



MAGAZINE

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Imperialist Flashpoints

Reimagining & Remaking Society



“As authoritarian politics harden in the United States, familiar channels of resistance are proving dangerously inadequate. In this moment, questions of power — who has it, how it is exercised, and how it can be withdrawn — are no longer abstract. They are immediate and practical.”

- Alexandria Shaner



www.znetwork.org

Protest against ICE in Minneapolis, Minnesota, January 10, 2026
Photo: Fibonacci Blue/Flickr

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Social Strikes: Confronting ICE and Resisting Authoritarianism

Jeremy Brecher interviewed by Alexandria Shaner

On January 23, hundreds of thousands of Minnesotans refused to work, shop, or go to school in a “Day of Truth and Freedom” to demand “ICE out of Minnesota.”

In an interview with ZNet, Jeremy Brecher put the Minnesota action in the context of “social strikes” that have overturned authoritarian regimes around the world.

Could you give a definition of what you mean by social strikes?

Social strike is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of activities that use the withdrawal of cooperation and mass disruption to affect governments and social structures. I use the term “social strikes” to describe mass actions that exercise power by withdrawing cooperation from and disrupting the operation of society. Social strikes represent the withdrawal of cooperation and acquiescence by a whole society, manifested for example in general strikes, political strikes and mass popular “people power” uprisings. The goal of a social strike is to affect not just the immediate employer, but a political regime or social structure. In all their varied forms they are based on Gandhi’s fundamental perception that “even the most powerful cannot rule without the cooperation of the ruled.”

Why is this a winning strategy, and as you put it, a “defense against MAGA tyranny”?

The power of the powerful ultimately depends on the acquiescence and cooperation of those they rule. Social strikes have been one way that people have exercised the power to withdraw that acquiescence and cooperation.

Social strikes provide a possible alternative when institutional means of action prove ineffective. In many countries, where democratic institutions have been so weakened or obliterated that they are unable to disempower tyranny, such methods have been used effectively. My report on “Social Strikes” recounts examples that have brought down tyrannical regimes in Poland, the Philippines, Brazil, Puerto Rico, and most recently South Korea. These large-scale nonviolent direct actions — often referred to as “people power” uprisings — made society ungovernable and led to regime change. In all these cases, popular mobilization and the threat of general social disruption were so great that the autocrat’s supporters abandoned or turned against him and forced him to resign.

Of course there are no guarantees that social strikes can win in the U.S. today or in any other situation. But as MAGA tyranny drives more and more individuals, constituencies and institutions into opposition, its power is being progressively undermined. Historical experience around the world has shown social strikes are a powerful means to manifest that withdrawal of acquiescence and the refusal of the people to cooperate. Indeed, widespread forms of mass resistance like the Tesla and other boycotts, the No Kings Day-type national protests, and the on-the-ground resistance to ICE are already hamstringing the Trump administration’s freedom of action. Social strikes would represent a significant intensification of what I have called “social self-defense” against Trumpian tyranny. They have the potential both to further impede MAGA depredations and to contest for support from the majority of the population.



Protest against ICE in Minneapolis, Minnesota (Photo: Fibonacci Blue/Flickr)

Where would you situate us, in our current moment, in terms of the trajectory of the escalating authoritarianism that we have been experiencing? How does this compare to some of the historical scenarios you analyze in the report and what does that mean for our strategic organizing?

An authoritarian takeover is under way in the

U.S., complete with the arrest of opposition political leaders like Rep. LaMonica McIver, unrestrained executive usurpation, and lawless physical violence and kidnapping by masked, unidentified, armed federal agents. The government is now protecting and defending ICE agents who shoot down protesters in cold blood. The president is now threatening to invoke the Insurrection Act, which would allow him to use the

military to suppress a “rebellion,” i.e. action by any who oppose him. As his power is threatened, it is entirely plausible that he will turn to a full-scale coup. When a regime starts shooting down unarmed protesters in the street, that’s a Rubicon.

While they have much in common, every tyrannical regime and every opposition has its own dynamics. Growing popular discontent and emerging elite opposition (think Jerome Powell and the Clintons) are likely to lead to intensified repression (think Iran today). Authoritarian regimes are likely to use every means available to them to destroy opposition — something we are seeing every day with the Trump administration and its allies. Such repression can be effective, but it can also provoke still further opposition (think popular response and on-the-ground resistance following the ICE killing of Renee Nicole Good). We need to be prepared for intensified repression, but also be mindful that the people potentially have the power to defeat tyranny.

Following the murder of Renée Good by an ICE agent in Minnesota on Jan. 7, and an ongoing assault on the state by federal immigration forces, a labor-community coalition is calling for residents to refuse to work, shop or go to school on Jan. 23. Could you comment on this and other recent calls for social strikes?

The Minnesota story is developing hour by hour. The escalation of repression, including more and more shooting of unarmed civilians, massive invasion by additional ICE agents, and Trump’s threat to invoke the Insurrection Act, seem to have enraged large swaths of the state’s population without intimidating them into acquiescence. Mass action responses have been cascading. Rapid response networks and neighborhood ICE watch groups, armed with cameras and whistles, are proliferating. A friend in St. Paul wrote to me that there are 1,100 rapid response anti-ICE volunteers in their neighborhood alone.

On Jan. 10, ten thousand joined an “ICE Out of Minnesota” rally and march. On Jan. 14, thousands of St. Paul high school and middle school students marched to the State Capitol Building; nine high schools staged walkouts; a thousand students blocked St. Paul’s main thoroughfare with a two-mile march. On, Jan. 18 union postal workers will rally to demand “ICE Out Of Minnesota!” followed by a march to the site of Renee Nicole Good’s killing.

The proposed day of refusal to work, shop or go to school is a perfect example of a “social strike,” including work stoppages by workers but also myriad other forms of noncooperation by large and highly diverse sectors of society. A wide swath of immigrant, religious, labor, community, tenant and other groups are deeply involved. Unions already supporting the day of action include the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005, SEIU Local 26, UNITE HERE Local 17, CWA Local 7250, and St. Paul Federation of Educators Local 28.

The way Minnesotans are turning to this form of action is a result of the specific situation they face, but also of the growing discussion of and calls for general and social strikes. In that context, the “day of refusal” could have repercussions far beyond Minnesota. Teacher and union activist Dan Troccoli says, “in addition to appreciation, we want emulation. We need that out there in the streets in every city.”

Where are we now in terms of strategy and readiness for impactful and sustained mass social strikes?

A crucial development of the past years has been the emergence of what I call the “movement-based opposition.” With the Democratic Party largely failing to effectively play the role of an opposition party, an alliance of social movements has begun playing the role of a “non-electoral opposition” that can mobilize those harmed by MAGA, identify common interests, unify their programs and actions, and articulate alternatives.

The movement-based opposition is exemplified by the participation of millions in protest days of action like Hands Off!, MayDayStrong, and No Kings, and the mass civil resistance to ICE raids around the country.

Next steps are already under way. Indivisible's One Million Rising, which it describes as "a national effort to train one million people in the strategic logic and practice of non-cooperation," could be a step in preparing those already participating in mass protests for social strikes. Future actions can progressively incorporate elements of noncooperation and disruption that evolve toward social strikes and serve as living representations of their potential power. They can combine strikes with non-workplace actions like boycotts, commercial shutdowns, mass picketing, blockades, occupations and civil disobedience. Such actions will need to constantly seek the "sweet spot" between effective disruption of MAGA oppression and alienation of forces that might otherwise be won over.

Could you outline a medium to long-term organizing vision and priorities for where we should aim to go from here?

I have dubbed the overall struggle against MAGA tyranny "social self-defense" — the defense of society by society against the forces aiming to destroy it.

Social self-defense against a creeping or galloping MAGA coup is most likely to succeed through a combination of electoral and social strike methods. The overcoming of authoritarian regimes in the Philippines, Serbia and elsewhere, while accomplished under circumstances far different from those in the U.S. today, provide examples of how they can be combined.

The detailed timelines of social strikes cannot be known in advance. They are likely to grow out of a gradual, and not always visible, build-up of harm — and resentment at harm. This is already occurring in Trump's America. It could

lead to a series of escalating struggles, possibly punctuated by defeats or by concessions generating temporary quiescence. Popular opposition could also diminish as a result of repression, MAGA counter-maneuvers, a sense of futility, or other "unknown unknowns." A period of apparent quiescence with a rising sense of grievance might eventuate in a sudden explosion of popular rage and a mass uprising.

Whether gradually or rapidly, social strikes will need to develop the power necessary to reduce MAGA power enough to bring an end to its rule — through elections, collapse of political support, or social disruption.

Resisting the rise of tyranny will no doubt require sacrifice. But that sacrifice will not be primarily on behalf of one political party vs. another, of Democrats vs. Republicans. It will be a defense of democracy — defense of government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Beyond that, it is the protection of that which makes our life together on Earth possible. It is defense of the human rights of all people; of the conditions of our Earth and its climate that make our life possible; of the constitutional principle that government must be accountable to law; of global cooperation to provide a secure future for our people and planet; and of our ability to live together in our communities, our country, and our world. A MAGA tyranny is a threat to all of us as members of society. Overcoming MAGA usurpation of power is social self-defense.

We can hope that social strikes will not be necessary to limit and ultimately end MAGA tyranny. Accomplishing that goal by less drastic forms of social self-defense inside and outside the electoral system would likely require less risk and less pain. But if other means are unavailing, experience around the world indicates that social strikes may provide a way for people facing authoritarian takeover to establish or reestablish democracy.

Bad Bunny, Good Neighbor

Michelle Ellner

For thirteen minutes on the most-watched stage in American culture, Bad Bunny made the United States feel expansive, uncontained, Caribbean rhythm-centered, and alive with a sense of belonging that crossed borders without asking permission. As a Venezuelan-American, I felt chills from the very first second to the last. I was a child again, asleep across two chairs pushed together at a family party that refused to end, the music still playing, adults laughing loudly in the background, grandparents locked into a serious game of dominoes as if nothing outside that table mattered. I could feel the dancing in the living room, smell the food that took all day to make, remember that deep sense of togetherness you can't explain or translate – you simply grow up inside it.

And then came Bad Bunny's ending—loud, defiant, and unmistakably intentional. When he said “God bless America,” naming Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela, Guyana, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Haiti, las Antillas, the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico, it felt like calling family members into the room, reminding everyone that America has always been bigger than the version that those in power are comfortable with, and that it has always belonged to more people than it is willing to treat with dignity.

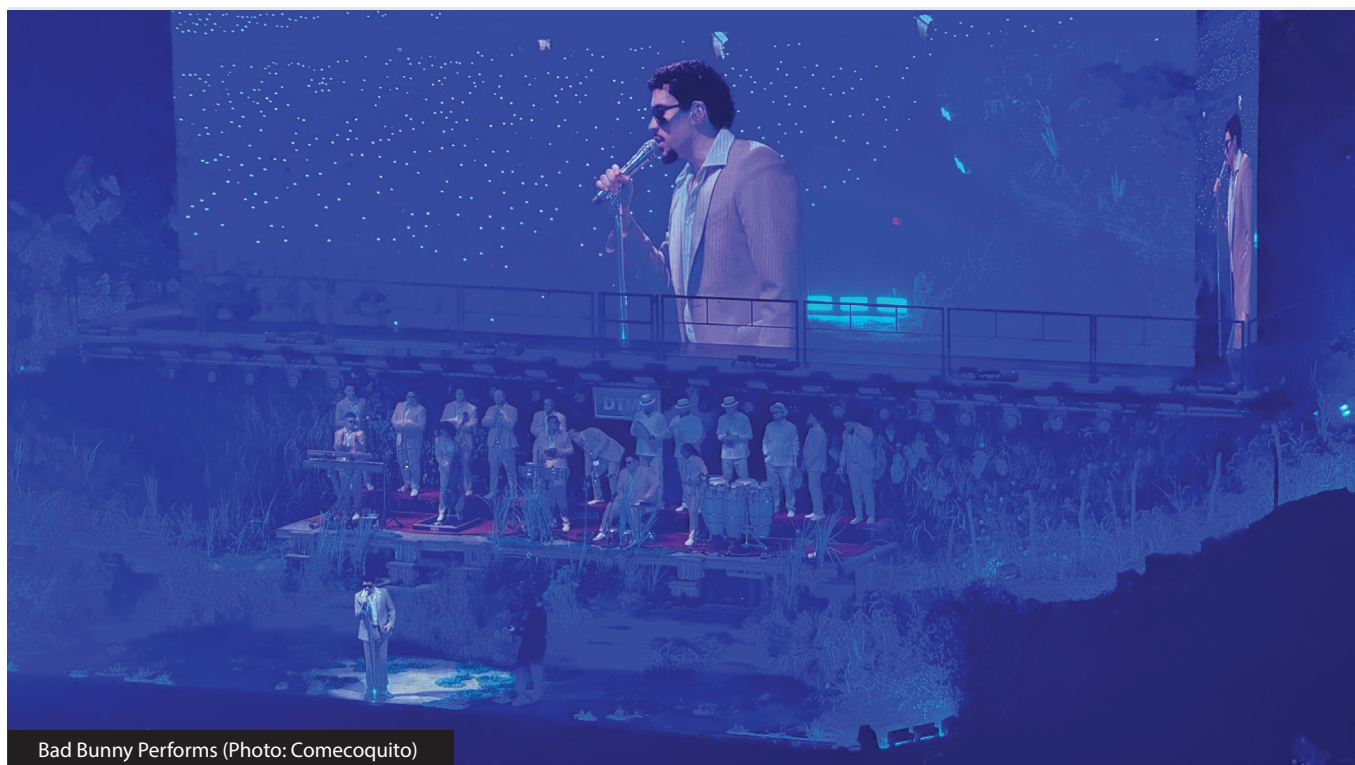
At that very same moment, offstage, untelevised, and unacknowledged, the U.S. government was tightening the screws on Cuba. Under Donald Trump, U.S. policy toward the island has moved from long-standing hostility into something closer to an open siege. Sanctions have been escalated, fuel deliberately cut off, and third countries threatened with tariffs and sanctions for daring to trade with Cuba. The consequences are immediate and

devastating: rolling blackouts shutting down hospitals, universities forced to suspend classes, factories and farms unable to operate, and entire transportation systems paralyzed. The U.S. fuel blockade has grounded flights, stopped buses from running, and forced ambulances to be rationed.

The U.S. embargo on Cuba itself is illegal under international law and is condemned year after year by the overwhelming majority of the world's nations. Yet the United States continues to enforce it unilaterally, using its navy, its financial system, and its political power to prevent oil shipments from reaching Cuba, to intimidate shipping companies, and to punish any country that dares to trade. U.S. pressure doesn't stop at its own borders; it extends outward, telling the rest of the world who they are allowed to sell fuel to, who they are allowed to insure, and which economies must be starved into compliance. When ships are blocked, oil is cut off, and a civilian population is plunged into darkness, this is a blockade. And under international law, that is an act of war.

Washington then claims humanitarian concern, offering small, tightly controlled aid packages while maintaining the very sanctions that created the emergency. The crisis is manufactured first, then weaponized as proof that Cuba is “failing.” Scarcity becomes both the method and the message. This is collective punishment, designed to exhaust a population into submission through hunger, darkness, and isolation.

We need to be honest: this is not just Trump. Trump is blunt, crude, and unapologetic, but he did not invent this. For decades, U.S. administrations have treated Latin America and the Caribbean as a sphere to be managed, disciplined, or reordered, operating from the same assumption: that the United States has a providential right to decide who



Bad Bunny Performs (Photo: Comecoquito)

governs and who must be punished into compliance. But ask yourself, really sit with it, can you imagine the humiliation of entire nations being told, again and again, that their future will be decided elsewhere? Imagine living under the constant threat that your economy can be strangled, your leaders removed, your people starved simply for refusing obedience. Who gave the United States this right? Who decided that Latin America's sovereignty was conditional?

Two centuries ago, Simón Bolívar warned that the United States seemed destined "to plague America with misery in the name of liberty." His vision was not domination but dignity: nations free to determine their own paths, bound by solidarity rather than submission. Nuestra América, the America of José Martí, Simón Bolívar, Augusto Sandino, Frantz Fanon, Fidel Castro, and Hugo Chávez, is land, people, language, and resistance that still exist and insist on sovereignty.

This is the choice in front of us. You can accept Trump's America, the America that governs through sieges, blockades, sanctions, and humiliation, deciding from afar who may rule, who may

eat, and who must be punished into submission. Or you can stand with Nuestra América, the America Martí and Bolívar imagined, and that Bad Bunny echoed when he held up a football, reading "Together we are America." This is an America that refuses domination, that believes no nation is a backyard, and that insists the future of this hemisphere belongs to its peoples, not to an empire. There is no neutral ground between those two Americas.

This is why the moment demands more than applause. It demands that we look past the spectacle and confront the systems that decide who gets to thrive and who is forced to flee. A real Good Neighbor Policy would respect sovereignty, stop weaponizing hunger and instability, and recognize that dignity does not end at the U.S. border. Bad Bunny reminded millions of people of connection, of shared humanity, of a hemisphere bound together by history and responsibility. What comes next is on us. If those thirteen minutes meant anything, they must move us toward demanding a foreign policy that treats our neighbors as equals. Because in the end, the message is simple and uncompromising: the only thing more powerful than hate is love.

The Hydra of Authoritarian Violence

Andrew Moss

The violence is interconnected.

U.S. military forces attack Caracas to extract its president, killing as many as 80 people in the course of their operation.

An ICE agent shoots and kills a poet, a mother of three, on a street in Minneapolis.

A 43-year-old disabled widow, burdened by medical debt from her husband's and her own cancer, walks two hours in the early morning darkness to get free treatment at a health fair in Columbus, Ohio, a treatment for conditions not covered by her Medicaid. At the same time, Medicaid, and the SNAP food benefits that have also sustained this widow, are being severely cut by this administration.

Real harms to real people: it isn't difficult to trace the connections from ledger to ledger in the federal budget. President Trump and his ICE-friendly Congress supercharged ICE's deportation powers last year with a \$75 billion supplement over and above its roughly \$10 billion annual expenditure of the last few years. In the same One Big Beautiful Bill Act, the President and Congress cut Medicaid by \$1 trillion, a reduction to be spread over 10 years, hurting low income adults, children, seniors in nursing homes, and hundreds of rural hospitals. To these ledger entries must be added the first-ever \$1 trillion defense budget, a budget that continues to generate hundreds of billions in windfall profits for defense contractors, and a budget that enables this president to wield immense military power, unconstrained by anything other than, as he said, "my own morality. My own mind."

Connecting the ledger entries means more than shining a light on distorted national priorities. It points to a fundamental reality that differentiates

this election from any that preceded it. For the first time in U.S. history, a national election (the midterm election) is taking place with a consolidating authoritarian administration in power. Authoritarian rulers and regimes wield power, or attempt to wield power, without regard to the rule of law, human rights, or human well-being. By definition, they operate by the threat or use of violence – harm to others – in order to achieve specific objectives and hold on to power for its own sake.

To ignore this reality, to pretend that electioneering must proceed as it's always been done in the past, is to drive straight ahead on a freeway while looking only in the rearview mirror. It's a dangerous venture.

Many Democratic leaders feel confident they can carry the campaign banner of affordability to midterm victory this year. It's true that the prices of groceries, rent, health care, and other necessities pose great hardships for millions of Americans, but affordability as a campaign slogan will go only so far. People need to know, in terms as clear and straightforward as possible, how the immense wealth of the United States is being diverted to harmful ends. They need to understand how many of the forms of violence they're witnessing today emanate from a single source: the inherent, persistent aggressions of an authoritarian regime.

In ancient Greek mythology, the Hydra was a dangerous nine-headed serpent that attacked humans and animals alike. Any time one of its heads was cut off, another two would grow back. The legendary hero Heracles slew the monster by cutting off its heads and having his nephew Iolaus cauterize each of the wounds.

The myth of the Hydra offers a vivid image of



Vigil for Alex Pretti January 28, 2026 at the Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington, DC. (Photo: Jason Gooljar)

how different forms of violence can be traced to a single, lethal source. But its utility ends there. No Heracles will come to slay this beast. A single “heroic” figure, or figures, isn’t even desirable. A complex history must first be accounted for: how the current authoritarian regime emerged from decades of festering inequalities of wealth and power, from long-standing precedents of scapegoating, racism, and xenophobia.

But a different set of traditions must also be acknowledged. The land that gave rise to the most toxic kinds of violence also nurtured generations of nonviolent activists, teachers, and leaders, who pushed the nation to deliver on its earliest promises of freedom and equality. They were the abolitionists, suffragists, trade unionists, human rights and peace activists who engaged in creative, nonviolent struggles to keep widening the horizons of human possibility.

Their heirs today fully understand that the 2026 midterms are not about politics as usual. They know that the struggle for democracy, for human well-being, must be waged nonviolently in street protests large and small, in myriads of strategic noncooperative actions (e.g. boycotts like that of Avelo Airlines), in straight-up campaigning and electioneering, and in protecting the vote from all kinds of promised subversions. They know that this is – and will continue to be in the coming months – a difficult and multi-dimensional struggle. But they also know that if it’s conducted wisely, it’s a struggle that will go a long way in putting the brakes on a runaway authoritarianism – and possibly reversing its course. Nonviolence, more expansively and creatively understood than ever before, must be the order of the day.

The War Intervention: AI, Data Centers, and the Environment

Aaron Kirshenbaum

Early on Saturday, January 3rd, Venezuela was attacked on behalf of oil, mineral, tech, and weapons profiteers in a regime change operation. Since then, the Trump administration has threatened Iran, Greenland, Cuba, Colombia, and Mexico. What unites these threats? The U.S.'s quest for endless resource extraction to power its increasingly deadly global empire. And it's not slowing down. These resource wars and "operations" are emerging as the AI drive also ramps up. In July, Palantir and the Pentagon signed a 10-year, \$10 billion agreement. In April 2025, Palantir won a \$30 million contract with ICE — a significant development in their decade-plus-long partnership that we are now seeing play out in their increasingly militarized, unrestrained murders and abductions in Minneapolis and around the country. This increasingly inextricable partnership between AI and the war economy is throwing us into a fast track of climate and environmental chaos that threatens us all.

In August, I learned about an AI program created by the U.S.-armed Israeli military called "Where's Daddy." The program is designed to track individuals Israel is targeting in order to kill them at home with their families. In October 2023, the AI war giant Palantir entered into a contract with the Israeli military. Since 2021, the Israeli Occupation Forces have been working with tech companies like Google on AI programs such as Project Nimbus, used to surveil and murder Palestinians. "Where's Daddy" and other overlapping systems represent the newest phase of this. The program characterizes the families of these alleged combatants as "collateral damage" and is often far from accurate, killing entire families without the "intended targets" even being there. The tech companies developing these programs do not have anyone's "safety" or "security" in mind; they are solely motivated by profit.

This cruelty is no surprise— these companies are the same ones building toxic data centers across the U.S., largely in working-class and Black and Brown communities, in the newest phase of environmental injustice.

We've been hearing about AI more and more as it enters the commercial market in increasingly pervasive ways. In particular, much has been reported about AI data centers entering communities and the opposition to them. Many of these fights have been taken up by environmental organizations; it's estimated that data centers could consume approximately 21% of global energy by 2030. In order to sustain this energy use, data centers need cooling. Mid-sized data centers use as much water as a city of 50,000 people. Meta's Hyperion data center in Louisiana is projected to use as much water as the entire city of New Orleans. Another Meta center in Cheyenne, Wyoming, is projected to use more power than the state of Wyoming itself.

These centers not only increase electricity bills for communities that can't afford them, but they also generate significant air, water, and noise pollution. Some centers regularly use diesel "emergency" generators to meet increased demand. Each generator is the size of a railcar, and thousands are littered across data center hotspots like Northern Virginia. As a result, toxic chemicals are seeping into the lungs of residents, causing asthma and long-term illness. Data centers are known to create noise pollution, with constant hums that can lead to hearing loss, anxiety, cardiovascular stress, and a host of other long-term issues. Furthermore, equipment is certain to break down and lead to toxic waste and electronic pollution.

"Critical" minerals are required for the operation of

these data centers. The process of obtaining these minerals, supposedly also used for green technology, requires the militarization, destabilization, and total plunder of mineral-rich regions. These minerals are supposedly “critical” for energy transitions, and some have advocated more “sustainable” methods for maintaining data centers through “green” technologies.

The use of these minerals is clear: The Pentagon recently became the largest shareholder in MP Minerals, one of the largest mining companies in the Western Hemisphere. Why? Aluminum for fighter jets. Titanium for missiles. And copper, lithium, cobalt, and many others for data center batteries and semiconductors. The more data centers are built, the more minerals are needed. This process of extraction has murdered millions in the Congo, destroying the soil, water, and forest: one of the largest “lungs” of the planet. It has led to the newest phase of imperialist aggression on Venezuela, a mineral-rich country with the largest oil reserves in the world (oil, of course, is also essential for data centers). Additionally, it has led to the attempted subordination of the Philippines to semiconductor production. The U.S. also seeks to use the archipelago as an “unsinkable aircraft carrier” for the U.S.’s looming war with China, its largest competitor in the AI and mineral race.

These are the impacts we already know to be devastating. But this is also new technology, which means there’s a lot we don’t know and a lot that’s being intentionally hidden. Lack of transparency is the norm in this industry. As data centers rapidly expand and buy up land around the country, the actual companies behind them hide behind non-disclosure agreements. This is not dissimilar to the intentional concealment of the military’s role in global emissions, enacted through U.S. pressure at the third U.N. Climate Change Conference in 1997. Decades later, the issue of militarism is still left out of climate conversations.

The parallel makes sense, considering how the AI industry has fused with the war machine. The U.S. military is one of the most environmentally

destructive forces on the planet. In its oil consumption alone, the U.S. military is the world’s largest institutional polluter. The U.S.’s 800+ bases in 80 countries globally are known to regularly leak jet fuel and cancer-causing PFAS chemicals, along with a toxic cocktail of hundreds of other chemicals. While training exercises like RIMPAC in the Asia-Pacific region authorize the deaths of thousands of sea creatures, in environmental sacrifice zones like Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, toxic waste from military facilities has killed infants hours after birth. In bomb testing sites like Vieques, off the coast of mainland Puerto Rico, lung cancer and bronchitis rates have been shown to be 200% higher than on the mainland for men, and 280% for women. And the oil-motivated “war on terror” emitted 1.2 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide from 2001-2017.

Now we are entering a new era of resource wars that will further destroy the planet as the AI race with China accelerates. The relationship between AI and the U.S. military goes beyond the Pentagon’s contracts with Palantir, Meta, and Microsoft: last June, executives Shyam Sankar (Palantir), Andrew Bosworth (Meta), Kevin Well (OpenAI), and Bob McGrew (Thinking Machines Lab, previously OpenAI) were sworn into the U.S. Army as lieutenant colonels. Michael Obadal, executive of the AI-war manufacturing company Anduril, is now the Under Secretary of the U.S. Army, still with hundreds of thousands in Anduril stock. Peter Thiel, co-founder of Palantir, is himself a major funder of Anduril. In June 2025, OpenAI, Google, xAI, and Anthropic entered into \$200 million contracts with the Department of War. The more you look at the partnerships between such companies and their executives, the Pentagon, governmental departments, and other entities, the more tangled this military-tech-industrial complex all becomes.

Many organizing groups are rightfully building power against the data centers that literally fuel it all, pushing for increased regulation and transparency. At the same time as Palantir makes new deals with the Pentagon, regulations in sacrifice zones are being thrown out the window. On De-



Community members in Prince George's County, Maryland, gather for a rally in September that led to a moratorium on data centers being built there. (Courtesy of the No Landover Data Center Coalition)

September 18th, the House of Representatives passed a bill backed by Microsoft, Micron, and OpenAI to fast-track data centers. The bill significantly reduces the number of environmental and financial factors that can be considered in permitting processes. It's simple. These communities are becoming the Camp Lejeunes of a new age: the new toxic waste dumps in the belly of the beast used to power the war machine. They must be fought against at all costs.

Regulation is crucial. It's also far from a long-term solution. There is a lot that we don't know, because a lot is hidden: just how much of these companies are tied up with weapons manufacturers, the Pentagon, and proxies like Israel; the environmental destruction caused by military usage of AI; the specific usage of all of these data centers. But it is obvious that AI is becoming inseparable from war-making, that increased AI means increased war-making, and that increased war-making is resulting in new and increased forms of unfathomable environmental destruction to communities around the world and here within the belly of the beast.

AI has been creeping up our necks. The horrific "Where's Daddy" program existed long before I heard of it. It seems like these products are popping up in every corner of the market before we can even start discussing them. Their emergence has been intentionally designed to not only conceal their role in environmental destruction, but also their role in the militarism destroying communities from Virginia to Gaza.

No part of this is sustainable — not the war economy, not unending extraction, regardless of how much "green tech" it produces, and not an AI-driven speculative economy. We cannot afford to have splintered conversations either; these AI and tech companies are war profiteers. The new Cold War on China drives this. The genocide in Palestine drives this. The war on Venezuela, Latin America, and the Caribbean drives this. And so our organizing must be unified against the impacts, mechanisms, and causes. Against data centers and the wars that drive them. We need to stop the blood. But we can't lose sight of why and how the bullets are fired.

The War on Drugs or the War on the Poor?

Laura Capote

The constant insistence of the US discourse on the war on drugs seems to reflect a moral crusade by successive US administrations to rid their country of drug use. However, the truth is far removed from this simplistic idea that is often perpetuated by the mass media. In reality, what the so-called 'War on Drugs' seeks to achieve, as demonstrated by our region's history, is a facade for the development of various mechanisms of imperialist intervention that, since the 1970s, have involved a combination of methods ranging from military financing to countries in the region, the installation of military bases, and even explicit support for certain candidates in electoral contests.

The most recent dossier prepared by the Tricontinental Institute develops the main hypothesis that the so-called 'War on Drugs' is actually directed against the poor, who are the weakest link in the production chain leading to narcotics. In fact, drugs and their huge profits are of little concern to the US ruling class and global capital's financial circuits, despite making every effort to separate them from the 'legitimate' practices of capitalism.

In reality, the criminal transnational enterprise that is the drug trafficking industry is a fundamental element of the accumulation circuits of capitalism on a global scale. The dossier states that 'the War on Drugs is merely an attempt by capitalist states to ensure that these narcotics circuits remain underground so that the money siphoned from illegal trade can continue to liquefy a banking system that would not function without it.'

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the region most affected by the so-called 'war,' the Colombian case stands out as paradigmatic in understanding the different consequences of this US policy: from the criminalization of peasant farmers to the financing of a war and repression apparatus against the popular classes, including training and financ-

ing provided by the US to the country's military forces with a counterinsurgency doctrine that found its perfect justification in the WOD.

The research indicates that the demand for illicit goods does not vary substantially despite price variations, given the nature of the demand in terms of its levels of dependency, providing a breeding ground for crimes such as petty theft in order to finance consumption by any means possible.

'The violence in the passage of the drug from farms to the streets, and the violence of overdoses, rarely disrupts either production or the market.'

In this way, lives can be sacrificed without interrupting the process of capital accumulation in the formal economy. The illicit goods economy, with extreme worker exploitation, generates massive flows of laundered cash that lubricate the financial system. This allows for the control of marginalized communities through social demoralization and police intervention.

With a review of the coca production process, the dossier seeks to highlight how profits are concentrated in the links of the chain furthest from plant cultivation with, paradoxically, the workers of these illicit crops being the most criminalized and persecuted by the alleged 'war' on drug trafficking.

The role of peasant farmers is one of the main concerns of the research, highlighting how, from the perspective of the Colombian peasantry, the political economy of the war on drugs responds to a complex connection between crops, lack of rural development, and armed conflict that has characterized the country's agrarian history.

The Colombian case has been the paradigmatic example on the continent of what lies behind the simplified narrative of this so-called 'war.' It is the



deepening of the neoliberal model in agriculture that has accelerated the extinction of small farmers. Peasants face a lack of land access and tenure, as well as social and economic exclusion, unemployment, oppression, and marginalization, exacerbated by weak public policies, inadequate rural health and education, and the impossibility of accessing decent housing. In Colombia, the crisis is further intensified by land grabbing, usurpation and legalization. The ‘regularization’ of illegally dispossessed land is carried out through a paramilitary model with state funding and consent at the service of large transnational corporations.

Beyond being the targets of a media moralistic narrative that ignores their economic and social reality, peasants are the least of the beneficiaries of the drug trade. Instead, large profits are reaped by big capitalists who, as President Gustavo Petro has repeatedly said, operate in places like Florida. These individuals are well-known to US authorities and inhabit the same social spheres where the cocaine they so often point to is consumed, resulting in nearly one million Latin American deaths.

On the other hand, it is important to note that the peasant movement in Colombia has also developed tools to organize in the territories where coca is grown.

From historic peasant marches in the mid-1990s to the present day, peasant communities that produce

coca leaves have been demanding that the state voluntarily replace crops and cease forced eradication methods using glyphosate, which have only brought an increase in military presence to the territories, generating violence and dispossession.

‘The problem is not the coca plant but the economic system that criminalises the rural poor while absorbing and recycling the enormous liquidity generated by illicit markets. The financial sector depends on these flows. Global banks welcome them. And the wealthier nations that promote eradication simultaneously rely on the stability that this hidden capital provides. To treat the campesino as the enemy is to conceal the real architecture of the drug trade, which stretches upward into the circuits of legal finance, global commodities, and state power,’ the research states.

If the goal is to end violence and economic dependence on coca cultivation, then the starting point should not be militarization or eradication, but the reconstruction of rural life: agrarian reform, guaranteed prices for legal crops, infrastructure, public services, and political rights for those who cultivate the land. Without transforming the social and economic conditions that push families into illicit agriculture, the cycle will simply repeat itself. Without confronting the financial institutions that launder the profits, the global drug economy will continue to function as an unofficial pillar of capitalist liquidity.

The Fantasy of Trump's Imminent Demise is the Political Opiate of the Masses

Phil Wilson

David Pakman makes a fairly stunning observation: Trump's perseverative trope about immigrants coming from "insane asylums" likely reflects Trump's utterly moronic inability to comprehend that "political asylum" and "insane asylum," despite sharing a common word, have vastly different meanings. An average person knows that an "insane asylum" provides respite, comfort and remediation for people who suffer from acute mental illness, while political asylum grants safety to people escaping from violent persecution transpiring in a foreign state. Does Trump respond to meanings or, more primitively, to parallel phonetic stimuli?

Furthermore, "insane asylum" is an antiquated term that fell from grace over a century ago in favor of the less judgmental term, "In Patient Psychiatry." In Trump's addled mind, the phonetic sound of the word asylum leaps automatically to a vision of "crazy" people. Trump is too far gone for even nominal nuance – the word asylum delivers him instantly into the nightmare of a Hieronymus Bosch portrait of hell. In a world of vast and confusing complexity, Trump's insipid, vicious and incoherent blather simultaneously manifests the qualities of genocidal fascism, psychotic illness, and rampant stupidity.

As a mental health worker, I once encountered an elderly, well-educated man, suffering from schizophrenia, who told me, "Haldol means hell to all, and Thorazine means, 'Thor,' the hammer of thunder." While these remarks may come across as both whimsical, and astute in their reference to psychiatric medications as a sort of punishment inflicted upon the victims of the drug industry, the speaker was not a well man.

When psychotic people respond to the phonetic sounds of words, in lieu of the actual meanings, we call this dysfunctional mental process a "clang association." Pakman suggests that members of the press ought to ask Trump if he understands the difference between political asy-

lum and insane asylum, but our political discourse has atrophied to a point well short of that possibility. The interactions between reporters and the so called president resemble the stilted, perfunctory exchanges involving floridly delusional, aggressively angry people and their reticent family members. The intent may be unspoken, but nearly every reporter strives to get the fuck away from that toxic maniac before he bites their heads off. Pakman can't possibly believe that Trump could weigh and measure the terms insane asylum and political asylum apart from his subconscious impulse to launch into a Pavlovian fit upon hearing the phonetic provocation. Nor could Trump engage in any sort of introspection, any measure of reconsidered objectivity.

No, Trump would say, "shut up Piggy, you are a horrible person." While Pakman's observation about Trump's confusion displays unusually imaginative scrutiny, he backslides into the idea that the press might hold Trump accountable. Under fascism all institutions have been degraded to the point of self-parody. The interactions between Trump and network reporters ought to be seen as institutional self-mockery. Once we assume that Trump has employed a clang association concocted by his broken brain in the service of genocidal aspirations, all fantasies of regaining "normalcy" ought to be jettisoned in favor of broadcasting a dire warning – we are experiencing a five alarm fire.

There are three fatuous tales about Trump that cling to mass media like a fungal crust: 1) That he is so overtly demented that it will soon be impossible for him to continue his reign 2) That leaks from the Epstein Files will erode all of Trump's support other than the most diehard members of his base 3) That Trump is at death's door and will keel over and die in a matter of months. All of these stories nurture public passivity – we have merely to stand aside and happily watch a time-lapse video of Trump evaporating like a chunk of dry ice. A recent New York Times op-ed by Ruth Ben-Ghiat

suggested that, historically, dictators like Trump have self-imploded and pursued policies that “backfired.” To which Mike Lofgren responded in Common Dreams as follows: *“While this theory might seem like comforting evidence that history ‘proves’ that dictators will get their comeuppance, it is actually a counsel of passively sitting on our hands and waiting out the authoritarian leader: either to await his death, or hang on till he’s ousted from power by his own miscarrying plans. If history proves anything, it’s that patient optimism is not a virtue.”*

At this moment those who oppose Trump engage in a largely unacknowledged debate – some obsessively predict that Trump teeters on the edge of collapse, while others view the moment as being rife with dire urgency. One can choose to see Trump’s mental incapacity as a harbinger of his looming self-implosion, or as a gauge of our decaying empire – our dystopian predicament.

Personally, I see Trump less as a grotesque anomaly and more as a caricature of the US. Trump exaggerates the qualities that cause us to plunge into the vortex of collective anomie and cult violence. We live in arguably the sickest society ever to hurl itself over a cliff. Unlike Germany under the Nazis, we barely require guns pointed at our heads to keep us in line, and unlike the Romans of Nero’s time, Trump’s state invests almost nothing in free entertainment. The fascist government can outsource “bread and circuses” to MacDonald’s, Pornhub and the NFL, and the masses will pay for their own Xfinity subscriptions with barely a whimper.

Trump himself is our gauge of mental decline. He can conflate insane asylums with political asylum, threaten a hot war with Denmark, over Greenland or Iceland (he is not sure which) destroy the economy with tariffs, spend every tax payer dime on military hardware and paramilitary police to round up the laborers who pick our crops, and send half the citizens of our country into a swooning fantasy about his own imminent death. The mainstream press hover over Trump with a restrained air of normalcy.

Cults abound in the US like mushrooms at the edge of a swamp. The billionaire cult dreams of space flights to Mars and underground luxury bunkers (with spas and in home theaters a mile under the Sierras). The Trump

death cult luxuriates at the thought of immigrants being cruelly rounded up. Perhaps even those of us who savor the anticipated moment when Trump’s MacDonald’s encrusted arteries will soon deliver the judgement that Merrick Garland would not, might be thought of as a cult – the cult of schadenfreude, the cult of Karma, the cult of passive retribution.

What are the best and worst case scenarios regarding Trump. The best may be not merely unlikely, but insufficient to mitigate our suffering – that Trump dies suddenly, that an Epstein file drop contains a video of Trump that the public cannot “unsee,” that the MAGA base rises up and sends an enraged mob to Washington to reenact January 6th with chants of, “hang Donald Trump.” Does the best case scenario have Trump disappearing and a chastised and cautious JD Vance regressing into a past epic of austerity/free market Reaganomics?

The worst case scenarios requires very little imagination – that Trump simply does many of the things he has threatened to do: seize Greenland, bomb Iran to a pulp, invade Cuba (he already starves the Cuban people with a blockade), invade more US cities, throw US citizens into concentration camps by the tens of thousands, suspend or rig elections, annex Canada (remember the Austrian Anschluss?), take over the Panama Canal, complete the “ethnic cleansing” (genocide) of Gaza in order to build golf resorts. Of course, the VERY worst case scenario involves nuclear weapons. Trump intends to spend \$95 Billion annually to “upgrade” all three legs of the US nuclear system. He also plans to spend upwards of \$4 trillion to build the magical “Golden Dome” – a fantasy that would allegedly allow the US to initiate WW III without consequences to ourselves. One critic claims that there is not enough money on earth to pay for the “Golden Dome.”

Remember, the man who plans to build a strike force and defensive contraption capable of winning a nuclear war also can’t tell the difference between an “insane asylum” and “political asylum.” The question we should all be asking is this – can we afford to allow this floridly psychotic man to wither away via the fickle mechanisms of time, or should we be disobeying by the tens of millions like our lives depended on it?

Suffocating an Island: What the U.S. Blockade Is Doing to Cuba

Medea Benjamin

Marta Jiménez, a hairdresser in Cuba's eastern city of Holguín, covered her face with her hands and broke down crying when I asked her about Trump's blockade of the island—especially now that the U.S. is choking off oil shipments.

“You can't imagine how it touches every part of our lives,” she sobbed. “It's a vicious, all-encompassing spiral downward. With no gasoline, buses don't run, so we can't get to work. We have electricity only three to six hours a day. There's no gas for cooking, so we're burning wood and charcoal in our apartments. It's like going back 100 years. The blockade is suffocating us—especially single mothers,” she said crying into her hands “and no one is stopping these demons: Trump and Marco Rubio.”

We came to Holguín to deliver 2,500 pounds of lentils, thanks to fundraising by CODEPINK and the Cuban-American group Puentes de Amor. On our last trip, we brought 50-pound bags of powdered milk to the children's hospital. With Trump now imposing a brutal, medieval siege on the island, this humanitarian aid is more critical than ever. But lentils and milk cannot power a country. What Cubans really need is oil.

There were no taxis at the airport. We hitchhiked into town on the truck that came to pick up the donations. The road was eerily empty. In the city, there were few gas-powered cars and no buses running, but the streets were full of bicycles, electric motorcycles, and three-wheeled electric vehicles used to transport people and goods. Most of the motorcycles—Chinese, Japanese, or Korean—are shipped in from Panama. With a price tag near \$2,000, only those with family abroad sending remittances can afford them.

Thirty-five-year-old Javier Silva gazed longingly at a Yamaha parked on the street. “I could never buy one of those on my salary of 4,000 pesos a month,” he said. With inflation soaring, the dollar now fetches about 480 pesos, making his monthly income worth less than ten dollars.

Cubans don't pay rent or have mortgages; they own their homes. And while healthcare has deteriorated badly in recent years because of shortages of medicines and equipment, it remains free—a system gasping but not abandoned. When my partner Tighe had an asthma attack, we went to the clinic and within minutes, he was breathing in albuterol mist from a nebulizer. No insurance forms. No bill. Just care — delivered with competence and a smile. That's what health care looks like when it's treated as a human right.

The biggest expense for Cubans is food. Markets are stocked, but prices are out of reach—especially for coveted items like pork, chicken, and milk. Even tomatoes are now unaffordable for many families.

Holguín was once known as the breadbasket of Cuba because of its rich agricultural land. That reputation took a severe hit this year when Hurricane Melissa tore through the province, destroying vast areas of crops. Replanting and repairing the damage without gasoline for tractors or electricity for irrigation is nearly impossible. Less food means higher prices.

Production across the economy is grinding to a halt. Factories can't function without electricity, and many skilled workers have given up their state jobs because wages are so low. Jorge, whom I met selling bologna in the market, used to be an engineer at a state enterprise. Verónica, once a teacher,

now sells sweets she bakes at home—when the power is on. Ironically, while Marco Rubio claims he wants to bring capitalism to Cuba, U.S. sanctions are crushing the very private sector that most Cubans now depend on to survive.

I talked to people on the street who blame the Cuban government for the crisis and openly say they can't wait for the fall of communism. Young people told me that their goal is to leave the island and live somewhere they can make a decent living. But I didn't meet a single person who supported the blockade or a U.S. invasion.

"This government is terrible," said a thin man who changes money on the street—an illegal but tolerated activity. But when I showed him a photo of Marco Rubio, he didn't hesitate. "That man is the devil. A self-serving, slimy politician who doesn't give a damn about the Cuban people."

Others put the blame squarely on the United States. They point to the dramatic improvement in their lives after Presidents Obama and Raúl Castro reached an agreement and Washington eased many sanctions in 2014–2016. "It was the same Cuban government we have now," one man told me. "But when the U.S. loosened the rope around our necks, we could breathe. If they just left us alone, we could find our own solutions."

The only way Cubans are surviving this siege is because they help one another. They trade rice for coffee with neighbors. They improvise—no hay, pero se resuelve (we don't have much, but we make it work). The government provides daily meals for the most vulnerable—the elderly, the disabled, mothers with no income—but each day it becomes harder as the state has less food to distribute and less fuel to cook with.

At one feeding center, an elderly volunteer told us he spends hours every day scavenging for firewood. He proudly showed us a chunk of a wooden pallet, nails and all. "This guarantees tomorrow's meal," he said—his face caught between pride and sorrow.



Electric motorcycles are Cuba's response to the fuel crisis.

So how long can Cubans hold on as conditions worsen? And what is the endgame?

When I asked people where this is leading, they had no idea. Rubio wants regime change, but no one can explain how that would happen or who would replace the current government. Some speculate a deal could be struck with Trump. "Make Trump the minister of tourism," a hotel clerk joked, only half joking. "Give him a hotel and a golf course—a Mar-a-Lago in Varadero—and maybe he'd leave us alone."

Who will win this demonic game Trump and Rubio are playing with the lives of eleven million Cubans?

Ernesto, who fixes refrigerators when the power is on, places his bet on the Cuban people. "We're rebels," he told me. "We defeated Batista in 1959. We survived the Bay of Pigs. We endured the Special Period when the Soviet Union collapsed and we were left with nothing. We'll survive this too."

He summed it up with a line Cubans know by heart, from the great songwriter Silvio Rodríguez: *El tiempo está a favor de los pequeños, de los desnudos, de los olvidados*—time belongs to the small, the exposed, the forgotten.

In the long sweep of time, endurance outlasts domination.

The Siege of Rojava

Eli Cicek, Hekim K

Through the actions of regional and international hegemonic powers, the Middle East is being reshaped once again, a century after its last major reordering. The genocide in Gaza and the political elimination of Hamas, the intelligence-driven operations in Lebanon that have crippled Hezbollah, and finally the rapid overthrow of the Assad government by HTS under the leadership of the Salafi jihadist Mohammed al-Jolani, whose past is rooted in Al-Qaeda in Iraq, ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra, mark a new phase of regional transformation. The process that began with Hamas' attack on Israel on 7 October 2023 has continued with the dismantling of Iran's so-called "axis of resistance." Step by step, the focus appears to be shifting toward Iraq's Hashd al-Shaabi forces and ultimately toward Iran itself. Scenarios are now openly discussed in which all ISIS elements are reorganized under the Damascus regime into a Sunni jihadist army to be used against Shiite communities in Iraq. This points to the likelihood of new massacres and an even deeper humanitarian catastrophe.

What some commentators describe as cold and calculated chess moves is, in reality, a state of collective madness of war crimes akin to genocide, where tens of thousands of civilians have lost their lives.

In a region where forced displacement, executions, abductions, sexual violence, and the desecration of bodies have become normalized, new atrocities emerged with the establishment of an HTS-centered jihadist regime in Damascus. Following the regime change, armed groups aligned with the new authority carried out continuous attacks, kidnappings, and acts of violence against Alawite communities along Syria's coastal region. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), at least 1,068 civilians were killed in these attacks, which began on 6 March 2025.

In July 2025, after the circulation of an audio recording allegedly insulting the Prophet Muhammad and attributed to a Druze cleric, armed Sunni jihadist groups affiliated with Damascus launched attacks against Druze communities in Suwayda. Reports stated that at least 196 people were executed in mass killings, including 28 women, 8 children, and one elderly person. According to SOHR, between 15 and 22 July, 1,311 people were killed, including 637 Druze and 104 civilians.

With the support and approval of regional and international powers, these same forces turned their weapons to Kurdish neighborhoods in Aleppo on 6 January 2026, and soon after, towards the entire territory of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, known as Rojava. These unilateral attacks and the humanitarian crisis they created have largely gone uncovered in the international media. Instead, they are often portrayed as clashes in which both sides are equally aggressive.

The chronology below illustrates how the siege on Rojava gradually intensified, by examining the attacks and humanitarian devastation launched by Sunni jihadist forces loyal to Damascus on two Kurdish neighborhoods in Aleppo in January 2026.

1 January | Violence escalates

Violence intensified in areas controlled by Sunni jihadist forces aligned with Damascus. In December, 181 people, including women and children, were killed, and a mass grave was discovered in Aleppo.

2 to 4 January | Talks on "integration" with Damascus

The Autonomous Administration announced that contacts with the Damascus regime regarding military integration were ongoing and that high-level meetings were being planned. It was also announced that schools in the Kurdish neighbor-



People in the autonomous region of North and East Syria take up arms and display the Kurdistan flag in Qamishlo, their de facto capital, in the face of an invasion by forces allied with the Syrian government. (Courtesy of Rojava Information Center)

hoods of Aleppo, which had been closed on 30 December 2025 due to fuel shortages and an ongoing blockade, would reopen on 4 January 2026.

5 to 6 January | Damascus and Israel reach an understanding under US mediation

Damascus and Israeli delegations reached an understanding in Paris under US mediation. At the same time, talks between Turkey and Damascus accelerated. On 6 January, Sunni jihadist forces aligned with Damascus launched a large-scale attack on Kurdish neighborhoods in Aleppo. Civilians were targeted with heavy weapons, and the neighborhoods were besieged.

7 to 8 January | Civilian infrastructure targeted, humanitarian crisis deepens

The Damascus regime declared the Kurdish neighborhoods legitimate military targets. The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) stated that it had no military presence in Aleppo and had withdrawn under a public agreement, transferring security to the Internal Security Forces. Osman Hospital in Ashrafiyah was directly bombed, and disabled from service, and health workers were executed. Many Sunni jihadist groups on the international sanctions lists participated in assaults under the name of the transitional government. The Turkish Ministry of Defense stated that Turkey would provide support if the Damascus regime requested.

Statements from the European Union were limited to calls for restraint.

9 January | EU aid to Damascus

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa met Ahmed al-Sharaa in Damascus. Von der Leyen announced a 722 million dollar aid package. On the same day, Khalid Fecir Hospital in Sheikh Maqsoud was also heavily attacked and hit at least seven times by reconnaissance aircraft and heavy weapons.

10 January | Attack on the body of a Kurdish woman fighter

A humanitarian aid convoy was blocked by Sunni jihadist forces aligned with Damascus, and safe corridors were not opened. Images circulated showing jihadist fighters throwing the body of a Kurdish woman fighter from a building while chanting religious slogans.

11 to 12 January | Ceasefire and civilian losses

A ceasefire and the evacuation of civilians were announced through international mediators. Local sources reported that women were taken to mosques, men to unknown locations, and that more than 271 people were missing.

13 to 14 January | Attacks spread to eastern Aleppo

The Israeli army shelled the areas around Abdin and Koya in Daraa, in parallel with its advances in the Quneitra countryside in southern Syria. At the same time, Sunni jihadist forces aligned with Damascus, with Turkish support, moved to the east of Aleppo and bombed Deir Hafir and the town of Meskene near Tabqa.

15 January | The heavy toll in Aleppo

The Turkish Ministry of Defense reiterated its support for the Damascus regime. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, at least 120,000 people were displaced from the neighborhoods of Sheikh Maqsoud, Ashrafiyah and Beni Zed, and human rights organizations reported more than 500 missing persons. Ilham Ahmed, Co-Chair of the

Foreign Relations Department of the Autonomous Administration, presented documentation detailing how the attacks were carried out, the forces that participated in them, and the war crimes that were committed.

16 to 17 January | SDF withdraws east of the Euphrates, clashes continue

US President Donald Trump announced the creation of a Gaza Peace Council. The SDF stated that it would reposition its forces to the east of the Euphrates. Despite this decision, attacks by Sunni jihadist forces aligned with Damascus continued. The Imrali delegation of the DEM Party stated that Abdullah Öcalan viewed the escalation in Syria as an attempt to sabotage the process of Peace and Democratic Society.

18 January | Jihadist attacks spread

The attacks launched by Sunni jihadist forces aligned with Damascus spread to Tabqa, Tishrin, Mansura, Raqqa and the countryside of Deir ez-Zor. The Autonomous Administration declared general mobilization. On the same day, Damascus announced that a 14-point agreement and a comprehensive ceasefire had been reached with the SDF. The SDF stated that to prevent a major civil war, it had decided to withdraw from Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor and would talk to the Damascus regime.

19 January | Attacks continue despite ceasefire, ISIS prisoners released

Despite the ceasefire, attacks continued. The SDF announced that Shaddadi Prison, which holds thousands of ISIS detainees, had fallen under the control of Sunni jihadist groups aligned with Damascus, and footage showed ISIS prisoners being released. It was reported that more than 10,000 civilians were displaced from Raqqa to Hasakah. Iraqi Shiite leader Muqtada al-Sadr warned that the conflict could spread to Iraq. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and President Donald Trump held a phone call that included discussions on ISIS and the prisons in Syria. The SDF stated that the Damascus regime was demanding total surrender and that it had therefore decided to resist. The Damascus regime invoked the Quranic chapter al-Anfal to declare a conquest against the Kurds.

20 January | Hasakah and Kobane under blockade

More than 25,000 people fled from Raqqa and Tabqa toward Hasakah within 48 hours, and around 500 people were reported missing or forcibly disappeared. Civilians attempting to reach Hasakah were attacked by forces aligned with Damascus. The SDF stated that the Damascus regime imposed a blockade on Hasakah and Kobane and launched heavy attacks. The SDF also announced that it had withdrawn from Hol Camp due to attacks by Sunni jihadist forces and the failure of international forces to fulfill their responsibilities. The Damascus regime declared another ceasefire, while the SDF reported continued violations.

President Trump claimed he had prevented ISIS prisoners from escaping and shared a message that he said was sent by President Macron. US diplomat Tom Barrack stated that a centralized authority had been re-established in Syria, that the SDF's role as the primary force against ISIS had largely ended, and that the Damascus regime was ready to take over the security of ISIS prisons and camps.

21 January | Military buildup

Protests were held across Kurdistan and in many European cities against the attacks on Rojava. Thousands of people displaced from Afrin, Shahba, Raqqa, and Tabqa took refuge in the Jazira Canton, sheltering in schools and mosques. The SDF reported systematic ceasefire violations in the Jazira and Kobane regions. ISIS flags were reported to have been raised again at the entrance to Raqqa. Turkey deployed tanks and artillery to the Kobane Suruc border line.

22 January | Humanitarian disaster warning

According to nine separate sources who spoke to Reuters, the attacks carried out by the Damascus regime against North and East Syria were approved by the United States, Israel, and Turkey at the meeting held in Paris in early January.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) issued a warning of a "humanitarian catastrophe" in Kobane, which is under siege by the Turkish state and Sunni jihadist forces aligned with Damascus. It con-

demned the international community's silence. In a video said to have been recorded in Raqqa, which is under the control of the Damascus regime, a severed braid claimed to belong to a YPJ woman fighter was shown. The footage sparked anger and outrage in many parts of the world. Kurdish and Yazidi women launched a solidarity campaign on social media using the hashtag #kezi (braid).

23 January | ISIS prisoners released

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth stated that non-Iraqi ISIS detainees would be temporarily held in Iraq. Sunni jihadist forces aligned with Damascus released hundreds of ISIS prisoners from al-Aktan prison in Raqqa.

Conclusion

The events that took place between 1 and 23 January 2026 show that the attacks against Rojava are part of a plan by global and regional powers to reshape the Middle East. What began with assaults on Kurdish neighborhoods in Aleppo has evolved into a multi-layered siege strategy that aims not only to dismantle the Rojava model but also to carry out a systematic destruction targeting the very existence of the Kurdish people. The horrific images coming from the region demonstrate that the crimes ISIS committed against humanity, particularly against the Kurdish people in 2014, are being re-enacted today.

The silence of international actors, along with direct or indirect approval of certain powers, has created the conditions for this destruction and the continuation of these crimes. What is happening in Rojava today is not only about one region; it is a clear indication of the kind of violent order shaping the future of the Middle East. The attacks on prisons holding ISIS detainees under SDF control, and the footage showing the release of these prisoners by forces aligned with the Damascus regime, provide serious evidence that a new Sunni jihadist army is being formed by uniting ISIS elements under the umbrella of the Damascus regime. These developments mark an extremely dangerous threshold, signaling that the Middle East is being pushed towards far wider humanitarian catastrophes and new waves of war.

From Gaza to Cuba: How Canada Remains the World's Most Tactful Bystander

Anne Kamath, Umer Azad

The world is witnessing yet another manufactured humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in plain sight in Cuba. This crisis is not the result of any internal collapse or mismanagement. It is the deliberate outcome of United States policy, a policy of collective punishment designed to impose economic suffocation on an entire population to extract political change. President Donald Trump has openly declared his intention to overthrow the Cuban government by year's end, meaning Washington is transforming its decades-old blockade into a full-scale siege. The Trump administration has absurdly designated the small, peaceful Caribbean nation as "an unusual and extraordinary threat" to the United States, weaponizing tariffs and economic coercion against any country that dares to sell oil to Cuba.

The consequences are immediate and impossible to ignore. Cuban authorities have announced that jet fuel will be unavailable at airports across the country starting this week, disrupting airport operations and grounding both domestic and international carriers. Canadian airlines have already announced contingency plans for flights to and from Cuba, assessing reroutes, suspensions, and assistance for stranded travelers. But aviation is only the most visible edge of a far deeper collapse. If Cuba's energy infrastructure fails, people will die. This is not a metaphor. It is inevitable. Without electricity, food cannot be grown, preserved, or transported. Medicines cannot be produced, refrigerated, or administered. Hospitals cannot operate. Ambulances, incubators, and ventilators will stop.

This deprivation is not at all incidental. It is intentional. Administration officials and the extreme right Cuban American political establishment have been explicit: the goal is to inflict suffering, to manufacture hunger, medicine shortages, and nationwide blackouts as instruments of regime change.

Washington's intentions could not be clearer. The United States is attempting to strangle an entire nation into submission.

While the U.S. pursues this deliberate campaign of suffering, Ottawa has once again chosen the path of procedural dithering, offering words instead of action. Canada's response, to no one's surprise, has been another Kafkaesque exercise in bureaucratic evasion. When Senator Yuen Pau Woo asked officials from the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade what Canada is doing to prevent this potentially catastrophic humanitarian disaster in Cuba, the exchange exposed more absence than action. Pressed for specifics, the response was: "There are no specifics." The officials further conceded that "there is no humanitarian response plan for Cuba that I'm aware of," explaining that Canada's engagement has been framed as "more looking at the development context and not the humanitarian context." In practice, this distinction functions as a delay mechanism. The government is "looking into the matter," as it so often does, deferring urgency behind the process while conditions deteriorate. The latency appears less accidental than structural. And, as usual, no timeline has been offered, no indication of when this period of observation will end, or when statements will give way to action.

This pattern is not all new, nor is it confined to Cuba. It is, in fact, a continuation of a long record of calibrated restraint and strategic silence. Canada's response over the past few years has been consistent, predictable, and deeply inadequate. By now, Canada has perfected the art of tactful bystanding, present in language, absent in consequence. Ottawa has expressed concern, called for de-escalation, and urged all parties to respect international law, but it has avoided naming responsibility and evaded con-



President Donald Trump greets Prime Minister of Canada Mark Carney, (Photo: Danel Torok)

fronting its closest ally. Canada criticizes outcomes while refusing to challenge the very system that produces them. This is simply appeasement dressed up as diplomacy. While statements are issued, the systems that produce these horrors remain untouched, leaving ordinary people, Palestinians, Venezuelans, Iranians, and now Cubans, to bear the consequences.

For the past two years, the United States has funded and enabled genocide in Gaza, where tens of thousands of civilians have been killed with U.S. weapons, under U.S. protection, with full knowledge that no meaningful consequences will follow. A recent Al Jazeera investigation revealed that U.S. supplied thermal and thermobaric munitions, burning at 3,500 degrees Celsius, effectively evaporated nearly 3,000 Palestinians, leaving no trace of their bodies, a stark illustration of unchecked barbarism. And as we speak, Israeli authorities are reportedly preparing to execute Palestinian prisoners under mandatory death penalties in military courts for vaguely defined “terrorism” offenses, laws applied only to Palestinians. And yet Canada, despite claiming to have imposed an arms embargo, continues to supply ammunition and weapons parts that fuel this violence. Canadian factories produce fighter jet

components, explosives, and munitions that flow through U.S. channels directly into the assault, sustaining the machinery of death while Ottawa issues carefully worded statements of concern.

This silence is not confined to Gaza. After the United States launched strikes on Iranian nuclear sites, Ottawa responded with bland calls for calm and diplomacy. Still, it deliberately refrained from directly condemning Washington’s military action, instead echoing cautious G7 language about negotiation without even naming the U.S. role in the escalation.

And when the U.S. carried out large-scale strikes in Venezuela and captured its president, Canada’s official statement did not even bother to mention the United States. And, instead offered abstract calls for all parties to “uphold international law” while leaving Washington’s unilateral intervention unchallenged.

In each case, Ottawa paid lip service to restraint while leaving raw power untouched, exposing how Ottawa’s posture has consistently privileged diplomatic caution over moral accountability.

Although recently, it did seem that Canada’s posture

might be shifting, tellingly, not because of mass civilian deaths abroad. The change came only when U.S. military adventurism edged closer to home. Prime Minister Mark Carney's warnings about a collapsing rules-based international order only came after the U.S. threatened Greenland, a territory tied to NATO allies and Arctic stability. Only then did Canada speak clearly about sovereignty, coercion, and the dangers of unchecked power. The timing is telling. It suggests Canada perceives the risks of impunity only when they threaten Western interests or its own proximity, while the devastation inflicted on others remains effectively invisible.

Even then, the response has remained largely rhetorical.

And now, as the humanitarian catastrophe looms in Cuba, Canada appears to be relying on verbal gymnastics to maintain political correctness while avoiding meaningful action. Even though, on paper, Ottawa opposes U.S. sanctions and the blockade, in practice, it offers no condemnation, no advocacy, and no protection for ordinary Cubans facing hunger, blackouts, and collapsing hospitals. Suffice it to say, Canada has by now perfected the role of silent bystander to nearly an art form.

Today, the mechanisms that enable atrocity, impunity, exceptionalism, and allied silence are on full display and fully operational, and Cuba is simply the latest victim. To call the United States' behavior "outside the spirit of international law" would be a grotesque understatement. Washington treats international law as optional, shielding mass civilian slaughter through diplomatic vetoes, launching unilateral strikes with impunity, and sustaining devastation through overwhelming military support.

Canada is not responsible for U.S. actions. But it is responsible for its response to them. Ottawa has deliberately hidden behind bureaucratic loopholes while allowing Canadian-made weapons components and ammunition to move through U.S. supply chains and into Israel, insulating itself from accountability while profiting from the machinery of war. Carney's government has offered no clear or urgent plan on Bill C-233,

legislation intended to curb Canadian arms exports where there is a risk of war crimes. The bill continues to hang in limbo, while Canada remains embedded in U.S. military supply chains. Canadian-made F-35 components and ammunition continue to flow to the United States, where end-use accountability effectively disappears. Simultaneously, Canada continues to export armoured vehicles and security equipment to U.S. agencies, including ICE, an institution that has detained Canadian citizens without explanation, due process, or urgency.

When Canada's response to ICE's documented brutalities of its own citizens is so plainly inadequate, it comes as no surprise that its response to U.S. aggression abroad is equally hollow and insufficient. None of the countries affected by the U.S. aggression, Palestinians, Iranians, Venezuelans, Cubans, or others subjected to unilateral force, believe that Canada is in their corner in any meaningful way. None. Canada's response serves no protective function at all. It is a calculated performance of concern, engineered to evade moral obligation without disrupting U.S. power.

If Canada genuinely wants to make a difference, it can start with something simple and immediate: sell essential goods to Cuba, food, fuel, and medicine. Not statements. Not carefully worded press releases. Tangible relief that keeps lights on, shelves stocked, and patients alive. Yet, as so often before, Ottawa may retreat behind another polished, empty statement while taking no meaningful action.

Ottawa's approach is built on a reckless assumption that Trump's chaos is governed by strategy, that U.S. volatility is calculable, and that Canada will somehow remain exempt. That illusion has already collapsed. The same contempt for international law has now extended to Greenland, with explicit annexation threats aimed at allies. If Canada continues to hedge, appease, and delay rather than act on principle, it should not expect any support when its own sovereignty is challenged. Silence does not buy safety. It only invites escalation. If Canada does not adjust its course, it may find that when threats strike closer to home, there will be no one left willing to stand alongside it.

First Gaza, Then the World: The Global Danger of Israeli Exceptionalism

Ramzy Baroud

While many nations occasionally resort to a “state of exception” to deal with temporary crises, Israel exists in a permanent state of exception. This Israeli exceptionalism is the very essence of the instability that plagues the Middle East.

The concept of the state of exception dates back to the Roman *justitium*, a legal mechanism for suspending law during times of civil unrest. However, the modern understanding was shaped by the German jurist Carl Schmitt, who famously wrote that the “sovereign is he who decides on the exception.” While Schmitt’s own history as a jurist for the Third Reich serves as a chilling reminder of where such theories can lead, his work provides an undeniably accurate anatomy of raw power: it reveals how a ruler who institutes laws also holds the power to dismiss them, under the pretext that no constitution can foresee every possible crisis.

It is often argued that Israel, a self-described democracy, still lacks a formal constitution because such a document would force it to define its borders—a problematic prospect for a settler-colonial regime with an insatiable appetite for expansion. But there is another explanation: by operating on “Basic Laws” rather than a constitution, Israel avoids a comprehensive legal system that would align it with the globally accepted foundations of international law. Without a constitution, Israel exists in a legal vacuum where the “exception” is the rule. In this space, racial laws, territorial expansion, and even genocide are permitted so long as they fit the state’s immediate agenda.

Isolating specific examples to illustrate this point is a daunting task, primarily because nearly every relevant pronouncement from Israeli officials—particularly during the genocide in Gaza—is a textbook study in Israeli exceptionalism. Consider Israel’s

relentless assault on UNRWA, the UN-mandated body responsible for the survival of millions of Palestinian refugees. For decades, Israel has sought the dismantling of UNRWA for one reason: it is the only global institution that prevents the total erasure of Palestinian refugee rights. These rights are not mere grievances; they are firmly anchored in international law, most notably via UN Resolution 194.

While UNRWA is not a political organization in a functional sense, its very existence is profoundly political. First, it stands as the institutional legacy of a specific political history; second, and more crucially, its presence ensures the Palestinian refugee remains a recognized political entity. By existing, UNRWA preserves the status of the refugee as a subject with the legal right to demand a return to historic Palestine—a demand that the “state of exception” seeks to permanently silence.

In October 2024, Israel unilaterally legislated the closure of UNRWA, once more asserting its “exception” over the entire framework of the United Nations. “It is time the international community (...) realizes that UNRWA’s mission must end,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had already declared on January 31, 2024, signaling the coming erasure. This rhetoric reached its physical conclusion on January 20, when the UNRWA headquarters in occupied Jerusalem were demolished by the Israeli military in the presence of National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir.

“A historic day!” Ben-Gvir announced on that same date. “Today these supporters of terror are being driven out.” This horrific act was met with bashful responses, mute concerns, or total silence by the very powers tasked with preventing states from positioning themselves above the law.



A flag with an image of Marwan Barghouti at a protest against Israeli theft of land, Kufr ad-Deek, Palestine (Photo: KafrAdDeek)

By allowing this Israeli “exception” to stand unchallenged, the international community has effectively sanctioned the demolition of its own legal foundations.

In the past, Israeli leaders masked their true intentions with the language of a “light unto the nations,” projecting a beacon of morality while practicing violence, ethnic cleansing, and military occupation on the ground. The genocide in Gaza, however, has stripped away these pretenses. For the first time, Israeli rhetoric fully reflects a state of exception where the law is not just ignored, but structurally suspended.

“No one in the world will let us starve two million citizens, even though it may be justified and moral until they return the hostages to us,” Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich admitted on August 5, 2024. This “justified and moral” stance reveals a localized morality that permits the extermination of a population as an ethically defensible act. Yet Smotrich also lied; the world has done nothing practical to dissuade Israel from its savage pulverization of Gaza.

The global community remained idle even when Smotrich declared on May 6, 2025, that Gaza would be “entirely destroyed” and the population “concentrated in a narrow strip.” Today, that vision is a

reality: a genocide-fatigued population is confined to roughly 45% of the territory, while the remainder stays empty under Israeli military control.

Netanyahu himself, who has stretched the state of exception beyond any predecessor, defined this new reality during a cabinet meeting on October 26, 2025: “Israel is a sovereign state... Our security policy is in our own hands. Israel does not seek anyone’s approval for that.” Here, Netanyahu defines sovereignty as the raw power to act—genocide included—without regard for international law or human rights.

If all states adopted this, the world would fall into a lawless frenzy. In his seminal *State of Exception*, Giorgio Agamben diagnosed this “void”—a space where law is suspended but “force of law” remains as pure violence. While his recent stances have divided the academic community, his critique of the exception as a permanent tool of governance remains an indispensable lens for understanding the erasure of Palestinian life.

Israel has already created that void. In the hands of a genocidal settler-colonial society, the state of exception is a relentless nightmare that will not stop at the borders of Palestine. If this “exception” is allowed to become the permanent regional rule, no nation in the Middle East will be spared. Time is of the essence.

How Venezuela Poses an “Unusual and Extraordinary Threat” to the U.S. Agenda

Celina della Croce

U.S. President Donald Trump has not shied away from admitting his thirst for Venezuelan oil. On 16 December 2025, in the leadup to the 3 January bombing of Caracas and kidnapping of the country’s president and first lady, Nicolás Maduro and Cilia Flores, he claimed ownership over Venezuela resources, stating that “America will not... allow a hostile regime to take our Oil, Land, or any other Assets, all of which must be returned to the United States, IMMEDIATELY”. In his previous administration, he echoed the same obsession with resource-driven regime change, decrying in June 2023 that “When I left [office], Venezuela was ready to collapse. We would have taken it over. We would have gotten all that oil. It would have been right next door.” Yet Venezuela is not only home to the world’s largest known oil reserve, but also the continent’s largest gold reserves and an ample supply of bauxite, diamonds, iron ore, nickel, and coal... And, not least of all, hope.

Trouble at Home

Within his own borders, Trump faces heightened civil unrest, with over 100,000 people in Minneapolis alone taking to the streets (roughly a quarter of the city’s population) during a 23 January general strike—an action that has not been seen on this scale for decades—and again during a 30 January nationwide shutdown. Similar uprisings have spread across the country, from Los Angeles to New York, following ICE’s murder of Renée Good and Alex Pretti. This massive outpouring follows a year of discontent and marches decrying Trump’s anti-immigrant, anti-poor policies.

The escalation of ICE’s tactics under the Trump administration has cost U.S. taxpayers, reaching an all-time high of \$85 billion in allocated funds (compared to annual spending that has hovered around \$10 billion or less for the past decade). Much of these

funds go to benefit private corporations: for instance, 86 percent of detainees are held in private, for-profit prisons (whose stocks skyrocketed as a result of Trump’s election and subsequent policies), and the cost of deportation flights, also run by private companies, is astronomically higher than commercial flights (the per-person cost of a deportation flight from El Paso to Guatemala, for example, is \$4,675—five times higher than a commercial first-class ticket for the same route). At the same time, Trump’s administration has slashed social spending, with a \$186-billion reduction to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits alone (a program that, up to that point, helped 1 in 8 people in the U.S. with the basic provision of food).

In the United States, and the West in general, there is a deep-seated narrative that this is just the way things are. Perhaps we can tone back the violence—swap out a Donald Trump for a Joe Biden who is more cautious with his tactics and open to mild concessions but no less interested in protecting capitalist profits at all costs. Even key figures in Trump’s own party, from Senators Josh Hawley (R-MO) and Todd Young (R-IN) to Trump’s former Vice President Mike Pence, have sought to distance themselves from his extreme tactics and distaste for liberal democracy (a general audacity that risks backfiring lest it create sufficient dissent and turmoil to provoke a mass uprising and turn to the left). Yet neither party is willing to allow anything further than a meek liberal democracy beholden to the interest of a small but powerful elite, at most with enough provisions to keep the general population at bay.

Venezuela’s Break With the End of History

The U.S. population, like much of the world, has been told, time and time again, that History has ended. We may be able to eke out higher wages,

and certainly demand that the heightened assault on liberal democracy through ICE and the openly fascistic declarations by Donald Trump be brought under control, but anything beyond that is painted as impractical at best, and perilous at worst. Just look at the Soviet Union, we are told—it just doesn't work. Socialism sounds nice, but look at the suffering in Venezuela and Cuba. You don't want that, do you?

Yet this way of understanding the past, present, and future not only seeks to protect the interests of capital, tricking many working-class people into betraying their own interests, but is wildly inaccurate both by omission and by outright lies. And it seeks to cover up another extraordinary resource that Venezuela represents: a living example of hope, of unmovable dignity, of the success of a revolution that has not only brought a population out of extreme poverty but has lifted up its confidence and consciousness. In a country under extreme siege by more than 1,000 U.S.-led unilateral coercive measures, there are nonetheless a fraction as many homeless people as in the U.S. (where there are roughly 28 vacant homes to every 1 homeless person and 60 people froze to death in the streets during the most recent winter storm alone).

Even at the height of the crisis in Venezuela, as Trump ramped up his maximum pressure campaign and 40,000 Venezuelans died in a single year (2017-2018) due to the lack of medicines and healthcare that had previously been provided freely to the population, the vast majority of Venezuelans have continued to fight to defend not only their right to self-determination, but also to revolution and transformation. What exactly are the Venezuelan people fighting for that the U.S. government tries so hard to cover up? What is the source of resiliency and loyalty to the Bolivarian Revolution, despite the tremendous human cost of U.S.-led efforts to overthrow it? And, what is the “unusual and extraordinary threat” that Venezuela poses to the U.S.—as then President Barack Obama decreed in a 2015 executive order that paved the way for the economic siege?

When President Hugo Chávez came to power in 1999, a revolutionary process began that would set

out to repay the “social debt” owed to the Venezuelan people, beginning by dedicating 75 percent of national spending to social investment—funds, importantly, generated by the country's historically predominant oil sector. Through missions that began the year Chávez was elected, the country elevated its population out of poverty and illiteracy, reaching a 100 percent literacy rate, with more than three million people learning how to read and write (Mission Robinson); training 6,000 professionals in universities and graduating one million high school students (Mission Sucre); granting nearly 5 million homes to families across the country (Mission Vivienda); building health clinics in 320 of Venezuela's 355 municipalities (Mission Barrio Adentro); and restoring the eyesight of some 300,000 Venezuelans while providing eye surgery to 1 million (Mission Milagro).

President Nicolás Maduro has continued this legacy, despite the duress imposed by the U.S.-led unilateral coercive measures imposed in the years following Chávez's death, ensuring not only that the country's resources benefit the well-being of the majority, but also that power is given back to the people through a model of direct democracy. Weeks before he was kidnapped, for instance, Maduro convened the Constitutional Congress of the Working Class, the culmination of 22,110 assemblies in workplaces across the country in which delegates debated and made proposals to the president about the future of the country's labor sector and productive processes, such as strengthening domestic production of machinery components in order to reduce external technological dependency. Aprobada (‘approved’), Maduro told delegate María Alejandra Grimán Rondón as she presented him with the conclusions of the congress in front of a packed auditorium; for another proposal, “the method still needs to be refined”, he replied, outlining next steps for further debate. Furthermore, communes (grass-roots organisations at the heart of Venezuela's direct democracy through which communities exercise self-governance) have engaged in quarterly national consults since 2024, with millions voting on the allocation of government funding for thousands of projects that most need attention in their communities, from updating medical equipment in their



Image: Carlos Latuff

local health clinics to investing in water filtration supplies to ensure access to potable water.

Both of these processes are part of a model of direct democracy that, in the 27 years of the Bolivarian Revolution, has held 31 elections, carried out constitutional reform, and created structures for everyday people to make direct decisions about the path of the country. In short, while the accomplishments of the revolution are far too numerous to list here, at their core is a people who have reclaimed their dignity, taken control of their future, and made the irreversible decision to stand upright.

Unlike social democratic projects in the West, Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution has set out to fundamentally transform society and build a socialist project rooted in class struggle and run by its people. That means that the social advances are also tied to a process of raising consciousness among the population, whereby people become the protagonists of their own struggle in a process that ultimately seeks to give them the power and tools to run the country, replacing the bourgeois state with a communal one. In this system, decisions are made by

the population which is organized into communes and various social and political movements across the country. Through these processes, people learn how to run productive processes, from coffee to construction materials, and be effective owners of their own means of production; how to engage in popular decision-making processes across thousands of households; run communications teams; carry out education programs; identify, prioritize, and fix issues in their communities; and other elements that are necessary for a productive society that prioritizes the well-being of its people. All of this is done in line with core principals such as protecting the planet (with some communes collecting recyclable plastics and turning them into playgrounds, benches and chairs for the elderly and schoolchildren, and other needs expressed by the community) and centering the leadership and rights of women and marginalized sectors.

What Does the Future Hold for the Nobodies?

This dynamic process is a continuation of the path set out by Chávez, one that called upon the “nobodies” to be the makers of their own destiny. These “nobodies”—today the protagonists of one of the world's most resilient and equitable democracies—have shown, time and time again, that they will not sacrifice their dignity nor sovereignty at any cost, no matter how severe the threat. This example is no less valuable a resource than the country's oil, nor any less of a threat to the Trump regime and U.S. agenda at large. The example set by the Bolivarian Revolution and its people creates a fissure in the narrative that the U.S.—and the world—population must make the best of what we have, go to work every day with our heads down and spirits crushed, and forfeit our dreams of a better world. It opens a window for the nobodies of the world—and especially of the U.S.—to see that on the other side of events like the mass uprisings sweeping the country, they, too, could live in a society where the wealth that they themselves generate is reinvested into the common good rather than paying for bombs and lining the pockets of the few.

Gaza Teaches Us That Only Some Lives Are Worth Talking About

Sylvia Monkhouse

Since the so-called ceasefire came into effect in Gaza, Israel has killed over 500 Palestinians. But these lives – according to western media and politicians – are not worth talking about.

You probably won't have heard about Zaina, Menna and Maryam Al-Atbash. On Saturday, the remains of these young sisters were found on the street by their uncle. Aged between five and nine, they had been blown out of their Gaza City apartment by an Israeli airstrike. Their grandmother, Um Nael Al-Atbash, and aunt, nurse Islam Al-Atbash were also killed in the blast.

It's unlikely too, that you will have read anything about siblings Jibril and Sham Abu Hadaid. On the same day the Al-Atbash sisters were blown to pieces, these little children were sleeping in their tent in Khan Younis when it too was struck, burning them alive. The attack killed seven members from three generations of the Abu Hadaid family.

And you definitely won't know anything about the lives or identities of over 200 Palestinians whose graves were ransacked last week during an operation to retrieve a single Israeli body. For two days, the Israeli military mobilised tanks, drones and what locals described as "explosive robots" to recover the remains of Ran Gvili – an Israeli policeman killed more than two years ago. "They dug up about 200 graves," Khamis al-Rifi, a journalist in Gaza, said. "They tested them one by one until they found the [Israeli] body."

Ran Gvili's story has been blasted all over western media. There are countless articles celebrating his life, complete with photographs and anecdotes from his family and friends. His remains were air-lifted to Israel for a dignified burial. The

unearthed Palestinian bodies, on the other hand, were left "covered with sand by the bulldozers," with "some still visible on the surface" al-Rifi said.

Four Palestinian civilians were also killed by Israeli fire as they attempted to check on the graves of their loved ones following the operation. Like the bodies dug up by bulldozers – and the thousands more buried under Gaza's rubble – we don't know their names or anything about them.

A hierarchy of worth

The message we're being sold is clear. Some lives are worth talking about; others are worth nothing at all.

Of course, this narrative is not new. For decades, wealthy white people from western countries have been afforded infinitely more worth than poor brown and black people from the global south. The livestreamed genocide in Gaza however, has laid this disparity bare.

Just compare the days of wall-to-wall coverage of the Bondi beach attack with reports of 32 Palestinians killed on Saturday. Israeli forces killed more than twice the number of people killed in Australia. But those Palestinian deaths during a so-called ceasefire didn't even make the headlines.

Blocking communication channels

This erasure of Palestinian identity is no accident. Israel has done everything in its power to ensure the stories of Palestinians do not make it out of Gaza. Since October 2023, Israel has banned international media from entering the enclave, making

it impossible to come close to reporting on the actual number of people killed, maimed, orphaned – let alone faithfully tell their stories. At the same time, it has systematically assassinated Gaza-based journalists.

At the beginning of the year, Israel revoked the licences of 37 life-saving aid groups – including Oxfam and Doctors without Borders (MSF) – ensuring they can no longer operate in the Palestinian territories. Beyond depriving Palestinians of vital aid, the move cuts off one of the last remaining channels through which the world can see what is happening in Gaza. MSF in particular have borne witness to Palestinian suffering, sharing stories with western media and documenting some of the horrors they've witnessed in Gaza through published reports.

Israel's refusal last week to renew UN spokesperson Olga Cherevko's visa prompted UNRWA's Director-General Philippe Lazzarini to state: “[this] follows a pattern of actively silencing aid workers...who are considered ‘too vocal’ about what they have seen on the ground”. These humanitarian partners, he added, “are being forced to make a choice between being the ‘voice of the voiceless’ or being permitted to do their work at all.”

Non-human by association

What's also striking is that this effort to silence and dehumanise is applied to anyone who speaks up for Palestinians too.

UN special rapporteur for the Palestinian territories, Francesca Albanese, has described herself as a “non-person” since the US government imposed sanctions on her last year. The punishing sanctions – which came days after she published a report accusing western corporations of being complicit in Gaza's genocide – have left her unable to use credit cards or book hotels or flights. Her assets in the US – including her bank account and apartment – have been frozen. “It's important that people understand the extent... the United States, Israel and others would go to

silence the voice of justice, the voice of human rights” Albanese said.

Greta Thunberg – once courted by world leaders and named person of the year by Time magazine in 2019 for her climate activism – has effectively been cancelled since raising her voice for Palestine. On her second attempt to reach Gaza via the Global Sumud Flotilla to deliver humanitarian aid, Thunberg was abducted by Israeli forces and taken to Ktzi'ot Prison. Here, according to various statements from Thunberg's fellow passengers and her own testimony, she was tortured and sexually abused.

The story – shocking both for what happened and who it happened to – was met with strikingly little coverage in western media. There were no condemnations from the world leaders so eager to be photographed with Thunberg five years ago. No opinion pieces in the mainstream media calling for an investigation and demanding justice for Greta. Nothing at all from Time magazine.

And not a single mainstream media outlet reported the accusation of rape by German journalist Anna Liedtke – who was also onboard the flotilla. During an international conference, the 26-year-old described having been raped by Israeli guards after resisting a forced strip search while she was detained. But again, not a whisper from our politicians or media.

As horrifying as these revelations are, they offer only a glimpse into what it must be like to be a Palestinian living in the occupied territories. Following her assault in Israel, Greta Thunberg said: “If Israel, with the whole world watching, can treat a well-known, white person with a Swedish passport this way, just imagine what they do to Palestinians behind closed doors.”

Gagged and dehumanised, Palestinians have been stripped of their basic right to tell their stories. The media may have fallen silent, but those of us who still have a voice cannot. Please don't stop talking about Gaza.

Innovation In a Post-Growth Economy: Incentives Beyond the Profit Motive

Josephine Ewoma

What does innovation look like when profit and capital accumulation aren't the goal? I think about this often. Over a year ago, I began exploring this question in the context of technological innovation. Watching the AI arms race unfold between major tech companies, all claiming their innovations would reshape our lives, I wondered: what's the point? The answer was, and remains, for profit. To increase shareholder value. To win against the other tech bros. More recently, I've returned to this question about innovation in the context of post-growth futures.

Capitalist proponents argue that innovation, and human ambition, is driven by the desire to gain capital and financial security. However, innovation in our current imagining has led to extraction of resources and depletion of people and planet. With this in mind, how will innovation be re-imagined in the context of a post-growth economy? How will we, as humans not driven by capitalistic gains, be incentivized to innovate?

Is new always better?

Innovation is currently defined as 'introduction of a new idea, or new methods' — emphasizing that 'new' is an essential aspect of innovation. Many would argue that innovation leads to better outcomes — that innovation (and by extension newness) is better. But when we look around at our current environmental and societal outcomes, this doesn't ring true. We're in the midst of climate breakdown, mass biodiversity loss, poverty persists, and mental health issues are commonplace across a range of communities. This isn't to say that 'new' things haven't led to better outcomes for humanity; medical advancements, for example, have seen decreases in child mortality and increases in life expectancy.

But new hasn't always made things better, and if we continue to 'innovate,' where does it stop? In 1972, *The Limits to Growth* predicted that at some point during this century our planet would essentially collapse. So far, the model used in this book is quite accurate to our current reality. This book argued that on a planet of finite resources there must be a stopping point. This idea of a limit is necessary to how we reimagine innovation. There must be a point where we reach our peak. When our systems, technologies, resource extraction are absolutely optimised, there's nowhere further to go. This shouldn't be a breaking point, however — rather, this is the point where we as a society say 'this is enough, this works.'

Take the iPhone. Roughly every year Apple presents a new iteration: maybe the camera is clearer, the storage is higher, perhaps the phone is thinner than previous models, 'optimized' by Apple innovation. But approximately two years later, that phone runs slower. It's no longer compatible with the latest iOS. Surely, innovative technologies would be adaptable and enduring. Instead, planned obsolescence provides an opportunity for Apple to ensure that we buy new phones. Their incentive to 'innovate' is profit-driven. Innovation in this context demands that profit be the outcome, in this way innovation and capitalism are deeply intertwined. The growth imperative of capitalism is applied to innovation. We continue to push the needle of what we can create, extracting resources beyond our planetary boundaries and simultaneously produce waste.

Centering mutual aid

Moving away from our current understanding of innovation, how can we create a new definition of innovation that is aligned with a post-growth world? We need to consider where innovation has been ben-



Photo: Lucia Obst

eficial and focus on investing our time, energy, and resources into furthering innovation in those spaces. Our ultimate goal should be making our societies more equitable and happier, within our planetary boundaries.

Looking at the world's happiest countries, a few patterns become clear. Firstly, GDP is not always an indicator of happiness — as shown by Mexico (10th) and Costa Rica (6th). Secondly, robust social welfare and health, strong community, generosity, and high levels of trust are key factors in a country's happiness. Another key insight from the most recent report is that caring, or benevolent acts of kindness, is directly related to an increase in happiness. This was measured by whether people volunteer, donate and/or help strangers. All of these acts can act as a proxy for mutual aid. The report suggests that people doing these acts, and believing that others will do them too, led to an increase in happiness.

In Sweden, which is fourth in the list of happiest countries, the concept of *lagom*, or 'just enough,' might also give insight into how we truly reach happiness. Prioritizing people's happiness and equity is paramount to post-growth innovation. Shifting away from financial incentives towards community wellbeing is at the core of this work. Making mutual aid the

cornerstone of innovation will not only lead to people being happier, it is also likely to reduce the potential harms and waste of previous versions of 'innovations'. Our starting point becomes 'who can I support and care for' rather than 'what will ensure financial gain'. Innovation in a post-growth economy might ask questions such as:

- How can this benefit my community?
- Who can I build this with?
- Who can I learn from?
- Who can I share resources with?
- Is this necessary?
- Is this genuinely better than what we already have?
- Is this a good use of resources?
- Who, or what, might this harm?

Exploring questions such as these presents the opportunity to truly build better. With all this in mind, I invite you to consider other questions that post-growth innovation would engage with, and how you would redefine innovation. In a post-growth world innovation is born out of the desire to meaningfully support our communities. It asks questions about resource extraction, waste, inclusion (and exclusion), who can this help, and — most vitally — is this necessary?

From Historical Blockage to Radical Rupture: The Ontological Revolution of Socialism

Mahir Engizek

The intellectual framework of new socialism gains meaning through the transcendence of the three main pillars of modernity: statism, industrialism, and hierarchical rationality. These three pillars have been reproduced in different forms throughout history. Capitalism reinforced them through the dogmas of growth, competition, and the market. Traditional socialism, on the other hand, preserved these three elements under a different guise by expanding the state and centralizing economic planning.

For this reason, a new conception of socialism cannot be envisioned without a critique of modernity. To criticize modernity requires questioning not only economic relations but also modes of knowledge production, moral norms, perceptions of time and space, and even how society gives meaning to its own existence.

The knowledge production model of modernity is built upon the concept of “centralized truth.” This understanding produces knowledge not from within society, but through institutions positioned above society. The university, state bureaucracy, fields of expertise, and scientific authorities are the truth-production mechanisms of modernity.

Although these mechanisms ostensibly defend free thought, they reduce the diversity of social experiences to a single form of rationality. This reductionism destroys the richness of social knowledge. New socialism recognizes the production of knowledge by society and the place of social experiences in the production of truth. Therefore, “truth” is not a piece of information descending from the center to society, but a process arising from the multi-layered life practices of society.

This new understanding of knowledge is also mandatory for political transformation. Because as long as

knowledge production remains centralized, politics remains centralized. As knowledge disperses, politics disperses. As knowledge becomes democratized, politics becomes democratized. Therefore, new socialism aims for the dissolution of structures that monopolize knowledge. Strengthening the social circulation of knowledge is the fundamental condition for strengthening the social subject. This means the reconstruction of society’s capacity to give meaning to itself.

Reconstructing society’s world of meaning beyond modernity also requires a transformation in the understanding of time. Modernity views time as a linear line: the past is left behind, the future has not yet arrived, and the present is merely a transitional moment on this line. This linear perception of time constantly directs society toward the future; the future is always imagined as a more “advanced,” “larger,” and more “developed” stage.

This fetishism of progress is the common ground for both capitalist growth and traditional socialist developmentalism. Yet, freedom becomes possible by stepping outside the perception of linear time. Recognizing the cyclical and relational dimension of time returns society to a life suited to its own rhythm. New socialism evaluates time not through criteria of growth and development, but through social harmony and ethical life.

Modernity’s understanding of space is also open to criticism for new socialism. Modern cities squeeze human relations into technical functionality. Space becomes an area where production and consumption processes are organized. However, the liberation of society is possible through the re-socialization of space. Space is not merely a geography but also a network of social relations. Therefore, new socialism re-relationalizes space. The neighborhood, the commune, locality, and community transform into

political subjects. This transformation ensures that politics ceases to be state-centered.

In this context, one of the most fundamental goals of new socialism is to rebuild society's own organizational capacity. Under the modern state, society becomes a disorganized entity. The more the state grows, the more society shrinks; the more the state centralizes, the more society becomes passive. This passivity is one of the fundamental psychological structures of modernity that governs social life. The aim of new socialism is to make society an active subject again. When society's organizational capacity increases, the need for the coercive mechanisms of the state decreases.

The self-organization of society is not just a political model but also a philosophy of existence. When society organizes itself, the individual becomes not only an economic actor but also a political actor. This political agency takes the individual out of loneliness and strengthens them through social bonds. The modern individual is lonely. The individual of new socialism, however, is a relational being. This relational individual finds freedom not in loneliness but in subjectivity within social bonds.

The understanding of freedom in new socialism also requires an ethical transformation. Ethics is the invisible law of social life. In modern society, ethics has remained in the shadow of the law. Law is determined by the central authority; ethics is produced by the social conscience.

Therefore, the expansion of the centralized legal system often means the weakening of social ethics. New socialism sees law not as a mechanism that replaces society's ethical capacity, but as a tool that strengthens this capacity. As ethics strengthens, the need for a centralized legal system decreases.

The reconstruction of social ethics also requires placing economic relations within an ethical framework. The purpose of the economy cannot be merely production or growth. The purpose of the economy is to meet social needs and strengthen the ethical foundations of social life. Therefore, it is mandatory to

restructure economic relations based on community and with ecological sensitivity. When the economy is not compatible with society's ethical framework, freedom weakens.

This point points to the ontological dimension of freedom. Freedom is not an internal state of the individual, but a set of relations that determine the conditions of society's existence. When society is free, the individual is free; when the individual is free, society rebuilds its own organization in a more creative way. This mutual interaction makes freedom both an individual and a social process. Freedom is not the absence of power, but a form of existence that emerges with the dissolution of power within social relations.

Within this entire framework, while new socialism aims to transcend the contradictions of modernity, it simultaneously constructs a new social ontology. This ontology offers a new way of knowing regarding society's own existence. Society is not a hierarchical pyramid but a multi-layered network of mutual relations. Every relationship within this network carries the potential for freedom. Therefore, freedom expands with the reconstruction of social relations. It narrows as hierarchy and power relations increase.

This intellectual structure carries new socialism beyond old paradigms and turns it into an ethical, political, and ontological project of freedom. Such a project does not wait for the future; it builds its own future in the practices of today.

The radical transformation of new socialism is not just a theoretical construction but also a reconceptualization of social experience. In the terrain where modernity atomizes the individual and dissolves social bonds, experience is no longer evaluated in a purely economic or political framework as in the past.

Experience is the sum of social memory, cultural accumulation, ethical relations, and individual creativity. This sum is the most fundamental basis for the reorganization of the social subject. The subject can no longer be defined only by a class or an organization. It is the result of social bonds, cultural diver-



sity, gender relations, ecological consciousness, and historical memory.

At this point, the radical rupture directly invalidates the classical socialist paradigm that centers the state and central power. The power mechanism of the state is a framework that limits social relations. No matter how well-intentioned it is managed, the centrality of power limits social freedom.

New socialism makes the state a tool that supports the collective will of the social subject, not a central power. The power-oriented structure of the state functions as a mechanism that absorbs social energy; social organization, on the other hand, is a process that distributes and reproduces this energy.

Therefore, a free society is a stateless but organized society.

When women's freedom is placed at the center of this structure, social transformation is not merely a symbolic change. The dissolution of patriarchal relations requires a restructuring that penetrates even the smallest nodes of power. Women's freedom is not just gender equality, but the fundamental indicator of society's capacity to organize itself.

The dissolution of the patriarchal structure also clears the way for stateless democratic mechanisms, collective ethical norms, and social creativity. Women's freedom is the ontological foundation of the freedom paradigm. It ensures the formation of a new ethical and relational order at every level of social life.

Ecology is also an inseparable part of this holistic vision of socialism. Modern capitalism and industrialism treat nature as a means of commodification; they detach humans from nature and reduce living spaces to a single logic of production-consumption.

Yet, a free society sees nature both as a part of its own life and as a part of social relations. Ecological consciousness is a criterion of social freedom; the value given to nature is directly related to social responsibility and collective will. Therefore, new socialism is a life model that reorganizes both human and nature relations.

The dogmas of the modern left are forced to dissolve in the face of this radical rupture. The sanctity of the state, the absoluteness of central planning, the idea of a single revolutionary subject, and the linear understanding of history become invalid within the critical framework of Leader Öcalan's paradigm.

History is no longer understood as a process advancing on a single line, but as a multi-layered, multi-subjective, and relational organization. The future is not a utopia waiting for a certain moment to happen, but a process built through the continuous transformation of today's social relations. Freedom and socialism are no longer goals deferred to the future, but dynamics that must be actively produced at every moment of social life.

In new socialism, knowledge production also undergoes a radical transformation. Knowledge is no longer produced under the monopoly of central institutions and authorities. It is a product of social experience, collective memory, and cultural accumulation. This distribution of knowledge is the fundamental building block of social organization. When knowledge is democratized, power also disperses. When knowledge remains in a central position, power concentrates. Therefore, social liberation is closely linked to the democratization of knowledge production.

The relationship between the individual and society is at the center of this paradigm. The individual is not conceived as having a freedom independent of social relations. Freedom is reproduced within social relations. In these relations, the individual is both the subject and assumes the responsibility of the relations. The freedom of society feeds individual freedom. Individual freedom, in turn, strengthens social bonds. This two-way process defines freedom

not only as a right but also as a social obligation and a practice of life.

In new socialism, ethical and political fields are inseparable. Ethical transformation is a prerequisite for the reconstruction of social relations. In modern society, ethics often remains in the shadow of the law, and individuals are prevented from assuming their own responsibilities. In new socialism, ethics is placed at the center of social life. The individual and society regulate their own behavior through collective conscience. This ethics-based life takes the place of central authority and ensures the social continuity of freedom.

The radical rupture is a holistic paradigm that goes beyond classical socialism and the modern left. This paradigm addresses social, economic, cultural, ethical, gender, and ecological relations within the same integrity. It transcends the boundaries of the state and central power. It subjectivizes society collectively. It re-establishes the relationality between the individual and the community, and between freedom and responsibility. This is not just a theoretical proposal, but a vision of freedom and socialism fed by the practices of today and continuously produced.

New socialism is not only a proposal for a social order but also an intellectual project that transcends the epistemological and ontological boundaries of modernity.

While modernity atomizes the individual, it defines society as a mechanical system. This mechanical definition paves the way for hierarchy, centralization, and the concentration of power. New socialism, however, sees society as a network of relations. Every relationship carries freedom, every bond carries responsibility, and every community carries a creative capacity. This ontological transformation allows social life to redefine itself. Society is no longer an object shaped by power, but a subject that continuously produces its own existence.

Another dimension of the radical rupture is the reconstruction of the collective will. In traditional socialism, the collective will is squeezed into the state

or central party mechanisms. Individual subjectivity is often ignored or subordinated to central authority. New socialism processes the collective will within the network of social relations and positions the individual's subjectivity as an active element within this network. Collective will is no longer a top-down decision-making mechanism, but a horizontal, pluralistic, and continuously reproduced process. In this process, the individual is not just a subject demanding rights, but a creative actor shaping social experience.

Modernity's understanding of history also undergoes a radical critique. The traditional left has envisioned the line of history as a linear and progressive process. Revolutions, development, and central planning are seen as steps forward. Yet, new socialism conceives historical experience as a multi-layered, relational, and pluralistic field. The past is not merely a heritage; it is the source of today's social organization and the vision of future freedom. Making the past, cultural accumulation, and social memory visible again is the fundamental condition for social freedom.

In this context, social memory is not just historical knowledge, but also the creative source of freedom. Memory serves as a guide in the organization of social relations. When society's collective memory is strong, individuals and communities can organize their own experiences freely. Memory breaks modernity's myth of one-way progress and prepares the ground for a free future vision. The future is no longer a distant utopia, but a process built by the continuity of today's social practices.

In this new paradigm, economy is not addressed merely as a relationship of production and consumption. Economic relations are redefined together with social and ecological bonds. Capitalist growth and industrial production push the limits of social and natural life; new socialism shapes production within the framework of social needs and ecological balance. When economic processes are made compatible with social ethics and ecological consciousness, the potential for freedom is unlocked. This is not only an economic but also an ontological and ethical restructuring.

Women's freedom is at the center of social freedom. The dissolution of patriarchal relations directly increases society's capacity to question power relations. Women's freedom functions as a mechanism that disperses social energy and strengthens collective responsibility. Social freedom cannot be completed without women's freedom. Because patriarchy reproduces power through the state, the economy, and cultural norms. New socialism aims to dissolve patriarchy at these three levels and to re-establish social relations on the basis of equality.

Knowledge production is also an inseparable component of freedom. Knowledge is not a content received from central authorities, but is produced through social experience and collective memory. The democratization of knowledge is the fundamental condition for social organization and collective will. As knowledge disperses, power also disperses; when knowledge is monopolized, power concentrates. Therefore, knowledge is not merely a tool, but a mechanism that shapes freedom itself.

The ontological and ethical dimension of freedom is at the heart of the holistic paradigm of new socialism. Freedom is not an internal state of the individual; it is a process reproduced within the network of social relations. The individual becomes free within social relations, and society nurtures individual subjectivity. This two-way process makes freedom both an individual and a social practice. Freedom is not the absence of power; it emerges with the dissolution of power within the network of relations.

In conclusion, new socialism transcends the boundaries of modernity, the classical left, and the paradigm that centers the central state. It subjectivizes society collectively, positions the individual as a relational being, questions patriarchy and central power, and offers an ecological and ethical framework. In this paradigm, freedom is not merely a right, but a continuously produced process, a form of existence, and the fundamental dynamic of social life.

New socialism is no longer a utopia deferred for the future, but an existential space built with the relational, collective, and creative social practices of today.