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Price

Britain on the Brink of War with Russia

The British government, with the support of the opposition, is currently engaged in acts of war against the Russian Federation. It has approved the use of British made and supplied missiles to the Ukrainian state in order to attack targets within pre 2014 Russia. The Russian government has made it clear that such actions constitute war against the Russian Federation. Although just over half of UK voters still support Britain's actions against Russia, few realise that we have just committed acts of war against that country. The most recent IPSOS poll was taken before the British Storm Shadow missiles were launched. Keir Starmer's government have pushed us into a war with the Russian Federation without consulting the British people and apparently with the support of the main opposition parties. This is how British democracy works in a matter of life and death for the British people.

The latest British aggression against Russia, together with similar actions by a rudderless outgoing American administration have resulted in the Russians deciding to escalate their response. A long range multi warhead hypersonic missile launched from deep within Russia devastated an industrial region of the Ukrainian city of Dnipro. The Russians are making it clear that if such attacks on its

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Starmer's Pointless Missiles

Keir Starmer's decision to assist Ukraine in shooting UK supplied weapons into Russia is puzzling for many reasons.

Firstly, it is not going to affect the outcome of the war in Ukraine.

Secondly, it is not going to change the conditions which Russia would require in any peace deal.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it is a decision that clearly goes against the declared intent of the man who will become the next president of the US on January 20th, Donald Trump, who has stated that he will end the war in Ukraine.

It is clear that the vast majority of NATO countries did not want Trump to win the US presidential election. The British Labour Party, which Starmer leads, was actively advising Trump's opponent, Kamala Harris. But Trump won. Britain needed to build bridges with Trump. Instead it chose to insult him by escalating the war in Ukraine. One suspects Trump will take this as a personal affront.

Trump and his vice-president, J. D. Vance, seem to have largely accepted that Russia had a right to feel that its national security was threatened by the eastward expansion of NATO. The British establishment refuse to acknowledge that Russia had any genuine

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territory continue it has the means to launch devastating non-nuclear attacks within and beyond Ukrainian territory.

Britain is particularly vulnerable as a strike on British bases or even on British territory against military or intelligence targets would not lead the United States to risk its own security through a military response. Furthermore, an attack on British assets or on Britain itself would come as a complete surprise and shock to the British people who have been led to believe that the Russian Federation is a feeble, corrupt and incompetent country which we have nothing to fear from. It is hard to imagine a more dangerous misperception. The British public have been consistently lied to by their government, their opposition, the BBC and the oligarchic media as to the intentions and capabilities of the Russian Federation, but we are coming close to discovering the truth in a most uncomfortable way.

Britain has not been invaded since the Dutch paid us a friendly visit in 1688. The last serious devastation by an invading army was the harrying of the North by William the Conqueror's forces in the winter of 1069-70 which destroyed most of the population in the north of England. The contemporary

British population simply has no conception of what an invasion would mean for their families and their lives. War to them is something that you see on the television. Loss, suffering and death are abstractions. Russia on the other hand experienced the death of millions of its citizens 80 years ago. Every family in Russia has former family members who fought and died in the German invasion of 1941-45. Russians know what it means to fail to maintain national security and they are determined that no-one will humiliate, invade or destroy their country again. If that means that countries like Britain receive a sharp lesson in the realities of modern warfare, then Russia is fully prepared to deliver that lesson.

What, however, is most shocking about this is that the behaviour of the British political class is so reckless and irresponsible. These are people who make it their business to run the country but appear to remain ignorant of the risks to which they are subjecting themselves and their fellow citizens. Either that or they are wicked beyond measure, a possibility which, unfortunately, cannot be entirely discounted. Our political class are corrupt warmongers who appear to believe that their reckless actions will have no

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consequences. They could not be more wrong and they will probably discover their mistake before too long at great cost to their country and its reputation.

Sixty two years ago, at the height of the Cuban missile crisis British citizens and even schoolchildren were aware of the peril in which we stood. The essential truth of the situation was not kept from them. We now have a ruling class and a compliant media who keep the truth of Britain's irresponsible foreign policy from them. Britain needs to wake up before Starmer and his gang of hooligans plunge us into a devastating war with Russia.

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reason to fear this event while knowing full well that Russian concerns had a very real basis. Ukraine in NATO would give a first strike by NATO against Russia a much greater chance of success.

For centuries, Britain refused to grant independence to Ireland because it feared that Ireland could form an alliance with enemies of Britain like Spain, France and Germany. Only in 1922, when it had defeated Germany, the country it feared most, did Britain grant a limited form of independence. The Irish understood well that their independence depended on never entering into an alliance with an enemy of the great power on their eastern border.

Unlike Ireland, Ukraine thought that it could safely join an organisation, NATO, whose main purpose was to maintain the power of the West against China and a renascent Russia. Ukraine had good reason for believing they could do this. NATO was, after all, just a front organization for the most powerful nation on earth, the US. Who could therefore dare to challenge their right to join NATO?

There was, however, an error in Ukraine and NATO's calculation. Although Russia was a lesser power than the US, it still had sufficient

power to destroy western civilization. Russia made it clear that it was prepared to destroy western civilization rather than allow Ukraine to become a member of NATO and so give NATO a winning hand in any possible nuclear confrontation.

Ukraine joining NATO was perceived as an existential threat by Russia. Ukraine not joining NATO is not in any way an existential threat for the West. Starmer, in launching his pointless missiles at Russia, gives very clear evidence that he has not grasped this fact.

Starmer and most of the western leaders consider themselves vastly superior to Trump. But, unlike them, Trump understands that Russia sees the eastward expansion of NATO as an existential threat and will therefore stop at nothing to prevent it.

Putin, in perhaps his clearest warning to date, has left no doubt than any future British missiles fired into Russia could lead to an attack on a British military site. He has grasped that the only thing the British establishment understand is actual power. He is prepared to escalate the war all the way up to a nuclear confrontation. The sooner Starmer realises that, the better. In any nuclear confrontation with Russia, Britain would cease to exist, and much of the western world with it.

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Sahra Wagenknecht Newsletter November 2024

We mustn't become a country of dropouts and uneducated people!

Our schools are on fire. Figures we obtained from the Federal Statistical Office show that more and more pupils are leaving school without a qualification: Last year, 17 per cent more than two years previously. This is no wonder, as our education system is in a miserable state. Even in primary school, core skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic are far too often not learnt. The lack of teachers and social workers means that pupils and young people from poorer families in particular are left to deal with their problems on their own. According to the school barometer, one in three of them suffers from psychological stress. One in four of all pupils surveyed rate their own quality of life as low and far below the level before the Covid pandemic. I find this development devastating! Instead of simply shrugging their shoulders at such figures, politicians must finally take action and provide more staff in daycare centres and schools.

The economy is limping, CEOs are cashing in. Stop the payouts to senior managers!

The economy is shrinking, insolvencies are soaring, more and more companies are announcing redundancies - and despite all this, the managers of DAX companies are earning more than ever before. And the head of VW, of all people, who announces cost-cutting plans and redundancies to employees, also pockets the highest salary at over 10 million euros. This has nothing to do with fair performance! It also deepens

the social rifts when the salaries of top managers increase more than twice as much as the wages of normal workers and employees. We finally need a sensible economic policy that rewards innovation and job creation and limits the greed of managers and major shareholders. Medium-sized companies in particular should be freed from obstacles such as poor infrastructure and excessive bureaucracy and share buybacks, dividends and bonuses should be taxed more heavily.

An end to Weapons delivery! No to Taurus missiles to Ukraine!

Attacks on targets in Russia with long-range weapons would open Pandora's box and lead us to the precipice of a world war. Russia's foreseeable response to the use of ATACMS missiles by Ukraine, authorised by Joe Biden, will cost even more lives. It is a sign of complete irresponsibility that Biden, who has already been voted out of office, continues to escalate the conflict with Russia. Instead of supplying Ukraine with thousands of kamikaze drones, Scholz should now speak to Zelensky after the phone call with Putin and make it clear that a military escalation is not in the interests of the people in Germany, Ukraine and Europe and would result in an end to Germany's support. The last thing that is needed in the current situation are people like Merz or Habeck who, misjudging reality, want to run after a failed US president and supply Ukraine with Taurus missiles for an unwinnable war.

Ukraine has used far-reaching

weapons against Russia for the first time, authorised by a US president who was voted out of office. I find that extremely dangerous.

Even US intelligence agencies warned in the summer that the lifting of range restrictions on Western weapons could lead to Russia attacking military bases on NATO territory in return.

Instead of continuing to escalate the situation by supplying Taurus missiles and risking a world war, a ceasefire must finally be negotiated. On Maischberger (a German TV Talkshow), I explain why negotiations are the only way to end the appalling suffering and death in Ukraine and why we should not adopt the position of Ukrainian President Zelensky, who rejects talks with Putin and is determined to lead Ukraine into NATO.

Arrest warrant against Netanyahu for War Crimes. Weapons embargo against Israel now!

Yesterday, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant against Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu for war crimes and crimes against humanity. This decision is also a resounding slap in the face for Federal Chancellor Scholz and Foreign Minister Baerbock. After all, almost a third of arms deliveries to the Israeli army come from Germany, last year almost half. What will it take for the German government to stop aiding and abetting the war crimes of the Netanyahu government in Gaza? In my opinion, an arms embargo against Israel is more than overdue!

Class Guerilla War in the Sixties.

By John Clayden

I was working for New Century, a large window cleaning firm in London with an office in Red Lion Square. While cleaning the office of the chief executive of 20th Century Fox high up in Soho Square I removed some newspapers he had placed on an internal window ledge before stepping out to do the exterior of the windows. This was because they were hazardous as they would not have given me a secure foothold climbing in and out of the windows. The Chief Executive said nothing to me but later it emerged he had phoned up and complained to the company and a supervisor was duly despatched to our meeting place in Lyons basement in Oxford Street near Tottenham Court Road. It was agreed all round that the Chief Executive was an obvious idiot to be ignored and the supervisor who had previously worked our round regaled us with stories from his work experiences some of which would not be suitable for this publication. On one occasion he said early one morning he offered the women who worked in an underwear shop, to dispose of some empty nylon stocking boxes and leave them where they would be collected by the dustmen a few streets away. On turning a corner he was confronted by two policemen who jumped to the conclusion he was a thief.

“Officer “ he said to the first copper “What size does your missus take?” He handed him the appropriate box

and the policeman shoved it up his tunic and this was repeated with the other and they parted on good terms.

Center Point had not long been built and there was a bank on the ground floor which was on his round. It was a cold frosty day and it was not uncommon for the water to freeze on the windows. Another hazard was that in cold weather plate-glass can become brittle and shatter and it is therefore not advisable to place a pointed ladder, known in the trade as a point, up against a large shop window to reach higher up.

When the bank manager complained he had neglected to clean the top of the huge plate glass window, he explained the danger but the manager insisted he clean the rest of the window.

Our new friend went and got himself a bucket of boiling hot water and threw it at the window. A crack shot up the window and he went inside to inform the manager. The manager phoned the company and a representative came round. The window cleaner explained that he had warned the manager of the Point bank what the consequences of using point in these weather conditions could be. The manager was informed that because he had been warned it was not the responsibility of the company. The manager was seen no more.

Need for a peace movement

By John Clayden

It is difficult to contemplate one's demise and even more so that all life on this planet could cease. Since the invention of nuclear weapons this has become a possibility. With some friends I attended a meeting in Trafalgar Square in the early 60s where Bertrand Russell warned us that if we did not take action now we would not be around next year. We took him seriously. A friend in the Communist Party Biddy Youngday who while a member of the German Communist Party had lived in Berlin through the rise of Hitler became one of the original Committee of One Hundred which advocated civil disobedience, she was jailed in Holloway on charges of conspiracy. We took part in attempts to block Ruislip Airforce Base and other sit ins as well as taking part in the Aldermaston marches. The local branch of the Yiewsley and West Drayton CP organised a local CND branch which included members from the Labour Party as well as various Christian congregations and one Tory. They organised local and

regional activities with Uxbridge, Hayes and Southall branches and there were branches throughout the country. These activities gave many people the confidence to take things into their own hands. We put on films in the local town hall like All Quiet on the Western Front and On the Beach.

With members of the local CP we defied the banning of a demonstration in Trafalgar Square and a march down Whitehall. We heard Martin Luther King speak and we were outside Grosvenor Square American Embassy at the time of the Cuban missile crisis. Our fears were justified when the details of the crisis emerged and it was revealed that were it not for the initiative and intervention of Vasily Arkhipov the fleet commander of a Soviet nuclear armed Submarine fleet which the Americans were unaware was armed with nuclear torpedoes, nuclear war would have destroyed all life on the planet.

Subsequently the Americans and Soviets took measures to maintain communication on vital issues and after the INF treaty intermediate

missiles were destroyed on both sides. Scott Ritter was a weapons inspector who was an observer of this for the US government in Russia.

Unfortunately since then things have got considerably more dangerous again. The INF treaty has been revoked and nearly all communications between the Russians and the US have on the initiative of the latter have been severed.

Russian protests at the encroachment on Russian legitimate security concerns have been ignored and Putin has been demonised. The Ukrainian War has been used to try to bring Russia to the helpless condition it had been reduced to after the collapse of the Soviet Union. But the sanctions have not worked and relations with China and others have become stronger.

The western sanctions have reinforced the building of the BRICS

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Defenders of the Rich

By Gwydion M. Williams

Britain and the USA increasingly move in tandem.

Thatcher began the process of copying everything the USA had got wrong.

This now includes a health service that runs for private profit. In the USA, it costs twice as much per head, but may be denied to the critically sick or injured. Withheld from those who cannot prove an immediate ability to pay.

Long term it can ruin even well-off families when a family member has prolonged expensive sickness. That's a theme in many US novels, for instance Joseph Wambaugh's *The Black Marble*. And yet Starmer's government is intent on following that model.

Wider US failures are also massive British problems. No man is an island, though some of us are peninsulas. And in social terms, Britain is a peninsula that foolishly makes new barriers between itself and Continental Europe.

Trump in his Second Coming may push the European Union into reasserting its own interests. It is not an entirely hopeless hope. But it is sadly likely that Starmer's Britain will remain muddled between the two.

We have Trump again, because Kamala Harris stuck with what Bill Clinton began, and Obama

and Biden continued. All rejected decades of belief by their party in New Deal values. All became **defenders of the rich**.

Harris, like Hillary Clinton, lost out to Trump. He is just as much a defender of the rich. But though he cites the wrong causes, he tapped into a widespread feeling that things have gone badly wrong. He promises radical measures, though often of the wrong sort. And it was the less educated who were much more likely to believe him.

Harris was not a drastic failure. Nor was she doomed as a black woman – the British Tories just surprised many by choosing a black female leader. And Harris got nearly 50% of the vote.

Her defeat was exaggerated by the bizarre Electoral College system of the USA. Small states get extra votes, which is why Republican Presidents get elected despite it being 20 years since they last won the popular vote. Those states are dominated by rural voters who depend heavily on vast Federal subsidies put in place by Roosevelt's New Deal. State spending never touched by Republicans with a theoretical belief in Free Markets.

But she still failed. Someone following the example of moderate socialist Bernie Sanders would probably have won. Sanders in

2016 was polling better against Trump than Hillary was. But the party elite saw Sanders as a worse enemy.

This time round, there is a reasonable suspicion of a fix. Biden got the nomination for a second term, which has hardly ever failed for a sitting President. Then he pulled out with the primaries safely over. Not having Harris replace him would have insulted black and female voters. But had Biden never claimed to be fit for a second term, a more radical candidate might well have emerged in primary voting.

Trump has the wrong answers to real problems. Eager impoverished immigrants do undermine the job prospects of a vast ill-educated lower class. People who are anyway hung up on their supposed status as part of the White Race. But African-Americans also felt threatened, and record numbers voted Republican. Likewise Latinos born in the USA, or who have legally gained citizenship. Latinos may figure that fewer illegal immigrants makes their own status better and their acceptance greater.

The Democrats also used to get the votes of individuals among the minorities who had conservative social views, but saw the Democrats as defending their economic interests. Sadly, the party has got increasingly radical on social matters and increasingly neglectful of the economic needs of ordinary citizens.

It is a sad mess, obviously. New Deal policies had defended everyone. It reduced racism, though for a long time progressive Democrat politics depended on White Racist votes in the former Confederacy. But there was a time when even Republicans accepted state controls on the rich and decent treatment for the poor.

So what, if anything, will Trump do for his ordinary voters?

Economists predict disaster if

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agreements and it is now representative of the most powerful economic bloc on the planet. This has finally realised the hopes the CND had placed in the Bandung Conference in the Seventies as its policy was for Britain to join the nonaligned movement of the time.

The Russian bear has been poked once too often and has finally retaliated with the Oreshnik hypersonic missile to which the west has no response. But still the West have been provoking the Russians into some form of response which would escalate the situation in Ukraine before Trump takes office. This has heightened the danger of nuclear war tenfold as has been pointed out by among others Scott Ritter, Brian Berletic, Col Douglas MacGregor and a number of former Pentagon weapons experts. Unless a third alternative can be agreed upon. A peace mass movement organised by Consortium News and others has been initiated in Washington for the beginning of December. A sister movement is urgently needed in this country.

Trump makes good his promised protectionism. They also predicted disaster for Russia when it was thrown out of the portions of global trade the USA still dominates. And for the past ten or fifteen years, they have repeatedly predicted disaster if China failed to follow their demands for less protection and for private property in land.

State-owned land makes sense. Farmers can honestly and usefully profit from what they can grow on the land or graze on the land. Not from selling land for other uses: housing or mining. China is one of the few places that limit private farmers to their proper function.

Looking more broadly, it's a mess that started long before Trump was anything more than the heir of a rich and racist property developer. Thatcher and Reagan managed to twist conservatism into a defence of rich individuals. Entrepreneurs, who often degraded actual conservative values. Rupert Murdoch in the media is a notable case: undermining traditional values while claiming to defend them.

They did stabilise their societies after the disruptions of the 1970s. But genuine conservatives would have restored the successful balance of New Deal or Keynesian values. They instead saw these as having failed and being inherently flawed. They imagined a return to classical capitalism, with all of its injustice and inequality.

And it was pretty much imagination. Classical Capitalism was amazing in a world where most civilised countries were much the same from century to century. China in the 19th century was not notably richer or more sophisticated than it had been under the Han Dynasty, which began two centuries before Christ. But Victorian Britain was growing at less than 2% per year, despite a fast-growing population. Imperial Germany with a much bigger role for the state in a broadly capitalist economy was pulling ahead of Britain, which is why the British elite wanted a war of destruction. Got it as soon as they could find a pretext that

would pull in the broad mass of Britons, who traditionally preferred Germany to France or Russia. Jingoism was originally about saving Constantinople from Russia: Britain's elite secretly promised it to get Tsarist Russia involved in the destruction of Germany.

With the Old Order seen as discredited by the war, much of the European left identified socialism with the Soviet Union. H G Wells spoke for many when he said '*I have seen the future and it works*'. Not that he wanted a copy: his world states were always English speaking and had an elite that mixed aristocrats and the cleverer of the middle classes. In his atomic-war novel *The World Set Free*, a leading character is a King Egbert who abdicates as King of Britain and then becomes a leading figure in the new and benevolent World State.

The misbehaviour and failure of the late Soviet Union demoralised socialists. As did the squabbling and ineffectiveness of the various Trotskyist sects. But this was much too hasty.

While the Soviet Union fell apart, People's China was proceeding smoothly. Sticking with Leninist politics, and with strong state control of the newly permitted capitalism. All land remains state property, with private farming having long leases and not allowed the parasitic process of land speculation. Nor the disastrous falling into debt of less successful farmers.

Yet in the West, ordinary people are far too ready to trust the rich. To believe that they are indispensable, and should not be curbed. Or at least that the state cannot be trusted to do this.

They mostly don't ask why top managers should get 90 times the salary of most of their employees, when the system worked fine with 25 times as much back in 1980.

It remains the belief of the ruling elite that they should be allowed to pass on their advantages to offspring who have done nothing to merit it. This has become increasingly easy in the last three decades, even

though libertarians are theoretically against it.

It is a sad lapse from the solid trend to equality that the West had from the 1940s to 1960s.

For much of history, rich families dominated and were seen as normal. A strange town called Catalhoyuk was an ancient alternative. The cities of the Indus Valley Civilisation lacked the temples and palaces of later urban life, though there was some inequality. But both of these failed. Apparently collapsed: there are no signs of violent conquest. They were among the great range of different societies and empires that rise and then decline and fall.

Running a complex society is a complex task. It is easy to persuade people that the rich are a vital resource. That they make money, in the same way that bakers make bread and cobblers make shoes.

From this viewpoint, individual rich families will fail, but the class as a whole must be preserved. In the crisis of 2007 to 2008, conventional state action was needed to avoid a much worse crash. But instead of nationalising the banks and saying that dubious hedge fund profits were lost, both Obama and Gordon Brown chose to pick up the gambling debts of the extraordinarily rich. Then Brown lost the next election, failing to ridicule the suggestion that British government spending had caused the global crisis. The Tories kept taxes low and the budget balanced by a brutal austerity for ordinary people.

These are the errors that Starmer continues. That Biden continued, and Harris would have stuck to. The examples of past success when the rich were curbed are simply ignored.

And right across the political spectrum of governing parties, they are also failed defenders of Western values.

Meanwhile China keeps faith in Leninism. But also tolerates any sort of religion that is wise enough not to dabble in treason.

Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

Putin's Nuclear Gamble

Threaten carefully

In China, Bears Shit in the Woods!

Must We Be Eyeless In Gaza?

How to Reverse Progress and Be Very Baffled

Snippets

Trump Abandoning Taiwan?

Conciliation Within China

Reaching across the Pacific

India Neglects Its Poor

Putin's Nuclear Gamble

Russians have a history of losing many battles, but winning wars because they don't give up.

The USA beyond its home territory has a history of walking away when the going gets tough.

The USA lost in Vietnam because their allies were mostly dishonest or incompetent. Likewise in Afghanistan. And in Iraq, the only useful allies have their own diverse agendas.

In each case, they were up against enemies who preferred death to defeat.

And their carefully plotted Ukraine War is coming apart for much the same reasons.

In Ukraine, the 'heroes' of the 2004 Orange Revolution lost the election that came after. It had all along been a major split in a society with a shaky sense of identity. In 2004 after the election was re-run after allegations of fraud, Viktor Yushchenko got 51.99% and Viktor Yanukovich got 44.20%.¹

By 2010 Yushchenko was discredited, getting only 5.5% in his bid for a second term.² Yanukovich got 35.92 % in the first round, but when it was a choice between him and pro-US oligarch Yulia Tymoshenko, he got 49.55. Since another 4.42 were 'against all', this returned him to power. And he tried to be a bridge between Russia and the European Union.

Exactly what the Dollar Imperialists of the USA wanted to avoid. Since Putin had asserted Russian interests, they were determined to destroy him. But the pro-Western Yabloko had been getting less than 5% of the votes since 2003, and had no seats in Russia's national parliament.³ They needed some other method to weaken him.

I'm sure it irritated the US manipulators to have to

do the same job again. Probably they despised their allies for being so weak and useless. But they had an ace up their sleeves.

Or rather a movement that had begun and ended the Nazi invasion as willing allies of Hitler, even though they fought him between times.

At the end of World War Two, the USA found refugees for many who had served the Nazi war machine. Some were wanted for war crimes, mostly committed against Jews, but Ukrainian right-wingers had also massacred Poles. Many of these went to Canada: much safer than the USA, where Jews were more influential and judges more likely to assert themselves.

Returned from exiles, such Ukrainians could present themselves as Real Patriots. Win over discontented youths in the economic decline that New Right policies had inflicted on both Russia and Ukraine. Putin had of course turned Russia round when he finally realised that New Right policies were poison. But no such option existed in Ukraine, which kept discarding Presidents at the end of each term in office.

In 2014, widespread protests had outright Nazis as the hard core. Yanukovich offered a new election, but instead the parliament was rushed into declaring him deposed, which broke their own constitution.⁴ They polarised the whole society:

"Having overturned a sensible compromise that had been reached on the 21st, parliament then repealed a 2012 law that gave official status to languages other than Ukrainian in regions where at least 10% spoke it. Rights for minority languages is in line with European norms, but this was ignored."⁵

Facts like that have been covered up. One Facebook post of mine got removed as 'hate speech' when I mentioned Kiev's disputes with a Hungarian minority in its west. But the big reaction was in places where Russian was widely spoken. And especially in Crimea, which had been part of Russia until transferred by Russified-Ukrainian Khrushchev. He himself was an example of the free mixing: born in Kursk near Ukraine and living from age 14 in the Donbass, the eastern region that had to be persuaded by Lenin to be counted as part of Ukraine rather than Russia.

What they can't have seen is that almost all Russians

1 <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Ukraine-Punished-For-Rejecting-US-Values-in-2010>

2 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010_Ukrainian_presidential_election#Results

3 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yabloko#Election_results

4 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/past-issues/2015-07-magazine/2015-07-ukraine-illegally-removed-its-elected-president/>

5 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/46-globalisation/ukraine-kievs-five-day-war-machine/>

would feel the need to save ethnic Russians who were at risk of Ethnic Cleansing in the new Nazi-loving Ukraine.

They're not fighting Putin; they are fighting Russia.

Threaten carefully

Putin used a new type of missile – a ballistic missile that carries smaller hypersonic missiles. Russia and China are reported to be way ahead in this technology.⁶

And even if the USA can match it, it does make their missile defence systems useless. Ballistic missiles are fast but predictable. Hypersonic missiles change course and are far harder to intercept.

It is notable that the USA and other Western powers pulled their embassies out of Kiev just ahead of the missile, even though it struck somewhere else.

Russia led by Putin can hit anything in Europe. The missile he used could not hit the USA, and he's acting on the assumption that the USA is not going to start a nuclear war over anything that happens in Europe.

It is wrong to assume that any use of nuclear weapons means an all-out holocaust. This *might* happen between the USA and Russia. There would be big gains in launching a First Strike, and a balancing cost in delay. But the nuclear weapons of China, France, and Britain could not possibly manage a First Strike, except possibly against one of the minor nuclear powers. But even a few city-killing missiles are thought to keep those countries safe.

Two of the lesser nuclear powers, India and Pakistan, had a small war in 1999.⁷ Both had nuclear weapons, but I said at the time it was unlikely to expand. And indeed, Pakistan accepted a small defeat.

6 <https://english.almayadeen.net/news/technology/expert-says-us--nato-cannot-develop-hypersonic-weapons-for-2>
7 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kargil_War

As things are, Russia responded to Kiev being given extra missiles. And Putin got the law amended to allow him to use limited nuclear strikes. Maybe an atom bomb on one of Kiev's military bases. Or even a conventional hypersonic strike on a military base in Poland or even Germany.

Not something that the USA would be likely to start a global war over. Few of the voters are hugely concerned with anything that happens in Europe. Politicians would probably hesitate.

Of course it can't be assumed they will, either. But Putin takes risks, and Russians are pleased to be recovering from many years of national humiliation.

In the European Union, there are increasing signs that European leaders want to bail out.

In China, Bears Shit in the Woods!

"China loses third of its billionaires as economy falters"

That's from the *Financial Times*. Written to give hard facts to working business people. So it disapproves of a loss of status by the rich, but also has to report what's really going on.

If an economy can lose some billionaires and flourish, the ultra-rich will see it as a threat. This has been happening much more definitely since President Xi became leader. And the pressure keeps increasing:

"Chinese authorities are demanding wealthy individuals and companies double-check their taxes for unpaid liabilities in a move that threatens to further dent investor confidence in the world's second-largest economy.

"Tax officials in recent months have asked wealthy individuals and companies to carry out 'self-inspections' of their tax payments and cough up any deficiencies, as local governments hunt for revenue

to refill coffers depleted by a property slump."⁸

And China is doing better than Western economies, where the rich can legally avoid most taxes.

If this year's predictions of disasters for China are as false as those for the last 10 or 15 years, then we can cite them as a proof that the rich are not the indispensable wealth-creators they claim.

Note how media owned by the rich hypes any bad news, ignoring similar or worse things that happen elsewhere.

But why don't most of the left wish to celebrate China's success?

It all goes back to the chaos caused by Khrushchev suddenly deciding to criminalize Stalin and declare himself direct heir of Lenin. And nearly starting a world war, so he was dumped. Brezhnev then appointed himself the actual direct heir of Lenin, but forbade serious thought about how this had happened. It corroded the trust that a Leninist system vitally needs. And he suppressed Czechoslovakia, at a time when many there were sincere believers in socialism. When they wanted to do reforms similar to those Deng was to make in China.⁹

The problem seems to be that China will not renounce either Mao or Stalin, which most of the Western left sees as a sign of evil.

Lenin created the authoritarian system that Stalin operated. And Trotsky was very content for as long as he was 'Underboss' and could hope to be Lenin's heir. Initially not chosen, he might have waited and hoped to win back popularity. That was what Mao did when the Central Committee moved in on his Liberated Area, and in fact wrecked it. And Chinese Leninism has always

8 <https://www.ft.com/content/1570747c-313d-49e9-afb0-2567e003438e> - pay site

9 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/magazine-001-to-010/magazine-007-july-1988-2/the-1968-invasion-of-czechoslovakia-doomed-the-soviet-union/>

been much healthier because of the acceptance that the people chosen by the Party Congress had a right to rule until another Congress decided otherwise. But Trotsky claimed a right to overthrow the system, and had enough supporters and possible allies for the leaders to see purges as unavoidable.

When the initial Collective Leadership eroded to the dominance of Stalin, he got real success in a tough situation. The revolution turned into real achievements through the work of imperfect humans.

Deng, who had lived through it all, accepted that both Stalin and Mao had won victory when this was far from certain. He saw criticism of Stalin as foolish, even asking “*What good has Khrushchev ever done?*”¹⁰

Meantime much of the left repudiate all the winners and express vast admiration for many of the losers. And are incredibly surprised when this does not bring success.

Must We Be Eyeless In Gaza?

During the Vietnam War, a very clever British-born journalist called Alistair Cooke imagined that people had seen the horrific trenches of World War One, in the same way that Vietnam was being reported. Feelings would have been vastly different.

And a pointless war would have stopped, I’d have thought. But Cooke was always conventionally pro-American, living there till he died very old in 2004.

Only in the USA!

But many of his shrewd remarks stayed with me. Live television *does* give horrible events a vivid reality. That’s why later wars kept journalists under control. ‘Embedding’ them, so that they and probably their viewers identified with the fighting force they’d been placed with.

Not possible in the Land of Canaan, to use a neutral term. I have always tried to take a balanced view between two typical human combines that had unfortunately collided.¹¹ If asked

about Israel’s right to exist, I’ll say ‘*on the territory they were allocated by the UN in 1948, certainly*’. Or rather more, realistically. But trying to violently displace the Palestinians from your ideal vision of Israel was going to repel most of the world.

For a long time, there was a reasonable pretence that this was not the intention. But then politicians seeking to damage Hard Left rivals decided to accept the crazy notion that any criticism of an Israeli government would be defined as anti-Semitism.

The worse gift since the Trojan Horse, only I can’t think it was planned maliciously.

Most Israelis have eagerly drunk from the poison chalice. Eagerly accepted that whatever they wanted to do would be defined as virtuous. So large numbers of dead children would be ignored or understood by all right-thinking people.

Some football fans felt they had a right to do the same overseas:

“Thursday’s [France-Israel football] match was played in front of scant crowds and heavy security a week after violence in Amsterdam between pro-Palestinian demonstrators and visiting Israeli fans...

“According to Reuters news agency, some 100 Israel fans defied travel warnings from their government and sat in a corner of the 80,000-capacity stadium, which was barely a fifth full...

“Politicians across Europe decried a ‘return of antisemitism’ after Israeli fans were chased through the streets of Amsterdam.

“*Maccabi* fans were themselves involved in vandalism, tearing down a Palestinian flag, attacking a taxi and chanting anti-Arab slogans, according to city authorities. They were then targeted by ‘small groups of rioters... on foot, by scooter or car’, the city said in a 12-page report.”¹²

If young men under pressure behave like baboons, it is regrettable, but not at all unexpected. And the job of the mature men should be to control them.

Sadly lacking nowadays

How to Reverse Progress and Be Very Baffled

“America’s decades-long progress towards racial and sexual tolerance and equality has been a gradual shift, led by progressives with the centre and right quickly following.

“The pivots of the past decade, by contrast, have been abrupt and are leaving the majority behind. They are better characterised not as moves towards greater tolerance and equality but as shifts in rhetoric or proposed solutions for addressing disparities, where there is plenty of room for disagreement without bigotry.

“Many of these pivots originated with the activists and non-profit staffers that surround the Democratic party. In an invaluable piece of research carried out in 2021 ... these ‘political elites’ or tastemakers hold views often well to the left of the average voter — and even the average Democratic voter — on cultural issues...

“While 73 per cent of white progressive Democrats favour cutting the size and scope of police forces, only 37 per cent of Black Americans agree. A new study ... found that the use of the gender-neutral term ‘Latinx’ used by some progressives was not only deeply unpopular with many Hispanic Americans but may have actively pushed some towards Trump...

“Survey data shows that in every election from 1948 to 2012, American voters’ image of the Democrats was as the party that stood up for the working class and the poor. In 2016 that flipped. Now it is seen primarily as the party of minority advocacy...

“Whether or not progressives are ready to accept it, the evidence all points in one direction. America’s moderate voters have not deserted the Democrats; the party has pushed them away.”¹³

It’s part of a long liberal tradition of thinking they know best and imposing it on others. But now being done with fervour rather than realism:

“Donald Trump’s victory in the race for the White House appears to

¹⁰ <https://redsails.org/deng-and-fallaci/>

¹¹ <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Zionism-Decays-Into-Canaanite-Nationalism>

¹² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c98d9nrg1rgo>

¹³ <https://www.ft.com/content/73a1836d-0faa-4c84-b973-554e2ca3a227> - pay site

reflect a sweeping turn to the populist right, across all demographics. But the US is just another country where the protest vote — not necessarily on the right or left — has become the new majority...

"This year, in the 50 most populous democracies, incumbents have won 14 per cent of the elections in developed countries, compared with 73 per cent in developing countries. Approval ratings show the same stark gap; leaders are deeply unpopular on average in the developed world but are still popular in the developing world. The wave is not global, it is a revolt against long-term rot in post-capitalist economies, of which America is the leading example."¹⁴

People know that they are being neglected:

"Paul Spehar, 62, a maintenance technician based in Daytona Beach, Florida, has seen reports that the economy is doing well but has only seen his savings chip away. His car insurance tripled over the last three years, and he had to take on \$2,000 in debt to pay for the copay of a recent surgery. When Spehar retires, he will have to rely solely on Social Security.

"The system doesn't work for people like me," Spehar said.

"It's a common sentiment. In a Harris Poll conducted exclusively for the Guardian in September, nearly 50% of Americans believed that the country is experiencing a recession. Over 60% believed that inflation is increasing, and 50% believed that unemployment is increasing too. Even those who may know what the economists are saying don't feel great: 73% said it's hard to feel good about any positive economic news when they feel financially squeezed each month."

Harris ignored Bernie Saunders' advice to show concern for working class interest. Claims of economic brilliance were rightly rejected. Success for financiers need not benefit ordinary people, and increasingly does not.

Snippets

Trump Abandoning Taiwan?

"Anger in Taiwan over reports SpaceX asked suppliers to move abroad

Taipei says it is paying close attention to reported request by Elon Musk's firm"¹⁵

Will Trump back away from the Dollar Crusade of the Democrats. Which was also enthused over by some Republicans, but not then obviously failing and a waste of money.

Taiwan's troubles began when the pro-independence government encouraged Hong Kong protestors and made various mostly-symbolic gestures towards being independent.

This might not suit Musk or Trump. And them shifting would probably lead to Taiwan being more modest.

China could blockade and ruin it, but probably would prefer not to.

*

Conciliation Within China

Meantime the *Guardian* reports a boost being given to Xi's father:

"Chinese state television lionises Xi Jinping's father in 39-part serialised drama"¹⁶

They don't see a possible relationship to what his son now faces.

Xi Senior led a liberated area that Mao took over and made stronger at the end of the Long March. And the wider region remained his concern:

« Xi directed the political work of the Northwest Political and Military Affairs Bureau, which was tasked with bringing Communist governance to the newly captured areas of the Northwest. In this capacity, Xi was known for his moderate policies and the use of non-military means to pacify rebellious areas...

«In July 1951, following the Communists' defeat of the Ma Clique armies in Qinghai, remnants of the Muslim warlords incited rebellion among Tibetan tribesmen.»

¹⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/nov/07/space-x-taiwan-manufacturing-claims-elon-musk>

¹⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/nov/08/time-in-the-northwest-xi-jinping-father-zhongxun-time-in-the-northwest-china>

I'm sure President Xi wants to conciliate Taiwan, not conquer it.

Taiwanese would be wise to note the damage the Dollar Crusade has done elsewhere. Get the best deal they can.

*

Reaching across the Pacific

"China megaport opens up Latin America as wary US looks on...

«South American countries such as Peru, Chile and Colombia would be vulnerable to pressure because of the bilateral free trade agreements they have with the US, which Trump could seek to renegotiate or even tear up."¹⁷

China is a big market, and growing. A more sensible line-up. And boosted if Trump makes good his promise of drastic tariffs.

*

India Neglects Its Poor

"The missing puzzle piece in India's child stunting crisis

"Decades of caste discrimination have contributed to India having higher levels of child stunting rates than across Sub-Saharan Africa, new research has revealed.

"The two regions together are home to 44% of the world's under-five population but account for about 70% of stunted children globally - a key indicator of malnutrition.

"But, while both have made significant strides in recent years, India's rate stands at 35.7%, external, with the average across Sub-Saharan Africa's 49 countries at 33.6%.

"A child is considered stunted when they fall short of the expected height for their age - a clear sign of critical nutritional gaps."¹⁸

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Old newsnotes at the magazine websites. I also write regular blogs - <https://www.quora.com/q/mrgwydionmwilliams>

¹⁴ <https://www.ft.com/content/738cced3-35ee-45ef-b751-03d52bbaf35a> - pay site

¹⁷ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ckg79y3rz1eo>

¹⁸ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cj9n0420w8go>

Part 5: Science and Politics, Climate and Weather

By Richard Jones

It was nearly forty years ago that I read that the majority of scientific research world-wide was funded entirely or partly by the US war machine, in one guise or another. I never verified the claim, but as far as I remember it was from a scientific source, not an anti-war or anti-imperial source, and I've never had reason to doubt it. One qualification could be that it probably was a matter of the majority of funding, not the majority of research. Of the research independent of such funding, a significant portion must have been by pharmaceutical companies, and compromised in a similar manner.

Anyone with any exposure to science will have faced the question 'what is science?' and one or more smug definitions waffling about hypothesis, experiment, etc. If they don't evade it at all, they briefly acknowledge the social dimension by reference to the need for independent verification.

Since that era, US military aggression has expanded as US hegemony recedes. Funding of (supposedly) science has probably increased, but so has the fraud inherent in the system (glorified by political 'scientists' as pluralism) of bribery, often called lobbying, on which US Congressional decisions are made.

Then again, in the unfree 'Free World', the privatisation of information has undermined science to the extent that very little can be done that is not subject to impediments such as non-disclosure agreements, assignation of patent rights to people or organisations, and other interference in the free interchange of ideas and experience that is at the core of the scientific endeavour.

In this environment, it is no surprise that the publicists that dominate both sides of climate politics routinely accuse one another of whoring for interested parties. Climatists tell us that real scientists have a 'consensus' about climate change, and

denialists are doing PR for (mostly) petrochemical interests. Denialists tend to accuse climatists of serving political rather than commercial interests. All this is misdirection as it focuses attention on who makes (or sponsors) a claim rather than the evidence for or against the claim.

As news, real or fake, is mostly served by the entertainment industry, its vendors have no interest in providing information unless it is exciting. Extreme weather events are in themselves exciting, but the climate change context adds another level of excitement. Storms in Dubai, tornadoes in the US, floods in Spain, wildfires around the world.... These all provide vicarious excitement, but linking them to global warming brings them closer to home. Could we be next?

And so, weather is reported as climate.

In April this year (2024) Dubai was hit by a dramatic storm. Predictably, the entertainment media avoided the obvious: in desert climates, where rain is unusual, the rare occurrences are often dramatic. Instead, oddly, reports from the Guardian and Reuters waffled irrelevantly about cloud seeding with their chosen experts explaining why it was irrelevant. So why, other than magician's *trompe l'œil*, did it get mention? Both, however, managed to twist this weather event into a climate event.

To this end, the Guardian was characteristically scurrilous, simply making wild unfounded assertions:

"Human-caused climate breakdown is supercharging extreme weather across the world, driving more frequent and more deadly disasters from heatwaves and wildfire to floods. At least a dozen of the most serious events of the last decade would have been all but impossible without human-caused global heating.

"Extreme rainfall is more common and more intense

because of human-caused climate breakdown across most of the world. This is because warmer air can hold more water vapour. It is most likely that flooding has become more frequent and severe as a result."

Reuters was more sober, citing a meteorologist who explained the weather event as a weather event:

"A low pressure system in the upper atmosphere, coupled with low pressure at the surface had acted like a pressure 'squeeze' on the air, according to Esraa Alnaqbi, a senior forecaster at the UAE government's National Centre of Meteorology.

"That squeeze, intensified by the contrast between warmer temperatures at ground level and colder temperatures higher up, created the conditions for the powerful thunderstorm, she said.

"The 'abnormal phenomenon' was not unexpected in April as when the season changes the pressure changes rapidly, she said, adding that climate change also likely contributed to the storm."

The mention of climate change at the end of this explanation of a weather event is so incongruous as to suggest that it was solicited, if not spurious.

The recent floods in Valencia, Spain, led to immediate extreme pronouncements.

The Guardian: "Spain's apocalyptic floods show two undeniable truths: the climate crisis is getting worse and Big Oil is killing us"

Euronews:

"'Climate change kills': Spain faces new flood threat as leaders highlight extreme weather at COP29"

No attempt at all to provide evidence connecting the weather event with climate change. Evidence

is irrelevant to entertainment.

A climatist site, on the other hand, has an agenda and wants to convince us, so climatecentral.org says:

“The low-pressure system driving these historic floods tapped into an atmospheric river carrying excess moisture from the unusually warm Tropical Atlantic. According to the Climate Shift Index: Ocean, these elevated sea surface temperatures were made at least 50 to 300 times more likely by human-caused climate change.”

Just as your recent lottery win was made more likely by your purchase of a ticket. Unfortunately, one of the first things you learn, or should learn, about statistics is that they can't provide evidence of causality. Worse, this isn't even about the probability of the Valencia event. So-called climate modelling tries to predict the future and every step in the computing involves a probability. It has no predictive value beyond that of the model that says if you throw three dice, other outcomes are 215 times more likely than three sixes. If you take them seriously, you should conclude that the Valencia floods were not surprising. Good luck with that!

Is fire more exciting than flood? I ask because, apparently, very exciting wildfires don't generate so much need to entertain with extravagant claims about climate. According to an MSN report on US wildfires,

‘It's not possible to say that climate change caused the fires, but the extreme conditions fuelling the fires have strong connections to the effects of climate change, according to David Robinson, the New Jersey state climatologist at Rutgers University.

“Human-induced climate change underpins all of our day-to-day weather,” he said.

‘It's as if the weather foundation has been raised,’ he said. “The atmosphere is warmer, the oceans are warmer,” he said. If a storm comes through to trigger them then you get torrential rains. But if there's no trigger, “you still have the increasing warmth, so it dries things out.”

Almost simultaneously with the takeover of the world's worst chemical warfare criminal by the second worst, a French court fined Monsanto in relation to the cancer of an individual who had handled glyphosate. Statistics can support a proposition that a substance causes cancer, but attributing an individual case is another matter. In the same way, statistics, whether from observations or from modelling, could support the case that extreme weather events are due to climate change, but proving that for a particular event is a different proposition and I don't think anyone has attempted it. Why bother, when the media are so ready to run with it without evidence? It's as easy as blaming Putin for war in Ukraine.

As it is, there seems to be net zero, to coin a phrase, evidence for climate change driving extremes.

Yet the context of climate change talk makes extreme weather events more newsworthy. So, is there any doubt that we are more likely to hear exciting stories about

remote events than we would have many years ago? Or that we could thus be encouraged to believe that the world is a more dangerous place, weather-wise, just as more reporting of street violence can make us believe that the streets are more dangerous?

I must mention that, regardless of statistics or computer models, storms are powered by heat. Higher temperatures in the atmosphere and the ocean surface drive evaporation, convection, condensation, and precipitation. It is very plausible that an increase in average global surface temperature leads to more precipitation. The specific weather pattern are another matter. An increase in the frequency or intensity of storms is plausible, but evidence for it seems, so far, to be lacking.

Unfortunately, for those who want to link weather events with global climate change, there is no support from the IPCC, the coordinating centre for the supposed climatist ‘scientific consensus’.

Their latest (2023) report finds, as Pielke reports, no mention of climate change causation in

- River floods
- Heavy precipitation and pluvial floods
- Landslides
- Drought (all types)
- Severe wind storms
- Tropical cyclones
- Sand and dust storms
- Heavy snowfall and ice storms
- Hail
- Snow avalanche
- Coastal flooding
- Marine heat waves

“Furthermore, the emergence of a climate change signal is not expected under the extreme RCP8.5 scenario by 2100 for any of these phenomena, except heavy precipitation and pluvial floods and that with only medium confidence. Since we know that RCP8.5 is extreme and implausible, that means that there would even less confidence in emergence under a more plausible upper bound, like RCP4.5”

<https://rogerpielkejr.substack.com/p/what-the-ipcc-actually-says-about>

Pielke has experience concerning the interaction of politics and science in regard to climate change. Early in his career as a climate scientist, he was under political pressure to tell lies for our benefit. Although he had already researched the matter, his superiors in science wanted him to lie and say that the increasing cost of US hurricanes was due to climate change. His research had concluded that higher dollar damages were due to population growth and the increased wealth of the elite.

<https://rogerpielkejr.substack.com/p/why-climate-misinformation-persists>

I do hope readers will follow this last link. It gives a rare glimpse into the process by which public opinion (i.e. yours, mine, etc) is manipulated.

The State in Capitalist Society

What Socialists Should Know.

By Dave Gardner

Socialists need to understand what the state is and how it can help or hinder progress towards socialism. Societies can exist without a state but the reality is that, when a society becomes complex or is threatened by neighbouring societies it will develop a state. A state is an organisation that enjoys a monopoly of force against both internal and external enemies within a more or less well-defined territory. To a greater or lesser extent it relies on the implicit allegiance of most of those subject to its rule to ensure its stability. On this communists, socialists, liberals and conservatives agree, but on little else.

By far the most influential thinking about the state in the West is liberal. According to liberalism the state arises out of a contract between individual persons and a central power ('the sovereign'). In exchange for individuals giving up some or all of their rights, the state undertakes to protect them against internal and external enemies. In liberal thinking the state's obligations do not extend far beyond that, although some liberals have maintained that the state also has a duty to enforce a limited degree of distribution of opportunities and wealth. But all liberals see the legitimacy of the state based on some kind of contract between the monopoly power that is the state and individual citizens.

The functions of the state.

There are two major problems with this approach. The first is that the modern state has a much more extensive role than policing and defence, even in the most liberal societies. States have been obliged to attend to health, pensions, education, the unemployed and economically inactive, housing, money and economic development. Nationalist economists like Friedrich List maintained that modern states have to develop economically in order to be viable and to do this they need to direct economic development through regulation of external

trade, the provision of a currency, education and public works to provide the necessary infrastructure. In practice all modern states do this, but liberal theory does not seem able to account for it.

The second major problem is that the relationships between the state and citizens should not be seen as the relationship between a monolithic entity and individuals. In any society, with or without a state, people congregate in groups such as families, clans, churches/mosques/temples, businesses, political parties and trade unions. Their relationship with the state is mediated through these groupings to which most people also owe an allegiance. Their relationship with these institutions is usually much closer and day-to-day than it is to the state which seems abstract and remote. Therefore the society which the state governs is usually complex and composed of different interests, the most important two of which are the competing interests of labour and capital discussed in the previous article on class struggle. But there are also very often different religious, linguistic and national affiliations which can give rise to competition or even tension. Liberal theory has difficulty in recognising these fundamental facts.

The institutions of the state.

With a few exceptions liberals have not looked closely at the internal complexity of the state. Locke, a seventeenth century liberal, recognised that the state had legislative, executive and judicial powers, corresponding to a parliament, a sovereign and judiciary. But states also have civil servants, police forces and armies to carry out their various functions. We should bear in mind that the individuals who staff these state institutions are also people with their own interests and allegiances to other bodies as well as to the state. This is a fundamental point that Marx recognised. To gain control

of the state is to control all its parts, not just the legislative and executive functions.

The state and social classes: Marx's insight.

Marx understood that the state was a complex institution ruling over a class-divided society, invariably in the interests of the dominant class. He was not the first to recognise this; the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle understood this as well. Aristotle maintained that a well-governed state, be it a monarchy, oligarchy or democracy, pursued the public interest, that is what is best for all members of the society so that no one group can enjoy security at the expense of the others. He recognised though that many, if not most, societies are misgoverned and the public interest is neglected in favour of the interests of the dominant class or even of a dictator and his entourage.

Marx was more sceptical about the possibility of rule in the public interest than was Aristotle although he recognised that wise rulers will try to maintain the impression that they rule without fear or favour on behalf of the whole society. His main point though is that the state is primarily the instrument of the economically dominant class, in our case, the capitalist class and although concessions may be won by other classes and groups through pressure on the state and class struggle in the workplace and communities, the fundamental relationship does not change unless for some reason an economically subordinate group becomes politically dominant. Class struggle is in part a struggle for control of the state.

Marx's views are generally met with outrage and scorn on the part of contemporary liberals. But they have very little in the way of arguments against Marx's insight and ignore the uncomfortable reality of the deeply divided nature of modern societies. Conservatives sometimes

fall back on the Aristotelian position, acknowledging the stratified nature of society but insisting that the ruling group is benevolent and governs in the public interest. Marx and Engels considered the capitalist state to be the executive committee of the capitalists and their close allies, but did not go into a great amount of detail into the workings of this executive committee. However, some historians have, notably Lewis Namier who, in his discussion of the politics of eighteenth-century England, showed in detail how a small élite arranged affairs in their interest through the manipulation of electoral politics and the handing out of perks and bribes to influential people within localities where elections needed to be won. Namier presents the workings of the Georgian state in a matter-of-fact way, without passing judgement, but his account fits very well with Marx's and Engels's descriptions of the way in which a state operates. Namier was a conservative.

It could be said that the modern state is different because every adult has the vote and can ensure that governments act in the public interest. This view ignores the manipulation of public opinion by powerful media organisations in order to secure allegiance. No-one can have an informed opinion about a matter if they do not have accurate and complete information about it. Those who control the distribution of information in society can ensure that this is not the case, but rather that what is presented is designed to align with their own interests. They thus have direct control over state media but also of media organisations closely aligned with the state. Most mainstream media are owned by wealthy individuals and groups who make it their business to maintain the political *status quo*. Sometimes they acquire newspapers and television channels for this very purpose. State control of information is a very powerful instrument of political control in modern societies. It is one of the main challenges facing socialists. The rise of the internet has posed a limited challenge to the information monopoly of ruling élites and is sufficiently influential to be regarded with alarm and calls for censorship (or 'moderating content' as they prefer to call it). Given the way in which capitalists have accumulated wealth and power since the heyday of trade unionism in the 1970s through legislation, coercion, informational manipulation and the distribution of offices and perks, it is difficult to see how Marx's diagnosis was wrong. It is

also important to gaining the allegiance of the working class that there is at least the semblance of prosperity and attention to their needs. Economic growth is an important means of gaining this. But faltering growth and living standards since 2008 has placed this method of obtaining allegiance to the capitalist state in jeopardy. Even the perception of economic decline can lead to anger and apathy rather than to purposive action if there is no political leadership. But to recognise this is also to recognise that the tasks of anyone, who like socialists, wish to bring about a redistribution of wealth and power is a formidable one indeed. Better though to recognise the reality than to live in illusion

The Problem of Political Power.

In British politics majority party control over the House of Commons is necessary for legislative change. Even without control, powerful parties in parliament and the country can 'change the political weather' by forcing other parties to take account of the public opinion represented by them. To a limited extent this was true of Jeremy Corbyn's 4 year leadership of the Labour Party. The Tories under Theresa May were obliged to pay attention to the needs of sections of the working class (the 'just about managing'). With Corbyn gone, neither Labour or the Tories see the need for paying such attention. Although the Workers' Party seriously alarms the liberal and capitalist establishment it is not yet in a position to change the political weather to any significant extent. But you can be sure that a Worker's Party with significant parliamentary representation would change the political climate in Britain to a considerable degree, forcing working class interests and socialist proposals back onto the political agenda after many years' absence.

Gaining political power and wielding it effectively is however a different and more difficult proposition. To do so, a majority in the House of Commons is necessary but not sufficient. A party in power with a socialist mandate would meet the most ferocious and ruthless opposition up to and including violence. A socialist majority in the House of Commons would mean that a socialist bloc had gained a foothold in the state. It could not, though, be confident that its wishes, expressed through legislation, could be enforced. Obstruction from the civil service and the armed forces and quite possibly the judiciary could be

taken for granted. It is worth reminding ourselves why the Labour Government of 1945-51 was effective. As well as securing a large majority in the House of Commons the Labour Party had a mass membership as did the trade union movement. The trade unions, under the leadership of Ernest Bevin, were accustomed to wielding political power in wartime conditions. Much of the adult population had served in the armed forces and knew how to handle themselves in conditions of armed conflict. Last but not least, soldiers, sailors and airmen in the armed forces had thought and debated about the kind of society that they wished to see when peace returned and they expected the government that they elected to do something about it.

Generally speaking, the upper reaches of the various components of the state are staffed by individuals from the capitalist class and associated élites. They are not sympathetic either to working class interests or to socialism more generally. They cannot be expected to show enthusiastic or indeed any allegiance to a majority socialist party unless they feel that they have no choice. This is why the working class attempt to control the state cannot rely on parliamentary activity alone. It needs to be supported within civil society through the agencies of the class struggle, most notably trade unions but also, where possible, media organisations that are not subject to oligarchic control. Working class parties and organisations can also exert pressure on the BBC to provide less biased reporting and to act in accordance with its own statutes. They can ensure that censorship of news organisations that attempt to present impartial or alternative points of view are not suppressed. Trade unionism's work in localities can also strengthen civil society's ability to stand up to the state and to protect local, including municipal, attempts to better the conditions of workers and their families. Trade unions can organise within the state, including within the civil service and try to ensure that working class interests are properly attended to there. Trade union representation on the Court (governing body) of the Bank of England is an important working class demand which an incoming socialist government should immediately enact.

The State and the Economy.

Mainstream capitalist ideology maintains that the state has no role to play in economic life apart from maintaining the currency, enforcing contracts and doing the minimum

necessary to enable capitalism to flourish. When private enterprise fails to provide essential services such as banking, health, education or housing they allow that the state should be allowed to step in to provide them on a limited basis. In reality the state often provides these services because no one else will, or because of working class pressure to provide them. In socialist societies such as the People's Republic of China by contrast, the state has a significant role in economic development, providing infrastructure, finance and an entrepreneurial role in itself, as well as setting the framework for the development of capitalist enterprises within a socialist framework. The state also owns the land and leases it to farmers. No one can say that this has not been a hugely successful model, but it is one that capitalism in the west prefers to talk about as if the Chinese state is an obstacle rather than an enabler of economic development. Even in the west, the state's investments in infrastructure (think of the development of the internet for military purposes initially) leads to capitalist economic development.

There is also a variety of nationalist

capitalist economics that does recognise the critical role of the state in economic development. List, a nineteenth century German economist, was at pains to show how the 'productive powers' (i.e. economic potential) of a market society could be developed through tariffs against foreign goods and through infrastructure development within the state's territories. Many capitalist societies, including the United States, have followed List's model in their own economic development.

Working class power can be exercised on the state through the pressures of class struggle including trade union activism and party-political action. But unless working class parties gain at least some control of the state they will find it difficult to see legislation in their favour passed and will still need to provide external pressure to see that it is enforced. Any longer-term influence over the state will depend on the strength of working-class instruments of class struggle in political parties, trade unions, local authorities and in enterprises, particularly when the working class gains a degree of power within these as was argued in the article on class struggle last month.

Control over the state is a long-term objective of working-class politics. But it can never be secure without a strong presence in working class institutions within civil society. Influence over the means of communication and dissemination of opinion are very important for the maintenance of this influence and oligopolist control over these means needs to be challenged and if possible eliminated. One important piece of legislation in the working-class interest would be to set strict limits on ownership of mass media by foreign and domestic oligarchs. In the shorter term influence over the state can be developed even without control over the legislature by changing the expectations and terms of debate that set the political weather and the development of institutions that limit the power for the state to act exclusively in the interests of capitalism. The most important of these are the trade unions, whose current weakness needs to be reversed in order that serious progress in limiting the capitalist interest can be made.

Palestine Links—December 2024

[Full text of the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Lebanon \(Josephine Deep, Middle East Eye, 27 November 2024\)](#)

[‘Why is Hezbollah celebrating?’ Israelis unconvinced by ceasefire agreement \(Lubna Masarwa, Middle East Eye, 27 November 2024\)](#)

[Lebanon: Israel and Hezbollah agree to ceasefire brokered by US and France \(Josephine Deep & Lubna Masarwa, 27 November 2024\)](#)

[‘The ICC’s findings so far have only scratched the surface’ \(Mohammed R. Mhawish, 26 November 2024\)](#)

[US Senate rebuffs Bernie Sanders, supports weapons for war crimes \(Michael F Brown, Electronic Intifada, 25 November 2024\)](#)

[Palestinians in Israel’s north ‘abandoned’ by authorities as rocket deaths soar \(Suha Arraf, +972, 22 November 2024\)](#)

[The entire history of Zionism’s injustices, in one Bedouin village \(Orly Noy, 20 November 2024\)](#)

[ICC arrest warrants: The US must distance itself from an increasingly toxic Israel \(David Hearst, Middle East Eye, 21 November 2024\)](#)

[For Gaza’s olive farmers, the war has left little to salvage \(Taghreed Ali & Ibtisam Mahdi, +972, 19 November 2024\)](#)

[The not-so-secret history of Netanyahu’s support for Hamas \(Ghousoon Bisharat, +972, 11 November 2024\)](#)

[Electronic Intifada hires UK lawyers after police raid targeting Asa Winstanley \(Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 22 October 2024\)](#)

[Mental health professionals struggle with Gaza’s overwhelming trauma \(Ahmed Al-Sammak, Electronic Intifada, 22 October 2024\)](#)

[UK police raid home, seize devices of El’s Asa Winstanley \(Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 17 October 2024\)](#)

[Israel is starving northern Gaza \(Nora Barrows-Friedman, Electronic Intifada, 17 October 2024\)](#)

[US demands Israel improve humanitarian conditions in Gaza or risk military aid \(Barack Ravid, Axios, 15 October 2024\)](#)

[Held captive by the Israeli army \(Donya Ahmad Abu Sitta, Electronic Intifada, 14 October 2024\)](#)

[He carried a white flag, but soldiers still shot him \(Tareq Zaqout, Electronic Intifada, 14 October 2024\)](#)

[“Netanyahu’s war is a year old, and Sinwar’s war has only just started” \(David Hearst, Middle East Eye, 13 October 2024\)](#)

[“Endless trauma” as Israel bombs another school \(Abubaker Abed, Electronic Intifada, 11 October 2024\)](#)

[How Israeli soldiers are livestreaming war crimes \(Al Jazeera, 8 October 2024\)](#)

[365 Days of Israel’s war on Gaza, 76 years of occupation \(Al Jazeera, 8 October 2024\)](#)

Bevin, MMT and the Class Struggle

By Catherine Dunlop

“People want to be governed.” This is what Burke said and it’s a fundamental truth. People want to get on with their lives and they rely on a government to maintain an environment where they can get on with their lives.

The instrument of the government is the state; a modern state has a police force to maintain order, an army, an education system, infrastructure etc; it has a gold reserve and it issues currency and levies taxes (in XVIIth century England there were great tussles as to how much of this treasure the king was allowed to have.) More on the state issuing currency below. All this is managed by legislation.

The population is made up of groups which may or may not have the same interests.

Take England in the 1920s at the time when Ernest Bevin was trying to organise a general trade union. The mine owners and the factory owners stood on one side of the fence and the workers, employed or unemployed, on the other. The employers had the power to impose low wages and long hours, and in the case of dockers, no contract of employment, so men were employed by the day or the half-day. Employers maximised profit by extracting the maximum work for the lowest pay. The achievement of Bevin was to redress the balance of power between employers and men through union organisation. He encountered resistance not just from the employers and the government, but also from the men themselves, who in some cases already had a small union and didn’t want to relinquish what they had. He also encountered resistance from the Communist Party which wanted revolution not bargaining power.

Through the work of Bevin’s

Transport and General Workers Union, and its weapons, that is, strikes and threat of strike, as well as Bevin’s negotiating talents, hours shortened and wages increased.

What is the stance of the government in this struggle? Does it side with the employers or the men? It follows its rule, that the population should feel it is able to get on with life. If there is discontent, the reaction of the government will depend on the influence the discontented group has. If it has no influence, the government will do nothing. The government will do what the strongest group in society wants.

Members of the government at the time were friends and relations of the employer class. They formed the English ruling class, united by wealth, tradition and education and not disunited by strong religious feelings (the Church of England is a broad church), or by competing political ideas since the power of the king was tamed in 1688.

This is what Bevin was up against in the 1920s. Class differentiation was clear: the employer class owned assets and were entitled to respect, the working class was the opposite.

Then in the 1930s the great depression threw millions out of work. Unemployment then meant no money and no food. The ruling class split. Some wanted to sit it out and wait for better times. Keynes thought that unemployment was too bad to do nothing about; his revolutionary thought was that the government should step in and provide employment; he said: “Anything we can actually do we can afford.”

This was revolutionary, since under free capitalism it is private enterprise that provides

employment. The idea however came not from the trade unions but from a member of the ruling class. Keynes and Bevin worked together on committees, but it is Keynes who wrote the books and is remembered. Bevin ran the economy during the war, and he stood next to Churchill on the balcony of Buckingham Palace on the 8th May 1945. But he is a true working class hero who never betrayed his class.

After the war, thanks in part to Bevin, the balance of power had changed in favour of the working class; the state took on functions that did not favour the employer class, by nationalising transport and industry. The welfare state and a national health system were introduced. Unions got more power.

The employer class has been working ever since to redress the balance of power in its favour and it succeeded, most remarkably with Thatcher and her successors. State assets were sold off, and as much as possible was given over to the private sector. Eventually even vital institutions like schools are being given over to private companies funded by the state.

Thatcher and her successors had little or no opposition to their schemes, partly because they gave compensations: People were no longer discouraged from claiming benefits; they got to own their council flats and houses through generous discounts; the use of credit was generalised, all creating an impression of ease.

Large numbers of industrial jobs, from the shop floor to technicians to engineers and scientists, simply disappeared.

The economy changed: out went industry, in came services and large shopping malls. Class distinctions blurred. Working

class people owned their own homes, acquired a credit card, went on foreign holidays. Cameron interviewed on television was expected to answer questions on the price of a loaf of bread, as if he did the shopping like everyone else.

The result of that new economy is that the rich have become hugely richer and the poor hugely poorer and the gap between the two wider.

In the 1970s the gap between the lowest and the highest paid was much smaller than now; the gap in asset ownership is even wider. The number of private jets and super yachts has seen a fantastic increase, ironically since 2015 and the Paris Agreements on Climate Change.

The paradox is that the Labour Party Manifesto piously puts its propositions within the frame of the UK's legal obligations regarding Climate Agreements, while presiding over a system that permits or even encourages conspicuous consumption of energy hungry luxury goods.

The other paradox is that when there was relative equality, the class struggle was at its height, whereas now that inequalities are glaring, there is no feeling of class among the population and no struggle, apart from sporadic actions for wages. Of course that is not a real paradox: the super-rich get away with it because there is no opposition to speak of.

The discontent from the poorest is not expressed, since the poorest have no access to the media and are powerless. Expressions of discontent come from those who have access to the media, the middle class; they are put out by the worsening of conditions in the NHS: longer to wait for an appointment, GP consultations reduced to a maximum of 10 minutes, sometimes just a phone call. They are disgusted by the private water companies pouring sewage into rivers and lakes.

The question is, where is the balance of power? Which group

can cause enough pressure to force the government to act in their favour?

There is much discussion, and not just among bloggers and podcast makers, around the idea that the government could, at no cost to the ruling class or to anyone, issue money to spend, for example on the NHS and on nationalising the water industry. In fact this idea (sometimes called Modern Monetary Theory, MMT) is so prominent that the Bank of England has issued a paperback entitled "Can't we just print more money?". (It answers "yes, but there are limits". It doesn't elaborate on the limits).

The political limit to money creation is the balance of power between the different groups in society; the dominant group being the ruling class, or the class of employers, who want a maximum of economic activity to be in private hands, their hands.

A campaigning group, We Own It, claim that 80% of the population want water renationalised. But what are the incentives for the government to renationalise? The pressure from the private sector is stronger than public opinion, and that's that for the moment.

What are the other limits on printing money? The public was made aware of Quantitative Easing, money creating, during the financial crash of 2007, and during Covid. 2007/8 was a very dangerous moment for capitalism. It laid bare the fact that the state is the source of money and that the state was absolutely essential to the very survival of private banks; and it opened the way for the question to be asked: if the state can spend on rescuing the banks with no bad consequences, why can't it spend to nationalise water and pay nurses better? It was crucial for the ruling class to come up with a convincing answer. It was a golden opportunity for other groups to open their eyes and to open the eyes of the public to the fact that government spending is a political option. The

opportunity was totally missed.

The real answer that the capitalists said to themselves is, the state can't create money because we don't want the government to exercise its power to spend.

Obviously this can't be said out loud. So the story is put about that state finance is like household finance: expenditure should not be bigger than income, and because the state has spent enormous amounts in a time of crisis, it must now reduce spending, make cuts and impose 'austerity'. It is a simple common sense story that persuaded people, already shaken by the crisis, and who instinctively feel that there must be limits somewhere to money creation. Whether some government ministers actually believe the household budget story does not matter, whether they believe it or not, the pressure is on them to behave as if it was true.

The household budget story and austerity are two sides of the same coin, or the same lie.

The main reason that we won't get the state to build more hospitals or renationalise water is that the ruling class don't want it to do so. To put it crudely, the CEOs of the several private companies that run water in England are paid millions, and they cling to their yacht and private jet with all their energy, with the help of their friends in the same situation.

But suppose that the balance of power changed and a party with the interests of the working population in mind came to power. There would still be limits to money creation.

One of the MMT bloggers, Richard Murphy, explained the limits in one of his videos.

"Let's look at what modern monetary theory says: it is necessary to have a properly functioning economy which runs its own [currency](#) because it's really important to understand those conditions because when they don't apply, of course

modern monetary theory doesn't apply either.

"And those conditions are that the government in question must be strong. In other words, it must have popular support.

"It must be upheld by the rule of law.

"It must be respected.

"It must also have its own [central bank](#) or, in the case of the Eurozone, be an active participant in a currency zone where there is a strong central bank.

"It must be able to operate an efficient [tax system](#) because if it doesn't have such a tax system, it can't recover the money from the economy that it has spent.

"It must have a sufficiently large government sector that the government's demand to be paid, in the form of taxation, basically forces the currency that the government creates into use in that economy for everyday exchange. If there are parallel currencies operating in a country, it's very difficult to enforce any form of monetary policy.

"The currency in question must also be acceptable for international trade. That's vital because if it isn't accepted for international trade, then the country is wholly dependent upon its ability to make export sales, to buy the currency that it requires, to pay for its imports, whereas if the currency is available and acceptable for international trade, then it can effectively trade internationally on credit. And that allows it to, therefore, ride out the inevitable troughs and highs that exist with regard to the economic fortunes of any country.

"And perhaps finally, and very significantly, there must be no sanctions against trade with that country and no bars on the use of its currency, and it mustn't be the victim of war or some other deep political circumstance that means it's basically a pariah within the

international community."

(From his blog 'Funding the future')¹

England does not exist in a vacuum. It is part of an economic and political bloc consisting of the US and the EU. Both have a strong policy that the state will not spend to create wealth, because wealth should stay with the private sector. What would their reaction be if England started breaking ranks and going back to an economically creative state? They could easily sabotage England by various means, e.g. by demanding to be paid in Euros or Dollar for goods imported into Britain.

The reason the state will not create money for public goods is that the employer class don't want them to. And conversely, the employee class is not making a strong and coherent case that creating money would be good for the country's economy as a whole, as part of a system. Creating money, yes, but what for? What will it lead to? It will lead back to the post war situation, and that is (probably wrongly) not a popular option.

Richard Murphy agrees that the choice is political and a result of the balance of power:

"So the choice is, the City and the wealthy versus the people. It is becoming increasingly clear that is the case. The massive, panicked and utterly absurd reactions to Labour's feeble attempts to adopt a different agenda makes clear that is true.

Rachel Reeves could decide to be on the side of the people.

It is already clear that she is caving in on almost all her plans. She is deciding to succumb to the demands of the City and wealth.

The short-term cost will be enormous. Misery and despair will continue whilst the wealthy continue to consume our planet as if there is a spare available when this one runs out, which will never be true.

The long-term costs of this

¹ <https://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/2024/10/10/venezuela-the-weimar-republic-and-zimbabwe-prove-mmt-is-true/>

cowardice from Reeves will be bigger still: we are talking about the fates of people, this country, our democracy and our planet here and she is putting herself on the wrong side of all of these issues.

Meanwhile, the IFS is hailed as the voice of reason when it is the voice of the wealthy and the City, wishing, as a result, the destruction of everything of value in our society."²

Richard Murphy is right in what he says, but he is not framing his demand for state spending within the framework of a system. He seems to think that the system is OK, but would be improved with more state spending. He does not see that more state spending means a change in the balance of power, that is, a change in the economic and political system, a return to 1945.

It seems paradoxical that at a time of extreme wealth inequality, there is so little consciousness of injustice. But the dominant view is put about that 'we are all in it together'; the financial crisis put us all in danger; the Covid crisis put us all in danger; the climate crisis puts us all in danger.

People are encouraged to believe that the British people stand together and have always been 'a force for good in the world' 'standing alone' to save the world from Hitler (never mind from Napoleon) and now Putin.

There is 'the cost-of-living crisis' but even that, the government is pretending it is trying to solve on behalf of the whole population. The influence of the super-rich is everywhere and they are not unpopular yet, despite eating up the earth's resources and denying many people a decent standard of living, timely health care and clean rivers. But the pendulum will turn, when people feel that they are not being governed properly.

² <https://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/2024/10/10/the-economic-choice-facing-us-is-who-matters-the-people-of-this-country-or-the-wealthy-and-the-city/>

The United States policy towards Europe's energy needs

Part One—an early experience

By Eamon Dyas

The way in which Europe is currently committing a slow economic suicide in the wake of what is effectively a US geopolitical exercise in Ukraine stands in marked contrast with what happened in 1981-82. The more robust stance adopted by Europe at that time promised the possibility of an independent Europe evolving in a way that made a safer world possible. Had Europe remained within its EEC borders and NATO not been an instrument of US Geopolitics the continent would have prospered economically in an environment of peaceful co-existence with Russia.

But, that Europe is no more. It was destroyed by a combination of globalist free trade, an expansion that went beyond its original western European genesis, and the emergence of an increasing reliance on a shared geopolitical view with the United States.

The accession of the three notoriously anti-Russian Baltic States into the EU and NATO in 2004 represented the point where the old Europe could be said to have finally given way to the Europe we now see. The old Europe which had been guided by an outlook that laid stress on the values of social capitalism and peaceful co-existence continued to function for a time after those events but the oxygen which it was now breathing was of a different mix and eventually gave way to the values of the free market, low regulation capitalism that took its cue from Tony Blair's New Labour Britain, and a mission to spread the transatlantic version of democracy in the world.

The contrast between the old and new Europe is highlighted by the way in which both responded to Washington's policies that have served the US geopolitical agenda firstly in the context of communist Russia and now in the contest of the capitalist Russia. As Russia has changed so too has the EU but the consistent factor that transcends those changes is the foreign policy of the United States.

What follows is the first part of a two-part article. The first part attempts to explain the way in which Europe dealt with its first experience of a US foreign policy that directly impacted European economic interests and the second part will look at the way in which the new Europe has responded to the recent manifestation of that foreign policy and its resultant impact on the European economy.

Early European use of Russian oil and gas

On 18 December 1958 a decision was taken at the 10th session of the Soviet Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (known as Comecon). The decision was that Soviet Russia and other members of the Soviet bloc construct what was to become

one of

the world's longest oil pipelines. That pipeline continues to influence the situation in Europe over 65 years later.

The completion of the pipeline became part of the Soviet Union's Seventh Five-Year Plan. However, at the time the Soviets continued to suffer from steel shortages and did not have the technical knowhow to build the wide diameter pipes and large compressors necessary for the transit of oil in such quantities through long-distance pipelines. In order to overcome those difficulties it was necessary to involve outside resources and expertise in the project. This resulted in the formation of Soviet partnerships with several Western governments and companies.

The entire pipeline became operational in October 1964. In the meantime Czechoslovakia was the first country to receive oil via the pipeline in 1962, Hungary was next in September 1963, Poland in November 1963 and East Germany in December 1963. By the time of its completion 40% of the requirements for large-diameter pipes had been purchased from West Germany and Sweden.

This pipeline, which was called the Druzhba (meaning friendship) pipeline soon became the means by which Russian oil also found its way to European markets and those markets became more demanding in the aftermath of the Arab oil embargo in the 1970s. But, as we shall see later, the pipeline and its involvement of European companies was a development which the United States did all it could at the time to sabotage.

Just as the involvement of the European market in Russian oil began with the development of the energy infrastructure for the Soviet bloc so too was the case with gas. Khrushchev's Sixth and Seventh Five-Year Plans involved a need to invest more in the exploitation of natural gas. This was to result eventually in the construction of new and more extensive networks of gas pipelines to be built across the Eastern bloc, with the Trans-Siberia pipeline forming its basis. Before that however, there was the Soyuz pipeline which was built between 1974 and 1978 connecting the Volga region with the Bratsvo distribution network.

However, even before that the first shipments of gas from the Soviet Union had begun to reach Western Europe in 1969 through a range of shorter networks. Deals involving modest volumes of gas were struck with Italy in that year and West Germany in 1970, 1972 and 1974. The Trans-Austria Gas (TAG) pipelines connected Czechoslovakia with Austria and Italy in 1974 and the more ambitious MittelEuropäische-Gasleitungsgesellschaft (MEGAL) pipeline, constructed from 1974

to 1979, linked up with Austria, Germany, and France. By this point negotiations were already under way between France, Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union for what was to become, and continues to be, the most controversial gas pipeline constructed in the Soviet era.

The proposal was mooted in 1978 to construct a gas pipeline linking Western European customers with the newly developed Urengoy gas fields in Western Siberia. It was known as the Trans-Siberian pipeline (also known as the Urengoy-Pomary-Uzhhorod pipeline). The proposal was to link it with the existing Bratsvo network via the Kursk Oblast and Sumy in Ukraine making a 4,500 km route from Western Siberia to Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Romania.

Just like the Druzhba pipeline was to form the backbone for the transit of Russian oil to wider Europe the Trans-Siberian pipeline was to serve the same purpose in the case of gas. And just like the Druzhba oil pipeline the Trans-Siberian gas pipeline would require the participation of Western investment and technical knowhow. In July 1981, a consortium of German banks, led by the Deutsche Bank, and the AKA Ausfuhrkredit agreed to provide 3.4 billion Deutsche Mark in credits for the construction of compressor stations. A group of French banks together with the Japan Export-Import Bank (JEXIM) later made finance agreements relating to the funding of the project. This funding enabled the Soviets to sign contracts with Creusot-Loire of France, John Brown Engineering of Britain, Nuovo Pignone of Italy, AEG-Telefunken, the German industrial conglomerate, for the supply of wide diameter pipes, as well as Dresser Industries of the US and Japan Steel Works. The Japanese company, Komatsu supplied the expert personnel relating to the pipe laying work (the appearance of which may have been the source of some US propagandists to claim that the Soviet Union was employing Vietnamese slave labour on the project).

And as was the case with the earlier use of Russian oil in western Europe the United States set out to do all it could to sabotage this development from the outset.

United States determines to disrupt Europe's commercial relationship with Russian energy

The United States Government witnessed these developments at the time with profound anxiety. The fear was that the growing trade relationship between Europe and the Soviet Union would at some point lead to the emergence of a Europe with the potential to move away from US influence. Whereas the US had helped Europe to ward

off the ideological influence of the Soviet Union it was no longer confident that it could prevent an influence that had its basis in commerce.

In fact US anxiety had become manifest at the outset of the construction of the Druzhba pipeline when it attempted to strong-arm Western companies from assisting in its construction.

"[The] tension between the United States and its European allies grew appreciably during the construction of the Druzhba pipeline. In 1962, three West German firms signed contracts to supply an estimated 163,000 tonnes of large-diameter pipe to the Soviet Union, a deal valued at \$28 million. However, the United States attempted to scuttle the Soviet project by pressurising its allies to cancel their shipments of pipes. At first, US policymakers channelled their complaints through the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (CoCom), a multilateral institution founded in 1949 to stop the transfer of dangerous technologies to the Communist bloc, but they were unable to create the necessary consensus to add pipes to the list of banned export items. Instead, the United States worked through the machinery of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), where a vote was not necessary. On November 21, 1962, the NATO Council passed a secret resolution that strongly encouraged member states to immediately halt the export of large diameter pipes to the USSR and its allies. The German government complied with the resolution but faced a political crisis at home for doing so. However, the embargo did not last long as Britain and Italy chose to interpret the NATO resolution as a recommendation rather than an order and fulfilled their contracts with the USSR. Non-NATO members Sweden and Japan also resisted American pressure. This incident demonstrated that although energy technologies were a source of leverage over the USSR and formed the basis of East-West cooperation, exercising it for political purposes was a challenge because it required unanimity among Western countries." ("Pipeline politics between Europe and Russia: a historical review from the Cold War to the Post- Cold War." By Jae-Seung Lee and Daniel Connolly. Published in *The Korean Journal of International Studies*, April 2016.)

Although the NATO embargo, because it proved ineffective, ceased to operate in 1966 the United States maintained its opposition to any significant cooperation between Europe and Russia particularly in the field of energy supplies.

Washington's concerns gathered pace in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's military involvement in Afghanistan in 1979. In response to that involvement the United States imposed sanctions on the Soviet

Union which it expected its European allies to abide by. However, by 1980 the attractions of trade with the Soviet Union was proving too tempting for many European businesses and there was a gradual fraying of the US-imposed sanctions. In defiance of intense American opposition several contracts were signed by the end of July and late November 1980 between West German banks and businesses and the Soviet Union on the financing and supply of compressor stations as well as the price and amount of gas to be delivered to West Germany.

Initially, Britain attempted to offer some support for the US by at least partially abiding by the sanctions. However, in the face of the growing disregard for those US sanctions by many European businesses, British businesses found themselves in danger of being pushed out of the lucrative Soviet trade. The problem was summed up by Ronald Scrivener, head of the British-Soviet Chamber of Commerce:

"A factor in this process has undoubtedly been the sure knowledge that Britain's political allies, but commercial rivals, have been less hesitant in resuming government contacts and filling the trade gaps left by the British and the more resolutely hard-line Americans who cut exports to Russia by 67% in the first nine months of 1980. Mr. Scrivener points to the activities of the West Germans, Italians, French and Japanese. The more diplomatic United Kingdom trade officials can only mutter darkly.

Each of these has retained or reestablished trade links with the Soviet Union. A number of large contracts have been signed or are in the offing. They include a

£33m heavy vehicle deal involving Fiat Allis; a trade agreement between the Russians and Rhone-Poulenc, the French chemicals group; and continuing negotiations on the Siberia pipeline project with groups such as ENI, of Italy and Rhurgas, of West Germany. Various Western nations have indicated their willingness to provide credit for the gas line." ("Thaw begins in British-Soviet trade", *The Times*, 23 January 1981.)

In the week previous to the warning issued by Ronald Scrivener, the Soviet deputy foreign trade minister, Vladimir Sushkov, addressed a conference organised by the London Chamber of Commerce. In the course of that address he said that "Moscow welcomed participation by British companies in offshore oil, coal, agriculture, synthetic fibres and machine tools. Machinery imports, the Soviet State trading organisation had already begun talks with Rolls-Royce, GEC, Davy International and constructors John Brown on a large pipeline project." [an obvious reference to the Trans-Siberian pipeline - ED].

It was in reaction to the waning impact of US sanctions by European businesses and their trade with the Soviet Union that the Thatcher government dispatched Gavin Dick,

the Under-Secretary for Trade to Moscow at the end of January 1981 in what was seen as an attempt to normalise the trading relationship between Britain and the Soviet Union.

Washington's response was not slow in coming. Within a year, the United States found a new excuse to re-energise its sanctions policy on the Soviet Union. This took place in the aftermath of the imposition of martial law in Poland on 13 December 1981 for which Washington held the Soviet Union accountable and because of which it once more imposed sanctions. And as had previously been the case the main focus of these sanctions was European involvement in the Trans-Siberian pipeline.

While expecting its allies to maintain sanctions imposed because of Soviet actions on another continent in Afghanistan was always problematic the US felt that sanctions imposed because of Soviet actions in Europe was more likely to generate more commitment from its European allies. So, within a matter of weeks after the declaration of martial law in Poland Washington announced another effort to stop the development of the gas pipeline through sanctions. It was to justify these sanctions in terms that continued to be used in the same context for the next 40 years - US concern that any further reliance on Russian gas would endanger the security of Europe.

In late December 1981 President Ronald Reagan announced sanctions prohibiting American companies from exporting oil and gas machinery and technologies to the Soviet Union. The immediate impact of this was to block the sale of 200 American-built pipe laying machines to the Soviet Union which had been procured for the construction of the Trans-Siberian pipeline.

However, there were other aspects of this prohibition that were to impact European industry. In a report with the heading "US threat to Siberia pipeline" *The Times* reported on the measures being taken by Washington to prohibit the issuing of export licences for components of the General Electric Company that were used in the construction of the pipeline. The company had been supplying compressor turbine parts to a subsidiary of AEG Telefunken of West Germany, John Brown of Britain, and Nuoro Pignone of Italy.

At this time John Brown Engineering had a contract to build 21 of the 125 gas turbines ordered by the Soviet Union for installation in 41 compressor stations (the contract was worth £104 million to the company). As for the impact of the US attempt to stifle American company involvement it appears that the subsidiaries of US companies undertaking that work in Europe decided to continue to operate on the understanding that the sanctions were not retroactive and so existing licences and contracts were unaffected.

"The British company [John Brown Engineering] said it understood that General Electric had not stopped production. Construction of the turbines was continuing. Only General Electric parts could be used in the John Brown

turbines.” (“US threat to Siberia pipeline”, *The Times*, 9 January 1982).

And as far as the purchase of Russian gas was concerned:

“France will resume negotiations with the Soviet Union to purchase Siberian gas despite its concern over Poland. A delegation from Soyuzgas Export is due to meet Gaz de France, the French gas utility in Paris on January 18 to discuss the purchase of 8,000 million cubic metres a year of additional gas. “The French Government does not believe that the purchase will create any dangerous dependence on the Soviet Union.” (Ibid.).

The wider response among European governments was to question the American sanctions and an article in *The Times* even speculated about Washington’s motives in imposing those sanctions. It did so in the following terms:

“But if the Reagan sanctions order of December 29 was intended to set a worldwide example, it had a serious flaw. By cracking down on the exports of high technology goods and oil and gas equipment it appeared loaded against West European manufacturing and trading interests while leaving America’s huge grain business with the Russians virtually untouched.

“Of the \$3,700m worth of goods that America sells to the Soviet Union each year, about three quarters are agricultural products against only \$300m worth of high technology exports. Although the President announced that he was postponing negotiations on a new long-term grain agreement, the administration has already allowed the delivery of 23 million tons of grain to the Soviet Union this year.

“It has been suggested that a grain embargo should be imposed if conditions in Poland deteriorate but the US Department of Agriculture has been actively reassuring the midwestern farmers since the Polish military takeover that they will not lose the lucrative Soviet market.

What, therefore, are the Europeans to make of the American sanctions policy? Is it a deliberate move to scotch European industries’ export opportunities while midwest farmers continue to make hay? Or is the apparent inconsistency between the approach to sanctions on industrial and agricultural products just another instance of an administration rooted in middle America and on the West Coast picking up a blunt instrument in response to domestic pressure without thinking of the impact on the European allies? There is probably some truth in both these views.” (“How Reagan’s sanctions force Europe’s hand”, *The Times*, 11 January 1982).

Whether through default or design, just as today with the sanctions against Russia over Ukraine, the sanctions arbitrarily imposed by the US in December 1981 was

seen at the time to have been done with no regard to the economic welfare of Europe. And just as today with Russia, the US was more concerned with weakening the Soviet Union’s capacity to commercially exploit its natural resources even if that involved a potential damage to the European economies.

Europe’s response to US sanctions in 1981-82

The main difference between the 1981 US sanctions and the sanctions imposed in the aftermath of Russia’s takeover of Crimea in 2014 (further expanded in 2022 after the incursion into Ukraine) was the way in which Europe responded to the former as against the latter.

Washington announced its sanctions against the Soviet Union at the end of 1981 and expected Europe to follow suit but West Germany, France and even Britain failed to do so. Nonetheless, while refusing to implement the 1981 sanctions Europe was eager to assure Washington that the refusal did not imply any divergence from the ideological position which they all shared when it came to the Soviet Union. Europe’s position was purely based on the disproportionate economic sacrifices which the implementation of Washington’s sanctions would demand.

As to its ideological position, Europe continued to assure Washington that it shared its antipathy to the totalitarian Soviet Union but it was unconvinced by the justification which the US used in the formulation of its sanctions policy. That justification rested on the claim that the Soviet Union was directly responsible for the imposition of martial law in Poland on 13 December 1981 and that this was something which required a response from the Free World. Both Germany and France refused to accept this interpretation of those events. At the time, a West German government spokesman, Kurt Becker, insisted that the government “did not share the American view that Russia was the instigator of martial law in Poland. The West German Government believed that the Polish authorities had acted autonomously.” (See: “Germany: angry it was not told”, *The Times*, 31 December 1981). The spokesman added that had the Soviet Union reacted to the crisis in Poland as it had been expected to act the previous year by directly intervening then West Germany would have implemented “joint contingency measures” but that was patently not the case.

Similarly, France’s socialist government under François Mitterrand argued that it was wrong to claim that the Soviet Union was directly responsible for the declaration of martial law in Poland and that sanctions imposed on the basis of that belief could not claim a level of commitment from America’s allies that would have been the case if that claim was shared. On the contrary, Jacques Huntzinger, the Deputy Secretary for International Affairs in the Socialist Party stated “Although there is an obvious Soviet involvement in the military coup d’état of General Jaruzelski, this is not the same as a takeover by the Soviet Government.” (See: “France baffled by US approach”, *The Times*, 31 December 1981).

It was this difference of opinion between Europe and the US on whether the Soviet Union could be directly held accountable for what had happened in Poland on 13 December 1981 that formed the political basis for Europe’s insistence on placing its economic welfare above what the US was demanding by way of sanctions.

In June 1982 Washington responded to this reluctance of Europe to fall in line with its sanctions policy by expanding the terms of those sanctions. The new

stipulation meant that any machinery supplied by European companies to the Soviet pipeline project which contained American components should be placed under embargo. This included any components made in Europe under licence from such American companies. A failure to comply with this new restriction would mean those companies being blacklisted by the US Government.

The three turbine companies affected by this were the West German company AEG-Kanis, a subsidiary of AEG-Telefunken, Nuovo Pignone, from Italy, and John Brown Engineering from Britain as all had contracted with the Soviet Union to supply turbines made under licence from General Electric of the United States. The total threatened losses to these companies if they were to abide by the sanctions was valued at nearly \$1,000 million (£581 million) but the real loss to Europe was something which *The Times* commented upon when it said:

“The wider United States ban was aimed at delaying, if not rendering impossible; the building of the pipeline that will carry vast amounts of Soviet gas (40,000 million cubic meters a year for at least 20 years) to western Europe under long-term contracts.” (“UK group will lose \$181 million Soviet contract”, *The Times*, 29 June 1982).

In terms of the implications for West Germany from any loss of the pipeline, the gas supplier, Ruhrgas, had committed to take more than 100,000 million Deutsche mark (more than £22,000 million) worth of gas over the following 25 years (taking it up to 2006) as part of the contract with the Soviet Union. Needless to say, such a loss would have had serious implications for the future trajectory of the West German economy and even that of Europe. Unsurprisingly, the West German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, was the most assertive of the European leaders in the face of this US threat. On a visit to San Francisco he declared that “The pipeline will be built.

And the British, the French, the Germans and other Europeans will stick to the agreements which their firms have been making with the Soviets.” (See: “US-Europe rift widens”, *The Times*, 24 July 1982).

Schmidt further described the American President’s actions as an “attempt to apply his own policy decisions to territories outside his jurisdiction”. This was a sentiment shared by Lord Cockfield, the British Secretary of State for Trade, when he said that the American embargo was “an attempt to interfere with existing contracts and is an unacceptable extension of American extra-territorial

jurisdiction in a way which is repugnant in international law.”

Margaret Thatcher’s criticism of Washington’s actions while on a visit to Rome in July was a prelude to an order being issued on 2 August 1982 by the British Government to those companies located in Britain that had contracts relating to the Soviet pipeline. In all there were around a dozen British companies with contracts relating to the Soviet pipeline and those contracts were worth in total about £220

million. The Government order however only applied to the four main British registered companies and it forbade those companies from abiding by the terms of the American restrictions. The companies served with this order were John Brown Engineering, Baker Oil Tools, Smith International and American Air Filters. Three of those companies were subsidiaries of United States corporations but despite that they were all threatened with unlimited fines if British courts found that they deliberately failed to honour pipeline contracts because of American restrictions.

Later in August the French Government, in defiance of the US, ordered DresserFrance and Creusot-Loire, a main contractor for the Trans-Siberian pipeline, to load three compressors for the pipeline onto a Soviet bound cargo ship docked at Le Havre.

Washington responded to this by placing those two companies on a blacklist denying them future access to American goods and services.

The US introduces the prospect of a wider trade war with Europe

A couple of months later, in October, in an obvious attempt to make Europe see sense, the American International Trade Commission decided to begin the process of imposing a 40% import duty on five carbon

steel products from six European countries, including Britain. The US government claimed that these five types of steel products benefitted from illegal government subsidies in Europe and therefore harmed the American steel industry.

This action on the part of Washington was viewed as it was meant to be viewed in Europe with even The Times Brussels correspondent, Ian Murray, writing “American determination to stop European participation in the construction of the Siberian gas pipeline lies at the heart of the current difficulty in reaching an agreement on steel exports.” (See: Transatlantic trade rift, *The Times*, 16 October 1982). The US threat of imposing tariffs had been initiated earlier in June but it was held in abeyance until the process began in mid-October with a deadline given as 21 October.

The US had carefully chosen the targets of the proposed tariffs. The countries to be subject to the new tariffs were Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, West Germany and Britain. With this mixture of countries with contracts relating to the Siberian pipeline and those without such contracts the obvious object was to ensure that the likes of Germany, France and Britain would come under pressure from the wider EU to abandon their contracts regarding the Siberian pipeline.

As a result of this move the European Commission embarked on the task of constructing a proposal which it hoped would satisfy the United States. However, because those proposals contained a component which adversely impacted West Germany’s arrangements with the pipeline, the West German Government refused to accept the arrangement.

As the date for the introduction of the new US tariff regime approached, and as the

US undoubtedly hoped, the West German Government came under increasing pressure from other European States to accept the US-imposed arrangement. In mid-October, 1982,

“Herr Hans Dietrich Genscher, the West German Foreign Minister, will come under intense pressure at an informal meeting of foreign ministers at Nyborg in Denmark to accept the package, which the [European] Commission is confident will satisfy the American administration.” (Transatlantic trade rift, *The Times*, 16 October 1982).

Despite Britain beginning to buckle at the prospect of its steel industry being hit with a 40% tariff, the West German Government held out and the European Commission abandoned its efforts to formulate an arrangement with the US in defiance of West Germany’s position. And then in May 1983 it was announced that a deal had been reached as a result of an arrangement with George Shultz, the US Secretary of State, the previous autumn when both sides had agreed to undertake an investigation into the means by which US concerns for the transfer of high technology to the Soviet Union could be prevented. However, by that point and as early as October 1982

“Despite the American sanctions, even some Washington officials concede that the compressors that are already being shipped by the Europeans, backed up by smaller Soviet compressors if necessary, may be sufficient to keep the pipeline on schedule. Gas throughput is not expected to reach its peak until 1987 or 1988. The Soviet Union meanwhile is rushing its own version of the 25 MW compressor into production.” (East-West deal: the pipeline that began a trade war, *The Times*, 6 October 1982.)

With the compressor capacity being one of the main examples of high technology exports to the Soviet Union already serving their purpose in the context of the gas pipeline and with the Soviet Union already on the road to manufacturing its own version, by May 1983 it had already become clear that there was little point in the US continuing to pursue its sanctions policy. The pipeline was constructed and its official inauguration ceremony took place in France in 1984.

Three years later, in 1987, a young writer by the name of Anthony J. Blinken published a book entitled: “Ally versus Ally: America, Europe, and the Siberian Pipeline Crisis”. And the now US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken has overseen the current US efforts to achieve that goal that the US had attempted to achieve in 1981-82 - the destruction of a mutually beneficial energy arrangement between Europe and Russia. This time round however, the US was dealing with a more pliable and less robust Europe and has been successful to an extent that was inconceivable in 1983, as we will see in part two.

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Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant,” he wrote in a Facebook post.³

“Everyone in the tent was fast asleep: Ibrahim, Hala, Ahmad, Mahmoud, and my wife, Dalia. I was the only one awake, tossing and turning, with the faint sound of news playing from my phone’s speaker.

“Suddenly, the silence was shattered by my phone ringing. Calls at that hour always brought dread, heralding bad news. I grabbed the phone quickly, desperate to silence it before it woke everyone.”

On the other end of the line was Abu Wazna’s brother, Fadi. He was speaking from under the rubble.

“[He said] ‘Yasser, it’s Fadi, your brother. They bombed us, Yasser. They bombed us. Come help me. I, my daughters, my wife... everyone’s under the rubble,’” Abu Wazna recalled.

“The line then went dead. At that moment, it felt like the entire world collapsed. Fadi’s voice wasn’t just a cry for help; it was a wound etched into time, a memory seared into my mind that nothing can erase.”

Fadi survived. But his family – his three-year-old daughter Maria, his three-month-old daughter Jana and his wife Shorouk – had all been killed. “The weight of their absence remains an unknown wound in his heart,” Abu Wazna wrote, “and our hearts cannot be healed by words.”

Available on-line, <https://www.defenddemocracy.press/icc-arrest-warrants-welcomed-as-a-glimmer-of-hope-in-gaza/>

³ https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1845532156189885&id=100021993546682&mibextid=WC7FNe&rdid=voe6gUaf6D17ChrW

ICC arrest warrants welcomed as ‘a glimmer of hope’ in Gaza

While many Palestinians in Gaza see Netanyahu and Gallant warrants as merely symbolic, the faint promise of justice still resonates

By Maha Hussaini in Deir al-Balah, occupied Palestine. 22 November 2024

Sitting in Gaza City, Anas al-Ramlawi could hear the bombardment of northern Gaza. He read the news. The International Criminal Court (ICC) had issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former defence minister Yoav Gallant.

The 30-year old, from the Nasser neighbourhood in western Gaza City, has already lost his home to Israel's relentless attacks. As he read about the historic legal step, a “glimmer of hope” arose within him.

“It was perhaps a coincidence that I was reading about the arrest warrants while I could hear the sound of a massive explosion caused by the Israeli army bombing and demolishing residential buildings in Jabalia, just a few kilometres from where I stay,” Ramlawi told Middle East Eye.

“When I heard the explosion and read the news of the arrest warrants, a glimmer of hope arose within me – the possibility of one day seeing those responsible for these crimes in the dock.”

This is the first time the Hague-based court has issued arrest warrants for senior officials allied with western powers, a step Palestinians in Gaza, which has been under Israeli blockade since 2007, view as a “breaking of isolation after over a year of genocide”.

“For over 13 months, we have endured various forms of pain, perhaps the most excruciating of which is the feeling that everyone has abandoned us, leaving us to face the Israeli occupation determined to annihilate us. Today, this brings some hope that we are not totally alone,” Ramlawi continued.

“Arresting them is still a distant dream, but at least it gives us the sense that the perpetrators of these heinous crimes that are committed against us are now being pursued and will eventually be forced to stop committing such atrocities. I hope

we live to see the arrest warrants executed and justice served for us.”

The ICC's pre-trial chamber found reasonable grounds to believe that Netanyahu and Gallant “each bear criminal responsibility for the following crimes as co-perpetrators for committing the acts jointly with others: the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare; and the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts”.

According to the chamber, there are “reasonable grounds to believe that both individuals intentionally and knowingly deprived the civilian population in Gaza of objects indispensable to their survival, including food, water, medicine and medical supplies, as well as fuel and electricity”.

Symbolic warrants

Roaa Shawwa had just finished a task she carries out every day: trawling for hours through the shattered streets of Deir al-Balah to secure some morsel of food for her children.

She told MEE she sees the arrest warrants as more symbolic than actionable.

“I am aware that this is a very important and historic step. Theoretically, it is a huge step to bring justice to victims, but as a person trying to survive genocide day by day, I no longer believe that there is value for any legal or human rights measures,” she said.

“This is an important step for future generations, but as long as the governments of the world continue to support the Israeli militarily with weapons that are intended to exterminate us, and fail to impose serious sanctions on it, I won't feel too optimistic about it.”

The ICC's warrants are considered the second major legal step against Israel's devastating war on the Gaza Strip, following the International Court of Justice (ICJ)'s ruling² in

January 2024, which mandated that Israel refrain from acts that could constitute genocide and ensure the protection of civilians.

On Thursday, Gaza's health ministry said that 71 Palestinians in the Strip had been killed in Israeli attacks in the past 24 hours, bringing the total to 44,056 killed since the war began following the Hamas-led attacks of 7 October 2023.

Additionally, 104,268 people have been wounded since the start of the war, according to Gaza's health ministry.

“No one can deny this step is still a small measure of justice for the victims, but will it bring back the tens of thousands of civilians who were killed? Will it make an entire generation forget what they have gone through? Will it bring back our homes?” Shawwa asked.

“I am not pessimistic, nor do I underestimate the importance of such legal steps. But I know that major powers like the United States will not allow actual arrests to take place, nor will they allow justice to be fully served for the victims, simply because they are Palestinians.”

Justice and memory

The US “fundamentally” rejected the ICC decision on Thursday. “The ICC issuance of arrest warrants against Israeli leaders is outrageous,” President Joe Biden said in a statement.

“The United States has been clear that the ICC does not have jurisdiction over this matter,” a US National Security Council spokesperson said.

Yasser Abu Wazna, a forcibly displaced Palestinian in the southern Gaza Strip, recounted the bombing of his brother's family in Khan Younis, which took place on the same day last year.

“Although it might seem strange, I feel compelled to share this memory today, the day the International

1 <https://www.middleeasteye.net/countries/israel>

2 <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-gaza-icj-ordered-allow-aid>

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