensification of the capitalist relationship within the entirety of territory brought under the control of capital during the British cycle, which was basically the whole world. There is no other terrestrial geography for a future cycle of accumulation to expand to. Sure, the Indian economy is still growing, and Chinese state capitalists are going through Africa, Oceania, and the Caribbean,

engaging in the kind of predatory lending to acquire infrastructure that the World Bank pioneered in the 1970s and '80s, while Google and a couple other companies are making tepid inroads into Africa to encourage a functional high-tech economy there. But these so-called underdeveloped populations are smaller, not larger, than the populations of North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Australia, where capitalist development is reaching a saturation point. To simplify grossly, the next terrain for capitalist expansion would have to be larger to accommodate another cycle.

This conundrum is what led to the prediction in "A Wager on the Future" and "Extraterrestrial Exploitation" that the next territory for capitalist expansion was offplanet, on the moon, the asteroid belt, and eventually, Mars. Many of the smartest capitalists today are engaging in serious investment and design to make that possible. But we can thank our lucky stars here on Earth that over the last two years, they have not been making advancements fast enough to save capitalism from its impending collapse.

SpaceX's reusable rockets and drone recovery system provide one of the most important pieces for a potential extraterrestrial cycle of accumulation—cheap access to space—but none of the next pieces have come into place yet. Those would include a luxury passenger service into orbital space and eventually to the moon, which would never constitute a major industry in its own right but would help inject cash flows at a critical stage in the development of longer-distance capabilities, as well as selling the mega-rich on the desirability of space in order to win more financing. The second, more important piece is asteroid and lunar mining. Japan and NASA are currently in the process of landing robotic probes on asteroids to carry out the chemical analysis that will facilitate future prospecting, among other things, but those probes aren't due back until 2020 and 2023, respectively, and there are still other missing steps before commercial mining could begin. Without those other pieces, cheaper rockets only contribute to the profitability of a fully geocentric economic activity, the launching of ever more satellites.

There is, however, another possible direction for capitalist expansion. As Richard Feynman said presciently in 1959, "there's plenty of room at the bottom."

It is not that hard to conceive of a way to oppose state power and racist violence that leaves us ready, primed, and on our feet no matter who wins in November, and many anarchists are doing just that. As anarchists, we will always fight against borders, against racism, against police, against misogyny and transphobia, and thus we will always be on the frontlines against any right-wing resurgence. But are not borders, police, the continuation of colonial institutions, and the regulation of gender and families also a fundamental part of the progressive project?

The principal hypocrisy of progressives can often be found in their tacit support for repression, that unbroken chain that connects the most vicious fascist with the most humanistic lefty. That's why it makes sense for anarchists to highlight the prisoners' strike and to bring the question of solidarity with detainees from anti-pipeline struggles and prisoners from anti-police uprisings into the heart of any coalition with the left. If they want to protect the environment, will they support Marius Mason and Joseph Dibee? If they think building ever more oil and gas pipelines at this advanced stage of global warming is unconscionable, will they stand with Water Protectors? If they loathe police racism, will they support the people still locked up after uprisings in Ferguson, Baltimore, Oakland and elsewhere, primarily black people fighting back on the frontlines against police violence?

Such an emphasis will separate Democratic Party operatives from sincere activists in the environmental, immigrant solidarity, and Black Lives Matter movements. It will also challenge the illusion that new politicians will solve these problems, and spread support for the tactics of direct action and collective self-defense.

DEMOCRATIC OR TECHNOCRATIC SOCIALISM

NOTHING LASTS FOREVER, AND THOUGH DEMOCRATIC STRATEGIES OF governance and exploitation might be the greatest present danger today, that doesn't mean the same will be true tomorrow. Democracy as a governmental practice incapable of realizing its ideals is in crisis domestically in the US and many other countries, but democracy

actually makes sense—and large-scale legalization of immigrants coupled with a further strengthening of the border and deportation machinery.

Above all, they will sell a dream of an inclusive patriotism, a vision that mainstream media outlets are already trying to peddle. We are reminded here of the SYRIZA government in Greece, the most progressive in all of Europe that, aside from instituting the harshest austerity measures, also won the distinction of being even more militarist than their conservative predecessors.

Over time, Democratic constituencies are likely to continue shifting in favor of the progressive faction, who may field a progressive candidate by 2028. Of course, if the economic collapse is as bad as it has the potential to be, all their policies will revolve around and be constrained by it and the concomitant geopolitical turmoil.

Meanwhile, Trump's phantom infra-majority will continue to wane. The age groups he won start at 65, so more of them will be dying off every year, and unless progressives suddenly start losing the Culture War, they won't be rapidly replenished. For some time, though, they will fatally divide Republican constituencies, forcing that party into the balancing act of having to appease two polarized factions, neither of which will be terribly motivated to support the other in elections (especially now that the motivator of the Supreme Court majority no longer applies).

If somehow the Republicans win in 2020, either they rein back in (e.g., replacing an impeached Trump with Pence), or they will cement their destruction of US political hegemony and economic dominance. Trump's program, such as it is, is not "revanchist" as some hyperbolic antifascists have claimed; rather than trying to recover America's dominant place in the world it is in fact destroying it. In an economically depressed, geopolitically has-been US in the alternate future in which Trumpist Republicans keep winning, we might imagine the conditions for more fascist movements, but what would all the supremely powerful US capitalists be doing in all the intervening years as they watch their fortunes willfully flushed down the drains? They would be doing everything they could to prevent it, as they already have started doing, with many of the most important US corporations repeatedly speaking out against Trump policies. Again, this contradicts the simplistic anti-fascist assertion that economic recession equals more fascism. It's much more complicated than that: sometimes, economic crises push capitalists to support more democracy, not less, as happened in Spain in the 1970s and as is happening today.

The question for anarchists, then, faced with a resurgent right and the even greater possibility of a triumphant left, is: what are the positions that cut to the heart of the problem, no matter who is in power, while also speaking to the specific details of how power is trampling people down?

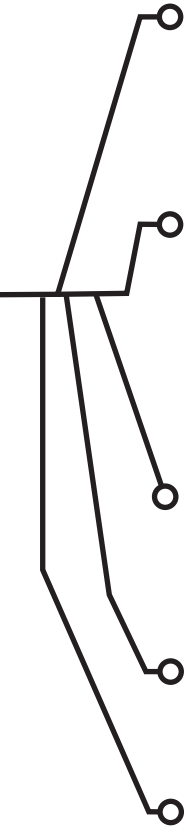
BIOECONOMIC EXPANSION

The seven billion human beings on the planet is a small flock if every life form and every form of life can be plugged into capitalism. There's no reason a new productive expansion of capitalism has to be geographic, since capitalism works in a space of flows, managing relations, and not in a space of places, managing square kilometers.

A bioeconomic expansion would constitute the invasion of capitalism into the processes through which life itself is produced and reproduced. The precedents for this activity are important, for they represent the first incursions, but they have not yet been developed to the point that they could ignite a new cycle of accumulation. Such precedents include, in the production of organic life, genetic engineering, and in the reproduction of human life, social network technologies. The former have allowed a few companies to make a lot of money, but they have not been terribly effective, and still fall far short of their potential to change our relationship with food production, disease, and other areas of intervention. The latter have produced mass stupefaction and exponentially improved techniques of social control, but they are still measured in the advertising dollars they generate for the sale of real commodities, a quaternary sector rather than an economy in its own right.

A bioeconomic expansion would involve profiting on the planetary processes that, once plugged into a capitalist logic, could be analyzed as "reproductive"; the biological processes that are constantly exploited through primitive accumulation but have still not submitted to a capitalist architecture; the organic chemical processes that constitute the constant unfolding of life; and the social processes grouped under the heading of "free time" that until now have only been clumsily exploited by consumerism. The rudimentary beginnings of profit models targeting the first three can be found in carbon trading, fertility treatments, and gene therapy, respectively.

Over the next two decades, these sectors might expand in the following ways:



THE DEPLOYMENT OF orbital reflectors or other devices to decrease and then fine-tune the amount of solar radiation that reaches the planet. Together with an increase in carbon capture technologies, this could enable the business-oriented mechanical control of the climate, not as a biosphere within which the economy takes place, but as yet another realm of economic considerations.

THE USE OF cloning to prevent the extinction of economically useful species. Together with a total inventory of biodiversity regulated by AI that can deploy drones and genetically coded nanobots capable of identifying and destroying members of target species, this could theoretically allow for total rational control of all ecosystems, with the parameters and objectives set by whatever consortium of companies and governments own the technology and oversee the procedures.

THE ASSEMBLAGE OF made-to-order nanomaterials and the use of genetically modified animal/factories to produce complex organic compounds. This would do away with the concept of "natural resources" by turning prime materials into an industrial product unbound by natural limits.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF nanomedicine and gene therapy to further wrest human life away from the vagaries of death and disease, which negatively impact human productivity. Death especially is a problem, as it allows people to escape domination permanently.

A SHIFT AWAY from open field monoculture to a decentralized total control model of agriculture based in greenhouse production and hydroponics, in which food production takes place in an engineered environment that is totally controlled according to light, heat, atmosphere, water, and nutrients, breaking with Green Revolution agriculture that attempted to carry out food production by industrially modifying the natural environment. Decentralized agriculture would be more energy efficient, reducing dependence on long-distance transportation and heavy machinery, and it would temporarily allow for an increase in employment and investment as agricultural land—40% of the planet's surface—is redesigned and also potentially reintegrated with urban space.

The capitalization of social processes can progress through the expansion of therapeutic, leisure, sexo-affective, recreational, and entertainment economies and the algorithmic surveillance and organization of those economies. This would entail the total conquest and abolition of that partial victory won through centuries of labor struggles, "free time."

two years of anti-fascist and pro-immigrant organizing. People who maintain critical positions will be called criminals, racists, whatever it takes. The NGO activists who share spaces with us have learned our language and they know how to neutralize us almost as well as the FBI neutralized Panthers in the 1960s and '70s.

Meanwhile, tens of millions of young and not-so-young Americans will pin their hopes on a progressive rebirth. Young immigrant girls will dream of studying to be lawyers and judges in the "courts of the conqueror," to borrow a phrase from that historic chief justice, John Marshall. High school radicals will style themselves socialists and go so far as to advocate expanded government health care programs and free university tuitions. They will all, without saying so, conspire to make America great again.

To achieve this renewal, the Democratic Party will have to achieve some kind of workable consensus between its centrist and progressive branches. The progressives who won primaries will have to show they can win seats in November 2018; barring that and a major improvement on the grassroots machine that failed to win Bernie Sanders the nomination in 2016, the 2020 candidate will represent the centrist faction. In 2016, the Democratic primaries were basically a referendum on who was best connected to the party machine, rather than who had a better chance of beating the Republicans. If Democrats are equally stupid, and don't prioritize criteria related to the ability to win, they might lose two unlosable elections in a row. If they wise up, they'll nominate someone charismatic who is capable of making significant nods to the progressive agendas that will motivate an activist base. This is especially crucial if we look at two factors: the strong left-wing tilt of younger age groups, and the even stronger decline in young voter turnout. By favoring visionless centrist candidates that discourage progressive voters, Democrats are committing political suicide, using a pro-center arithmetic that no longer applies to the current social reality.

The Democrats will get some extra help, maybe even making them stupidity-proof the way Trump wisely made himself controversy-proof, if the economy starts to tank before November 2020. They will have to work hard to not win in 2020, and if they do, they will immediately embark on an aggressive turnaround of US policy. An end to tariffs, closer relations with the EU, a return to the too-little too-late Paris Agreement, a stand against Russian influence in the Middle East, a thaw with Iran, a less belligerent policy of China-containment, and hypocritical attempts to broadcast an inspiring and coherent proselytism of democracy. On the home front, if congressional majorities allow, they will seek a healthcare reform—either shoring up Obamacare or implementing something that

pitching in, like Microsoft with its new "Defending Democracy" program.

There is a common perception of Democrats as political bunglers, and they didn't get that reputation for nothing. Yet they have far more influence in the streets than we might like to admit, especially vis-a-vis anarchists. In 2008, the Democratic Party proved that it could manage a large, grassroots street movement that temporarily silenced more critical efforts and funneled a massive amount of activist efforts into an election campaign. The Women's Marches showed they have not forgotten how to turn popular anxieties into electoral base-building. The March for Our Lives saw them creating a movement in a much shorter time frame, mobilizing hundreds of thousands of high school kids who will be of voting age in 2020.

And at their most cynical, the Democrats used the movement against child separation to show that they could coopt a movement with potentially radical implications and use it to protect the very border regime it had started out opposing. The protests against the breaking up of immigrant families and the imprisonment of the children of undocumented parents were organized in part by NGOs that receive government money to administer immigrant detention centers. The result was that locking up families together was presented as a victory, the hatred of borders was replaced with a hatred of ICE and Trump (remember that ICE can be replaced by other agencies), and everyone forgot that immigrant children were also locked up under Obama. In fact, courts had to force the Obama administration to stop indefinitely locking up families of asylum seekers—together—in "widespread deplorable conditions" in order to deter other asylum seekers, basically a sort of light terrorism designed to prevent access to what under the democratic order is supposed to be a basic human right. And while the Obama administration only "occasionally" separated children from their parents at the border, every one of the more than 2.5 million people Obama deported left children or other loved ones behind.

Borders separate families. That's what they do. And those who support borders—which is to say, those who support states and elections and all the other things that go along with them—can either dehumanize immigrants, or they can celebrate humane ways of imprisoning them and breaking up their families.

In the run-up to the November 2018 elections, we will all be told we are monsters if we do not vote to support more humane borders, more humane police killings, more humane wars, and the standard neoliberal trade agreements and political alliances. This process will be stepped up several scales of magnitude for the 2020 election campaign, which starts this November 7. The Democratic Party will be spending millions of dollars to take over or silence the broad left coalitions built up over the last

Once upon a time, capitalists were only able to appreciate the productive value of their underlings, whom they viewed either as slaves or machinery, depending on how progressive they were. The resistance of those exploited classes failed to abolish this relationship, but it did succeed in winning some breathing room. The achievement of higher wages was above all the attaining of "free time." Workers didn't want higher wages for the same 12- or 14-hour days; they left that for the professional classes, like lawyers and doctors, whose sense of self-worth derives entirely from their value to the market. They wanted to be able to meet their needs more easily in order to retain a part of their lives for their own enjoyment. The opposition between life and labor could not be more clear.

Capitalism can brook no autonomy, no liberated space, but neither could it overcome the resistance of the exploited. For a century, its strategic engagement with free time was to produce alternative commercial activities to capitalize on the choices people made while not at work. Free time was still free, but if capitalists and state planners could impoverish the imagination and the social landscape to the point that people were more likely to choose consumer activities over non-monetary forms of play and relaxation, they would remain tied into capitalist relations in a way that created artificial demands, thus sustaining new productive sectors.

Public greens and commons were paved over, party politics and state repression led to the wane of workers' centers, sidewalks and plazas were absorbed as restaurant terraces, the sofa in front of the radio or television replaced the front stoop or the chairs and benches placed directly in the street, communal spaces of sewing and washing were replaced by machines, sports were professionalized and commercialized, bars replaced drinking in the woods or in the parks, walks in the mountains gave way to specialized sports dependent on the acquisition of expensive gear, plastic and later electronic monstrosities eclipsed the simple, imaginative, and physically engaging wooden toys that uncles would carve for their nephews and nieces and the mere sticks that children would pick up off the ground and turn into a million different things depending on their imagined and self-defined needs.

Capitalist incursions into free time necessitated advertising, which took the form of an increasingly aggressive, ubiquitous call for attention, a distraction from the non-monetized possibilities within the terrain of free time, subject to diminishing returns as advertising's targets became increasingly hostile, cynical, sophisticated, saturated, or self-absorbed. The decreasing effectiveness of advertising reveals that free time still provided people a choice, and though capitalists overwhelmingly won that competition against unmediated nature, imagination, and sociability

(here my automatic dictionary jumps in with a squiggly red line to tell me that "unmediated" is not a word)—and the consumer economy has been immensely profitable and only becomes more so as time goes on—the effectiveness of advertising notwithstanding, those in power prefer that we do not get any kind of meaningful choice at all.

So be it: in the new economy there is no more distinction between labor time and free time or even producer time and consumer time; rather, all lived time is absorbed into a unified capitalist logic leading to a qualitative advance in the production of subjectivities. Since the advent of the cell phone, workers are always on call, but the social technologies that have been inaugurated more recently or wait just over the horizon mean that the entirety of our lived time is subject to surveillance, commercialization, and exploitation. Whereas before, information on consumers could be sold to advertisers who could make money convincing people to buy material products, with the entire economic chain dependent on the sale of a manufactured good at the end of the day, we have seen a qualitative leap in which data has become a resource with intrinsic value (think bitcoin), and in order to retain our status as social beings, we have to turn all our processes of sociability over to the digital apparatuses that mine our activity to produce data.

Before, you could still be a sociable human if you played soccer in the park, invited people over for a barbecue, or went camping in the woods rather than buying tickets to the game, meeting at a bar, or going bungee jumping. Today, you are a social pariah as well as unemployable if you have no smartphone, no Facebook or Instagram, no GPS, and don't use whatever that stupid app is that enables you to invite people to events.

There is no longer the possibility of spending free time in the woods as a non-commercial activity when your movements there are tracked on GPS, allowing the relevant entities to attach a value to natural parks or scheme about how to fill that commercial space.

Nixon took us off the gold standard to allow financial expansion to proceed unchecked. To regain stability, capitalism may well anchor economic value in data—in one form of bit economy or another.

The social economy will need to grow considerably if it is to enable a new cycle of capitalist accumulation, and though getting internet access and smartphones to a global majority is certainly a necessary precondition, that in itself won't be enough to constitute an industrial expansion. Remember that the US economic expansion of the postwar era was based largely on everyone getting a car, and everyone in the middle class a house in the suburbs. In comparison to houses and cars, phones are rather cheap pieces of equipment to constitute the backbone of an industrial expansion,

Merkel, and Macron, "honorable" politicians like McCain, Hollywood stars, and centrist media such as CNN and the *New York Times*.

The new social conflict brings together a broad left to fight a dangerous right in a way that does not question any fundamental aspect of the state. On the contrary, the new terrain is shaped in such a way as to funnel our efforts towards the renewal of the state.

This is not to say that the only critical position is on the sidelines. Quite the contrary. The recent toppling of the Silent Sam monument in Chapel Hill is one of several examples of people acting bravely and intelligently in difficult circumstances to simultaneously defeat the white supremacist right and also subvert the pacification of the institutional left. The counterpoint is that the specter of Trump and the far right make it even easier to form relationships of solidarity with more people, and to spread practices of self-defense and direct action, in many more situations than the anti-police rebellions that were spreading before Trump.

The problem is, these new alliances are much more vulnerable to being taken over or neutralized by identity politicians, the authoritarian left, and party activists.

It doesn't make it any easier when many anarchists and anti-fascists adopt essentially Popular Front politics and do the discursive work of Democrats. In this vein, we have Ami du Radical warning of a "corrupt judicial system," they and others advocating "human rights," and Portland anti-fascists demanding that the police receive better training.

Whenever we participate in broadly leftist spaces, such discourses abound. It comes with the territory, and insofar as those discourses are beyond our control, the only question for us is how to effectively respond to them, pointing out their flaws without being bossy or unfeeling. But when we reproduce those discourses in order to fit in, or because we have become so scared of the right that we begin to support the projects of the left, we are digging our own graves. It is vital to articulate specifically anarchist positions with regard to social conflict rather than flocking to lowest-common-denominator stances, precisely because those stances are formulated to favor the interests of social control—in the long run, those stances *do not* negate white supremacy.

Warnings of approaching tyranny and fascism abound in the center left. What does it mean when a good part of the content on an anarchist website is redundant to positions published on CNN and in the *New York Times*? Examples include Jeffrey Sachs writing for CNN about how we are going down the path to tyranny, or the recent bestsellers, *On Tyranny,* by Timothy Snyder, Malcolm Nance's *The Plot to Destroy Democracy,* and Madeleine Albright's *Fascism: A Warning.* Leading corporations are also

threatened to destroy the entire capitalist and interstate order, in order to institutionalize a part of the rebels and repress the others, enable capitalists and scientific managers to wrest control of government away from more archaic power-holders, and create a state that was more robust, more in control of its populations, and able to engineer the circumstances for capitalist accumulation. We have been defeated by this same model so many times, we should get an outline of it tattooed on our foreheads so we see it whenever we look in the mirror.

The signs are abundant that most of the US elite—especially the most intelligent sectors—are gearing up for a major democratic renewal, using fear of Trumpian authoritarianism as a mobilizing tactic.

Before Trump, US democracy was already facing a crisis, as were multiple other liberal democracies across the world. In the United States, the crisis struck right to the heart of the country's fundamental basis as a settler state. Huge crowds were forcibly rejecting the right of the police to murder racialized people, and the right of extraction companies connected to the government to exploit or contaminate native land. The experiences of black and indigenous people were at the forefront in both of these struggles, yet at the same time racial narratives were not effectively used to divide people and prevent cross-racial solidarity,though progressives connected to NGOs, churches, and the Democratic Party certainly tried.

With the election of Trump and the temporary rise of the extreme right, the narrative has shifted drastically. The police are no longer in the spotlight, and though they have not done a good job playing the role of neutral peacekeepers preventing skirmishes between Nazis and Antifa, the critics they now face emphasize that they *should* be playing that role, whereas in the days of Ferguson, the principle demand was that they should just up and die.

The new narrative portrays a corrupt, right-wing government with unsavory ties to extreme-right groups—a government that badgers the press, colludes with arch-enemy Russia, goes easy on dictators, and attacks free trade.

This narrative is ideal for the Democratic Party. The obvious solution is to favor more rigorous legal oversight of campaign financing and lobbying, celebrate the media, encourage an independent judiciary, protect NATO, NAFTA, the European Union and "our" other alliances, condone greater censorship on Twitter, Facebook, and similar platforms, and buckle down for a new Cold War against Russia. It is no coincidence that after an inspiring and subversive albeit brief spate of airport occupations at the very beginning of Trump's term, the major protagonists of the anti-Trump resistance have been judges, the FBI, the CIA, leaders like Trudeau,

given that each cycle needs to be exponentially greater than the industrial and financial expansion in the cycle that preceded it.

Room for growth in the social economy will have to include a further integration of surveillance of people's vital activity and exploitation of their productive potential, so that surveillance is not limited to spotting criminal behavior or identifying which products to advertise, but constantly captures all activity within an economic logic, thus inviting people to *express themselves* or contribute their creativity to the adornment of virtual and social spaces—allowing everyone to be an *influencer* in some way. It would also include the ascension of crowdsourcing to a dominant productive model, taking advantage of total connectivity to treat the population as a permanently available labor pool ready to dedicate itself to solving some problem or another, often without any pay in return. There would also be an exponential growth of therapeutic, leisure, sexo-affective, recreational, gastronomic, travel, medical, design, and entertainment economies into a merged quality-of-life economy capable of generating the hundreds of millions of employment profiles that will replace the ones AI and robotization will make obsolete in manufacturing, telecommunications, retail, design and architecture, janitorial and hygiene work, and eventually transportation and delivery, clerical, accounting, and secretarial sectors, supervisory and management positions across sectors, construction, surveillance, and security.

The quality-of-life sector would make up for the misery and alienation of capitalist life through a totally engineered sociability. Everyone would be in some kind of therapy, and the upper-middle-class and higher would have emotional and physical therapists, personal trainers, and dietary consultants; they would eat out far more often than cook at home, and their lives would largely revolve around leisure activities. The precarious would work not only in restaurants and sales but also in an expanding sex-work industry distinguished from other forms of employment by increasingly blurry borders, or else as yoga instructors, guides for extreme sports and adventure tourism, or assistants or filler characters for commercialized LARPing, paintball, and similar games. Designers and programmers would make up a large and highly remunerated segment of the working class, lower only than executives and capitalists, and followed in turn by professionals like lawyers, doctors, technocrats, and professors, then cops, then nurses and other therapists with a wide range of responsibilities and pay grades, then precarious but well paid "creatives," then the remaining blue collar professions like carpenters and repair workers who deal in situations too variable for AI to handle, then teachers, and then the bulk of the precarious in the quality-of-life economy.

WHAT ABOUT MARS?

INCIDENTALLY, THE TECHNOLOGICAL SECTORS—PLANETARY, BIOLOGICAL, chemical, and social—that would need to advance to open up the territory for another industrial expansion are the same sectors that would need to advance to enable a subsequent extraterrestrial expansion of capitalism and the effective colonization of outer space. A major feature of these technologies, in contrast with the chief techniques of production and accumulation that characterize the cycle that is now ending, is their decentralization. Likewise, the colonization of Mars, to take one example, would require small-scale, decentralized technology. They can't fly over large industrial compounds; the mission would only be feasible with nanobots, 3D printers, and self-replicating machinery. Made-to-order nanomaterials would be crucial for constructions able to withstand extreme environments, and cloning combined with greenhouse agriculture in totally contained, controlled environments would be necessary to jump-start food production and biosphere production. What's more, effective terraforming would be unthinkable if the State did not already have experience with effective climate control here on Earth.

As for the social technologies, they might well be the linchpin. Decentralized technology, such as would be necessary in extraterrestrial colonization, can aid political decentralization. Any capitalist ventures, scientific associations, and state agencies that one day collaborate to colonize Mars or another celestial body will undoubtedly address, along with a thousand other matters of technique, the question of how to keep control of the colonies. Exerting military and bureaucratic leverage on a population that is located one or several months of travel time away is no easy feat. Five hundred years ago, European colonizers accomplished this through the social technologies of Christianity and whiteness, though not without a few major mutinies and defections.

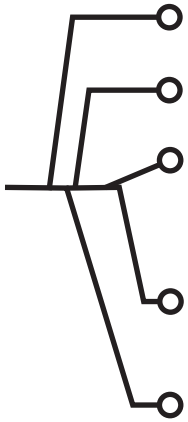
Again, it makes more sense to analyze the situation through the optic of social control than the optic of capital accumulation. Capitalism has long favored far more inefficient, centralized techniques of industrial production because the State lacked the techniques to maintain control over a diffuse production. Rather than the mere organizing committee of Capital, the State supersedes and encompasses Capital, for territory effectively disciplined by the State is the only territory in which capitalism can function. Thus, the diffuse control enabled by new social technologies (that *internet of things* in which we are the primary *things*) is a vital component of extraterrestrial colonization.

movements in world history, but because it was the fascists themselves who initiated the Transition, understanding that under a democratic capitalist government, they could profit more and create a more stable, powerful governing structure. More so than US and Soviet victories in World War II, this episode illustrates the conclusive subordination of fascism to democracy. When fascists themselves realize that they can achieve their goals better under the auspices of their old nemesis, democracy, fascism as a governing model ceases to be relevant.[3]

The Transition is also a case study in how fear of or unified opposition to the ostensible exceptionality of fascism has systematically been used by the ruling class to strengthen capitalism. In Spain, the democratic renewal of the 1970s and '80s succeeded in institutionalizing or repressing very powerful anti-capitalist movements. By dropping their Falangist regalia and joining liberals, socialists, and communists under the aegis of democracy, the fascists of Spain were able to create the conditions for capitalism to grow more steadily.

Similar factors were at work in the conclusions of the military dictatorships of Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, and most recently, Myanmar.[4]

An anti-fascist democratic renewal is just a variation on the (counter) revolutionary model that democratic movements have used since the beginning of modernity:



- APPEAL TO THE lower classes against a common enemy (initially, the aristocracy and the Church);
- BUILD ON AMBIGUOUS shared principles like rights and equality that seem to be better than the values of the old system;
- LEAVE OUT THE values of the lowest classes such as defense of the commons and non-representational self-organization, on the grounds that these are anti-modern or would "alienate" the bourgeoisie who are in fact leading the entire coalition;
- USE THE LOWER classes as cannon fodder and their more radical elements as a bogeyman to scare moderates among the current power-holders in order to chase them to the negotiating table;
- AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE, include representatives of the formal institutional structures—those that are able to produce representatives and a disciplined, obedient membership—while excluding the radicals and the masses.

Throughout the liberal revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries, throughout the anticolonial struggles of the 20th century, this same model has been used time and time again to defuse radical movements that

The construction of his majority comes at the cost of Israel's future, a calculation that was only possible in an enclave state that sees geopolitics in primarily military terms. A similar situation pertains in Turkey, where civil war is a defining aspect of domestic politics; Erdogan's iron-fisted construction of a majority has played a significant role in the destruction of the Turkish economy, alienating the country from multiple possible trading partners including the EU. As for Hungary, where Orban has constructed his majority on the backs of a famously xenophobic rural population, the entrenched right has only limited relevance on the European scale, certainly as an example of the difficulties of cultural integration, possibly as an argument for greater technocratic authoritarianism, but not as a model to follow. From the perspective of EU administrators and European capitalists, Hungary is a troublesome loser state not in a position to give advice to anyone.

As for the US and the UK, there is no solid right-wing majority, and little possibility that the policies of Trump and May mark a permanent change in the political and economic direction of these two countries. But if the proclaimers of a fascist threat are convinced that we're on the path to a one-party system, let's call it a bet. They will most likely be proven wrong as soon as 2020, but for their dire warnings to have any substance, we'd need to see this new style of politics stay at the helm for at least three terms, with effective centralization between the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary, and increasing right-wing control over the media. The alarmists will be proven right if Trump can hand off power to a successor in 2024, or if he is able to abolish the constitutional term limit and win a third term. That's probably not going to happen: the present swing to the right will be followed by a swing to the left, in the endless, stupefying pendulum of democracy.

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

In terms of longevity, the most successful fascist country was Franco's Spain. Lasting from 1936 to 1976, it outlived its more belligerent co-religionists by decades, primarily because it could kowtow to a democratic world system—in fact, Franco received covert aid from Britain from the very first moments of the coup. The story of the Spanish transition to democracy is of the utmost importance to anarchists, not only because it took place in the midst of one of the largest wildcat strike

THE NECESSITY OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The recent tremors in the Turkish economy, which almost sent the EU tanking, make it clear that what economic growth is still taking place today continues to be based on an unsustainable financial accumulation. European banks have nowhere in Europe to invest all their earnings, so they fund a huge wave of construction in Turkey, while Turkish companies grow by borrowing dollars, taking advantage of the low interest rate. In the short-term, free money. But as the US interest rate climbs, the value of the Turkish lira plummets, and since the local economy had never demanded the construction boom in the first place, it didn't have the means to pay back all the loans. Stocks in all of Europe's major banks dropped. It could have been the beginning of the big crash. But Qatar stepped in with a $15 billion loan for Turkey, again showing the importance of politics: one of Trump's first diplomatic moves in the region had been to buddy up to Saudi Arabia and give full support to the Kingdom's ostracism of Qatar. Then Trump got in a spat with Turkey and tried to sink its economy, so Qatar stepped in to save it,for the time being. Merkel, also recently shafted by the US, tried to normalize relations with Turkey when she had been one of its primary critics.

There are similar construction bubbles in Brazil, in China, in Singapore. The next crisis could start anywhere, but it will almost certainly spread everywhere.

If a bioeconomic expansion is the most viable way for capitalism to avoid its contradictions and continue its mad rampage, what political strategies would enable that expansion to take place? Some of the technological changes described above are already happening, but many key elements require such a drastic change that strategic state planning on a global scale would be necessary. This is not a good omen for capitalism, since the global institutions for interstate cooperation are in shambles, thanks in large part to extreme-right figures from Netanyahu to Putin to Trump.

In the end, the War on Terror failed to rally the world powers to create a new era of global cooperation. Because it borrowed too much of the zero-sum Orientalism of the Cold War, it only led to the erosion of the global political structures that maintained US hegemony.

Currently, the only viable platform from which to launch a new project of interstate cooperation capable of deploying and managing the changes

that a bioeconomic expansion of capitalism would require can be found in the response to climate change. Climate change provides a narrative of unified global interests. Any political power that acts in the name of addressing climate change can act in the name of all humanity: this offers the possibility to establish a hegemonic project, the same way that the narrative of democracy and human rights undergirded a hegemonic project after the horrors of World War II. Political structures for interstate coordination and global intervention would be justified as holistic measures necessary to save the entire biosphere, and they could also have a justifiably technocratic character, given that the media have successfully framed climate change as a scientific rather than economic or spiritual issue.

The major weakness of the US system was that the UN, as the safeguard of human and state rights, could do little more than protest, whereas the IMF and WTO, sanctioned to carry out technocratic interventions to safeguard the economic order, had a clearly mercenary character, pitting capitalism against human rights when under liberal democracy, the two were supposed to find their synthesis. Under a regime driven by the exigencies of responding to climate change, robust technocratic interventions and the safeguarding of common interests would find their perfect synthesis. As long as climate change is treated as a purely scientific issue, any responses will have to be compatible with the preexisting social relations, funding sources, and regulatory mechanisms through which they are to be carried out. In other words, a technocratic approach to climate change would not threaten capitalism.

But capitalists themselves are incapable of building the platform up to achieve the kind of systemic change they need. Investment in renewable energy fell by 7% in 2017. The volatility of the market will never produce the resources necessary for a phase shift in energy technologies. Liberal capitalism would leave us festering—or rather, boiling—in a fossil fuel economy. A rapid shift to a climate change economy will not be possible without most major governments introducing huge policy shifts and legally mandating investment in alternative energies and environmental protection measures as a significant part of their total budgets, on par with health care or military spending.

Capitalism faces a great need for strategic change, for a governmental mandate capable of redirecting social resources on a coordinated, massive scale. This is where the question of different governmental models becomes extremely important, as certain types of government are better suited to make such a shift than others, and some political tendencies are well positioned to seize the platform of climate change, whereas others are incapable.

The Culture Wars succeeded for a time in driving debate to the right, but the anti-globalization, feminist, and anti-racist movements ultimately managed to slaughter all the right's sacred cows, even as the left succeeded in institutionalizing those movements and limiting their subversive power. In the end, the Culture Wars left entrenched, intractable minorities in the US and some European and Latin American countries, all but incapable of political dialogue and intelligent governance strategies. They contribute to the crisis of democracy, but they do not point a way out.

Some argue that neo-fascists need not overthrow the government if they can create a one-party system within a democratic government. Netanyahu's Israel, Erdogan's Turkey, and Orban's Hungary provide a potential model here, though describing a Jewish government as the architect of a new brand of fascism is a risky maneuver for people not entirely sure about their word choice. It is hard to find other examples of democratic right-wing governments that have held onto power for just eight or nine years—not an unusual time for a party to stay in power in a multi-party system—so even with this meager list of examples, it's unclear whether the idea of a one-party system within democracy isn't just an exaggeration. The fact that some claim the one-party system has already arrived in the US due to the Republicans' temporary majority shows how they have turned panic and impatience into analytical values.

It also shows tolerance for a fundamentally democratic value system. By warning of the dangers of falling into a one-party system, they implicitly identify the victory of the second party, the Democrats, as banishing the threat, a victory for antifascism. This lays the groundwork for a democratic revival.

But let's take the threat at face value: the advantage of such a model is that the extreme right need not overthrow the government or provoke a destabilizing rupture. In other words, centralizing all the institutions and manufacturing a permanent majority is probably easier today than launching some kind of coup. The disadvantage is that a one-party system misses out on nearly all the advantages of democratic government, such as the recuperation of dissent, strategic course correction, and the institutionalization of political change and renewal. Netanyahu, Erdogan, and Orban have all manufactured fairly stable majorities, which they have bolstered through the recent "nation-state" law, the constitutional referendum, and the restriction on NGOs, respectively. But none of these states provides a model that is easily exportable to major countries, neither are they proving to be economically effective models. Netanyahu's policies have led to the large-scale exodus of progressive Jews, creating the kind of cultural straitjacket that is not usually associated with economic growth and innovation.

The prototypes and first expressions of organized fascism in Italy and Germany were responses to political crises that preceded the major economic crises: the *Biennio Rosso* and factory occupations in Italy, and the various communes or workers' republics smashed by the *Freikorps* in Germany. (Of course, high unemployment arrived with the end of World War I, but it was the explicitly revolutionary situation that motivated the blackshirts and the *Freikorps* to action). Fascist movements were already well developed, and already in control in Italy, when the economic collapse of 1929 occurred. England, France, and the US suffered the same economic crisis but did not veer into fascism; in fact, two of them moved left, because both the nature of the political crises they faced , and the local long-term strategies of political control were different. Capitalists in countries with hemmed in geopolitical prospects began supporting fascist movements in response to a political crisis, whereas the economic measures they supported were broadly similar to those of democratic states.

In the present case, the new iterations of what some are sloppily calling fascism also significantly preceded the economic crisis of 2008.

The crucible for the reactionary right in the US was the declaration of the "Culture Wars" in the 1970s. Above all, this was a call for investment in a right-wing ideological renaissance. After the progressive changes of Civil Rights and the Great Society, the right wing was structurally powerful but culturally moribund, represented by such embarrassing cavemen as the John Birch Society and the KKK. Rather than pointing out a strategic direction—they had none, and the visionless Nixon and unabashedly Machiavellian Kissinger illustrate their bankruptcy—they identified a strategic weakness and got to work building their own media, cultural networks, think tanks, and other structures that would help formulate an ideology around which to build a new political consensus. Evidently, they even had the support of a good many Leninists turned neocons who were turned off by the identity politics of the New Left and understood the techniques for reaching out to the white working class (in the UK, there's a similar trend of former Trots turned far-right, pro-business talking heads). Their great labor was not directed at increasing US geopolitical power or improving the efficient management of capitalism, but rather based on intellectual dishonesty, prejudice, and fear-mongering. Their priority was to rescue certain elitist values that they identified with American history and power, rather than making a lucid, strategic distinction between interests and values—a common error on the right. But the tropes they formulated were quickly exported and became an increasingly international ideology.

FASCISM, HISTORICALLY

Up until now, in mentioning the likes of Netanyahu or Trump I have spoken of the reactionary or far right. There are those who favor emotive hyperbole to historical clarity, and classify the entirety of this reactionary movement as "fascist." If I dispute this terminology, it's not because I enjoy semantic squabbles, but because sometimes, words matter. In this case, theoretical precision is especially important, because there is a longstanding tension between dictatorial and democratic modes of state power.

In the dictatorial mode, one portion of the ruling class uses military means to impose their strategic proposals on the rest of the ruling class and on society at large. They do this by relying on a strong military apparatus or by mobilizing a part of the lower classes against a perceived internal enemy—usually, they do both. They may take this course because they feel that the power structures they rely on are being threatened in a way that the rest of the ruling class does not appreciate, or because of a cultural conflict that leads them to see the rest of the ruling class as enemies rather than as peers, or because they do not have the necessary control over the lower classes to generate a social consensus.

In the democratic mode, the ruling class debate strategic proposals and try to win voluntary participation in their strategy, and thus a kind of consensus, from as much of society as possible. While they may engage in bitter fights against their rivals, they do not deny rivals the right to exist, nor do they attempt to destroy the mechanisms that enable debate and participatory decision-making. At various points in history, ruling classes have recognized the advantages of the democratic mode. It enables them to recuperate revolutionary movements and co-opt popular values so that they not only protect themselves from their own underclasses but enlist those underclasses to help manage the processes of exploitation. It enables them to carry out intelligent and periodic readjustments to ruling strategies, making the state apparatus continuously stronger and more scientific. And it creates a positive-sum game that prioritizes the mutual enrichment of all the property-owning members of society instead of negative-sum infighting.

States historically toggle between dictatorial and democratic modes, depending on circumstances; however, states are only able to make the

change at the drop of a hat if they have not built up a huge psycho-social complex training people to identify with their dictator or with their democracy. Usually, the stronger a state, the stronger the ideological scaffolding that accompanies and justifies the dictatorial or democratic mode; and therefore, the more stable the mode, the greater the crisis it would take to force a change in mode.

Making a clear distinction between these two modes is important because of how the experience of being governed changes from one mode to the other.

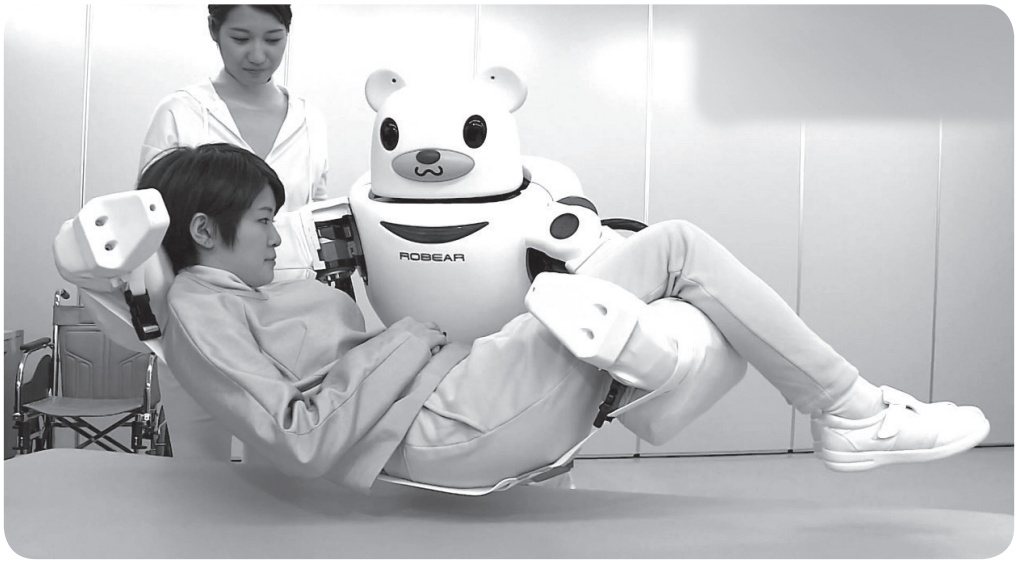
Fascism is a specific political movement that arose in the 1920s in Italy, inspiring similar political movements that took power in a dozen other countries, each a variation on the original model. This model never had time to homogenize itself because fascism was defeated by the democratic and the socialist states, the former of which went on to engineer the new world system.

Some anarchists in the past, like Voline, used a broader definition of fascism in order to criticize the Soviet Union. They did so because fascism was the dominant evil of the day, and because it was politically expedient to use the label more widely. Nonetheless, they did not have to engage in outright intellectual dishonesty in order to broaden this label, the way the Communist Party did by describing the German Socialists as "social-fascists" in order to justify their own collaboration with the Nazi Party in the early 1930s. This is because there were organic relations between left and right authoritarianism at the time. The Italian fascists led by Mussolini largely came out of the Socialist Party and improved upon the socialist tactic of mobilizing an obedient mass movement to conquer state power, and the Nazi police state directly modeled itself on its Soviet counterpart, not to mention the affinity visible in the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact or the effective conspiracy between the KPD and the Nazis to sabotage German democracy.

The broader definition used by Voline and a few contemporaries still enjoyed a basic precision because it distinguished between dictatorial and democratic modes of power. Voline was no lover of democracy, but he knew that it was important to make a basic distinction between such different modes. Thus, the justification for defining the USSR as "fascist" was its suppression of free speech, free press, and elections—in a word, its constitution as a dictatorship.

Today's social critics for whom Trump and May represent "fascism" make no such distinction. On the whole, they also refuse to define fascism. Instead, they sometimes argue that since certain historians have been even more strict in their definition—disputing whether the Nazis or Falangists

Certainly, a large part of the extreme right in the US are neo-fascists by any measure. They want to transform the US into a white ethno-state and a dictatorship. And traditionally democratic factions of the extreme right have not hesitated to work in coalitions with these neo-fascists. This represents the ideological incoherence characteristic of the extreme right, an exasperation with the Republican party and the democratic institutions that used to uphold a more visibly white supremacist order, and in at least some cases, the willingness of centrist elements to make use of extreme elements in the street, though they understand the extreme elements have little chance of victory and plan to abandon them when the alliance is no longer convenient. In other words, elements of the far right that don't actually seek to overthrow the US government and set up a dictatorship are either confused about the ideological differences between themselves and other elements, excited by the new energy and media attention the fascist



elements bring, as well as their rupturist discourse, or else they simply see the convenience of getting more forces together in the streets and having organizations to the right of them push the bounds of acceptable politics so their own positions will seem more moderate.

It is possible that the historically democratic extreme right in the US could become majority fascist in the long term, though this would further distance it from the institutions it aims to influence. There is, however, the view that capitalists will suddenly change their politics when an economic crisis occurs. Ami du Radical claims that fascism historically is a response to economic crisis. This is erroneous.[2]

militias of settler rangers. This is not a case of racist brutality that has to be organized by a vanguard party; rather, it is a shared expectation placed on all white people. As such, it transcends parties and flourishes in a democratic system.

The *crisis of whiteness* that Trump effectively tapped into stems from a deeply rooted fear that the historic paramilitary role of whites is becoming obsolete. This is a visceral insecurity that whites' longstanding role as protagonists has faded. In US history, that role has always been in support of American democracy, violently attacking the enemies of the nation but also defining what it means to be human and to deserve rights. This form of white supremacy even exists within the left of the Democratic Party, as a presumed right to define acceptable resistance by being the protagonists of other people's struggles, whether as the bestowers of freedom (and capitalist property relations) in the Civil War and Reconstruction, or as "white allies" in the Civil Rights movement and to the present day.

Whiteness was developed precisely for colonial situations in which capitalism required decentralized economic activity and was limited in its ability to centralize political control: in other words, the settler state. Not only is a decentralized, democratic white supremacy more effective in a settler state, a dictatorial or fascistic iteration of white supremacy in such circumstances is highly dangerous to state power. Fascism requires the suppression of privileged elements of society who do not toe the party line. In a settler state, that would force progressive members of the settler caste (whites) into alliances of self-defense with lower ranked elements of the colonial or neocolonial workforce (people of color), threatening the very power dynamic that gives the state life. Consider how in countries occupied by the Nazis, progressive professionals and wealthy families entered into alliances with Jews and working-class anti-capitalists to fight the regime, temporarily moderating their anti-Semitism and classism. In fact, the partisan movement was so broad and powerful as to be able to defeat the Nazis militarily in several regions, and to constantly thwart them throughout much of the rest of Europe.

In their inception, settler states tend to exercise a decentralized white supremacy because the entire point is to get all people who are classified as white to reproduce it voluntarily. As they mature, settler states prefer a democratic organization to allow progressives and conservatives to each enact white supremacy in their own ways. It is probably no coincidence that what was perhaps the largest iteration of fascism in a settler state, Peronism in Argentina, permitted both right- and left-wing variants and did not emphasize racial purity as heavily as all other fascist movements, thus allowing Argentinian white supremacy to be reproduced in a diffuse way, not subject to the centralization of the new state model.

also qualify as fascists—they are justified in going to the opposite extreme and being lax in their definition to the point of making no distinction between fascist and democratic modes of white supremacy. Additionally, they present dire warnings that fascism could return in completely different historical circumstances because there were people in the 1930s who didn't believe it could happen (both of these arguments are from "Yes, Trump Does Represent Fascism"). Or they offer elements of a definition that could be applied to practically any state, citing characteristics like "selective populism, nationalism, racism, traditionalism, the deployment of Newspeak and disregard for reasoned debate"—never mind that these are all "features shared by every single form of far-right politics (and in fact, Newspeak is originally a feature of Stalinism)" as I pointed out in an earlier critique.

Or they manufacture the appearance of double standards or common-sense arguments, like McKenzie Wark: "It's curious that the political categories of liberal, conservative and so forth are treated as trans-historical, but you are not supposed to use the category of fascism outside of a specific historical context… But maybe we should treat it not as the exception but the norm. What needs explaining is not fascism but its absence."

This rhetorical conundrum is easy to answer. Liberalism is a fundamental plank of modernity. We still live in the economic and political system created by liberalism, therefore the terminology of liberalism is still relevant, still historical. Applying "liberal" and "conservative" to the Middle Ages or early Han China, that would be "trans-historical."

On the contrary, fascism lost. It never created a world system, and the conditions it arose in response to no longer pertain. There have been dozens of variants to authoritarian politics and white supremacist ideology, most of them mutually opposed or inconsistent. To justify enlisting "fascism" as a catch-all category, someone would need to make a positive argument as to why that gives us theoretical tools we wouldn't otherwise have. As far as I can see, that argument hasn't yet been made. It seems that the reason people talk about fascism as an impending present danger is because it sounds scary and it makes them sound important. You don't get the same reaction talking about "an increasingly brutal democracy" even though democratic governments are responsible for a large share of the bloodiest genocides in world history (including the annihilation or decimation of hundreds of indigenous nations by democratic settler states including the US, Australia, Canada, Chile, and Argentina; mass murder carried out by democratic powers like the UK, Belgium, the Netherlands, and France in India, Congo, Indonesia, Algeria, Vietnam, and other colonies; and genocides carried out by post-colonial democracies like Colombia and

Myanmar). Most people don't know that, because so much weight is given to the misdeeds of dictatorial regimes . Democracy's crimes are covered up. Anarchists should know better, but an increasing number have been choosing political expediency over intellectual honesty and the hard task of sharing the truths no one else wants to touch.

Criticizing this theoretical sloppiness is important because our analysis of history is vitally important. *Historical amnesia is one of the greatest recurring impediments to revolutionary movements.*

Here's a working definition of fascism from an earlier article:

> "Fascism is not just any extreme right-wing position. It is a complex phenomenon that mobilizes a popular movement under the hierarchical direction of a political party and cultivates parallel loyalty structures in the police and military, to conquer power either through democratic or military means; subsequently abolishes electoral procedures to guarantee a single party continuity; creates a new social contract with the domestic working class, on the one hand ushering in a higher standard of living than what could be achieved under liberal capitalism and on the other hand protecting the capitalists with a new social peace; and eliminates the internal enemies whom it had blamed for the destabilization of the prior regime."

The abolition of a free electoral system is key. With free elections, no dictatorship; without dictatorship, no fascism. Multi-party fascism with a free capitalist press is a meaningless contradiction that strips language of any precision or usefulness in favor of amped-up demagoguery not unlike the style preferred by populists of all stripes, from Trump to actual fascists.

The presence of a hierarchically organized paramilitary force is also key to break the democratic system of checks and balances and to back up the autocratic creation of a new legality during the transition period. In historical fascism, such blackshirts or stormtroopers were vital in the very first years, only to be weakened or even suppressed after a new fascist legality had been sufficiently instituted.

Ami du Radical warns of "blackshirt organizations in every state," but this is an exaggeration. The Alt-Right in the US is murderous; denying them a platform and kicking them off the streets has absolutely been the right thing to do. But these rag-tag groups of internet warriors and basement trolls are peanuts next to the historical blackshirts or the KKK during Reconstruction. They have no unified leadership, no extensive military

DEMOCRATIC WHITE SUPREMACY

People need to get it out of their heads that democracy is a good thing. *Real* democracy does not preclude slavery. *Real* democracy means capitalism. *Real* democracy means patriarchy and militarism. Democracy has always involved these things. There is no accurate history of democracy that can furnish us an example to the contrary.

We have seen, tragically, how dangerous fascists in the street can be. But US history is full of reminders of how white supremacists can support democracy instead of fascism in order to get away with murder on a much more systematic scale. Similar in some ways to the Tea Party movement, the KKK was born in part to protect American democracy—white supremacist since its origins—from changes that were undesirable to wealthy whites. They mobilized to keep black people from voting, to keep black people from communalizing land seized from plantation owners (and in this they were aided by the Union army), and to attack white politicians attempting to change the historical Southern class relationship. They tried to influence elections via a variety of means (including terrorism in the case of the Klan and media in the case of the Tea Party), but they also legitimized the electoral system, rather than planning to seize control and abolish it.

Going back to the earliest states, all forms of government are based on a combination of inclusive and exclusive mechanisms. Democracy preaches universal rights and therefore inclusion, but it also permits the state to determine who is a citizen and therefore who obtains full rights. It prescribes certain modes of being human and practices genocide and colonization against those who practice other ways of being human. Democratic governments have never conceded human rights to societies that do not accept property ownership or compulsory labor (wage or slave). Conservatives tend to be more exclusive and progressives to be more inclusive, but both have been responsible for wars of extermination against forms of life that do not uphold white supremacist, patriarchal Enlightenment values regarding what it means to be human.

This is why the diffuse model for white supremacy in US history, so different from fascism's centralized model, is so crucial. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz writes about a similar pattern when describing America's "way of war," based on total warfare and extermination carried out by volunteer

for Mussolini and publicly organized groups intended to mirror the blackshirts. Some of them also made contacts with the military to discuss a possible coup.

All the evidence today suggests that capitalists appreciate Trump for the short-term tax break he has given them, fear his trade wars and disapprove of most of his mid-range strategies (or what pass for strategies in the Trump camp), and breathe a sigh of relief whenever he puts distance between himself and the far right. Capitalists will deal with Trump as long as he has his little hands on the levers. They don't care about Bannon. In Europe, investors have trembled at each victory of the far right, from Brexit to the appointment of Salvini in Italy.

The stronger the capitalist, the weaker the commitment to one political vision or another. Capitalists are famous for profiting under completely different kinds of government. They'll make short-term profit off a government that is committing political suicide, and long-term profit off a government enacting a more intelligent strategy. What they will not do is sabotage a world system that grants them stability, encourage suicidal strategies in countries they depend on, or embark on political crusades that sacrifice profit, increase instability, and put up obstacles to global finance and trade.

Curiously, in the 1930s, the economics were often broadly similar between democratic and fascist New Deals, both of them centering on ambitious government programs to boost employment. This shows how, regardless of political policy, capitalists tend to face the same needs simultaneously on a global scale, and that they can achieve the same broad economic program with a variety of political models. The triumphant democrats convinced international capitalists to invest in American deficit spending, whereas the fascists disastrously tried to go to war with everyone to steal the resources they would need to fund similarly heavy spending. This was clearly a negative-sum game, and it worked out poorly for those who bet too heavily on German fortunes. German capitalists, however, were blocked from colonial markets by the English and French triumph in World War I, so they had little choice.

How many people who cry "fascism!" today have asked themselves if the situation today is analogous? The answer is easy: it's not. Nor is there an economic need for warfare between major powers as there was in the 1930s. The Mutual Assured Destruction of nuclear war removes the economic benefits that conventional warfare provides, continuing Cold War politics mean that military spending is constantly at wartime levels, and the multiple ongoing wars left over from the War on Terror provide all the needed stimulus for military production.

structure,[1] no discipline, and a relatively small body count. The aforementioned paramilitaries were engaged in open civil warfare. The death tolls were in the thousands and tens of thousands. It is important to recognize this, because it is one thing for anarchists to be able to defeat a scattered, marginalized Alt-Right. It would be quite another thing to go up against an actual blackshirt organization.

The different organizational style is also extremely important. If there were an actual hierarchically organized paramilitary organization following a political party with a fascist (anti-democratic) program, that would speak volumes to the weakness of the government and the anxieties of the capitalist class willing to permit such a violation of their own norms. Those conditions simply do not exist now, and anyone who fails to recognize that is tilting at windmills. Secondly, the actual organizational pattern of the extreme right in the US is fully consistent with the diffuse mode of paramilitary violence that exists under democratic governments. Confusing one with the other gives a pass to democratic white supremacy, and constitutes a major strategic error.

There has been an actual neo-fascist party in recent years, with a fascist program aimed at seizing power, and building up a paramilitary force with non-democratic loyalties in the police and military. Golden Dawn, in Greece. Remember what happened to them? They were certainly weakened by anarchist direct actions, but it was the democratic government of Greece that shut them down, from one day to the next, after they exceeded their mandate by killing artists and attacking journalists rather than just killing immigrants and injuring anarchists.

Before and after the prosecutions targeting their leadership, Golden Dawn has used similar rhetoric to the AfD in Germany and other far right parties. The key differences were their paramilitary structure, their continued embrace of Nazi aesthetics even after they came into the media spotlight, and their continued projection of a putschist strategy united around a Führer-figure. Far right parties use the media spotlight to make nationalism and xenophobia palatable. The AfD, for example, celebrated how the Christian Democrats have been adopting immigration-related elements of their platform. Golden Dawn, on the other hand, broadcasts its dictatorial intentions. This is something that in the US, only the most extreme sectors of the far right will do, whereas any group that wants to court the Republican Party or wealthy donors downplays Nazi aesthetics and focuses on getting specific political programs adopted within the democratic system. As for paramilitary forces, under a democracy, these should be handled by intelligence agencies, rather than working directly for a political party. While this distinction is sometimes being blurred in

specific instances under the Trump administration, with implications that are both frightening and dangerous, we still can't speak of anything close to a unified fascist movement with paramilitaries under the direct control of a major political party.

Since the triumph of the democratic capitalist powers at the end of World War II, fascism has been tamed and put on a leash as a pet monster, locked up within the democratic toolbox. Fascists in the Global North are used to push acceptable discourse to the right, to attack and intimidate the socially marginalized, to manufacture tension or political crises—but they are never let off the leash. Fascists who act like there is no leash end up in court, like the leaders of Golden Dawn and the surviving members of a German neo-Nazi cell who had close contacts with the German intelligence services but ended up killing a cop after what I imagine was viewed by their handlers as a successful run murdering immigrants.

In the Global South, the equation is a little different, primarily because the democratic world system has always permitted dictatorships in post-colonial societies. This was in fact the norm throughout the Cold War, during which democratic government was a mark of privilege and advancement rather than a universal guarantee. Dictatorship is particularly compatible with economies based primarily on resource extraction such as mining, petroleum, agriculture, and forestry. When capitalism takes the form of naked plunder, there isn't much need to cultivate the values of citizenship. Democratization tends to accompany greater and more complex investment as well as local cycles of accumulation—though if democracy fails to establish social peace, dictatorship can reappear quickly. Still, since World War II, most dictatorships have not positioned themselves as opponents of the democratic world order but rather as its allies. Following cues from the US, they took up the crusade against Communism without situating themselves as the heirs of fascism. Incidentally, this was the exact same ideological middle ground that liberal democracy occupied in the 1930s and '40s.

The next crisis could start anywhere, but it will almost certainly spread everywhere.

Alexander Reid Ross's *Against the Fascist Creep* is one of the most extensive attempts to map fascism historically and theoretically. The book charts the evolution of the philosophies and the thinkers who would eventually go on to form fascist movements in Italy and elsewhere. The research is extensive and interesting, but the framing suffers from a mistake that makes the work all but useless from a theoretical perspective: it takes fascism seriously as a philosophical movement. Neither Mussolini, nor Hitler, nor Franco, nor Codreanu, nor any of the other fascist leaders were coherent thinkers. They were effective populists, which means they mixed and matched any pattern of claims, philosophies, and worldviews that would motivate their base. This is why fascists were simultaneously Christian, pagan, and atheist; bohemian and aesthetic; capitalist and socialist; scientistic and mystical; rationalist and irrationalist. This pseudo-intellectual aspect has been a fundamental characteristic of the extreme right throughout the 20th century and up to the present day. It's one more reason why it makes no sense to engage with them on the level of reasoned debate, because they will say anything that provokes the kind of reaction they want to provoke.

It's silly to trace fascism back to Nietzsche and Sorel unless one has an axe to grind. On a structural and organizational level, fascism borrowed immensely from the left, particularly from syndicalism and the socialist and communist parties. Yet the philosophical genealogists of fascism always attempt to tie it to the more marginalized elements of anti-capitalist movements; nihilists, naturalists, and individualists are common whipping boys. This is not particularly useful for understanding fascism; rather, it is a mechanism by which leftists clean house and further marginalize their more radical critics.

A useful historical analysis of fascism would be largely economic, posing the question: at what point do capitalists begin to support fascist movements? The moment when Germany's industrial and military establishment decided to support the Nazis was beyond any doubt a watershed in the evolution of a small group of violent wingnuts into a huge party capable of taking over the country. Military and capitalist support also played a decisive role in changing Nazi ideology and toning down many of the more esoteric, anti-establishment beliefs that Ross spent so much time researching.

Without the economic support of capitalists, there is no fascism. Anarchists should be paying more attention to what key capitalists are saying about how to respond to the ongoing crisis and less time on Alt-Right message boards. This is a question of priorities, not a criticism of the latter activity. The Alt-Right had practically no capitalist support besides the Mercer family, mid-range capitalists at best, and when the split went down between Trump and Bannon, they clearly chose Trump (highlighting that there are real discrepancies between democratic white supremacy and fascist white supremacy, as I previously argued, and as the author of "Yes!" disputed by describing Trump and Bannon as "bosom buddies" eight months before their falling out). There are practically no capitalists on a world scale who are looking towards some kind of fascism to solve their problems. And we would know if they were. In the 1930s, Ford, Dupont, and other leading capitalists openly expressed their admiration