



# Gaza: Biden's 'red lines' lie

William Briggs

**Israeli atrocities and war crimes continue. Western leaders continue to act out grief, even outrage, but nothing is done. A few courageous exceptions, such as the stand taken by Spain, Norway, and Ireland to recognise Palestine stand out, as does South Africa's move to take Israel to the International Court of Justice. Israel remains unmoved. President Biden has spoken of red lines, but the words are empty, meaningless, false, and hypocritical.**

His latest 'statesman-like' offering has been to call on Hamas to accept Israel's terms for a ceasefire. His address came as tanks blast the centre of Rafah, as the border to Egypt has been seized and closed, as aid dries up and as Netanyahu announced that the 'war' will go on at least until the end of the year and probably longer.

## NO REAL PEACE PLAN

Biden's announcement of an Israeli "peace plan" was odd, to say the very least. One of the first to respond was Netanyahu who issued a statement. He acknowledged that he had "authorised the negotiating team to present a proposal," but in the same statement made it clear that it was designed to "enable Israel to continue the war until all its objectives are achieved."

Netanyahu can act with impunity. The International Court of Justice has demanded an end to the genocide. The International Criminal Court has issued warrants for his arrest as a war criminal. None of this has any meaning. Why? Because Biden and his allies support Israel and its crimes, and quietly look away.

In early May, Biden went on record saying that he had "made it clear to Bibi [Netanyahu]" and his cabinet that "they're not going to get our support if, in fact, they go into those population centres." A red line had



In Borloo/Perth, about 500 people attended a snap rally in solidarity with the people of Rafah. Speakers called for the recognition of Palestine and a permanent ceasefire.

been established. Or had it? Rafah, the last allegedly safe place in Gaza was attacked. It was bombed, shelled, tanks destroyed homes and hospitals. Then came the outrage of the slaughter of civilians sheltering in tents.

## MOVING LINES

Did this cross Biden's red line? Not according to White House National Security council spokesperson, John Kirby. He dismissed the latest crimes by saying that "this is an airstrike. It's not a major ground operation. It's different."

Aaron Miller, a former senior advisor on Arab-Israeli relations with the US State Department and now a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, sees things a little differently. He was asked whether he was surprised at Biden's lack

of response. Miller said "no, because when it comes to the US-Israel relationship, red lines have a way, historically, of turning, let's say, pink."

The US president's "red line" fantasy came on 8 May, fully seven months after the nightmare of Israeli invasion began. It came after more than 35,000 Palestinians were killed at the hands of the Israeli military. On 8 May the president threatened to cut off arms supplies to Israel if the assault on Rafah was launched. He immediately stepped back from this position, stating that not all arms shipments would be stopped because the defence of Israel was "critical." When the Tal as-Sultan tent camp was bombed and the charred bodies were seen on screens around the world, Biden declared that this still did not constitute a "major offensive."

Since the "red line" statement, the world has watched the daily bombings and shelling, not only of Rafah, but of northern Gaza and of refugee centres designated as 'safe' areas. The world has watched images of Israeli tanks in Rafah, and now Israel controls the city. The Israelis have seized the entire border area between Gaza and Egypt – the Philadelphi Corridor. This violates the conditions of Israel's treaty with Egypt. The area had been officially declared to be a buffer zone and was administered and overseen by Egypt from the Egyptian side of the border. Added to this has been the closure of the Rafah land crossing which has meant a virtual end to aid convoys.

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# Guardian

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## Universities Why you care

This paper isn't 'the Workers' Weekly' for nothing. Workers produce all the wealth. Workers are the majority of the population.

There's one group of workers are not treated like 'regular' workers by the media, and a lot of our politicians. That's university workers. They battle an out-of-date stereotype of academics as out-of-touch types who lead lives of privilege studying strange stuff 'real' people don't care about, like the academic robe-wearing teachers in Harry Potter, but without the fun magical powers. People who aren't into uni might ask "Why should I care?" Here's why you should.

The issues university workers face answer that question. All too often, university staff are the canary in the coal-mine for mistreatment of working people. They're up against casualisation and wage theft on a massive scale. If you like having job security, you should care about it being taken away from uni workers, because if they can do it to them, they can do it to you. This paper has reported on the sterling efforts of the National Tertiary Education Union to fight wage theft. If you care about being paid for the work you do, you should care about what's been done to uni workers.

John Howard, Australia's second-longest-serving Liberal Prime Minister understood this. He gave universities financial incentives to put their workers on individual contracts. He knew that casualising one sector would make it easier to casualise others.

Universities also face corporate takeover. If you don't like the idea of big corporations having too much power, you should care about that. Underfunding and government pressure has led to large companies having a lot of clout with universities. Corporations do not fund universities because it makes them feel nice. They do it to promote their social licence and to push agendas.

Governments have attacked universities in a number of ways. They've massively underfunded tertiary education, and have pushed unis into a dependence on International Students (who now mean more to our economy than sugar does).

Governments have also hit students hard – at the same time as lowering taxes for people with high incomes and/or large assets. HECS/HELP funding has reached a point where it's now a deterrent to students.

Governments don't like funding unis. It's expensive, and there's no immediate electoral payoff – Liberals assume they've lost already, Labor assume that uni students and workers won't vote for anyone else, although the Greens have given them pause for thought on this.

If you're not going to use a uni and perhaps don't mind that the cost puts some people off starting study, consider this: if you have to have major surgery, would you like your doctor to be someone who's really good at surgery, or someone whose family can afford for them to do medicine? HECS-HELP is moving us towards the second option.

Universities are whipping boys for the Murdoch media, who use the 'ivory tower academic' stereotype to avoid engaging with facts about things like Climate Change.

We've also corporatised universities. One thing the recent encampment protests have brought to the surface is just how much universities depend on large corporations.

It feels like universities are part of the furniture, always there, but the attacks are taking their toll. Talented scholars get tired of living from grant to grant. Some of the keenest minds we have give up and go do something else. International students are beginning to notice the penny-pinching.

It doesn't have to be like this. This country can afford university workers who don't live in badly-paid insecurity. We can afford free TAFE and university education. We can afford to keep our best minds at uni, working for this country.

This paper will continue to report on university and TAFE workers because we are for the working class. Keep reading, subscribe or donate to the Press Fund if you are too.

The Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union

121 Royal St  
East Perth 6004

**AMWU WA branch condemns genocide in Gaza and calls on the Australian Government to recognise the state of Palestine**

31 May 2024

The AMWU Western Australian branch condemns in the strongest possible terms the ongoing Israeli attack on Rafah and the murder of Gazan civilians. The failure of governments around the world to act is an abrogation of our collective moral responsibility. We are witnessing a genocide of Palestinians and doing nothing about it.

Manufacturing workers have fought for peace for decades. Our Union has a proud history of Peace Committees and has a longstanding anti-war position. Members and officials of the AMWU and our precursor metal trades unions have been beaten, arrested, and jailed for maintaining an unflinching peace stance.

Many of our members work in defence materials manufacturing, particularly naval shipbuilding at Henderson. We know better than most the capability of modern armaments. For weapons of war to be used on children and families sheltering in Rafah is sickening.

We call on the Australian Government to immediately strengthen end-use controls on defence materials exports. Without appropriate oversight of into whose hands the weapons we make end up, the government cannot claim that they are not complicit in how those weapons are used. Workers are unwillingly made part of a violent system that governments and arms corporations have total design and operational control over.

We also call on the Australian Government to urgently review Gazan refugee intake processes. Australian immigration officials revealed on 29 May 2024 that two thirds of Palestinians seeking asylum in Australia have had their visa applications rejected. In a situation as catastrophic as the one we are witnessing in Rafah, this is a stunning absurdity. The Australian Government must urgently fast-track visas for Palestinians wishing to find safety in Australia.

Finally, we call on the Australian Government to accelerate the process foreshadowed by Minister Wong in April 2024 to formally recognise the Palestinian state. We agree with the government that recognition is the only "pathway out of the endless cycle of violence."

Our Union stands ready to assist Gazans with the rebuilding of their homes and infrastructure and commits to working in solidarity and cooperation with Palestinian metal trades unions and others in Palestine in any reconstruction effort. We support Gaza remaining Palestinian forever.

In solidarity,

Steve McCartney-State Secretary AMWU WA

## Gaza: Biden's 'red lines' lie

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None of this, it would seem, ruffles any feathers in the White House. How could it? Regardless of experts on the ground the US seems happy to accept whatever comes from the mouth of Netanyahu. The Israeli leader dismissed as "anti-Semitic slander" any suggestion that his army was targeting civilians or using food and starvation as a weapon of genocide. He has claimed that aid deliveries were pouring in. He has told the media that the ratio of "militant" deaths to civilians was "the lowest rate we have seen in an urban war." The last figures in the growing list of dead Palestinians, the vast majority of whom are civilians was 36,224.

These are the reasons that the people of the world are so outraged. This is why the anger does not dissipate. The fact remains that Netanyahu can only continue the genocide because he has the "ironclad" support that Biden has pledged.

There are domestic political issues that plague the Biden administration. He has an election to fight. Huge numbers of Biden's political base are sickened by their government's actions. How this plays out in November remains to be seen, but Biden appears to be digging in on Israel, regardless of domestic political concerns. Some analysts have already made the claim that Netanyahu and his 'war' will be

going on after Biden's time in the White House is up.

Disturbingly, recent opinion polls in Israel show a rise in support for Netanyahu.

Biden's refusal to waver in his support for Israel and Netanyahu, rests solely on maintaining control of the Middle East. Israel is vital to the strategic interests of US imperialism.

For America's dwindling band of loyal allies, it is a case of acting outraged while awaiting any shift in line from Washington. We see, in Australia's official response, a sorry but predictable set of actions.

### HAND WRINGING

Immediately after the latest Israeli atrocity, Foreign Minister Penny Wong pleaded for Israel "not to go down this path." The path she alludes to is the one that crosses Biden's red line. It is a long path and one not paved with good intentions. The Foreign Minister declared that "the international community has been one on this. What we have seen ... reinforces why we and the international community issued this warning." She went on to call the death and destruction in Rafah "unacceptable," adding "this cannot continue." However, it is continuing.

Wong has been urged to make a significant gesture by recalling Ralph King, the Australian ambassador to Israel. It hasn't happened. The Australian government

speaks of the suffering as being unacceptable and that it cannot continue. It does nothing about the contracts with arms manufacturers to supply parts for aircraft that kill civilians. Defence Minister Richard Marles, along with Penny Wong has repeated Defence Industry Minister Pat Conroy's line that we are not exporting military weapons, things like bombs ... to Israel. These arguments did not convince the hundreds of public service workers who recently signed an open letter demanding an end to the trade. Their letter repeated the UN warning that such a trade that enables the genocide violates international humanitarian law.

The actions of the Albanese government are broadly in line with the most ardent supporters of the USA and therefore of Israel. Hands are wrung, brows are knitted, statements are made, but the crimes go on, aided and abetted by these 'free and democratic' regimes.

The war crimes of Israel count for little in the thinking of Washington or its allies. Netanyahu has just received an official invitation to address a joint session of the US Congress. The letter of invitation was to "highlight America's solidarity with Israel ... We invite you to share the Israeli government's vision for defending democracy, combatting terror and establishing a just and lasting peace in the region."

Red lines! ✪

# Statements from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

## The International Court of Justice

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) affirmed that what media reports and press investigations revealed about the occupation's spying on the International Court of Justice and Palestinian human rights and official institutions is a new confirmation of the nature of the role of this rogue entity within the colonial system, which includes the tasks of genocide, ethnic cleansing, imposing hegemony by force, breaking international standards, norms and laws, and deterring any attempt to apply any measure of justice.

The PFLP explained that this brutal role, espionage and conspiracy missions are the essence of this entity's project and its function

within the colonial system, which enjoys full US support and guidance and partnership with the rest of the colonial system. The Front said that the Biden-Netanyahu partnership of war criminals seeks to impose this bullying on the entire world, flouting all international laws and norms, and the positions of peoples and their support for the rights of our people.

The PFLP stressed that this arrogant entity poses a real danger to humanity as a whole, as it practices a war of extermination, commits all forms of war crimes, and attacks international institutions with threats and espionage. The PFLP stressed that the concerned parties, including international institutions, governments,

international judicial bodies and human rights institutions, are obligated to work to inflict the severest sanctions on this terrorist system, as there is no possibility that this entity will comply with their decisions without isolating it and besieging it with sanctions.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine called on supporters of Palestine and believers in justice and humanity to escalate all forms of struggle against the occupier, its supporters and all parties involved in the genocidal war against our people, and to raise the level of solidarity with our people, their just cause and their legitimate resistance.

## US-British aggression against Yemen

The Popular Front has affirmed that the US aggression on Hudaydah governorate in brotherly Yemen, which claimed the lives of 16 martyrs and a number of wounded, is a clear expression of the brutality of the US and British enemy in committing the most heinous crimes of bombing cities, destroying facilities and targeting civilians.

The Front expressed its full solidarity with Yemen, its people and leadership in the face of this aggression, emphasising the gratitude of the people of Palestine for what the heroes of Yemen, its people and leadership are doing in solidarity with the resistance and the Palestinian people in their just battle against the Zionist war of extermination.

The Front said that the US administration and the entire colonial system is engaged in a desperate defence of the continuation of the war of extermination against the people of Palestine, and seeks to expand the scope of aggression, killing and destruction against the Arab peoples

who are struggling for their rights, freedom and independence of their homelands, while Yemen stood dear, proud and fighting in defence of Palestine and its people, the Arab nation and the peoples of the region, and the values of justice and humanity.

The Front stressed that the United States is leading an aggressive and colonialist alliance against the Arab peoples, imagining that it can impose its hegemony on the region without deterrence, stressing that the resistance forces and their axis stand in the front row in defence of their peoples, their nation and their just causes.

The Front said that condemnation is not enough to comment on the positions of some Arab governments involved in the aggression against Yemen and complicit in the genocidal war against the people of Palestine, as these regimes have chosen to be in the camp of aggression, war criminals and enemies of humanity, against the Arab nation with all its components.

The Front affirmed that the unity of the blood being shed in Palestine and Yemen is the truest expression of the unity of the peoples of this nation and the living resistance forces in the face of all proposals of abandonment and surrender, stressing its confidence that the brotherly Yemeni people have demonstrated by their positions their great readiness to confront the aggressive American arrogance and adhere to their Arab, moral and humanitarian role in the fateful battle for the fate of the peoples of the region and the Arab nation.

The Front concluded by saying that the blood of the pure martyrs bleeding in Palestine and Yemen, the sacrifices of the heroic resistance fighters, and the steadfastness of the peoples and resistance forces will defeat the coalition of Zionist-American colonialist aggression and open the door to a new stage in the history of the region.

30-31 May 2024

## Ballarat community members rally to save uni and TAFE

**Community and union members from across the Ballarat region rallied on Saturday 1 June as part of an escalating campaign to save Federation University from mismanagement.**

The rally will call on FedUni management to stop its devastating 'Future Fed' cuts proposal, in which nearly 1 in 5 Full Time Equivalent positions stand to be removed from the institution.

The event has been called by Ballarat Trades and Labour Council and endorsed by the National Tertiary Education Union, the National Nursing and Midwifery Federation, the Australian Education Union, and the Australian Workers' Union.

Speakers at the rally will include local MP Michaela Settle, Ballarat Trades and Labour Council Secretary Brett Edgington, and NTEU FedUni Branch President Dr Mathew Abbott.

"The Future Fed cuts proposal threatens to rip the heart out of our small institution. Staff members at Fed pride ourselves on providing an outstanding level of support and pastoral care for our students. We should be out there publicly advertising our generous staff to student ratio, not seeking to attack it," said Dr Abbott.

"As well as its staff and students, FedUni belongs to its communities and matters very much to those who live in the regions

we serve, so it is very powerful to see our whole community coming together to support our rally this Saturday," Dr Abbott said.

MP for Eureka Michaela Settle, said that having a strong regional university was "a matter of fairness."

Ballarat Trades and Labour Council Secretary Brett Edgington described the university as "vital," and said that "at a time of unprecedented skills demand it has been devastating to see our university slash staff and course offerings."

National Tertiary Education Union

Find out more about the

## Communist Party of Australia

web [www.cpa.org.au](http://www.cpa.org.au)

email [cpa@cpa.org.au](mailto:cpa@cpa.org.au)



# Deakin University admits wage theft after two years of denial

**Deakin University has finally admitted to engaging in multi-million dollar wage theft after denying underpaying staff for two years.**

In an email to all staff, Deakin management revealed the underpayments, which the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) estimates could exceed \$10 million.

Some individuals were underpaid more than \$45,000.

The NTEU lodged a dispute with Deakin management in June 2022, alleging systemic underpayments of sessional staff for marking. The NTEU referred the dispute to the Fair Work Commission in November 2022.

Deakin has reported itself to the Fair Work Ombudsman over underpayments in just two of its schools, despite the NTEU presenting evidence of widespread wage theft across the organisation.

The NTEU will push for broader repayments and may be forced to initiate Federal Court action if management doesn't make a full admission.

NTEU Victorian Division Secretary Sarah Roberts said:

"Deakin management's refusal to admit a clear-cut case of wage theft for two whole years is a disgrace.

"As late as February this year, management was still insisting the piece rate used to fleece workers didn't exist – despite staff presenting rock solid evidence.

"This humiliating admission is



Deakin University, Burwood, Victoria.

Photo: Bob T – Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0)

a huge win for brave NTEU members at Deakin who have been on a two-year journey to expose this shocking conduct.

"Unfortunately, Deakin has only 'fessed up to stealing wages in two schools, but we won't rest until this entire systematic scandal is fully exposed and every cent owed repaid."

NTEU National President Dr Alison Barnes said:

"It's absolutely shameful that just one day after the University of Queensland admitted to \$8 million in wage theft, Deakin has been added to the ever-growing list of university wage thieves.

"The spiralling wage theft epidemic needs urgent action from state and federal governments.

"Unaccountable vice-chancellors and their senior executives are making a mockery of education ministers who clearly said universities should be exemplary employers.

"We need to end the insecure work crisis and implement a proper governance system if we're serious about having the universities Australia deserves."

National Tertiary Education Union ✪

## Wilmar uses intimidation tactics against striking workers

**Queensland: Wilmar Sugar has issued a notice that the workers who participate in tomorrow's industrial action will be locked out of the mills indefinitely without pay.**

Australian Workers' Union (AWU) Northern District Secretary Jim Wilson said that this is a disgraceful attempt to prevent workers from standing up for themselves and their communities.

"This is a multinational corporation trying to bully and intimidate North Queenslanders to stop us asking for our fair share."

"These are intimidation tactics of the highest order."

"Workers won't take this lying down, and growers won't accept Wilmar further delaying the crush by locking skilled workers out of their workplaces," Wilson said.

"Crushing workers' wages and entitlements at Wilmar has clearly become the personal crusade of some people in management."

"If this continues, they will never be able to show their face in our communities again."

Wilmar is putting their latest bad deal out to ballot next week and workers are expected to vote it down.

"Workers will continue to take action, we will vote down the newest bad agreement and Wilmar will be back to square one," Wilson said.

"These are the actions of a company that is running out of ways

to avoid paying its fair share – it's time for Wilmar to come back to the table and end this farce."

Tully mill workers have also been hit with a lockout notice today. This is especially egregious as workers at these mills have not been performing strike action, only bans on certain tasks.

AWU Far Northern District Secretary Dave Hearse said that the lockout notice is heavy handed, bullying conduct by the mill.

"Workers have been performing work bans to further our campaign for a fair pay rise."

"Workers just want to see some of the profits that the corporation has made so they can continue to put food on their families' tables."

"Tully has chosen to use intimidation tactics on our members instead of coming to the bargaining table with a reasonable offer."

Hearse said that this shows why we are fighting in the first place.

"Our region is tired of being ripped off by multinational corporations trying to make a quick buck off our labour."

"This is a fight for Far North Queensland, and we aren't stopping."

Protected action will continue until workers get a better deal.

### BACKGROUND

During the lockout period, the employees affected will be prevented from performing work under

their contracts of employment and will not receive compensation.

Wilmar have indicated that they will be locking out any workers that perform action which means that if a worker takes a 1-hour strike then they will be not able to return to work.

This will clearly affect the crush season and the workers ability to perform their roles.

### TULLY MILL INDUSTRIAL ACTION

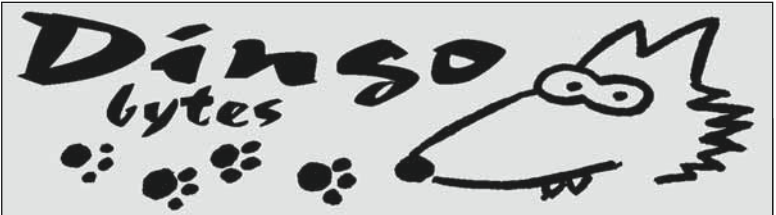
Workers at Tully mill have been performing bans on heavy-duty equipment involving high-risk tickets, the use of keys (including locks for doors, vehicles, personal isolation locks and electronic swipe keys) and using computers to document work.

Workers at mill have been performing the majority of their assigned work and all this will do is prevent the mill from being ready for the crush. Workers at Tully want to work, and the company is saying they cannot.

### OUR COVERAGE

The Australian Workers' Union is one of Queensland's oldest and largest blue collar trade unions.

The AWU represents workers in the sugar industry and has hundreds of members who work for sugar mills across Queensland. AWU ✪



This week's target of US aggression and interventions since the end of WW2 is the **Philippines 1945-53**: The US military fought against leftist forces (Huks) even while the Huks were still fighting against the Japanese invaders. After the war, the US continued its fight against the Huks, defeating them, and then installing a series of puppets as President, culminating in the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos.

**On monopoly:** In 2004 the Australian dairy industry produced 11 billion litres of raw milk, by 2014 it was 9.3 billion and today 8.3 billion. The dairy industry is now dominated by the big four – Bega (Australia) Saputo (Canadian), Fonterra (New Zealand), and Lactalis (French). Together they represent 80 per cent of the nation's milk processing.

Teachers and school support staff at Ipswich Girls Grammar School (IGGS) took stopwork action on 4 June. It is the first strike action taken by employees in the school's history and comes as staff continue their campaign for better working conditions.

The unprecedented action by Independent Education Union – Queensland and Northern Territory (IEU-QNT) Branch members is the result of the school employer's failure to listen to key employee concerns. Staff are seeking action on three key issues – a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) payment, a new automatic step for experienced teachers, and flexible access to leave.

IEU-QNT organiser Andrew Elphinstone said taking any form of protected industrial action, especially strike action, was always a last resort for union members.

"Taking such action is the last thing IEU-QNT members at IGGS want, but their employer has left them no other choice," Elphinstone said. "Ipswich Girls' Grammar School promotes that values like respect are at the heart of its school community. So why isn't the school respecting its teachers and support staff and their working conditions? Instead of listening to staff concerns, Ipswich Girls' Grammar School is ignoring the voice of employees."

The strike action comes after IEU-QNT members at IGGS began their first tranche of protected industrial actions on 20 May. These protected industrial actions include employees not attending staff meetings (except those related to staff and student safety) and not being available for any work on scheduled breaks.

Elphinstone said the employer's response to IEU-QNT members taking these low-level actions – including simply taking their lunch break – was to dock their pay. "These are the kinds of tactics big businesses employ against their workers – not what we expect to see a school employer doing to their staff. If IGGS wants to live its values of respect, we call on them as the employer to come back to the bargaining table ready to address employees' concerns."

**PARASITE OF THE WEEK:** Israel. The following is from a Statement, National Committee to Commemorate the Nakba (Nakba: 'Day of catastrophe' for the Palestinian people, marking the establishment of the state of Israel and the dispossession of the Palestinian people, 1948.):

Michaela Settle called it "a matter of fairness" for kids and lovers of learning to have a strong regional university, adding that a great uni degree "shouldn't depend on where you live." She urged the Ballarat community "to support Fed Uni staff and the unions fighting for their rights."

# Drugs: government spends big on law enforcement

**Governments in Australia spent nearly \$5.5 billion on illicit drug countermeasures in 2021/2022, but less than 10 per cent went towards strategies aimed at preventing use and reducing negative consequences.**

Australian governments spend more on law enforcement in illicit drug policy than treatment, prevention and harm reduction combined, says a UNSW Sydney report.

The report shows that state and federal governments spent approximately \$5.45 billion in the 2021/2022 financial year on illicit drug countermeasures. Nearly 65 per cent (\$3.5 billion) was spent on law enforcement programs, including \$1.8 billion on routine policing against drugs. Less than 2 per cent (\$90 million) was spent on harm reduction measures such as needle syringe programs and supervised injecting facilities.

"Governments do invest a significant amount of money on proactive drug policy, and where they spend that money shows what they consider as important in responding to drugs," says Professor Alison Ritter AO, the report's lead author and drug policy specialist at the Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Arts, Design & Architecture. "This research provides the foundation for evaluating the investment and whether Australia is on the right path to reducing drug-related harm."

## SPENDING DOWN ON PREVENTION AND HARM REDUCTION

The Australian 'drug budget': Government drug policy expenditure 2021/2022 is the most recent report in the 'drug budget' series, which estimates spending on proactive responses to illicit drugs by governments across Australia.

Money spent on prevention, such as in-school education programs, slightly decreased since the last

report in 2009/2010, down from 9.5 per cent to 6.7 per cent in 2021/2022. Spending on harm reduction also decreased from 2.2 per cent to just 1.6 per cent.

Spending on law enforcement remained relatively stable, slightly down from 64.9 per cent to 64.3 per cent of expenditure. Meanwhile, spending on drug treatment services rose from 22.0 per cent to 27.4 per cent.

Dr Annie Madden AO, Executive Director of Harm Reduction Australia (HRA), says the report reveals the true extent of governments' chronic under-investment in harm reduction.

"Australian governments have continued to claim their position as a global leader in harm reduction over many decades. In this case, however, the evidence does not lie," Dr Madden says. "We know that frontline harm reduction services such as needle and syringe programs, opioid treatment, take-home naloxone, drug consumption rooms and drug checking services reduce potential harms including drug-related deaths.

"The fact that harm reduction spending has continued to decline in the face of unprecedented evidence of impact and effectiveness is deeply concerning for many reasons, not the least of which is the undeniable fact that harm reduction saves lives."

State and territory governments spent the most against illicit drugs, accounting for 76 per cent or \$4.11 billion of the total proactive expenditure, the majority of which (\$2.87 billion) was for state law enforcement.

"The lion's share of the investment is from state governments and continues to be in law enforcement, and that's related to the policing of drugs, which we know is an expensive activity," Prof. Ritter says. "At the same time, the amount that's invested in helping people who are experiencing problems with illicit drugs is significantly less as a proportion of spending."

University of New South Wales Sydney

## Call for Labor to fund legal services

**Senator Lidia Thorpe is calling on the Albanese Labor government to commit to urgent increases to funding for legal services, following a damning report into the state of the sector.**

The Independent Review of the National Legal Assistance Partnership (LNAP) found that current funding is far below what is needed for critical legal assistance services to meet growing demand.

It made 39 recommendations for significantly increased funding and changes to the way funding is delivered.

Thorpe has criticised the Attorney General Mark Dreyfus after he failed to indicate government support for those recommendations, or indicate which of the recommendations, if any, government would adopt.

Thorpe has also criticised the government's handling of the report, accusing the Attorney General of concealing it to avoid scrutiny until after the May budget was announced.

The May budget allocated \$41.4 million to legal assistance services, with just \$15.4 million of that earmarked for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services sector, which was calling for \$229 million in funding to meet increased demand and operational costs.

This new report shows just how inadequate that budget allocation is, with recommendations calling for over \$500 million in investment.

The report also points out that without significant new investment, the government's closing the gap targets will continue to go backwards.

"If Labor is serious about closing the gap" said Thorpe, they must invest far more into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services, and they must respect First Peoples right to self-determination by ensuring Aboriginal community-controlled organisations are well-resourced and central in decision making.

"The sector was hoping that with the release of this report, the AG would commit to its

recommendations and lay out an implementation plan.

"But Dreyfus has said he needs to talk to the states."

According to Thorpe, the Attorney-General "has been sitting on this report for months, he's had plenty of time to read it and talk to the states."

She added that some of the report's recommendations rehash the recommendations from the Deaths In Custody Royal Commission report, which is more than 30 years old.

"Countless people have been denied justice because of Labor's neglect in this area. Women and children seeking safety from domestic violence have been turned away from life-saving services, people have been unjustly imprisoned, families have been denied justice for the deaths in custody of loved ones, and children have been wrongfully stolen from their mothers."

Thorpe has demanded that Dreyfus "show some leadership" and commit to supporting the report in full.

## GREEN NOTES

### Greenwashing

Anna Pha

With increased concern over climate change and the desire for green energy and products, corporations are making an art form out of greenwashing. The methods vary from outright lies about products to changes to packaging with new 'green' labelling and charging consumers more for the 'greener' products. This latter method not only seeks to deceive but also serves to enhance profits.

In April this year the Channel 10 reality TV show, *MasterChef*, announced sponsorship deals with gas companies, and that it would use cooktops run on biomethane. Biomethane is methane produced from organic matter including food, animal, and human waste. Methane is more than 28 times more potent than carbon dioxide when it comes to trapping heat in the atmosphere. There is nothing green about it. *MasterChef* attracts an average of 1.42 million viewers, making it the most watched television show in its time slot. Ads during the program promote "Renewable Gas"! Instead of greenwashing, it should be promoting induction cooktops.

HSBC, one of the top banks globally, still finances carbon polluting industries such as thermal coal mining, oil, and gas. The company has the gall to claim it is financing many of these industries to help them eventually transition to net zero as it would be impractical to terminate funding now. Their greenwashing ads promoting their "climate friendly initiatives" were banned by the Advertising Standards Authority in the UK. At the same time HSBC was running workshops on how to spot and deal with greenwashing!

Closer to home, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) took the retail industry superannuation fund, Active Super (AS), to the Federal Court. ASIC alleged misleading conduct and misrepresentations to the market in relation to AS's claims that it was an ethical and responsible superannuation fund. AS claimed that they had eliminated investments that posed too great a risk to the environment and the community, including tobacco manufacturing, oil tar sands, and gambling. ASIC Deputy Chair Sarah Court said, "There is much competition among super funds for new members, and we know that funds seek to attract members with promises their investments will not be exposed to certain industries. When making these claims super funds must have evidence to back their claims and ensure they are not promising exclusions that they cannot guarantee." ASIC alleges that AS held 28 holdings, either directly or indirectly, which exposed members to investments it claimed to restrict. These included: **Gambling** – Skycity Entertainment Group, PointsBet Holdings, Tabcorp Holdings; **Tobacco industry** – Amcor which provides speciality cartons for the tobacco industry; **Fossil fuels** – Gazprom PJSC (gas), Rosneft Oil Company (oil and gas), Shell (oil, natural gas, oil sands activities), Whitehaven Coal (metallurgical and thermal coal).

(The Federal Court found Active Super guilty on 5 June 2024.)

Labelling on products is part of green credentials deception: look for the vague language with green-sounding words like 'farm fresh', 'natural', 'conscious', 'sourced from nature' amid images of animals, trees, or plants, or 'cleaner' (cleaner than what?).

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# The poverty of policy

Anna Pha

**The Fair Work Commission has increased both minimum and award wages by 3.75 per cent from 1 July when the tax cuts for middle to high incomes also commence. The increase is a fraction higher than the 3.6 per cent rise in prices over the 12 months to April 2024.**

This brings the national minimum wage to \$24.10 per hour or \$913.91 per week, based on a 38-hour week. This amounts to an increase of \$33.10 per week or \$1,721 per year for full-time workers. It hardly scratches the surface of hardships facing families, as landlords hike rents by anything up to \$200 or more a week and electricity bills soar.

The main beneficiaries of the wage increase will be women who are more likely to be on minimum or award wages and working in low-paid 'feminised' jobs. They are also more likely to be in casual employment and not full-time, so their gain will be even less than the \$1,721 per-year maximum.

The Fair Work Commission's decision entrenches and perpetuates the Albanese government's poverty of policies, after more than a decade of falling and stagnating wages, especially for those on low incomes.

Millions of Australians are now in their own personal recessions, struggling from day to day, skipping meals, and relying on charities for food and assistance with bills.

There is no sign of relief in sight. At the same time the government, the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA), and large corporations continue to impose further hardships on workers and social security recipients.

## CALLOUS

The government callously refuses to increase Jobseeker, the Youth Allowance and pensions. It refuses to cut the billions of dollars in debt for university fees, let alone abolish higher education fees.

There is a lot the government could do to address the cost of living crisis. For example, it could impose caps on rent increases, and force energy and telecommunications companies to reduce prices, or better still nationalise them. Abolishing higher education fees and debt would also be of great assistance. (For more measures see *Guardian* 2101, "People's budget – Working class solutions")

The government has failed to take serious action to curb price rorting by large corporations, in particular the dominant supermarket duopoly and the 'Big Four' banks. Instead, it is promising price surveillance. While living standards of ordinary Australians plummet,



Poverty in Sydney. Photo: Carey Ciuro – flickr.com (CC BY-NC 2.0)

banks and the duopoly continue to rake in record profits.

Hardship applications to banks and utilities have risen considerably.

RBA interest rate hikes are increasingly taking their toll, driving housing prices, rents and mortgage repayment even higher. More Australians are falling behind on their mortgage repayments as the combination of inflation and high-interest rates bites deeper into already over-stretched family budgets.

The RBA has wielded its blunt instrument of interest rate rises to tackle inflation. In doing so, it is successfully achieving its goal of increasing unemployment and lowering living standards.

## INSOLVENCIES

The Australian Securities and Investments Commission's (ASIC) annual statistics for insolvencies for the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 show a sharp rise, in particular amongst small to medium size businesses. This did not let up, with company collapses surging 37 per cent in the last six months of 2023. Construction took up 28 per cent of that tally.

Construction industry insolvencies increased by over 75 per cent in the past 12 months as 2,349 companies went under. Rising interest rates, increasing material costs, delays in the supply of building materials and an ongoing shortage of workers all contributed.

At the same time under-payment and non-payment of legal entitlements are on the rise, alongside the growth of sham contracting and phoenix companies. Workers are the big losers when bankruptcies occur as they lose wages, superannuation payments and other entitlements

In the case of construction companies, prospective homeowners lose their deposits, often their life savings, and workers lose their jobs.

Accommodation and food services had the next highest insolvencies at 15 per cent.

## NOT SO BONZA

The fate of Bonza Airlines staff is uncertain. They were stood down without pay as the regional airline went into voluntary administration on 30 April. They have been told they will not be paid wages owed for the month of April.

At the end of May the Federal Court granted Bonza's administrators a two-month extension to find a solution before being liquidated.

The workers are desperate with financial commitments and no income. If they find alternative full-time employment, they risk losing their entitlements if the company is sold and they continue their employment with it.

If the company goes into liquidation at the end of July or earlier, the workers will be entitled to the Fair Entitlements Guarantee

(FEG) but that would not include their superannuation entitlements.

## RECESSION

For ordinary Australians the economy is in recession. The government may point to an increase in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but this is not flowing on to the people.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that GDP rose 0.2 per cent in the last 3 months of 2023. It was driven by government expenditure and private business investment. "Domestic demand continued to slow in the December quarter as households cut back on discretionary spending while investment slowed following three quarters of growth," the ABS said.

The government has the responsibility to address the crisis by boosting the incomes of the lowest paid. JobSeeker, the Youth Allowance, pensions and other social security payments should be increased to well above the poverty line. No one in a country as rich as Australia should be living in poverty.

The hundreds of billions of dollars being handed over to the US and UK in the AUKUS war-making troika should be redirected to providing public services, including housing, for the Australian people and lifting social security payments. That would bring true security. ✪

# Queensland's 50c fares stunt

Caiden Bartholomew

**As far as election season political stunts go, Queensland Premier Steven Miles's reduction of public transport fares to 50c is not bad. The question now is whether it will be backed up by any real commitment to developing public transport.**

The Queensland government has announced a 6-month trial of 50c fares across the entire Translink network, set to begin in August. Announced as a means of addressing cost-of-living pressures, the move is a small victory for the many Queenslanders who rely on public transportation.

The move has left many people confused, however, about what exactly comes next. Queenslanders have been subjected to one of the most expensive public transport systems in the world, and now many are wondering if the costs will return once the 6-month trial is over. Others are left asking why the government is even bothering

with 50c fares rather than simply making public transport free.

At 50c per ticket, Queensland's reliance on privatised ticketing systems may be costing the state more money than it would take to simply scrap the ticketing machines altogether. Between the costs of ticket enforcers (inspectors and police), the legal costs of pursuing fare evaders, and contracts with private companies for ticket machines and card readers, there are many costs of the current system which, at the time of writing, lack publicised up-to-date figures.

The last reported figure for a 10-year contract to roll out the Smart Card system was \$371 million. Miles has said that the new fares are as "close to free as you can get," but given the costs of the privatised fare system and its middlemen it seems a free public transport system would be a simpler, more cost-effective solution.

There are other reasons to support free public transport. If the Miles government is truly committed

to addressing cost-of-living by taking on public transport, providing reliable, accessible services to all Queenslanders must be the goal. The 50c policy does not apply to privatised services, meaning some Queenslanders will be forced to pay higher fares due to a lack of alternatives.

Australians as a whole are still overwhelmingly reliant on cars, a travel option that is environmentally damaging, harmful to the design of Australian cities and infrastructure, and simply inaccessible for many Australians thanks to cost-of-living pressures. Investment in comprehensive public transport makes cities greener, pedestrians safer, and removes a significant economic burden from the backs of many Australians.

Miles' 50c fare policy could be a good first step towards encouraging more people to use public transport, but if this is an issue the Queensland government is serious about, it must be able to commit to a system that better serves all Queenslanders. ✪



Queensland Rail TRANSLink Electric train. Photo: John Ward – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

# For peace and development: China's 'Shared future for humankind'

A Carruthers

For over a decade the People's Republic of China has established the policy framework "Shared Future for Humankind" (literally in Chinese, 人类命运共同体, *rénlèi [humanity] mìngyùn [destiny] gòngtóngtǐ [community]*), beginning in 2013. It's a central aspect of President Xi Jinping's wider governance philosophy, and in particular Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy.

In 2017, Xi said, "China has grown from a poor and weak country to the second largest economy not through military expansion or colonial plunder, but through the hard work of its people and their efforts to uphold peace."

A 2023 White Paper on Shared Future, released by the State Council Information Office, affirmed that "China has never accepted that once a country becomes strong enough, it will invariably seek hegemony." In contrast with some major countries in the world today, China does not view its success as leading to the failure of others. Rather: "When the world thrives, China thrives."

That's the essence of Shared Future: taking lessons from history, including its own, in pursuit of a better future for the world. China rose through the hard work of socialist construction at home, not through colonial plunder abroad. Thus it understands that nothing is more important for major-country diplomacy than to uphold peace and encourage development.

It's important to note at the outset that key concepts in Chinese Marxist philosophy, like Shared Future, are always evolving. They are neither dogmatic nor fixed: they respond and adapt to changes in the world environment. The Shared Future concept is also interwoven with other concepts and initiatives, like the Chinese Dream, 'Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Dual Circulation Strategy,' and most recently the development of New Productive Forces. The "Five Principles for Peaceful Coexistence," dating back to a 1954 agreement between China and India, may be considered a precursor to Shared Future.

There are several specific and rooted aspects to Shared Future for Humankind, however, that need strong emphasis:

1. *A multilateral outlook on human rights.* A focus on longstanding bodies like the United Nations and an adherence to the fundamental law of the UN Charter. 'Multilateral' means involving multiple, many countries, as opposed to 'unilateral' (one country) or 'bilateral' (two countries).

2. *Respect for the 'diversity of civilisations' in the interests of peace and mutual 'win-win' benefit.* Implicit here is how win-win counters the imperialist mindset of 'win-lose' (winner takes all, zero-sum gain mentality) which more often than not becomes lose-lose. The phrase 'diversity of civilisations' suggests associated terms that



have gained currency lately like 'multipolarity' or 'pluripolarity,' but the key here is equal respect for *all* civilisations in equal degree. This is reflected in more recent 'inter-civilisational' Chinese proposals like the Global Civilisational Initiative (GCI). It also draws from the best of ancient Chinese wisdom, as Xi said in 2014: "A single flower does not make spring, while one hundred flowers in full blossom bring spring to the garden. The Chinese civilisation and other civilisations in the world are all fruits of human progress."

3. *A concern for raising the level of the productive forces in poorer, developing countries.* This means special focus on the Global South, and African, Arab, Asia-Pacific, and Eurasian partnerships, but not 'decoupling' from Europe or the West *per se*. From the perspective of socialist foreign policy history, this is an evolving way for a large and domestically successful socialist country to conduct foreign policy in a new era. In the time of the Soviet Union, from Stalin to Brezhnev, similar calls were made for peace and development, and efforts were made to support anti-colonial struggle, many successful. The Shared Future concept is mindful of history (from the wars of the early twentieth century, to the National Liberation movements throwing off the yoke of imperialism mid-century, to the Cold War of the late twentieth century), and hard-won efforts towards establishing the ground for peace and development. But while it retains some core elements of twentieth-century socialist diplomacy, it goes beyond the Soviet mold. It

could be considered a new model for socialist diplomacy in the twenty-first century.

From these three fundamental aspects it becomes clear that the Shared Future for Humankind concept is quite different from foreign policy outlines of Western countries. Major Western countries more and more tend towards a rigid and fixed view of diplomacy: there are winners and losers, rich countries and poor countries, friends and foes, a first world and a third world. China does not begin with this black and white, either/or attitude. I want to again emphasise that it is 'evolving' because it is dynamic, not dogmatic, adaptable to new circumstances, not fixed, with the core aim being to invite any and all who wish to participate.

One other thing worth mentioning is that this is how Marx and Engels tended to write and think. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wang Yi, has emphasised that Xi Thought on Diplomacy "encapsulates the latest achievement of Marxism on the diplomatic front in the 21st Century," quoting Engels: "His [Marx's] way of viewing things is not a doctrine but a method." Most importantly, Chinese Diplomacy follows dialectical and historical materialism: "by following the Marxist tradition of analysing the dynamics between the productive forces and the relations of production, between the economic base and the superstructure."

Finally on a personal note, the method of Shared Future (since it is more of a method than a doctrine), which comes from the CPC, also enjoys broad support among the Chinese working masses; one thing I was

quite astonished at while living in China, where I worked for half a decade, was the extent to which the country was becoming *internationalist* in its outlook – not "globalised" in the way we tend to think of it – but deeply internationalist. It's visible in the way China takes the best of what it can learn from the outside without losing inner strength, which, we must add, is a core socialistic strength. It's truly global in a visible way. At festivals I attended and classes I taught, I met people from all corners of the globe: not just Europe and America, but Africa, the Baltics, the 'stans' (Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, etc), Mongolia, Belarus, Russia, and especially Latin American countries with whom China enjoys a close relationship. This is also the case in the way China manages its socialist market economy and trade. The wine section in their supermarkets, for instance, is usually arranged by continent, with an even showing from each continent: no one continent wins out. There's no embargo on Cuban, Syrian or Russian products, just as there's no longstanding embargo on Western products. There's a sense that China wants to learn the best from every civilisation, from all countries, including but not limited to 'the West.'

All five socialist countries on earth today – Korea, Laos, Vietnam, China, and Cuba – have evolved in different ways, and taken different paths. They are not carbon copies of each other: there's no one-size-fits-all model for socialism. Yet they all have one thing in common: an adherence to Marxism-Leninism. China's path is unique. China as I experienced it was profoundly, deeply open to the outside world, while maintaining its fine traditional culture and socialist orientation. It fully engages with the outside world but doesn't 'lose' itself to that outside world. It's a dialectic which also allows for the modernisation of Chinese culture; the idea that ancient civilisational wisdom doesn't stop when the internet or some other advanced technological change comes along. These changes can be harnessed for the people's benefit, to enhance rather than destroy culture.

China applies Marxian dialectics to foreign policy through the method of the Shared Future for Humankind. Needless to say, China's adherence to Marxism-Leninist method in its quest for peace and development is a shining star amid a world in peril. ✨

## China understands that nothing is more important ... than to uphold peace and encourage development

# Heat wave emergency impacts animals in South East Asia

Graham Holton

**There is no single global index on what exactly a heat wave in South East Asia is. According to the India Meteorological Department, a heatwave means temperatures exceeding 40°C in low-lying areas, and 30°C in the mountains. The agency's Heat Index illustrates how hot the body feels when relative humidity is factored in.**

The Heat Index is for humans, not for animals, which are less reported in regards to the devastating impact the present heat emergency is having on them. For livestock, heat waves affect productivity and health. Cows have reduced milk production and fertility issues. Pigs and poultry are particularly susceptible to heat stress, leading to decreased growth rates and higher mortality.

Wildlife faces habitat disruptions and lack of water, leading to dehydration and food scarcity. Species unable to migrate to cooler areas, or to adapt quickly enough, face large population declines. Animals are often unable to cope with prolonged temperatures above 40°C, causing heat shock and death.

Climate change is causing heat waves. In turn, heat waves are affecting rainfall patterns, viable habitats, migration patterns, and

the populations of many species. Wildlife is now facing threats from habitat loss and species decline, as ecosystems undergo profound changes. A loss of habitat means species are forced to migrate to other areas for food and shelter.

Animal migration is driven by temperature changes, day length, and food availability. The problem is that owing to forest clearance, due to modern farming methods, and the progression of cities, migration is often not easy for populations of birds, butterflies, marine mammals, and fish.

Some bird species are arriving at their breeding grounds two weeks earlier than they did 30 years ago. These migration changes have wider ecological implications, that affect the interactions between species and ecosystems. The present climate crisis is forcing species, such as monkeys and snakes, to move closer to cities and farms in search of food, water and shelter.

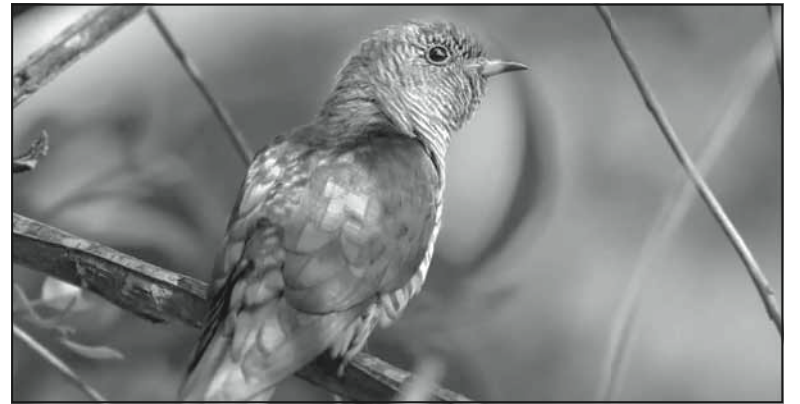
Temperatures in parts of India have been over 50°C, with 56°C recorded in some villages. The India Meteorological Department released a severe heat wave warning for the region, after a high number of heatwave days since April. Workers must work in these deadly conditions. Women still cook outdoors despite the severe health risks involved.

The heat wave, which has now broken temperature records, has forced schools to shut down across the country, with millions of children staying home.

In Kolkata, a city of 15 million people, pets and strays are being hospitalised unable to handle the severe heat. There are an estimated 70,000 stray dogs living on the city's streets. In April the city reached 43°C, the hottest single day since 1954. Gurshaan Kohli, of Humanimal Foundation, said "Scores of dogs and cats have died."

Schools were closed in the Philippines as authorities tried to deal with the deadly heat wave hitting the region. The Heat Index hit a record 45 degrees. Benjo Basas, chairperson of Teachers' Dignity Coalition, a group of educators, told DWPM radio station: "We already have reports of high blood pressure and dizziness, and fainting for pupils and teachers in the past days."

In Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, the national weather agency warned of increased risks of forest fires, dehydration, and heat shock, with temperatures reaching 44°C. The soaring temperatures have resulted in a mass fish die-off in a reservoir in Dong Nai province, south Vietnam. With lower rainfall, the lake level is too low, killing 200 tonnes of fish. The reservoir provides water



The Asian emerald cuckoo found in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. Photo: JJ Harrison (CC BY-SA 3.0)

for crops in the Trang Bom and Vinh Cuu districts. The low water levels mean that farmers are now struggling to keep their crops alive with the present hot dry conditions.

Henna Pekko of Rescue Paws operates an animal shelter in Bangkok, Thailand. She says the animals, "are eating less, and they are reluctant to move."

In Myanmar at least 1,473 people died from heat shock in April, more than 40 people a day. In Indonesia there has been a surge in dengue fever cases, up to 35,000 this year. Indonesian health ministry spokesperson Siti Nadia Tarmizi told state news agency,

Antara, that El Niño has prolonged the dry season accelerating the mosquito lifecycle.

Singapore's meteorological service predicts this year will surpass the record temperatures of last year, which was the fourth-warmest on record. In Malaysia the meteorological department has issued hot weather warnings of 40°C with 45 cases of heat-related illnesses and two fatalities due to heat stroke, already.

However the heatwaves are measured, they're getting worse. Action on carbon emissions is needed right now. ✪

## Danger of world war grows by the day over Ukraine

John Wojcik

**Almost by the day, the news about the war in Ukraine and the threat of world war grows worse. The latest reports suggest that Secretary of State Antony Blinken and other key officials in the Biden administration are pushing to allow the firing of US-supplied weapons into Russian territory by Ukraine.**

Those reports follow ones that came out earlier that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, dismissing the threat of nuclear war, called upon US officials to give the green light to shooting down Russian missiles over Ukraine. His comments were his strongest ever demands that the US not only send more arms but broaden their use in the Ukraine-Russia war.

Those demands by the Ukrainian president followed statements only two days earlier by Gen. Charles Brown, Jr., chair of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, that US troops, under the umbrella of NATO, would "eventually" end up in Ukraine.

All these moves have been met by Russia with warnings that it would strike back at any forces operating out of Ukraine – no matter what country sent them. These developments all increase sharply the chance that the US proxy war against Russia in Ukraine could turn into a face-to-face confrontation on the battlefield.

From the time that the war began, Americans have been told essentially that all they had to do was provide money and weapons and the Ukrainians would do all the dying. With the latest advances by Russian troops along the northern front of the war in Ukraine, however, that appears to be changing.

Adding to the pressure is the inability of the Ukrainian army to replace the troops it is losing on the front. The country is now conscripting prisoners to fight in exchange for parole, and its border patrols are shooting and even killing men who try to escape the draft. Some 650,000 are reported to have fled or refused to return home if they are already outside the country.

People familiar with discussions inside the Biden administration have told the press Blinken's position has changed to one of favouring the escalation because

of recent Russian gains on the battlefield. Consideration of Chinese and other proposals for negotiations to end the conflict continue to be ignored by the administration, which has participated in sabotage of peace talks several times over the years since the Russian invasion began.

The British foreign secretary, David Cameron, said earlier this week that Ukraine "absolutely had the right [to use US weapons] to strike back at Russia."

The US is now considering sending troops into Ukraine separately from NATO for the alleged purpose of "training" Ukrainians, according to the *New York Times*. The obvious question here is what the US would do if those troops were directly attacked by the Russians or were injured by Russian forces inadvertently.

At a press conference earlier this week, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin would not respond to questions about whether US weapons could be used to attack bases inside Russia that have been used in or are capable of strikes against Ukraine.

The Russian military responded to the latest US talks about escalation by staging manoeuvres with units that might be involved in the use of tactical nuclear weapons on the battlefield. The Russians have said that the manoeuvres are "in response to the latest threats and provocations from Western officials against Russia."

US officials have dismissed those exercises as "nothing but bluster and muscle flexing." Zelensky said this week that he believed there was no danger of Russia using nuclear weapons because "they have already escalated the war without using them."

With Israel's war on Gaza still raging, ongoing US bombing in South Yemen and elsewhere, and the stepped-up US military patrols in the Pacific, the latest escalation in Ukraine has, essentially, put the country on a war footing all over the world. It can only be hoped that peace forces can convince the people to push for reversal of these policies.

The immediate threat that they enable disastrous election results in November is bad enough. The possibility that they trigger a world war is even worse.

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# People's Conference for Palestine vows human red line

**The People's Conference for Palestine ended on 26 May with a bold call to mobilise: surround the White House on 8 June in protest of Israel's ongoing offensive against Rafah.**

"Biden said he had a red line, remember the red line? He said, 'If Netanyahu dares go into Rafah, that's a red line, we the United States, will stop sending weapons to Israel,'" said Brian Becker, executive director of the ANSWER Coalition. The comments were made during the plenary session entitled, "How Do Movements Achieve Transformation?"

"Israel went ahead and invaded Rafah, and what did Biden do? He continued to send the bombs and the missiles to carry out the massacre in Rafah and throughout Gaza. Biden's red line is a lie!" Becker declared.

Becker announced that on 8 June, a date picked to mark the 57th anniversary of the so-called Six-Day War, "We are going to be surrounding the White House with tens of thousands of people dressed in red, surrounding the White House and letting Biden

know, and letting the world know, and letting Palestine know, that we will be the red line to stop the massacre in Gaza."

The last day of the conference unfolded as Israel bombed hundreds of forcibly displaced Palestinians sheltering in tents in Rafah, martyring dozens of people. Horrific images and videos spread around the world of sheltering families burning alive. Rafah currently contains millions of Palestinians displaced by the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza.

As the news unfolded, Mohammed Nabulsi, a leader of the Palestinian Youth Movement, denounced the US government's complicity in the genocide of the Palestinian people.

Nabulsi denounced "those who send humanitarian aid simultaneously as they send bombs." Biden has made promises of aid to Gaza through the building of a temporary pier for the delivery of humanitarian goods.

*Globetrotter*

The pier has since been built, and has broken up due to heavy seas. 🌊

## London: Counter-protests stand up to racist 'Robinson'

**An estimated 5,000 fascists attended the London demonstration led by Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, stage name 'Tommy Robinson' – over claims that police have been soft on left-wing protests such as those supporting Palestine while hard on the far right.**

The fascists were protected by police as they marched from Victoria station to the Cenotaph, where Yaxley-Lennon was joined by speakers such as unemployed actor Laurence Fox, who heads the racist Reclaim party.

Police arrested one protester for being drunk and disorderly and for assaulting an emergency worker and another for racially abusing a woman.

Stand Up To Racism, which

mobilised about 300 counter-protesters, said the far-right claim of "double standards" in policing originated with then home secretary Suella Braverman last year. It led to a far-right riot by drunken thugs who attacked police at November's Armistice Day ceremony at the Cenotaph.

Speaker Zak Cochrane led chants of "Nazi scum off our streets" and "Say it loud, say it clear: refugees are welcome here." Others held placards reading "Oppose Tommy Robinson," and "Stop fascists and the far right."

Stand Up To Racism co-convenor Sabby Dhalu said: "Double standards in policing was a line pushed by Braverman before she was sacked as home secretary.

"This mobilisation has been

built by the Tory rabid right: that police are soft on left-wing demonstrations and hard on them."

She said fascists had not mobilised in such numbers in London for years.

"Once people realise they are mobilising in their thousands, they will mobilise against them," she said.

Nick Lowles, chief executive of anti-fascist campaign Hope Not Hate, said that "the scale of the gathering and connections being forged are concerning, and it's vital that we don't take these new developments lightly."

*Morning Star* 🌟

## Tokyo restricts Okinawan rights

**15 May 2024 marked the 52nd anniversary of Okinawa's reversion to Japan. The Kishida government on 15 May announced an additional designation of 31 locations in the southern part of Okinawa as "monitored areas" or "special monitored areas" in line with the land-use restriction law. With this announcement, the number of designated locations in Okinawa increased to 70, the largest among 47 prefectures.**

The central government's announcement on this day has drawn mounting criticism that such an act tramples on Okinawans' hope for realizing a peaceful Okinawa without military bases under the pacifist Constitution.

The Act on the Review and Regulation of the Use of Real Estate Surrounding Important Facilities and on Remote Territorial Islands allows state authorities to designate areas within a one-kilometre radius from "important facilities," such as US military bases, Self-Defence Force bases, and nuclear power plants, as "monitored areas" and "special monitored areas". The law also allows the national government

to surveil owners of designated land and collect their personal information. In "special monitored areas," a transaction of real estate without prior notification to authorities will be punishable by law.

In Kadena and Chatan towns, which host the US Kadena Base, almost all parts of the towns will be specified as "special monitored areas." In Ginowan City, where the US Marine Corps Futenma Air Station is located in the centre of the city, most parts will be declared to be "monitored/special monitored areas." In Okinawa's capital city of Naha, "special monitored areas" will cover densely residential zones.

Lawyer Kato Yutaka, member of a lawyers' group opposing the land-use restriction law, said, "Tokyo carried out the additional designation on Okinawa's reversion day. This indicates that the central government has no understanding of the fact that since the war ended, many military bases have been concentrated in Okinawa, and that heavy base burdens have been imposed on Okinawa. It is certain that the national government intends to force Okinawa to serve as a 'breakwater' for national defence."

*Japan Press Weekly* 🌟



## Global Briefs

**Peru:** According to the Public Prosecutor's Office, the 'Special Team of Prosecutors' for cases involving victims during anti-government protests has launched 62 investigations into officials from the police and military. A report investigating 324 people was presented due to 50 deaths and 716 injuries which took place during protests between December 2022 and March 2023. The charges include alleged aggravated homicide, aggravated torture, serious injuries, minor injuries, and abuse of authority. The protests against the government of President Dina Boluarte demanded her resignation, the dissolution of Congress, and the calling of new elections. A figure aligned with many of Peru's far-right elements, Boluarte has also been handed a constitutional complaint from the Prosecutor's Office for allegations of bribery following the 'RolexGate' scandal. The scandal refers to the revelation that Boluarte owned thousands of dollars' worth of luxury watches which she had not declared to tax authorities, along with other allegations of illicit enrichment.

**UK:** Almost 40 former RAF pilots and aircrew have launched a lawsuit against the Ministry of Defence after developing cancer from hazardous fumes produced by helicopters. According to testimony from personnel and their families, the UK government knew about the risks of the fumes since 1999, but refused to take action. At least three of the applicants have already died, while several more have received terminal diagnoses. The number of ex-personnel who have sued the Ministry of Defence is expected to double in the coming weeks. Several applicants have received out-of-court settlements. The issue centres around the Sea King, Westland Wessex, Puma, and CH-47 Chinook helicopters, of which the latter two remain in service. Pilots who travelled in these helicopters have developed lung cancer, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, throat cancer, multiple myeloma, and testicular cancer. According to Jonathan Dingle, a barrister for the case, engine jet efflux gases containing, among other things, benzene carcinogens were being sucked into cockpits. Pilot crews had not been supplied masks, any filtration system, or even a warning about the dangers of the system.

**China:** China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment has announced the launch of a 7-year biodiversity conservation program. Among the various tasks of the comprehensive strategy will be conducting surveys of key areas, identifying species to prioritise, and investigating biological genetic resources. The plan comes as part of China's broader ecological strategy, including its goal of establishing a near-complete national botanical garden system within the next decade. China has also announced the Kunming Biodiversity Fund after more than 2 years of preparation. The fund aims to support biodiversity protection in developing countries and has received support from the United Nations Environment Programme. The 7-year plan will begin this year with surveys of key conservation areas, plant growth, wild animal reproduction, ecosystem distribution, and the impacts of human activities on the Yellow River.

**Cuba:** The UN Development Programme has announced support for programs in Cuba to promote a circular economy. Among the targets of the project is environmentally sustainable management of urban solid waste, with new practices set to begin implementation in Havana. The program will be financially supported by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation and will include co-operation between Cuba's Science, Technology and Environment Ministry and local government. The project aims to minimise waste and promote sustainable use of resources through smarter product design, longer use life, recycling, and the regeneration of nature. The project also represents Cuban ingenuity in the face of resource limitations illegally imposed by the United States.

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# Socialism versus capitalism – connection versus alienation

William Briggs

**What makes a ten-year old child commit suicide? What makes a 17-year-old girl stab her younger sister? What drives someone to become a mass killer? What promotes racist abuse against taxi drivers? Why is there a tsunami of domestic violence and murder? Why is mental illness affecting so many? What has happened?**

Capitalism has happened and it is driving us all mad. Alienation, anxiety, fear, oppression, inequality, poverty, are all driving us mad. We are social beings, and yet live and work in social isolation. Our world and the people in it have been reduced to commodities. Such is life under capitalism.

Capitalism dominates our lives. Everywhere we look we see despair and anger. Society and the bourgeois state can only survive when there is a degree of legitimacy, or at least a sense of legitimacy. We expect things and not necessarily big things from our state. We expect that our physical and social needs will be met. We expect a decent return for our labour. We expect that our children's lives will offer hope. In return, the state governs. It is a social contract, of sorts, even if a minimalist one. People have a right to higher expectations, but the state and its sea of propaganda and ideology has limited people's horizons.

It is a social contract but it has been broken. It has fractured because capitalism and its state is in such crisis that it can no longer provide even the most essential and basic rights of housing, health-care, physical and mental security. We have been set adrift.

All this is made much worse when we are encouraged to believe that this is all there is. But some big questions need to be asked. Another world is possible. It is possible, it exists and is delivering for well over a billion people. Socialism offers an alternative and not merely in the abstract. Socialism is being built in China, in Cuba, in the DPRK, in Laos, in Vietnam.

Only a fool or a utopian would claim that people in these states live a blissful life. Communists are neither. Just the same, stark differences between social and economic systems are obvious.

Why, for instance, are more than 600 mass shootings recorded each year in the USA? Why are 1,200 people shot and killed by US police every year and why are there almost no similar incidents in China? Why is Haiti in a state of near constant upheaval, verging on civil war, while their neighbours in Cuba live in peace, dignity, and relative harmony? Why is there an acknowledged housing crisis in South Korea, which worsens with every passing year, while thousands of new apartments are being built each year in the DPRK? There is no housing shortage. These new apartments are simply bigger and better than the ones they replace, provided at no cost. Why is there a growing mental health crisis in Australia and why, in China, do statistics point to a steady rise in social well-being?

There are two political and economic ideas; capitalism and socialism. One idea leads to crisis, alienation and pessimism. The other leads to freedom, connection, material and spiritual well-being, and to optimism. Alienation and capitalism are inseparable. Much is written and said about alienation but we need look no further than Marx for understanding. In his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, he outlined the process of alienation that is so inherently a part of capitalist relations:

“What constitutes the alienation of labour? First, the fact that labour is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his essential being ... The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself ... His labour is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is forced labour. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means for

satisfying needs external to it ... the external character of labour for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own but someone else's ... it is the loss of self.”

The working class under such conditions is inevitably estranged, not just by capitalist relations, but from capitalist society and from the state itself. The middle class, too, is more and more affected by this deep sense of alienation.

Alienation exists because an antagonistic class-based society exists. Marx's work on alienation related specifically to the working class and its relationship to work and the production process. Work becomes a means to an end. That end is survival, in order to continue the cycle of exploitation. This becomes an unquestioned norm. Marx pointed out that we do not become this way naturally. We are social beings, but we are forced to compete with others.

If we look at our world, then the stress is palpable. We are all but completely alienated from society, from each other, and from the process of production that should exist to provide for us. We work longer and harder for less return. We are tired. We are compelled to consume the products of capitalism that are out of touch with our needs. We see our children's expectations of life being unfulfilled. We see a world aflame with anger. We see unimaginable wealth in the hands of fewer and fewer people and we see gross inequalities. Then, as if to rub salt into the wound, we are effectively blamed for the ills of society. Capitalism has all but destroyed the planet and is driving us to the brink of madness, and we are then burdened with personal and collective guilt. How could we not be alienated?

Capitalism creates the problem and then makes it worse.

Marx wrote about alienation a long time ago. Are things better now?

He insisted that when people worked for wages, they engaged in a transaction. They

were selling their labour-power. They still do. They produce goods that are turned into money by the employer. Profit derives from surplus value. It proceeds from that initial transaction of the sale of one's capacity to work; the sale of labour power.

For Marx, this meant that labour became just another commodity. A dehumanising effect was obvious. Life had no meaning apart from the process of work. What then is to be made of Marx's theory today? We may not hear the siren calling workers to the factory bench, but things are still being made by workers. Everything we touch or consume is the product of exploited labour. Capitalism expands because it has to. It has no borders, no nationality, no allegiance. It exists to survive and to amass more and more profit; more and more surplus value.

Capitalism today is no less exploitative. Work, whenever there is an unequal relationship, and wherever that might be, is alienating. Whether you are earning third world, or first world wages is really beside the point. If you are uncertain as to whether you will be getting a wage this time next

year, or next month, or next week, then you are living with unhealthy stress. If you are fearful of ill-health, of paying the bills, of a keeping a roof over your head, of making sure that your children's education is secure, then you are not enjoying anything like a full and enriching life. You are alienated from others and estranged from the mythologised society that capitalism presents as the good and normal life.

## THE COIN CAN BE TURNED

Evidence shows that people living in states that are socialist or are developing socialist economies, are less stressed, less alienated, more engaged with society. The development of these socialist societies flows from the reality of life and the strength or weakness of the economies they live with. There is no neat formula that each Communist Party follows.

Socialist societies face problems, but people in those societies have a greater sense of self-worth and pride. ☺

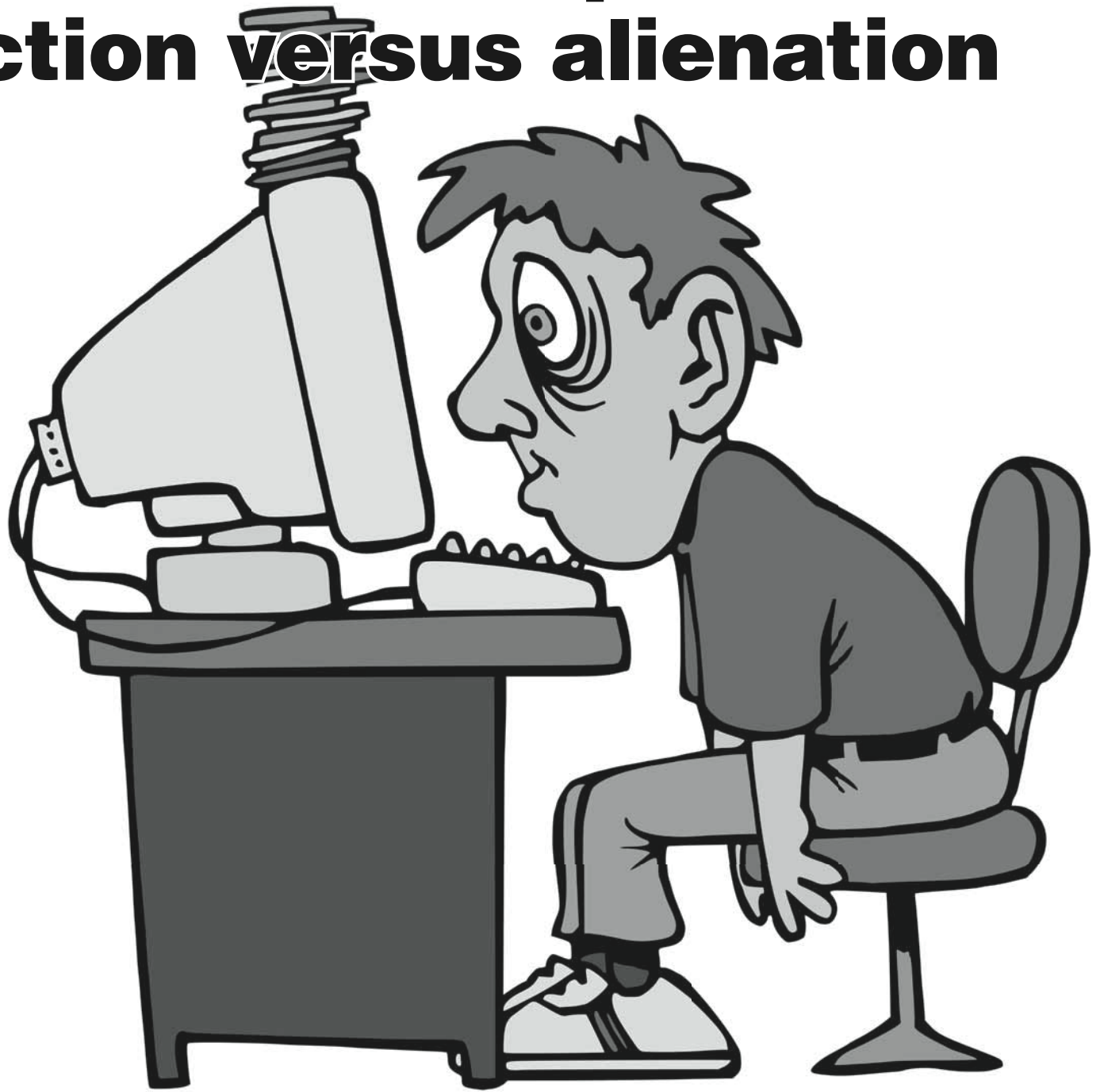


## What is ... ? Class struggle

We are a class-based society. There are those who control the means of production and those who don't. There is a capitalist class and a working class. Many have been encouraged to identify as middle class, but when economic crisis hits are often propelled back into the working class, from whence they came.

Classes have different aspirations. Capitalism can only exist by exploiting the working class. The interests of the two are contradictory. There is always an inevitable struggle between these interests – sometimes open, sometimes masked by the state. We are told that we are all Australians with one identity and one purpose. Gina Rinehart knows this is nonsense and so do we.

Class struggle can only end with the victory of the working class and the elimination of class antagonisms.



# Don't use 'overcapacity' to harm economic globalisation

Long Dingbin

**For some time, China has been accused of "overcapacity" in new energy products. This kind of hype is unreasonable and just a carefully crafted distraction, an attempt to promote unilateralism and implement trade protection, which will seriously harm the world economy and trade growth. Worse it will drag down the pace of global economic green transformation. China firmly opposes it. We should approach production capacity issues objectively and dialectically, from a market and global perspective, starting from economic laws.**

From a market perspective, whether there is overcapacity depends on the supply-demand relationship. Some argue that China's new energy product capacity has exceeded global market demand, and that other countries in the world are unable to absorb this capacity.

In fact, according to the International Energy Agency, the global demand for new energy vehicles will reach 45 million by 2030, which is more than three times global sales in 2023 and nearly five times production in China this year.

The global demand for new energy batteries will reach 3500GWh by 2030, more than four times the global shipment volume in 2023 and over five times this year's production volume in China. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, in order to achieve the Paris Agreement goals, the global cumulative photovoltaic installed capacity needs to exceed 5400GW by 2030, which is nearly four times the global cumulative installed capacity in 2023 and about nine times the cumulative installed capacity in China in 2023.

The current global production capacity of new energy products cannot meet future market demand, China's new energy products have made significant contributions to addressing global climate change and green low-carbon transformation.

From a global perspective, capacity cooperation means leveraging comparative advantages. Some argue that China's excess production capacity of new energy products is difficult to digest domestically and can only be sold to the world at low prices. In fact, countries have formed comparative



advantages in different industrial fields based on factor endowments, development paths, and other factors. The exchange of related products through cross-border trade is a reality of international economic division of labor and cooperation.

In 2023, Western Australia accounted for 39 per cent of the world's iron ore exports, of which approximately 85 per cent were exported to China. Both sides fully leverage their comparative advantages and make significant contributions to global economic growth. United States exported 80 per cent of its high-end chips, and at the same time is the world's largest exporter of liquefied natural gas. Yet the US has not been criticised for "excess capacity". While China's new energy products mainly meet domestic demand, new energy vehicle exports only accounted for 12.5 per cent of the total production in 2023.

From an economic perspective, comparative advantage is the result of continuous efforts by Chinese enterprises themselves. Some argue that the production capacity and price advantages of China's new energy products are the result of large-scale subsidies from the Chinese government. In fact, the advantages of China's new energy products are formed through market mechanisms, relying on a large domestic market and a complete industrial system, through

full market competition and technological iteration and innovation.

At the same time, it should also be noted that supporting the development of the new energy industry and the green transformation of the economy is a common practice worldwide. Countries around the globe encourage and support the industries through various means. Some countries provide significant subsidies to the new energy industry through legislation, such as the US Infrastructure and Employment Act, which spent US\$7.5 billion to support the construction of car charging facilities, as well as the Inflation Reduction Act, which provides a maximum tax credit of US\$7500 per electric vehicle ultimately assembled in North America.

History has shown that promoting trade protectionism on a large scale not only harms the world economy and trade growth, but also has more disadvantages than benefits for the countries that promote protectionism themselves.

One is that it is not conducive to the growth of world trade and economic recovery. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts that the world economy will grow by 3.2 per cent in 2024, significantly lower than the average level of 3.8 per cent from 2000 to 2019; Recently, the World Trade Organization (WTO) has also lowered its forecast for global trade volume growth this year, from 3.3

per cent to 2.6 per cent. In this context, using "overcapacity" as an excuse to politicize economic and trade issues will not only fail to solve the problems faced by the accuser's own industrial development, but also further drag down global trade growth and world economic recovery.

The second disadvantage of this protectionist argument is to drag down the global process of addressing climate change and promoting green and low-carbon transformation. In 2023, the global installed capacity of renewable energy reached 510 million kilowatts, with China contributing more than half. China has cooperated with more than 100 countries and regions in green energy projects, effectively solving problems of geography and high electricity consumption, making positive contributions to the global climate change response and achieving green and low-carbon development.

The kind of behaviour that on the one hand sees addressing global climate change as its "noble mission," but on the other hand adopts protectionist measures under the pretext of "overcapacity," to suppress the development of new energy industries in other countries and restrict the export of new energy products from other countries, seriously damages the global efforts to address climate change.

Thirdly, it leads to a mismatch between the supply and demand of global resources, further increasing domestic price pressure in affected countries and delaying the process of reducing inflation. Moody's report shows that after the United States significantly increased tariffs on Chinese products, US importers bore over 90 per cent of the cost of those tariffs. Currently, some countries are attempting to build trade barriers against other countries' new energy industries under the pretext of overcapacity, which may once again harm the interests of their domestic enterprises and the well-being of their people.

Today the countries of the world have become an interdependent and integrated community with a shared future. Openness, inclusiveness, and win-win cooperation are the only correct choice, and economic globalisation is the unchangeable general trend. China hopes that relevant countries can objectively, rationally, and comprehensively view the demands of the global new energy market and the development of China's new energy industry, work together to practice true multilateralism, promote industrial cooperation, achieve mutual benefit, and jointly promote global green development.

Long Dingbin is the Chinese Consul-General to Western Australia 🌐

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# Papua New Guinea: disaster and the hand of capital

William Briggs

**The tragic loss of life in the landslide in Papua New Guinea has shown just how pitifully inadequate is the level of infrastructure in the country. It is an indictment of successive governments in Port Moresby, and a shameful reminder of the legacy of Australian colonialism and of the continued abuse and neglect of PNG and its people. It is likely that the dead will number in their thousands.**

There was just one road into the area where the disaster struck. Efforts have been made to clear that road. This is necessary from the point of view of gaining access to the disaster area, but Prime Minister Marape made it known that access for supplies to the nearby Porgera gold mine was also a priority. The mining company has indicated that operations have not been affected and that it would play a role in assisting in the relief operation.

Marape blamed heavy rain for the disaster. 'Nature threw a dangerous landslide.' This may be so, but the country suffers from a continual lack of proper funding. It endures a chronic lack of basic infrastructure, a health care crisis, a lack of educational facilities, and endemic poverty. Forty per cent of the population live below what is designated as the 'extreme poverty line.' Barrick, the company that runs the nearby Porgera mine, extracted \$1.4 billion in profits from PNG in 2023.

Many of the missing and dead have been eking out an existence in 'illegal' mining of alluvial gold on the fringes of this mine.

The fact that the ground was more susceptible to landslips, either as a result of mining operations or climate change is not a surprise.

Kate Allstadt, a research geophysicist with the US government's *Geological Survey*, described how the landslide area extended for over 85,000 square metres.

She also showed evidence from a report published a year earlier that the particular area was unusually unstable. This was due to an earlier landslide. Despite this, no warnings were issued to local villages as to the possibility of such a disaster.

This lack of care is par for the course in PNG. While the government bears direct responsibility for the tragedy, its former colonial master, and powerful Australian 'family' member, through years of neglect and complicity in the exploitation of natural resources stands guilty before the people and the world.

Australia has promised a \$2.4 million aid package. It is a pittance. It is as empty a gesture as that of Defence Minister Marles, who, while reminding PNG of our joint military connections remarked that "all Australians will be thinking of Papua New Guineans at this very difficult time." Foreign Minister Wong chimed in with the news that Australia "stands with the people of Papua New Guinea" and that the aid package would "assist the urgent needs of those affected by this devastating landslide."

Successive Australian governments have all but ignored the real plight of the people in PNG. Albanese, during his recent visit to the country, wrung as much as he could from talking up the "family" relationship, and the Kokoda heritage, but now that a momentous crisis has struck, his government is prepared to commit just \$2.4 million in aid. The USA has been even less generous with a promise of \$1 million in relief. Only weeks before, these same leaders were working overtime to ensure that China did not become too closely involved in PNG.

Under normal conditions, aid from Australia has very tight strings attached. This is a direct throwback to the colonial days. Australian-based companies account for over half of the Foreign Direct Investment into the country. The great majority of this investment is in



Papua New Guinea National Parliament, Port Moresby. Photo: Drew Douglas – flickr.com (CC BY-NC 2.0)

mineral-based projects. This investment has little direct effect on the lives of the people.

Papua New Guinea has one of the highest inequality levels in the Asia-Pacific region. Ninety-four per cent of the poor live in rural areas. These areas of subsistence farming supported by sifting and panning for gold on the outskirts of foreign-owned gold mines are ravaged by poor health outcomes and violence, and are all but cut off from the urban areas. The urban elites are dominated by the political class and those employed by aid agencies and foreign companies. They are divorced from the needs of the vast majority of the population.

Marape's government can be accused of corruption. It is certainly corrupt, but this is the *status quo* in PNG. The interests that he promotes are those of those same elites.

Social tensions have become more intense, both in the urban centres and in the highlands.

Australia, for its part, has done nothing to change this tragic course of political and economic action. When the government of PNG sought to develop closer more productive relations with China, the muscle of Australia and the USA were soon brought to bear. PNG was reminded that, despite its wish to be an enemy of no-one and a friend to everyone, imperialism had other plans.

Chinese analysts were quick to make the point that "Western powers colonised these regions without properly establishing a system of social governance and left them in a mess in terms of politics, economy, and social governance when the regional countries gained independence." The government

of PNG has engaged with China as part of the Belt and Road initiative to develop better infrastructure and develop resources. Australia as its former colonial master and dominant neighbour has been critical of any such move on PNG's part.

Landslides happen, but that cannot be an end to the story. What is known is that the technology exists to map, identify unstable areas, and monitor changes that can at least offer warnings of potential disasters, either from effects of climate disruption, from mining, or from the geological make-up of the region. Data can only be gathered and interpreted if the necessary investments are made. That is unlikely to be provided either by the government, its imperialist backers or the giant mining corporations that continue to pillage and impoverish the people. ✘

## Australia through years of neglect and complicity in exploitation, stands guilty



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