The Origin of All Problems Was the Coup of 1913

Although the wealthy have been trying to take over our government since its founding on July 4, 1776, it took Lincoln's Civil War and the Coup of 1913 to actually bring it to fruition. The Coup of 1913 was the origin of the Treason to follow in the next 113 years.

The Coup of 1913 is an enabler that allows the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence to be ignored. These documents, among other things, state that all people are equal, with unalienable rights to life,liberty, and property, and most importantly, government gets its power from the consent of the governed. Elected Officials take a solemn oath to the Constitution and then undermine it for greed and power.

Everything that We the People deserve, based upon the sacrifices of our forbearers, are contained in the Constitution and Declaration of Independence. It is estimated that our present government is only about 50% Constitutional, with the balance being a Criminal Enterprise. Our Rights under the Declaration of Independence have been denied us by our elected officials taking orders from the Parasitic Super-Rich Ruling Class (PSRRC) and the Jewish Lobby.

By **Andrew Wallace**
October 19, 2026

If I were Thomas Paine, I would have the talent to motivate citizens during the next election to tell their elected officials to go to hell if they don't comply with the founding documents that guarantee our rights. This is a complex subject, but as is my wont, I will attempt to explain it using as few words as possible. My primary purpose as a writer is to give voters the information they need. Following is an explanation of the elements of the Coup of 1913 .

The Federal Reserve Bank prints Fiat currency out of thin air with no backing whatsoever. This allows for financing wars, foreign aid, foreign deployments, all kinds of theft and corruption resulting in inflation and transfer of the People's assets to the wealthy PSRRC. The Constitution requires gold and silver money to protect people's assets, but they can't print gold and silver. In other words, the private banks that own the Fed also control our country. If the Fed gets the CBDC digital fiat currency they desire, people will be totally controlled; no cash in their pockets, buying only approved items or not allowed to buy anything. China is an example of the consequences.

The Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution authorized the Income Tax, which effectively reversed the political and financial roles of the federal and state governments, making a Constitutional Republic impossible.

The Seventeenth Amendment to the Constitution took away the legislature's appointment of Senators, replacing it by popular vote, which means the Senate is now controlled by big donors, PSRRC, and the Jewish lobby.

October 26, 2026
ICRMC Packet

Tax-Free Foundations allowed the wealthy families to control their wealth forever, with minor inconsistencies.

The Coup of 1913 facilitated all the attacks on the People and the Republic that followed. We will look at some of the major events that deprived Americans of their lives, standard of living, freedoms, and assets and went to the Parasitic Super-Rich Ruling Class (PSRRC).

First, there was no justification for our participation in WW1 and WW2 except to fatten the pocketbooks of the PSRRC. The same is true for the conflicts for 81 years after WW2. The post-9/11 wars were also to support Israel's wars for control of the region. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor was caused by our government, which knew of the pending attack and did not warn the military.

WW1 started in 1917 and cost us $58 billion and the loss of 115,000 military dead. WW2 started for us in 1941 and cost $4 trillion (40% of GDP) and the loss of 418,500 military dead.

After WW2, during !945-2026, we were in almost constant wars for no legitimate reason except to make money for the PSRRC. The cost of these wars was $15 trillion and 105,000 military dead. The post-9/11 wars are included in these figures. These were wars to support Zionist Israel and we spent $10 trillion and lost 7,000 military dead.

Participation in all these wars was for no legitimate reason other than to enrich our rulers and their minions in government. But we lost 625,500 of our sons and daughters in our military, used as mercenaries at a cost of $19 trillion. I guarantee you that if we had not lost our treasure and our children to the greed in government, PSRRC, and the Jewish Lobby, we would be very prosperous.

The other great sucking sound that was stealing our assets and living standard was the Great Depression from 1930 to 1940. Unemployment went to 25%. The public debt was $16.9 billion at start of the Depression and increased to $33.7 billion to fund the Depression.

The Great Depression was caused by the Federal Reserve Bank's policy of lending easy money, which it then reversed, causing bank and business failures. The wealthy were then able to buy homes, farms and businesses for pennies on the dollar, depriving people of their assets.

Contrary to the opinion of many, the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930 did not cause the Depression, as the Depression had already started.

The government confiscated all the gold when it was $20.67 an ounce. Then in 1935, the government revalued gold to $35 an ounce. Today's price of gold is $ 4,204 an ounce.

It is important to note that our government is now spending 50% more than its income of $5 trillion with a debt of $40 trillion, making an Economic Collapse almost a foregone conclusion.

When Social Security was enacted in 1935, the life expectancy for men was 60 and for women was 64. The retirement age for Social Security was set at 65.

You don't have to be an Economist or an Accountant to see that the American people have been screwed for 113 years by its government at the direction of the Parasitic Super-Rich Ruling Class (PSRRC) and the Jewish Lobby. It is obvious that we have no valid or Constitutional reason to spend our money on foreign aid, foreign deployments, foreign wars, funding Zionist Israel or funding Communism in the cities. If we stop these unconstitutional activities and follow the Constitution, Americans can live in prosperity.

If our founding documents, the Supreme Law of the land, were followed, we could be in heaven on earth. But that is impossible without law enforcement of government, which will never happen because the FBI is complicit and corrupt.



A government that calls everything a security threat will have trouble rallying allies, or voters, when a real one arrives.

— Veronique de Rugy, "Trump Says He Wants To Beat China With Tariffs. He's Made the U.S. Weaker Instead" [2026]



W H Auden

September 1, 1939

I sit in one of the dives
On Fifty-second Street
Uncertain and afraid
As the clever hopes expire
Of a low dishonest decade:
Waves of anger and fear
Circulate over the bright
And darkened lands of the earth,
Obsessing our private lives;
The unmentionable odour of death
Offends the September night.
Accurate scholarship can
Unearth the whole offence
From Luther until now
That has driven a culture mad,
Find what occurred at Linz
What huge imago made
A psychopathic god:
I and the public know
What all schoolchildren learn,
Those to whom evil is done
Do evil in return.

Exiled Thucydides knew
All that a speech can say
About Democracy,
And what dictators do,
The elderly rubbish they talk
To an apathetic grave;
Analysed all in his book,
The enlightenment driven away,
The habit-forming pain,
Mismanagement and grief:
We must suffer them all again.

Into this neutral air
Where blind skyscrapers use
Their full height to proclaim
The strength of Collective Man,
Each language pours its vain
Competitive excuse:
But who can live for long
In an euphoric dream;
Out of the mirror they stare,
Imperialism's face
And the international wrong.

Faces along the bar
Cling to their average day:
The lights must never go out,
The music must always play,
All the conventions conspire
To make this fort assume
The furniture of home;
Lest we should see where we are,
Lost in a haunted wood,
Children afraid of the night
Who have never been happy or good.

The windiest militant trash
Important Persons shout
Is not so crude as our wish:
What mad Nijinsky wrote
About Diaghilev
Is true of the normal heart;
For the error bred in the bone
Of each woman and each man
Craves what it cannot have,
Not universal love
But to be loved alone.

From the conservative dark
Into the ethical life
The dense commuters come,
Repeating their morning vow;
'I will be true to the wife,
I'll concentrate more on my work,'
And helpless governors wake
To resume their compulsory game:
Who can release them now,
Who can reach the deaf,
Who can speak for the dumb?

All I have is a voice
To undo the folded lie,
The romantic lie in the brain
Of the sensual man-in-the-street
And the lie of Authority
Whose buildings grope the sky:
There is no such thing as the State
And no one exists alone;
Hunger allows no choice
To the citizen or the police;
We must love one another or die.

Defenceless under the night
Our world in stupor lies;
Yet, dotted everywhere,
Ironic points of light
Flash out wherever the Just
Exchange their messages:
May I, composed like them
Of Eros and of dust,
Beleaguered by the same
Negation and despair,
Show an affirming flame.

Our Failed Constitution

by Andrew P. Napolitano | Oct 23, 2026 | 0 Comments

"The natural progress of things is for liberty to yield, and government to gain ground."
~ Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826)

The U.S. Constitution was ratified to create and to restrain the government. It established boundaries beyond which the government may not venture, even when it invokes national security, public order, economic necessity, emergency or the will of a popular majority. Its purpose is not to make government more powerful but to keep the government off the people's backs.

By that measure, the American Constitution is a failure. Formally, the document physically survives, its ceremonies continue, and politicians swear their oaths to abide it. Yet functionally, the government it was designed to restrain has accumulated vast and totalitarian powers that its authors would never recognize.

Power grows, concentrates and perpetuates itself, while liberty contracts. Every emergency supplies a justification for new authority. Every temporary restriction threatens to become permanent. Every president discovers powers that his predecessors claimed but that the Constitution never authorized. And every generation is told that the latest surrender of freedom is necessary to preserve freedom itself.

The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 criminalized criticisms of government officials. Newspaper editors and political opponents faced prosecution. The government that had declared independence from a distant king was punishing Americans for criticizing their own elected officials.

The contradiction was extraordinary. The First Amendment had been adopted precisely to prevent the federal government from suppressing political expression; and it was ratified by some of the same human beings who later voted to undermine it. Thomas Jefferson and James Madison resisted these measures, recognizing that a government that could legally determine which political opinions may be expressed will eventually confuse criticism with sedition. And so it did.

During the Civil War, the Lincoln administration suspended habeas corpus, imposed military dictatorships which arrested civilians, and directed armies to kill civilians. In Ex Parte Milligan (1866), the Supreme Court invalidated Lincoln's arrests without trial and affirmed a principle that ought to be self-evident: Neither Congress nor the president can simply replace constitutional government with personal or unaccountable authority.

But that did not stop Woodrow Wilson from arresting those who verbally opposed the draft or Congress from establishing the administrative state as a fourth and unaccountable branch of government or FDR from arresting Japanese-Americans for being Japanese-Americans.

The Federal Reserve Act of 1913 created the Federal Reserve System, a central banking institution with authority over monetary conditions. It triggered unlimited money creation, and the eventual abandonment of gold convertibility in 1933 and the end of the dollar's international gold convertibility in 1971.

The Federal Reserve today creates money whenever it wants, and its monetary expansion weakens the purchasing power of money and transfers costs onto future generations.

The National Security Act of 1947 created the CIA and established the national security state as the fifth branch of government, truly unaccountable. The United States had emerged from World War II with unprecedented military power and global ambitions. Rather than return to a posture of restraint, Washington established over 850 worldwide permanent military and intelligence institutions designed for a world of perpetual confrontation and American domination.

The CIA was created to collect intelligence, not to serve as the president's personal army. Nevertheless, its history of secret interventions, covert actions, murders, tortures and even domestic operations conducted beyond ordinary public scrutiny raises a fundamental constitutional question: Who controls the government when the government acts in secret?

The national security state also perpetuates itself. Agencies justify their budgets through threats; military establishments seek new missions; presidents discover that secret operations are politically easier than openly debated wars. What began as a response to a particular international crisis becomes a permanent structure of government. The republic that once warned against standing armies and foreign entanglements is now a failing empire that thrives on both.

The Patriot Act of 2001 extended this pattern into domestic surveillance. Enacted after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, it radically expanded surveillance authorities available to federal agencies, and it unleashed the federal government's mass suspicionless and warrantless surveillance; today capturing every keystroke and conversation transmitted on fiber optic cables anywhere in the U.S.

Across these episodes, the pattern repeats itself. Government restricts speech in the name of stability, expands executive power in the name of war, weakens monetary discipline in the name of economic management, conducts secret operations in the name of security and broadens surveillance in the name of preventing terrorism. Each measure arrives with an explanation. Each emergency is declared exceptional. Yet the accumulated result is a government more powerful and a citizen less secure in his liberty. And none is countenanced by the Constitution.

Was Jefferson right that the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants? His famous language arose from the revolutionary generation's experience and its fear of concentrated power. It expressed a belief that liberty cannot survive without eternal vigilance and a continuous willingness to resist oppression.

The deeper question is whether the Constitution can preserve liberty when the people entrusted with enforcing it benefit from its erosion. The answer depends upon whether Americans treat government as their servant or their master.

In the long march of history, power tends to grow because those who possess it have incentives to retain it, while those who surrender their freedoms rarely recover them. All of these attacks on liberty were enacted or performed with popular support even though the Constitution was crafted to prevent Congress and the president from popularly or unpopularly impairing personal freedom.

If Americans fail to regard freedom as a birthright, the Constitution may survive as a historical document while the constitutional republic it created becomes a bankrupt failure.

The Constitution cannot save a people who have abandoned the principles from which it sprang. Ultimately, liberty survives only when the governed insist that the government remain within its constitutional limits. If it won't, we must alter or abolish it.

The seventh of October 2023 didn't change everything. It did, however, change a lot.

Gaza has now been reduced to rubble, obliterated. But since Gaza emerged as a distinct entity after Israel's ethnic cleansing in 1948, it's always been a forbidding place. The recurring image to outside observers has been that of a concentration camp. Whether or not the description is precisely accurate, whether or not Gaza is analogous to the Nazi concentration camps, can legitimately be queried. But that's the juxtaposition that reflexively leapt to mind—and on its own is telling. When Gaza was under Egyptian administration in the mid-1950s, a senior UN official stationed there observed that "[o]ne does not see people starving or dying of disease in the streets; nevertheless the Gaza Strip resembles a vast concentration camp."[1] A US Senator who visited Gaza soon after the June 1967 war informed Congress that Gaza was "a vast concentration camp on the sand, if you will."[2] A respected sociologist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem reckoned Gaza in a 2003 book as "the largest concentration camp ever."[3] The former head of Israel's National Security Council and still an influential figure with the current Israeli government referred to Gaza in 2004 as "a huge concentration camp."[4] This description of Gaza, by friend and foe alike, preceded Israel's imposition of a brutal blockade after Hamas won Palestinian parliamentary elections in January 2006. A UN Commission of Inquiry headed by a South African jurist and self-described Zionist found in 2009 that the blockade plausibly constituted a crime against humanity,[5] while Human Rights Watch found in 2024 that the blockade "is part of the crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution that Israeli authorities are committing against Palestinians."[6] Hermetically sealed off from the outside world, Gaza was "starkly transform[ed] from a potential trade route to a walled hub of humanitarian donations" (World Bank).[7] By the eve of 7 October, Gaza was reduced to a "human rubbish heap" (*The Economist*), a "sinking ship" (International Committee of the Red Cross), a "toxic slum" in which more than two million people were "caged . . . from birth to death" (UN high commissioner for human rights).[8]

But that was still only half the story. Israel periodically "mowed the lawn" (its macabre locution) in Gaza. That is, it launched high-tech killing sprees targeting Gaza's largely defenseless civilian population, 80 percent of whom were classified as refugees and half of whom were children: "Operation Rainbow" (2004), "Operation Days of Penitence" (2004), "Operation Summer Rains" (2006), "Operation Autumn Clouds" (2006), "Operation Hot Winter" (2008), "Operation Cast Lead" (2008–9), "Operation Pillar of Defense" (2012), "Operation Protective Edge" (2014), "Operation Guardian of the Walls" (2021). Each new Israeli "operation" typically picked up where the last one left off except at a qualitatively higher level of death and destruction. During "Operation Cast Lead," Israel killed 350 children, destroyed or severely damaged 6,000 homes, and left behind 600,000 tons of rubble. A UN Commission of Inquiry found that Israel's objective was "to punish, humiliate and terrorize a civilian population."[9] During "Operation Protective Edge," Israel killed 550 children, destroyed or severely damaged 18,000 homes, and left behind 2.5 million tons of rubble. The president of the International Committee of the Red Cross observed after touring the ravaged strip, "I've never seen such massive destruction ever before."[10]

Trapped in the vice of Israel's criminal blockade, Hamas desperately endeavored to carve out a path to normalcy. It tried *diplomacy*. A 2009 study by a US government agency concluded that Hamas had "been carefully and consciously adjusting its political program for years" and had "sent repeated

signals that it may be ready to begin a process of coexisting with Israel."[11] Its extended olive branches were met with silence, however, as Israel wouldn't brook anything short of total capitulation. Hamas then tried *international law*. After each of Israel's "operations" in Gaza, major human rights organizations would send delegations and the UN would dispatch a commission of inquiry to investigate human rights violations committed by either side. Each time Israel refused to admit let alone cooperate with them, while each time Hamas elected to fully cooperate, even as the investigative teams were often biased against the Islamic movement, in the faint hope that, although it itself stood to be indicted on criminal charges, justice would finally be done for the people of Gaza. Each time the investigative bodies produced voluminous reports that charged Israel with multiple war crimes and possible crimes against humanity. And each time Israel, machinating with the US, prevented any meaningful international response to the damning findings.[12] Hamas then endorsed *nonviolent civil resistance*. In 2018, the people of Gaza organized, and Hamas then lent its moral and practical support to, the Great March of Return, a principal objective of which was to end the criminal blockade. An authoritative report by a UN Commission of Inquiry documented in agonizing detail what happened next.[13] Israel deployed—in its own words—"specially-trained snipers, in order to ensure accurate and measured use" of live ammunition.[14] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) subsequently stated that "nothing was carried out uncontrolled; everything was accurate and measured, and we know where every bullet landed," while then-defense minister Avigdor Lieberman stated that "Israeli soldiers did what was necessary. I think all our soldiers deserve a medal."[15] The Commission of Inquiry found that "demonstrators who were hundreds of meters away from the Israeli forces and visibly engaged in civilian activities were intentionally shot. Journalists and health workers who were clearly marked as such were shot, as were children, women, and persons with disabilities."[16] Left abandoned by the international community, the demonstrators predictably reacted in rage and the hopeful, peaceful march descended into reactive violence and disintegrated.

Each and every avenue Hamas had ventured upon to free Gaza from thralldom proved to be a cul-de-sac.

By 2023, Gaza had vanished from the stage of international politics. No one any longer paid it heed. Even this writer, who had devoted a large part of his adult life to chronicling Gaza's martyrdom, had given up in despair and moved on. It appeared as if Saudi Arabia was about to enter into a joint alliance with the US and Israel, prefigured in the Abraham Accords signed with other Gulf states, that would seal Gaza's fate as a godforsaken, forgotten patch of land. On the eve of 7 October most young men in Gaza had been long unemployed as their natural gifts lay forever dormant and their human potential squandered. Arising at the crack of dawn, still, according to the calendar, in the sweetness of youth, they had naught to look forward to each day except pacing Gaza's 25x6-mile perimeter. The militants who breached the gates of Gaza the next day had been born into, languished in, and would almost certainly have died in—to quote again the head of Israel's National Security Council—"a huge concentration camp."

> *I stand up here . . . to obtain the liberation of two millions of wretched, degraded beings, who are pining in hopeless bondage, over whose sufferings scarcely an eye weeps, or a heart melts, or a tongue pleads either to God or man.*
>
> —Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, "Dangers to the Nation"

Decoding Pro-Israel Buzzwords in a Time of Genocide

by Norman Solomon | Oct 21, 2026

Nearly two years ago, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International released in-depth reports documenting that Israel had committed genocide in Gaza. Months later, Israeli human rights groups did likewise. Support for Israel has declined steeply among Americans, but its defenders continue to maintain a siege of buzzwords against Palestinian rights.

As historian Rashid Khalidi emphasized in his book *Brokers of Deceit: How the U.S. Has Undermined Peace in the Middle East*, "language matters." Standard terms and tropes "are the essential building blocks of a lofty and solid edifice of denial of an entire narrative, of the existence of an entire people, which is basic to the affirmation of a formidable counter-reality."

Prominent groups, notably the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee, AIPAC and Christians United for Israel – along with allies in Congress, the Executive Branch and the punditocracy – rely on the same buzzwords to defame critics of Israel and deny its systematic crimes against Palestinian people. For instance:

** **"antisemitic"**
At the top in the rhetorical toolbox, a blunt instrument for smearing Israel's critics no matter how true their accusations – and no matter the absence of evidence of bigotry against Jewish people.

** **"blood libel"**
A high-dudgeon epithet for equating valid condemnations of Israel with 900-year-old antisemitic craziness.

** **"held to a higher standard"**
A catchphrase to evade realities of Israel's ongoing large-scale crimes against humanity and the fact that Israel uses enormous U.S. military aid to impose apartheid, ethnic cleansing and genocide as matters of policy.

** **"homeland for the Jewish people"**
In other words: Palestinians will not replace us.

** **"indigenous"**
So, even Jewish Americans who recently moved to Israel are indigenous, unlike Palestinians whose ancestors have been living in Palestine for the last hundreds of years.

** **"Jewish and democratic state"**
It can't be oxymoronic just because it's an oxymoron.

** **"peace process"**
The process of Israeli expansion that has brought war and more war, with the U.S. government functioning as "Israel's lawyer" while arming Israel with massive quantities of weapons and continuing to make Israel (in the words of a recent Congressional Research Service report) "the largest cumulative recipient of U.S. foreign assistance since World War II."

** **"self-defense"**
A term reserved for Israelis but certainly not Palestinians.

** **"terrorism"**
When Palestinians kill Israeli civilians but not when Israelis kill Palestinian civilians in vastly greater numbers.

** **"renounce violence"**
A demand routinely made of Palestinian organizations but not of the Israeli government.

** **"Israel's right to exist"**
The standard gotcha question "Do you believe Israel has a right to exist?" can be answered with clear questions: "Do you think apartheid South Africa had a right to exist?" . . . "Do you think ethnic cleansing has a right to exist?" . . . "Do you think genocide has a right to exist?" . . . "Do you think the tens of thousands of Palestinian children killed by the Israeli military had a right to exist?"

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Norman Solomon is the national director of RootsAction and executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. The paperback edition of his book War Made Invisible *includes an afterword about the Gaza war. His new book,* The Blue Road to Trump Hell: How Corporate Democrats Paved the Way for Autocracy, *is free in e-book formats.*

The deaf, dumb and blind Empire of Piracy

Imperial deafness, dumbness and blindness is set to worsen.

The ways Iran is dismantling the entire American military ecosystem across West Asia with an extremely disciplined strategy are something to behold.

The whole CENTCOM support infrastructure is (devastating) fair game: from costly early warning radars to full air defense systems; from hangars to logistics hubs; from fuel and ammunition storages to forward operating bases; from naval and maritime surveillance assets to intel collection and communications nodes.

There's already a Greatest Hits playing all across the spectrum. Featuring, for instance, Tower 22 – which supports ops in al-Tanf; Muwaffaq Salti Air Base – which hosts U.S. aircraft for multiple ops; Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan, which supports intel and special ops; Bahrain, which as everyone knows hosts the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet HQ; Kuwait – a massive logistics and staging area; Qatar – which hosts the forward HQ of CENTCOM and the largest U.S. air base in West Asia.

Hits on all these nodes relentlessly undermine the myth of American power projection. New rules determine these nodes are essentially being rendered deaf, dumb and blind. Unlike The Who's classic, Persia is now the kid in the (military) candy store, playing a mean pinball against the Empire of Chaos, Lies, Plunder and Piracy.

Iran knows where everything is located – to the millimeter. No need to go for flashy photo ops Shock'n Awe-style monopolizing the news cycle. What matters is the Chinese torture of steadily degrading the enemy's capabilities; the strategy is painfully methodical, and painfully precise.

No wonder the Empire of Piracy is catatonic. What to do when your massively expensive and nearly irreplaceable sensing and monitoring hardware is being reduced to ashes? When your screens go deep dark? When the arrogant imperial confidence of the entire chain of command is being torpedoed in real time?

The Iranian Way of War is a sophisticated mix that may eventually be studied in Western military academies. All logically interconnected – from destruction of enemy support infrastructure to steady degradation of intel, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities; from attrition of air defense and interceptor inventories to widespread disruption of logistics.

And all that is supremely cost effective – but certainly not for the attacking Empire, as every (malfunctioning) Patriot costs millions of dollars, and simply cannot defend scores of different locations simultaneously.

In a nutshell: this is how a systematic degradation of the whole regional architecture that allows the U.S. and its vassals to project military power across West Asia looks like. Played out in front of the whole Global South. The manual is available for all, live, in real time.

Everything is running out

Iran's precision, restraint and reach is shutting up the whole vociferating spectacle emanating from the Empire of Narratives – as Iranian missiles and drones relentless strike fighter jets, Black Hawks, data centers (as in the Amazon central hub in Bahrain), logistics depots, power plants – and more.

The Global South just needs to check the satellite images of proverbial craters across Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and UAE. And Iran hasn't even started yet. Were Iran to obliterate Qatar's remaining LNG trains, that would leave most of the planet with no LNG from Doha for at least a decade – not to mention the helium for making microchips.

The massive humiliation of hitting and disabling one of those multibillion-dollar sitting ducks is being kept for the appropriate time. And as everyone knows, Iran runs the clock, and time is on its side.

Strategic Culture Foundation

Pepe Escobar

July 29, 2026 | FEATURED STORY

Israel's Critical Fuel Exposure

LARRY C. JOHNSON • JULY 23, 2026 •

What's going on with the Israeli hardliners? Following a security cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Smotrich said:

> The current situation, in which the conflict between Iran and the United States remains limited, is the right one and the best for us. We are not looking to get involved.

He elaborated that Israel's ultimate goal is to weaken and ultimately overthrow the Iranian regime, and that economic pressure (citing Iran's high inflation and currency collapse) is currently the most effective path. He argued the limited US-Iran confrontation, including pressure related to the Strait of Hormuz, benefits Israel without requiring direct Israeli military involvement.

But is he telling the truth? There may be another reason that Israel, despite some belligerent threats from Netanyahu, wants to avoid getting more involved in the war with Iran. I believe the answer may lie in an assessment I received the other day from a friend who is an energy expert and is an active consultant working with countries in the Middle East. Here are the key conclusions:

> CORE JUDGMENT: Israel's military posture is critically fuel-dependent. Air power is central to homeland defense, strategic reach and any protracted conflict involving Iran, Lebanon, Yemen or multiple fronts. The domestic middle-distillate system is concentrated in two refineries, with the larger Haifa complex still structurally impaired. Loss of both refineries would remove approximately 104 kb/d of diesel and jet/kerosene output. No assured external system can replace the resulting 88 kb/d sustained-war requirement at the necessary scale and speed. If import reception also fails, Israel enters a finite inventory clock that progressively compresses sortie generation, ground logistics, air defense, backup power and the wider military support system.
>
> **Executive Summary: Four Critical Deficiencies**
>
> 1. **NATIONAL REFINING CONCENTRATION**. Israel has no geographically diversified domestic refining system. Two facilities carry effectively the entire national burden. The current planning baseline is approximately 82.3 kb/d of diesel and 22.0 kb/d of jet/kerosene; Haifa supplies about two-thirds of combined middle distillates and roughly 70% of diesel. Loss of Haifa alone creates a 52 kb/d sustained-case deficit. Loss of both eliminates domestic supply.
> 2. **EXISTING STRUCTURAL IMPAIRMENT.** Haifa is operating, but it is not a fully resilient asset. Its dependence on interconnected power, steam, electrical, pipeline and transfer systems leaves the complex exposed to common-mode failure. The strategic danger is not merely reduced nameplate capacity; it is that further functional disruption could propagate across multiple processing and support systems at once.
> 3. **NO ASSURED REPLACEMENT SYSTEM**. With both refineries unavailable, approximately 88 kb/d of middle distillates must come from accessible stocks and imports under the sustained-war case. Black Sea supply is sharply constrained, global jet and diesel trade is compressed, Gulf refining availability is impaired, and every imported barrel remains dependent on insurance, shipping, reception, certification and internal distribution. Israel has procurement options, but no assured backup architecture capable of replacing its refining system at scale.

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4. **MILITARY POSTURE IS COUPLED TO MIDDLE DISTILLATES.** Israel's air force is central to deterrence, homeland defense, long-range reach and any protracted multi-front conflict. Jet fuel sustains aircraft; diesel sustains the system that makes airpower possible – air defense, ground mobility, logistics, communications, backup generation, maintenance and base continuity. A fuel crisis therefore degrades the entire military posture, not aviation in isolation.

Let me boil this down for you. During the first five weeks of Epic Fury Israel's refineries in Haifa and Ashdod were hit and suffered significant damage. Those two refineries are essential for Israel's ability to produce diesel and jet fuel. At present Israel is scraping by, but it does not have substantial reserves. Further damage to those refineries would create a fuel crisis for Israel, especially in terms of its ability to produce jet fuel. Without jet fuel, Israel's ability to continue bombing Lebanon and Gaza would be severely constrained, if not eliminated. A lack of diesel would also cripple Israel's ground operations. In short, renewed Iranian attacks on Israel's refineries could leave Israel unable to continue military operations.

WHO IN HELL ARE THE HOUTHIS?

by Eric Margolis

September 25, 2026

The Houthis are a small tribe in Yemen's mountainous north who love their quirky Zaidi sect of militant Islam, cherish their guns, and love to chew the narcotic shrub qat. I joined Houthis in the wild mountains of Yemen to follow their wars and chew qat.

Houthis like to argue, smoke weed and repel invaders. They live in one of our planet's wildest, most inhospitable regions, so bleak and arid that even the local camels are cranky and irritable.

The highlands are filled with squabbling tribes who call themselves pure Muslims while accusing their neighbors of being 'bad' Muslims. They do not welcome outsiders unless they bring tobacco and ammunition. The Houthis really dislike their Sunni Muslim neighbors. They deeply detest their Saudi Arabian neighbors who, in turn, despise their Yemeni neighbors as unlettered mountain bandits.

Into this hotpot of neighborhood animosities strode the Saudis. Long dismissed as illiterate Bedouin hicks, the increasingly rich Saudis decided they wanted to be the regional power. One of their first targets were the Houthis high up in the Arabian mountains.

Saudi Arabia had a strategic problem. Its rulers do not trust their small, feeble army. They fear it might stage a coup as is common in most Arab nations. So, the Saudis maintain a second Bedouin force called the `White Army'. It's a glorified camel corps. Saudi used to rent a 15,000-man division of Pakistan's crack army to protect its oil fields from covetous neighbors. Talks are underway again between Islamabad and the Saudis for a new Pakistani mercenary force.

In 2018, Saudi Arabia began a heavy bombing campaign against whatever Houthi targets could be found. Britain supplied the strike fighters. Pilots were mainly mercenaries from the US and Britain. Like the current US bombing campaign against Iran, results were sparse.

The attacks made a lot of Houthis really angry. Reportedly, 10,000 Houthis were killed. Finally, a bunch of Houthi warriors decided to go attack Saudi Arabia. Yemen's Houthis fired barrages of medium-range missiles at Saudi military bases and oil fields. At the same time, Houthis begam impeding the sole maritime passage out of the Red Sea, the Bab el-Mandeb. Coupled with the ongoing closure of the Strait of Hormuz, closing the Bab el-Mandeb (Gate of Tears) put world oil markets and shipping routes into a panic.

The Houthi blockade and Iran's closure of the Hormuz Strait caused a major jump in the price of oil and diesel fuel. Americans were outraged, particularly the truck drivers and farmers who formed Trump's voter base. The credo of America's far right remains 'God, guns and gasoline.' All three are sacred.

The Saudis are now pleading with the US, Britain, Israel and Pakistan to go after the Houthis. Large cash incentives are being offered to anyone who will bash these insolent tribesmen. Trump, for one, is scared of another small war. He should be.

Interestingly, the obscure Houthis are the only Arab nation willing to retaliate against Israel for its savaging of the Palestinians. The powerful Muslim nations – Egypt, Pakistan and Turkey – are scared of Israel and don't give a damn for the Palestinians,

So, the honor and pride of the Muslim world lies in the hands of a bunch of rag-tag, pot-smoking mountain bandits. A lot of Muslims would like to see them give the snooty Saudis a good kicking. Meanwhile, the Egyptians are sneaking troops back into Yemen, paid for, of course, by the Saudis.

Saint Leo the Wall Builder

August 1, 2026  Joseph Pearce

It is a reassuring thought that Pope Leo XIV lives in a city that Catholics call home, which is protected by a wall built by a great pope and saint named Leo.

The connection between truth and tradition is often made manifest in the names that new popes choose upon their election. This is as true of the present pontiff as of so many of his predecessors. Leo XIV has expressed his kinship of spirit with the previous Pope Leo, especially with respect to Leo XIII's crucial encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, published in 1891, which laid the foundation for the social teaching of the Church in the face of the challenge of both socialism and industrial capitalism.

Leo XIII's teaching was buttressed by Pius XI in his encyclical *Quadragesima Anno*, published in 1931 (on the 40th anniversary of Leo's encyclical) and by St. John Paul II in his encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, published in 1991 (on the centenary of *Rerum Novarum*). Joining his own voice to that of his predecessors, Leo XIV's first encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, stresses the importance of Leo XIII's earlier encyclical, especially with respect to the twin principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, upon which the Church's response to the challenges of modernity is founded.

Much more could be said about the Church as the champion of authentic political and economic liberty through its social teaching, but let's look at a couple of other popes who have borne the name Leo to see what timeless lessons they still teach.

St. Leo the Great, the first of all the 14 popes to bear the name, is honored as a Doctor of the Church for his theological teaching—but, also, for saving Rome from Attila the Hun and his invading horde. With great courage, Pope Leo met the fearsome conqueror and somehow persuaded him to withdraw his army, thereby saving Rome from being pillaged and burned.

In 455, three years after his meeting with Attila, Leo was unable to prevent the sacking of Rome by another invader, King Genseric, and his Vandal horde. Once again, however, Pope Leo had the courage to meet the invader face to face, saving the city from destruction. Although the Vandals plundered the city of its wealth, the pope's meeting with King Genseric prevented widespread murder and saved from destruction the Basilicas of St. Peter, St. John, and St. Paul, in which many of the terrified citizens of Rome had sought refuge.

Although Pope Leo I is rightfully known as St. Leo the Great, another Leo also deserves to be honored for his greatness and his sanctity. This is St. Leo IV, who became pope in the ninth century, four hundred years after his "Great" predecessor.

In spite of the centuries that separated them, Leo IV faced the same threat of foreign invasion. Whereas Leo the Great faced the Huns and the Vandals invading from the north, Leo IV faced invasion from the forces of Islam to the south and east. In 846, a year before he became pope, the outskirts of Rome had been plundered by Muslim raiders who sacked St. Peter's Basilica and the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls. The city itself was only saved by the Aurelian Walls, which had been constructed by the Roman Emperor Aurelian in the third century to protect the city.

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Considering that St. Peter's Basilica had been sacked because it was situated on the other side of the Tiber, outside the Aurelian Walls which protected the city of Rome, Leo IV made the building of a wall one of the top priorities of his pontificate. The Leonine Wall, as it became known, is two miles long and completely encloses and protects Vatican Hill and what is now known as Vatican City. It still stands—almost 1,200 years after its construction—as a living and lasting testimony to a great pope's prudence in defense of fortitude.

In 849, while the Leonine Wall was under construction, St. Leo IV received news of a Muslim armada near Sardinia, off the coast of Italy. Through the pope's efforts, a league of Italian cities formed a fleet which would meet the Muslims at the Battle of Ostia. Pope Leo blessed the fleet and offered Mass prior to the battle. As the battle commenced, a huge storm, a veritable act of God, put an end to the engagement as the ships battled merely to stay afloat. The Christian ships managed to return to port, whereas the Muslim ships were scattered and many of them wrecked off the Italian coast.

Are there lessons that can be learned from these earlier popes who have borne the name chosen by the present Holy Father? Are there lessons that the pope himself might learn from his illustrious and canonized predecessors? On the one hand, St. Leo the Great shows that dialogue, conducted with good faith and courage, can be a means of bringing peace; on the other hand, St. Leo IV shows the necessity of building walls to defend the things we love from enemies who seek to destroy them.

The building of walls is not only needed to secure a prison; it is also needed to secure a home. It is indeed a reassuring thought that Pope Leo XIV lives in a city that Catholics call home, which is protected by a wall built by a great pope and saint named Leo. May St. Leo the Wall Builder pray for the Holy Father and for the Holy Catholic Church.

Joseph Pearce

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> Freedom to differ is not limited to things that do not matter much. That would be a mere shadow of freedom. The test of [freedom's] substance is the right to differ as to things that touch the heart of the existing order. If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion or other matters of opinion, or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein."
>
> — Robert Jackson, U.S. Supreme Court Justice

A Framework for Peace in Ukraine

This proposed settlement – designed to help end a conflict that has cost hundreds of thousands of lives and carries a continuing risk of confrontation – addresses the causes of the war rather than only its symptoms.

by Jeffrey D. Sachs | Oct 22, 2026 | 1 Comment

The war in Ukraine can be ended permanently on terms that protect Ukraine's statehood, meet Russia's security concerns, and lay the foundation for a durable European security order. As another round of negotiations gears up in Norway, I propose a settlement concluded as a single package, signed by Ukraine and Russia, adopted by a vote of the United Nations Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter, and guaranteed jointly by the five permanent members of the Council together with other states that choose to join. The proposal rests on the principle of indivisible security set out in the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris.

The package would have four core commitments.

The first is Ukraine's permanent neutrality, adopted in a constitutional law on the model of Austria's law of 1955, which would return Ukraine to the founding choice of its Declaration of State Sovereignty of 1990. Ukraine would join no military alliance and host no foreign bases or forces, whether of NATO, the European Union, their member states, or Russia. Neutrality would not mean disarmament, and Ukraine would retain armed forces for its own defense.

The second is that Ukraine would pursue its candidacy for membership in the European Union as a permanently neutral state, with a neutrality protocol in its accession treaty on the model of Ireland's, and Russia would affirm that Ukraine's membership in the EU is consistent with Russia's security.

The third is an armistice line drawn along the line of contact on the date of signature. Each side would exercise de facto jurisdiction on its side of the line, neither would recognize the other's territorial claims, and both would renounce force in any future adjustment. This formula is compatible with both countries' constitutions, which bar or severely restrict the cession of territory.

The fourth is the end of NATO enlargement eastward. At signature the North Atlantic Council would declare that NATO will not admit Ukraine or other new members in Eastern Europe or the South Caucasus, withdrawing the Bucharest pledge of 2008.

The settlement would take effect as a permanent end of hostilities on signature, not as a temporary ceasefire, and its provisions would be implemented in stages under international verification. No element would be negotiated in isolation, and no party would be asked to make a concession in advance of signature.

The territorial arrangements are designed to address the concerns and claims of both sides. Ukrainian forces would withdraw from the part of Donetsk region that Ukraine now controls, which would become a demilitarized special zone. Russian forces would not enter it, the existing local civil administration would continue to function, and its final status would be left to negotiation. Russia would withdraw from the areas it holds in Dnipropetrovsk region and from the Kinburn Spit. A Northern Security Zone would be demilitarized on both sides of the Russian–Ukrainian border, and Russian forces would leave the areas they hold in Kharkiv and Sumy regions as Ukrainian forces withdraw from their side. The Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant would remain under Russian control with IAEA safety oversight and would sell an agreed share of its electricity to Ukraine at cost.

A demilitarized belt would run along both sides of the armistice line, with heavy weapons and long-range strike systems withdrawn to agreed distances, and mutual ceilings on forces would apply in the border regions on both sides. In the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, commercial navigation would be free for all Ukrainian and Russian ports, and attacks on shipping and ports would be prohibited.

The settlement in Ukraine should also begin the repair of European security as a whole. NATO and Russia would agree on a moratorium on ground-launched intermediate-range missiles in Europe, refrain from deploying nuclear weapons in any additional state, and restore the NATO-Russia Council. Normal diplomatic relations would be restored on both sides. The parties would convene the first summit of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe since 2010 to entrust the OSCE with monitoring the settlement, verifying arms limits, and overseeing the provisions on rights.

Questions of language, education, culture, and religion would be resolved according to European standards, with the Russian language treated on the same basis as Ukraine's other minority languages, and Russia would accept the same obligations toward Ukrainian speakers and religious communities on its side of the line. All obligations concerning extremism and incitement would be mutual and monitored by the OSCE. Prisoners of war would be exchanged on an all-for-all basis, detained civilians released, and separated children reunited with their families.

Sanctions would be lifted during 2027. Russia's immobilized sovereign assets would also be released, and private property seized or immobilized on both sides would be restored. An international reconstruction fund administered by the European Investment Bank would finance reconstruction on both sides of the line, with contributions from all parties, Russia included, in a common effort rather than as reparations. Gas transit through Ukraine could resume wherever there are willing buyers, without any commitment by the European Union to purchase Russian gas.

A report of serious violation by an OSCE monitoring mission of unarmed observers from states outside NATO would trigger consultations among the guarantors and referral to the Security Council. Ukraine would lift martial law and hold elections under OSCE observation, and the newly elected Verkhovna Rada would ratify the settlement and adopt the constitutional law on neutrality, while the Russian Federal Assembly would ratify it at the same stage.

This proposed settlement addresses the causes of the war rather than only its symptoms. Europe has been largely absent from the design of the peace. By putting forward such a framework, European governments can take the lead in building Europe's indivisible security and help end a war that has cost hundreds of thousands of lives and carries a continuing risk of confrontation between nuclear powers.

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The West as a civilization of infanticide

Would it be possible to speak of the "Epsteinization" of society as a whole, rather than of an "Epstein class"?

In its relations with the rest of the world, especially over the last two centuries, the North Atlantic West has adopted a posture of moral superiority – a superiority derived from its rationalist and individualist principles – over other civilizations of the world, which it viewed as barbaric. There was talk of a "white man's burden," as a supposed duty to elevate these so-called "barbarous peoples" to the supposedly superior civilizational level of the Western world.

If we fast-forward the clock to the future, however, and strip the West of its neon lights and chrome surfaces, the posture of "moral superiority" seems difficult to sustain. One of the most obvious examples of the deep Western crisis is the overwhelming, immeasurable effort the West makes to expand the possibilities of killing children.

In absolute numerical terms, according to data from the WHO and the Guttmacher Institute, North America and Western Europe together abort approximately 1.5 million fetuses annually.

But a purely numerical view does not allow us to contemplate the depths of the abyss.

Most countries in the world allow abortion, but under specific conditions, such as risk to the mother's life and health, with several countries also adding the fact that the pregnancy resulted from rape or that the fetus suffers from a severe disability. In these countries, as well as in those more liberal on this issue, there are time limits for the practice of abortion; that is, abortion, in permitted cases, is allowed within a specific time window, with limits ranging from up to 7 weeks to up to 17 weeks after the last menstrual period, for example.

Naturally, from a conservative perspective, we criticize the fact that some countries allow abortion for "socioeconomic" reasons or without any justification whatsoever, based solely on free and spontaneous will, but even these countries impose a time limit.

The reason behind the establishment of time limits is grounded in the development of the embryo and the stages it goes through. There are different understandings of when "life" begins, or when the fetus becomes a "person" (even if only potentially), or when it is sufficiently developed to feel pain, and the discussions surrounding these "stages" influence the public debate on "how late" an abortion can be performed.

But recent events in the U.S. make us reflect on whether the abortion debate unfolding in that country, and in Canada, truly has to do with "women's rights" or whether it serves a strange misopedic impulse of the "Far West."

In June 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the decision in Roe v. Wade, which served as a precedent to guarantee, at the federal level, access to abortion as a constitutional right up to approximately six months of pregnancy. This meant that the debate on abortion would be redirected to the states, which could then legislate according to their own understanding, as long as they did not contradict any eventual federal legislation.

With the end of this precedent, the states followed different paths according to pre-existing political tendencies. Much of the southern U.S. considers abortion completely illegal, except in cases such as risk to the mother's life or rape. Gradually, on the other hand, Democratic strongholds are liberalizing abortion rights.

And this liberalization is being promoted precisely by breaking limits that are upheld even in the most "progressive" countries regarding abortion – the restriction that authorizes abortions only at the "beginning" of pregnancy.

A few days ago, Governor Maura Healey of Massachusetts signed a law that eliminates the 24-week time limit for performing abortions, thus making it possible for women to abort babies at 7, 8, or 9 months of gestation – the so-called "late-term abortion." With this, Massachusetts joins Alaska, Colorado, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington, D.C., states that already authorized the killing of 9-month-old unborn babies.

Here it is worth reiterating a certain piece of information: European countries have a bad reputation for being more liberal than the U.S. on the issue of abortion, but no European country authorizes abortion at 8-9 months of pregnancy. Most, in fact, only authorize it up to the 3rd month. Even the USSR, constantly the target of harsh criticism from Western conservatives for its pro-abortion policies (after Stalin's death), only authorized abortion up to the 22nd week.

To understand the scale of the absurdity that has begun to happen in the U.S., in the 1st month of gestation, the embryo already has a heart pumping blood; in the 2nd month, its body already has a humanoid shape and moves on its own; in the 3rd month, its sex can already be determined, and it already makes breathing movements; in the 4th month, it already sleeps and wakes, makes faces, blinks, and the mother already feels "kicks"; in the 5th month, it already hears and recognizes the mother's voice and other sounds; in the 6th month, it already has a developed reflex and is already capable of surviving childbirth, if aided by a neonatal ICU; in the 7th month, it already has a sense of taste and already dreams; in the 8th month, it already responds to light stimuli.

Babies who are born prematurely do not allow us to lie: there is no visible external difference between them and a baby born after 9 months of gestation. What Massachusetts and 9 other U.S. states are authorizing is the free killing of completely viable babies. Why? What explains, for example, the sociopathic sadism of the women who smiled euphorically next to Governor Healey as she signed the legalization of "late-term abortion"?

Naturally, the pro-abortion argument relies on feminist narratives such as the issue of "women's bodily autonomy," with the fetus being seen as a parasite that should not be viewed as an autonomous life because of its dependence on the nutrition provided by the woman's body.

But can such an argument not be easily extended to the baby after birth?

Indeed, this is the line taken by the thought of Western philosophers such as Peter Singer (linked to Epstein through mutual friends, such as Steven Pinker) and Michael Tooley. For them, the "human person" is defined by its cognitive capacities of self-awareness, reasoning, and desire to continue existing, which, for them, do not exist in a newborn baby. Singer even compares the death of a baby to the death of a fish. More recently, philosophers Alberto Giubilini and Francesca Minerva put forward a defense of infanticide based on Peter Singer's arguments.

And, in fact, considering that the U.S. is legalizing the abortion of 9-month-old unborn babies (and that Canada and the Netherlands already authorize the euthanasia of babies), how long will it be before infanticide is legalized?

Perhaps the recent case of Lindsey Clancy, a mother who murdered her own young children with cruel refinements, gives us a grim indication. Social media posts defending Clancy have reached hundreds of thousands of likes, and a fundraiser to help her reached nearly 1 million dollars.

Would it be possible to speak of the "Epsteinization" of society as a whole, rather than of an "Epstein class"? If so, perhaps that is what we are seeing in the U.S.

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Raphael Machado

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Mises Wire

The Goal of Socialists Is Socialism — Not Prosperity

Political Theory, Politics, Socialism, Taxes and Spending

07/30/2026 • Mises Wire • William L. Anderson

I wrote this piece on socialism almost 10 years ago and with the rise of socialism again in the US, this article has become even more important in describing the real goals of socialists. Socialists are not seeking alternative means by which to better serve their fellow Americans. Instead, they are promoting a new ideology that socialists hope, in the words of New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani housing adviser Cea Weaver, will "impoverish the white middle class."

Forget the rhetoric from Mamdani and other "democratic" socialists about "affordability." The current wave of socialist rhetoric and action is about establishing socialism as the dominant arrangement for our political economy and has nothing to do with actually fulfilling the promises that socialist politicians are making. It is about imposing a socialist regime, which is an end in itself.

About 40 years ago, economist Bruce Yandle went to Washington to work for the Council on Wage and Price Stability, ready to apply his knowledge of economics and educate his fellow workers. After all, he reminisces, one eye-rolling, head-scratching decision after another was coming from government regulators that surely someone versed in economics could expose as stupid, wasteful, and downright ridiculous.

At some point, Yandle realized that the lay of the regulatory land looked quite different in Washington than it did in Clemson, South Carolina, where he was on the faculty at Clemson University. Regulators — and the representatives of the enterprises they regulated — were not looking to create an atmosphere in which the government tried to find the "optimal" set of regulatory policies that both minimized regulatory costs and allowed for the maximum removal of whatever "externalities" were created.

No, as Yandle writes:

> … instead of assuming that regulators really intended to minimize costs but somehow proceeded to make crazy mistakes, I began to assume that they were not trying to minimize costs at all — at least not the costs I had been concerned with. They were trying to minimize their costs, just as most sensible people do.

The more he examined the situation, the more he realized that all of the various actors in the system were acting in their own perceived self-interests — regulators, politicians, and those being regulated — and the

combination of their interests created perverse outcomes. The "big picture" view that those on the outside of the situation might have is irrelevant to what actually happens, and understandably so.

Far from the stated goals of the regulators and those involved in the process — that regulation was pursued in order to promote a lofty "public interest" — the real purpose of the regulatory apparatus is the promotion of the regulatory apparatus. The system exists to preserve and protect itself.

As I observe (and participate in) a few discussions on Facebook and elsewhere about socialism, I have come to a few conclusions about the nature of the arguments and the reasons why socialists remain socialists even as we see the utter failure of socialist economies throughout history. Maybe the meme that appears once in a while — "If socialists understood economics, they wouldn't be socialists" — might be true, but I doubt it. As I see it, the purpose of establishing socialism is to further promote socialism, not improve the lot of a society and certainly not to promote prosperity.

First, and most important, the minds of socialists work differently than do the minds of economists that see an economy as a mix of factors of production, prices, final goods, markets, and entrepreneurs that drive the whole route. Those of us who are economists are fascinated by this process because we see human ingenuity, the coordination of the goals of numerous people, and, when the system works, a higher standard of living for most people.

Socialists, however, don't see what we see. Instead, they see chaos and unequal outcomes. Not everyone benefits, right? In some situations, someone may lose a job or a way of doing things becomes obsolete. In the end, some people won't be helped at all, at least not directly, and in the mind of someone that has an organic view of society, the fact that certain entrepreneurial actions taken by some individuals have created goods that meet the needs of others is irrelevant. *Society should be providing those goods for free! People should not have to pay for what they need!*

Are you a surgeon who had done well financially because you have performed medical miracles for people who desperately needed your services? *You have exploited sick people!* Are you like Martha Stewart, who became wealthy in part by showing people how to make holiday celebrations better? *What about the poor? They don't have nice houses!*

When I first started writing about economics nearly 50 years ago, I was like Bruce Yandle, believing that all that was needed to convince socialists to stop being socialists was a well-reasoned economic argument. You know, explain that entrepreneurs don't earn profits by exploiting workers, but rather entrepreneurs make workers better off by directing resources to their highest-valued uses. You know, explain how a price system really does result in morally-just outcomes because, in the end, it directs resources toward fulfilling the needs of consumers. And so on.

I still believe the arguments, and over the years have come to understand them even better than I did when I wrote my first article for *The Freeman* in 1981. (It's funny how *Economics in One Lesson* continues to become increasingly relevant to my thinking each time I read it.) However, I believe that the end of all of this activity is — or should be — the improvement of life for people in a way that is not predatory and brings about voluntary cooperation among economic actors. In other words, economic activity is a means to an end, and the end is free people gaining in wealth and standards of living.

A socialist does not and will not see things this way. The end of socialism is *not* a higher living standard or even making life better for the poor, as much as a socialist will talk about the well-being of poor people. No, the end of socialism is socialism, or to better put it, the *ideal* of socialism. Once socialism is established, as it was in Venezuela or in the former USSR or Cuba, the social ideal had been met no matter what the actual outcome might be.

But what about the problems that inevitably occur in a socialist economy? Are not socialists shaken by the economic meltdown in Venezuela? The answer is a clear NO. For example, *The Nation*, which has supported various communist movements for generations, takes the position that Venezuela suffers from *not enough socialism*:

> "If socialism is understood as a system in which workers and communities (rather than bureaucrats, politicians, and well-connected entrepreneurs) exercise effective democratic control over economic and political decision-making, it would appear that Venezuela is suffering not from too much socialism, but from too little. Who can deny that Venezuela would be much better off if the hundreds of billions of dollars reportedly diverted through corruption were instead in the hands of organized communities?

The author assumes, of course, that socialism can be separated from the state, which shows either dishonesty or naivety, or perhaps both. After all, the author continues by claiming that the vast system of price controls the government has laid down over Venezuela's economy has had little economic effect and certainly has not been harmful, just as the author assumes that because most businesses in Venezuela officially are privately-owned, the government has little economic control over their operations. (As we know, the government there has seized businesses, arrested store owners for raising prices in the face of blizzards of paper money, and made ridiculous claims about conspiracies to overthrow the government.)

The one thing the author does *not* suggest is the government backing off its policies and its socialist ideology. To do so, obviously, would mean that socialism had failed and no socialist is going to ever embrace the idea that socialism could fail.

Perhaps the best example of this is Robert Heilbroner's famous 1989 *New Yorker* article, "The Triumph of Capitalism," written even before the Berlin Wall went down, along with the communist governments of Eastern Europe and the USSR. He followed this a year later with "After Communism," also in the *New Yorker*. In his first article, the Marxist Heilbroner wrote:

> “ The Soviet Union, China & Eastern Europe have given us the clearest possible proof that capitalism organizes the material affairs of humankind more satisfactorily than socialism: that however inequitably or irresponsibly the marketplace may distribute goods, it does so better than the queues of a planned economy ... the great question now seems how rapid will be the transformation of socialism into capitalism, & not the other way around, as things looked only half a century ago.

Yet, it is clear, especially after the second article, that Heilbroner was not advocating the establishment of free markets, but rather saw the collapse of the communist system as little more than a strategic pause of the Long March to Socialism. To reach that Utopia, wrote Heilbroner, socialists needed to turn to environmentalism to deliver the goods. (That most of the socialist countries also were ecological disasters did not penetrate Heilbroner's mind, and that should not surprise anyone. To Heilbroner, the end of socialism was not a better way to produce and equally distribute goods; no, the end of socialism was socialism.)

In other words, even after seeing the socialist system that economists like he, John Kenneth Galbraith, and Paul Samuelson praised for a generation melt down right in front of him, Heilbroner could not bring himself to admit that maybe socialists needed to turn in their membership cards and promote capitalism. No, Heilbroner decided that socialists simply needed new strategies to find ways to have state (read that, *social*) control of resources and economic outcomes. Interestingly, he wrote these words even after acknowledging that Ludwig von Mises and F.A. Hayek were correct in their assessment of socialism's "economic calculation problem," but even that admission did not bring Heilbroner to the logical end of his analysis: total rejection of the socialist system.

Like the Fonzie character from *Happy Days* that never could admit being "wrong" on an issue, Heilbroner — and others like him — could not concede that socialism in any form still would run aground, be it in providing medical care, establishing strict environmental policies, or the establishment of a vast welfare state. The central problem facing socialism — economic calculation — does not disappear just because a government does not directly own factors of production and engage in five-year economic plans.

This hardly means that economists like me should stop writing about the failures of socialism or stop explaining how a private property order and a free price system work. First, one never can be too educated in economic analysis and neither can anyone in public life. Socialists may not be able to abandon their faith, but others who might like to hear well-reasoned arguments might not be willing to join the Church of Socialism in the first place.

Second, there is nothing wrong in speaking the truth and just because socialists and their followers are averse to truth does not mean we give up saying what we know to be true. Just because socialists refuse to believe that socialism fails — even when the evidence points otherwise — does not mean they have the moral and intellectual high ground.

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