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Victory Day in China

Remembering fascism's defeat in Asia

As China marked the 80th anniversary of its victory in World War II on 3 September, the gathering in Tiananmen Square was not about swagger, but a moment of reflection on the challenges facing the world today.

The occasion is meant to commemorate the immense human cost of a conflict that left over 100 million dead or wounded worldwide. China, in particular, bore a disproportionately heavy toll: over the 14 years of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, it suffered over 35 million casualties and vast swathes of scorched earth.

The country has every reason to observe this milestone. In a battle between justice and evil, light and darkness, and the progressive and the reactionary, the Chinese people fought relentlessly – not only for survival but also for fairness itself.

Their fight – the largest against foreign aggression in modern Chinese history, and one that involved the greatest sacrifice, secured the Chinese people their first complete victory in national liberation and propelled the nation from the depths of crisis onto a path of rejuvenation.

Parade for the 80th anniversary of China's victory against Japanese fascism. Photo: CGTN

CONTRIBUTION

This resistance – the earliest to begin and the longest to endure in the global fight against fascism – belies the Western-centric narrative of a passive China. From 1931 to 1945, China tied down the bulk of Japanese forces and eliminated more than 1.5 million enemy troops, making a historic contribution to the Allied victory over fascism.

Yet Western collective memory has long fixated on the battles of Midway and Normandy, the Holocaust and the Nuremberg Trials. China's grinding campaigns and sacrifices, which underpinned Allied victory in the East, have often faded into obscurity.

The day of commemoration is a timely prompt to set the record straight. Some continue to shun their wartime atrocities, others erase decisive actors from the narrative, still others blur the issues that mattered through reckless amnesia or sly wordplay.

WHAT TO REMEMBER

To forget is to betray, and to deny is to tempt repetition. Eighty years on, it is imperative to confront the past in its entirety, unclouded by ideological bias or geopolitical calculation. Victory counts more if it prevents the need to fight for another one.

China's remembrance is more than a look back, it is a reminder of what happens when unilateralism and power politics run amok. The most significant decision made by the world at the end of WW2 was the creation of the United Nations.

Founded on postwar consensus, including sovereign equality and the peaceful settlement of disputes, the UN remains the most representative and authoritative intergovernmental organisation on the planet.

The UN-centred international system has kept major-power hot wars largely at bay while underwriting decades of global prosperity. Yet, today, the organisation's role in global peace and security has been challenged.

The world cannot afford a return to the darker days when the powerful were allowed to prey upon the weak without restraint. In fact, calls for an equal, orderly, and multipolar world – and for economic globalisation that is inclusive and universally beneficial – are growing louder.

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Tale of two wars

It's a war that started recently, but really it's been going on for a long time. It's appalling, but it's so constant that people not directly affected are beginning to tune out. It's ramped up a bit lately.

This could describe the Israeli genocide of Palestinian people. That's been going on since 1948, but is often reported as though it started on 7 October 2023. What else could we be talking about? The war on Aboriginal people.

Melodramatic? Colonisation isn't like conventional war, with clearly defined borders, declarations and battles, although historians have made a good case that early European settlement was actually a series of 'frontier wars.' With the first people of Australia, as with Gaza, there's what happened recently, and what's been going on for a long time.

Lately, things aren't good. The defeat of The Voice to Parliament emboldened racists and made potential allies more timid. Queensland's Labor government walked back from treaty negotiations and now Queensland has a Liberal National Party government that seems actively hostile to Aboriginal interests.

There's also a Country Liberal Party government in the Northern Territory promoting "law and order" policies which it knows adversely affect Aboriginal people. They're bringing back spit hoods, which have been defined by experts as "torture." Incarceration rates for Aboriginal people in the NT have doubled. The North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency called it "an alarming trend" that reflects "the ongoing failure of the justice system."

The problem is not just on the conservative side of politics. Victoria's Labor government took no time to reverse bail laws after a high profile attack. They knew the bail laws adversely affected Aboriginal people because a coroner had told them so after Veronica Nelson died while in prison for minor shoplifting-related charges. Labor showed that it knew the laws were wrong by changing them for the better. Faced with anger from the Murdoch press, they changed those laws back in an instant. Labor knew this would hurt Aboriginal people, but keeping the Murdoch tabloids off their back was more important. Most recently, Camp Sovereignty, a sacred Aboriginal burial site in central Melbourne was attacked by neo-Nazis. The silence of Australia's so-called anti-semitism envoy was deafening.

It's not all bad news. South Australia quietly introduced a state Voice to Parliament this year. At time of writing, Victoria is about to have a treaty tabled in state parliament. If the treaty is passed, there will be a First People's Assembly. These things aren't nothing, and come after decades of hard work by Aboriginal leaders and activists.

Indigenous people need a lot of support for the years and decades ahead. Colonisation was and is inseparable from imperialism, which as Lenin said, is the final form of capitalism. We can see this in Aboriginal land being used to 'host' troops and materiel for future US wars. The Communist Party of Australia was the first political organisation after European settlement to support Aboriginal people in their fight for land rights and human rights.

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Victory Day in China

Continued from page 1

Upholding the postwar framework is not an exercise in nostalgia; it is an investment in multilateralism and predictability, which are essential for global stability, growth, and security.

This year's commemoration also harkens back to the solidarity of 80 years ago, when many countries set aside divisions and ideological differences to unite against fascism.

TODAY'S NEEDS

Such an ethos is very much needed today. The world faces a confluence of challenges: regional conflicts that defy easy resolution, a sluggish and uneven global economy, and the relentless march of climate change, to name just a few.

In this interconnected reality, no country can tackle these challenges alone. Nor can anyone expect to thrive by exploiting others' hardship. Unity and cooperation remain the only viable way forward.

China's advocacy for a community with a shared future for humanity, along with its global initiatives regarding development, security, and civilization, helps recalibrate global governance along the lines of fairness and justice.

For China, the 3 September commemoration carries particular significance. When China was in the crucible of the Japanese invasion, few expected that a poor agrarian country could prevail over a mechanised invader, and fewer still foresaw the rise of the Communist Party of China (CPC) from a state of siege and adversity.

To underestimate China's resilience today would be equally unwise. The country, under CPC leadership, is well-positioned to overcome challenges on its journey toward rejuvenation, whether they come in the form of trade barriers or technological containment.

China will remain strategically steadfast, focus on its core priorities, and advance high-standard opening-up. Much like its wartime contribution, China's rise today continues to shape the world for the better.

The world's second-largest economy has driven over 30% of global growth for years. It has signed Belt and Road cooperation documents with over 150 countries and more than 30 international organisations, laying the path toward deeper connectivity and expanded opportunities.

China's breakthroughs in fields ranging from artificial intelligence and robotics to pharmaceuticals are drawing global attention. What was once the preserve of a few Western powers is shifting toward a more multipolar shared model of global innovation.

These developments have added certainty to an unsettled world, tightening economic interdependence and nudging nations toward greater openness and friendly cooperation.

China's millennia-old instinct for harmony, coupled with a long-standing military philosophy that emphasises prudence in the use of force, informs its strategic outlook. Its armed forces, shaped by the CPC's commitment to the people and tempered by wartime experience, are disciplined, measured, and purposeful. They are increasingly a counterweight to adventurism.

A country that rose from the ashes of war has become an anchor in a world of drastic change. Few tributes could better honour the hard-won victory over fascism 80 years ago.

Xinhua

Congress Appeal

From 27 February to 1 March 2026, elected delegates representing Communist Party organisations from all over Australia will gather in Melbourne for the 15th National Congress of the Party. There will be an opening on the Friday night, 27 February, to which all *Guardian* readers, their families and friends are invited. (Details will be provided in a future issue of the *Guardian*.)

Over three days, delegates will discuss the work of the Party, make any amendments to and adopt a Political Resolution. In the lead-up to the Congress, Party members are discussing and submitting amendments to the draft Political Resolution. In January 2026 the Central Committee will consider these amendments and finalise the draft to be put to Congress.

Congress will elect a new Central Committee to lead the work of the Party until the next National Congress. As the highest body of the Party, it can also amend the Party's Program and Constitution and adopt other resolutions as its delegates may determine.

The CPA has launched a Special Appeal to help defray the costs associated with holding a National Congress. These are considerable with delegates coming from as far away as Perth, the printing of documents, etc.

We are appealing to Party members, organisations, and all friends and supporters of the Party, including *Guardian* readers, to help us reach our $10,000 target as soon as possible.

To contribute, please fill in the form below or write your details on a separate piece of paper to send with your contribution. Payment by credit card can also be phoned in on 02 9699 8844 or use the direct credit details.

All contributions will be acknowledged in the *Guardian*, with the names of contributors unless otherwise requested. We look forward to your support for this important occasion.

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AUKUS: Who pays?

M Santos

People with disabilities, the aged, the sick, the unemployed and other social security recipients, the most vulnerable in the community and those who capitalism sees as worthless are expected to make a massive contribution to the funding of AUKUS and "budget repair."

Ronald Mizen writing in the pro-AUKUS *Australian Financial Review* let the cat out of the bag:

"The Albanese government faces billions of dollars in public sector funding cliffs, which bureaucrats warn threaten service delivery, key government initiatives and thousands of jobs.

"Key government departments including Health, Climate and Energy, Social Services and Attorney-Generals sounded the alarm in their incoming briefs to ministers, warning of budget cuts as large as 50 per cent in coming years and asking where they should plan to cut workers."

In addition, the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) has forecast a three per cent decrease in the wages bill for public servants. This, along with a ten percent wage increase, does not add up. Something has to give. According to the PBO that would mean the loss of 22,500 jobs if departments were to meet their budgets.

"The worst of the looming budget shortfalls take effect from 2026-27 when at least 100 programs, and likely dozens more, will have their funding expire," Mizen says. There is no certainty that these programs, many of them important community programs will have their funding renewed.

The cost-cutting to fund AUKUS is already underway.

AGED CARE

Amendments have been made to the Act governing aged care, with changes to come into effect late this year to home care packages. The government describes the measures as "better targeting," weasel words for making it harder to qualify.

At present there are 120,000 people on a waiting list for the necessary assessment to qualify for a package and another 87,000 already assessed as eligible waiting for packages to be released.

The government had delayed release of additional aged care packages until November promising 83,000 new packages. Some have been waiting more than 12 months. Some have died waiting. When the Greens, other cross-benchers, and the Coalition joined forces, the government was forced to release 20,000 now.

Labor is seeking to cut costs by keeping people off the scheme when costs could be significantly reduced by replacing the market-based system with a public one.

NDIS

The NDIS's administrative body, the NDIA, has been sending out reviews to participants, costing them thousands of dollars in medical and other reports to prove their needs have not changed only to still cut their funding.

The government has announced transfer support for children with "mild to moderate developmental delay and autism" from the NDIS to Medicare. The promised $1 billion in funding for them does not match the amount spent under the NDIS.

A joint statement from 10 disability representative organisations expressed disappointment that the government had not consulted the disability community before making the announcement.

Nick Avery, the chief executive of the South West Autism Network (SWAN) in Western Australia noted: "Ejecting kids with lifelong, permanent and significant disability breaks the promise of the NDIS. There needs to be investment in providing flexible, individualised and group-based supports ..."

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Services Minister Tanya Plibersek's department is forecast to have a total cut in funding of $213 million by the end of 2028-29 with an estimated loss of 1,190 jobs from 3,418 staff – a reduction of 35 per cent with further cuts to follow.

Age pensioners have just taken another hit with the government increasing the deeming rate of financial assets they hold by 0.5% to make a saving of $1.8 billion. This cut will see many pensioners removed from their pension or have their payments reduced.

The unemployed remain subjected to a punitive $793.60 per fortnight – around $56.69 per day. The Youth Allowance is the same, also well below the poverty line or enough to meet basic needs, let alone present at job interviews.

HEALTH CARE

To cut costs to Medicare of GP visits, pharmacists are gradually being given a greater role in prescribing common medications without a visit to a GP.

At the same time, Medicare rebates have not risen enough to encourage GPs to bulk bill general patients.

It should not be forgotten that while these and other cuts are being made, the population is increasing annually.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Attorney-General Michelle Rowland's department has warned that 32 programs due to expire by 2028-29, stand not to be renewed, resulting in an $81.2 million or 26.6 per cent funding cut.

These programs include parts of the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030 and the High-Risk Terrorist Offenders Scheme, which is designed to manage individuals convicted of terrorism offences after their prison sentence ends.

EDUCATION

John Falzon from the progressive Per Capita think tank when addressing the Australian Education Union (AEU) in the ACT on Education Day 2025 made the point that education is a human right. "It should not be treated as a commodity. Which is why the public education system should be properly resourced and funded.

Public education is a powerful reminder that there are some things too precious to leave to the market. Public schools, and the educators who work in them, are a bulwark against growing inequality, a defence of democracy, a space for creativity, learning and respect, and building blocks for a more equitable society."

Public schools continue to be chronically underfunded. Instead of increasing funding to public schools the Productivity Commission has suggested that off-the-shelf lesson plans should be developed for teachers to help them save time and teach outside their area of expertise!

The AEU said the Commission had correctly identified unsustainable workloads and teacher shortages as major issues in school education. 'One size fits all' lesson plans and no additional funding are not a solution – nothing could be worse. Student needs vary considerably with classes and across schools.

Universities have been slashing staff and Labor has not repealed the previous Morrison government's a hefty increase in the cost of non-STEM degrees.

As for public housing, that is not on the Labor government's agenda. Instead its schemes support first-time home buyers and developers.

Labor also steadfastly refuses to tackle the rental crisis, not just the shortage of rental accommodation but unaffordable and rising rents.

CLIMATE

Energy Minister Chris Bowen's department forecasts its funding would be cut by almost half from $357 million in 2025-26 to $180 million by 2028-29.

At the same time Labor aims to hit 82 per cent renewable electricity generation by 2030, necessary to reduce emissions to its inadequate target of 43 per cent on 2005 levels.

A spokesperson for Bowen said the 50 per cent budget reduction was "simply the result of a number of time-limited programs coming to their natural conclusion."

"This doesn't mean we're reducing our commitment to climate and energy policy," he said.

These cuts to government departments and other shortfalls in areas such as women's and Indigenous services all contribute to the funding of war preparations including AUKUS.

Photo: pickpik.com (public domain)

something has to give ... the cost-cutting to fund AUKUS is already underway

Robodebt scandal : never again

Australians for Mental Health has welcomed the historic settlement for Robodebt victims, but has also called for urgent whole-of-government reform so that no Australian is ever harmed by government policy in this way again.

The federal government has settled the class action in the Federal Court, which is being hailed as a record compensation outcome for victims of the unlawful scheme first exposed by the Royal Commission. A further $475 million will be paid in compensation to Robodebt victims.

"Today's settlement is a hard-won step toward justice for hundreds of thousands of people who were harmed, but it cannot be the end of the story. We must ensure this never happens again," Australians for Mental Health Executive Director Chris Gambian said.

"The Royal Commission documented an unlawful program that caused profound distress, financial hardship and, in too many cases, catastrophic outcomes for individuals and families. A government that measures what matters would have seen the warning signs, listened to evidence, and changed course sooner," Chris Gambian said.

Australians for Mental Health is calling for urgent whole-of-government reform to prevent a similar tragedy from happening again which include:

- Legislating a Wellbeing Act to put mental health and wellbeing at the heart of all major policy and budget decisions.
- Establishing an Office of Mental Health and Wellbeing in PMC (Prime Minister and Cabinet) to coordinate population-level mental health across portfolios.
- Appointing an independent national Mental Health and Wellbeing Commissioner (within the Human Rights Commission) with a mandate to report to the Prime Minister and Parliament.

Australians for Mental Health

A safer Northern Territory?

It has now been one year since the Country Liberal Party (CLP) returned to power in the Northern Territory.

They promised to make communities safer, but instead, have delivered a human rights crisis:

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ARE BEING TRAMPLED

The CLP lowered the age of criminal responsibility from 12 to 10, so primary school children are being arrested and locked away.

They reintroduced spit hoods – dangerous devices that the United Nations has condemned as torture.

Over 402 children have been held in police watch houses in just six months, some as young as 10 in places never designed for children.

PRISONS ARE DANGEROUSLY OVERCROWDED

Youth detention centres are beyond capacity, leaving kids crammed into unsafe, degrading conditions. With no space left, children are thrown into adult watch houses, cut off from family, culture, and education.

Reports show 20 women crammed into one cell in Alice Springs and an 11-year-old child locked in an adult facility in Palmerston.

The NT now has the second-highest imprisonment rate in the world, with more than 1% of its population behind bars – almost 90% of them Aboriginal.

The CLP's crackdown has failed even on its own terms:

- House break-ins are up 15% in Darwin,
- Assaults are up 9% across the Territory,
- Youth reoffending remains high, proving that punishment without support only fuels more crime.

This is not justice. This is not safety. This is systemic abuse of children's rights, and an attack on Aboriginal people who are disproportionately targeted.

- Raising the age, not lowering it,
- Community-led diversion programs that support children instead of criminalising them,
- Justice reinvestment – funding solutions that heal and strengthen communities, not overcrowded prisons.

We have challenged the CLP, and we have stood with families and Elders demanding dignity and evidence-based solutions. But the truth is clear: the CLP's first year in power has entrenched human rights breaches in the Northern Territory.

Children are being harmed, families are being broken apart, and communities are less safe. We cannot allow this to become the new normal or the CLP to remain unchallenged.

Amnesty's Indigenous Rights Campaigner, Kacey Teerman has been clear:

"The NT government cannot just abandon their obligations under human rights law. Spit hoods are torture. Children should only ever be detained as an absolute last resort."

The evidence is overwhelming: locking up kids does not make our communities safer. As Amnesty's Indigenous Rights Advisor Rodney Dillon reminds us, "The hard work is yet to come."

Amnesty International

Community sector workers unite for hard-won gains

Community sector workers and their union are campaigning to protect hard-won gender pay gains as the Fair Work Commission reviews potential undervaluation of awards.

The Fair Work Commission is considering adjustments to the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services (SCHADS) Award which could affect a landmark 2012 equal pay order that delivered pay rises to the female-dominated sector.

The Australian Services Union has submitted its feedback to the Commission ahead of the deadline. The union's submissions includes call for:

- Retention of equal pay rates so no worker goes backwards
- All workers to receive a pay rise as part of the Award review
- The Fair Work proposal be adjusted to better recognise workers' experience alongside their qualifications.

This effort comes as a new survey of more than 4,000 community sector workers shows strong support to retain the equal pay order.

More than nine in 10 workers said they are reliant on the Award for their wage outcomes while more than two in five would consider leaving the industry entirely if rates of pay went backwards.

ASU NSW & ACT Secretary Angus McFarland said: "Community sector workers and the ASU are campaigning for the SCHADS Award to be the best it can be. The SCHADS Award underpins the wages of hundreds of thousands of community sector workers.

"A fair Award that works for community sector workers also works for the many people who depend on them. Community sector workers are essential – they keep our communities safe and supported, providing care for vulnerable children, women escaping domestic violence, and people living with a disability, mental ill-health or facing housing insecurity.

"Any changes to the SCHADS Award must strengthen, not undermine, hard-won gender pay gains. Community sector workers have told us loud and clear that equal pay must be here to stay, and many say they would leave the sector if pay rates go backwards.

"We stand with community sector workers in calling for fair pay rises for all, the retention of equal pay rates so no worker goes backwards, and proper recognition of workers' experience alongside their qualifications."

Australian Services Union

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21 December 2025 – 9 January 2026

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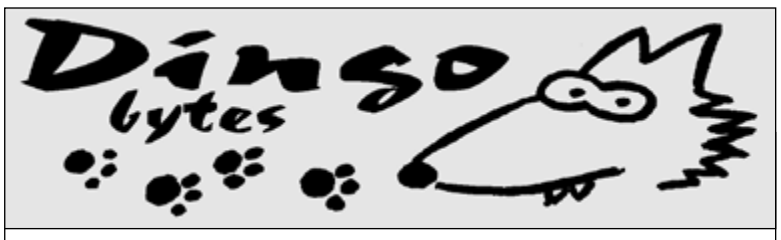

Modelling used by the Business Council of Australia to claim a strong 2035 target would cost billions, lacks credibility, the Australian Conservation Foundation warns.

The modelling by McKinsey for the BCA:

Misrepresents Australia's starting point. The modelling establishes a '50% by 2035' scenario, rather than treating Australia's present trajectory (51% by 2035) as a base case, adding billions for infrastructure and technologies that would be economically beneficial anyway.

Omits the benefits of decarbonisation, including the productivity and efficiency dividends of clean technologies.

Uses outdated baselines and data (including clean technology adoption trajectories), misrepresenting Australia's energy transition progress.

Doesn't follow a least-cost methodology, relying instead on inefficient, ineffective and costly technology choices like carbon capture and storage.

Does not factor in the costs of climate inaction, including lost productivity from disasters. More severe, more frequent extreme weather events cost billions, from rescue and clean up, to longer term impacts on fishing, agriculture, defence, insurance and tourism.

"While there's a lot we don't know about what the world will be like in 2035, we know the damage from climate change will continue to accelerate," said ACF's climate change program manager Gavan McFadzean.

"This Frontier Economics-style modelling completely ignores the massive costs of letting climate change rip: increasingly pricey rescue and clean up from extreme weather events, not to mention impacts on multiple industries including agriculture, fishing, insurance and tourism.

"Is scaremongering over climate action really what the BCA's membership wants the peak body to lobby for?

"A return to climate policy paralysis will undermine investor confidence in Australia's energy, manufacturing and industrial base.

"To give Australians and our environment the best chance of holding global warming at the safest levels now possible, Australia should set a 2035 target of no less than 80%."

There's nothing new about a NSW Labor government cosying up to the gun lobby to get votes from crossbenchers, which is what the Minns government is doing with the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers' party and their demand for the "right to hunt". I note that a "right to hunt" is but a step from a "right to bear arms". Shooting in state forests or on crown land would be a disaster for park workers and the bushwalking public. Hunting is dressed up as a recreational activity but guns – all guns – are designed to have one overriding objective – to take the life from a living thing. Shooters' party member Robert Borsak – who demands the right to hunt for food for his family – went on an excursion to Zimbabwe and shot an elephant.

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: is rubbish company Cleanaway Waste Management and its CEO Mark Schubert who has had 30 per cent of his short-term bonus cut following the deaths of three of its workers on the company's sites in the year to the end of June; 30 per cent of Schubert's bonus is $500,000. Cleanaway has also had an increase in serious injuries during the same time. One of the deaths happened at a recycling plant in Sydney's south-west, another involved a collection vehicle in Victorian and the third was a driver in South Australia.

But wait, there more! The company has had seven worker fatalities in the past four years and continual increases in serious injuries. And the company's conclusion? Workplace deaths happen and they can have an impact on executive bonuses.

End fossil fuel subsidies

A new Lock the Gate Alliance analysis reveals Australian taxpayers are paying for the construction of Whitehaven's Winchester South Coal Mine because the diesel subsidy the company will receive is greater than the capital outlay required to build the project.

Tax reform was on the agenda at the government's recent Economic Roundtable, and Lock the Gate is calling for an end to the Fuel Tax Credit for fossil fuel projects.

The calculations show Whitehaven Coal could be paid $44 million dollars of public money each year by claiming the Fuel Tax Credit subsidy for its planned thermal and metallurgical coal mine in Central Queensland.

The project's EIS indicates that the mine will consume 85 million litres of diesel each year and over 2.5 billion litres over the mine's lifetime. At current FTCS rates and in 2025 dollars, this will result in the mine receiving an average of $44 million per annum in FTCS subsidy or more than $1.3 billion over the mine's lifetime. Whitehaven's capital expenditure cost for the development of Winchester South is $1 billion.

Winchester South is just one of several proposed new Whitehaven coal mining projects. Whitehaven already operates six coal mines that claim Fuel Tax Credits each year.

Lock the Gate Alliance National Coordinator Ellen Roberts said, "Under this scheme, Whitehaven Coal is getting its Winchester South mine fully paid for by the Australian tax payer – as its diesel subsidy exceeds the amount of capital outlay. This is a massive financial and environmental cost to the Australian taxpayer.

"Whitehaven is a controversial company with a long list of environmental offences and warnings from its existing NSW mines. Its Winchester South coal mine would be responsible for more than half a billion tonnes of carbon emissions, would clear habitat that is home to endangered koalas and greater gliders, and would use up to 280 million litres of local groundwater each year. This is not a company that deserves any kind of taxpayer handout.

"Subsidising diesel for fossil fuel companies is perverse in the age of the climate crisis, when increasingly dangerous weather events like droughts, heatwaves, and floods are causing havoc for Australian communities.

"We're calling on the Albanese government to put an end to this unacceptable handout to fossil fuel companies."

Whitehaven's Winchester South coal mine is a proposed new (greenfield) opencut thermal and metallurgical coal mine in Queensland's Bowen Basin, south west of Mackay. The project would mine up to 17 million tonnes of coal a year until 2058 and according to Whitehaven it would be responsible for 583 million tonnes of climate pollution.

Lock the Gate Alliance

Adelaide's tram service publicly owned again

Len Lean

The South Australian government announced a deal in 2023 to scrap the privatisation of Adelaide train and tram services. The Labor state government had signed an agreement with train operator Keolis Downer Adelaide and tram operator Torrens Connect to hand back operations by 2025.

In 1993 a new Liberal State government was elected in South Australia. Elected in a landslide, the Liberal Party captured all but ten of the forty seven seats in the Lower House.

The swing was regarded as voters punishing the Labor government for its lack of vigilance which had allowed the state owned bank to lose over $3.15 billion. The Liberals' transport policy provided that Adelaide's public transport system would be put to tender. Within six months the bill had become the Passenger Transport Act and by July 1994 a passenger Transport Board was in place. The government had undertaken the most extensive competitive contracting of former government-run services.

The Labor party had promised at the 2022 state election to reverse the former Liberal government's privatised tram service in 2020 and train services in 2021. The contracts ($2.14 billion to run train services) were for the initial eight years with an option to extend but the Labor premier had said that a take–it-or-leave-it "partnership" deal was offered to Keolis Downer Adelaide Company. The alternative was a vote in Parliament that there be no compensation.

As part of the partnership deal, Keolis Downer would continue to maintain the train fleet and infrastructure until 2035. That would cost taxpayers $30.5 million for the first two years but the cost of the deal from 2025-35 remains hidden because of "commercial in confidence."

That's a legal term that refers to any information a business wants to keep secret. This could be anything from future product designs and marketing plans to sensitive financial information. By keeping this information confidential, businesses can make sure they stay ahead of the competition. It's also a handy way for privatising governments to avoid talking about what they're doing with taxpayers' money.

The public's right to know – freedom of information – open government is sometimes waived to enable governments to hide bad financial arrangements between government and the private sector thus avoiding adverse publicity.

As of 31 August 2025, Adelaide tram operations are back in public control, completing the state government's commitment to safeguard our essential rail services for future generations.

Tram networks are to be upgraded including safer and more reliable journeys through the removal of three level crossings, and better connection between the suburbs on either side of the Glenelg tram line. There is also a commitment to have safer and more accessible tram stops with improved access and lighting.

It is essential for all essential services in South Australia to be owned and operated by the state government. Privatisation has cost workers a lot. After the privatisation of ETSA (Electricity Trust of South Australia), electricity prices have now gone through the roof.

OP ED: Robodebt mentality still with us

Peter Farmer

Victims of the Morrison government's 'robodebt' scheme will get a further $475 million, after the largest class action in Australian history. It's ironic that the original rationale was to save money. The scheme was started when Scott Morrison was Minister for Social Services. The scheme involved averaging out any income earned by welfare recipients and averaging it out to produce possible overpayments.

Why 'robo' is in the name is that the process was then automated – people who hadn't been overpaid at all received threatening letters from debt collectors. There were suicides. Lives were ruined. It was a massive scandal.

The scheme was rushed through because the priority was to save money and for the government to look like it was being tough on welfare 'bludgers.'

Overall, it wasn't a roaring success, even for the Liberal government. The last two federal elections showed that Australian voters aren't all-in on mindless bashing of public services. They're also not all on board with attacks on public servants, as Peter Dutton found out after his badly-bungled promise to sack large numbers of government workers didn't pan out. A lot of Australians use 'welfare' at some stage of their lives, and a lot of people want public services to run well. That's not a bad thing, it shows that many of us know that we live in a society.

So Robodebt has left the scene, expensively and disgracefully. The bad ideas behind it remain in the attitude that 'welfare' is a bad thing, a cost that must be cut down or avoided. In fact, welfare is part of having a society worth living in.

We can see this mentality in the government's attitude to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The NDIS has always relied on private agencies, much as JobNetwork does. That makes it more expensive than it has to be. Now the government is trying to cut costs on the NDIS, hence proposing to create a separate agency for people with autism. Labor doesn't ostentatiously bash welfare recipients the way the Morrison government did, but it loves to announce 'savings.'

Curiously, Labor doesn't have this penny-pinching approach to AUKUS. Quite the reverse – it's given $4 billion to US shipyards to keep them building nuclear-powered submarines we don't need.

This country needs a government that puts people first. What we have is a government that puts private companies and the USA ahead of Australians.

Help us cancel the Indo Pacific Expo

To be held in Darling Harbour

November 4-6

The fact that Israel is committing genocide in relation to Gaza has been confirmed by many prestigious organisations and experts. The companies that are making huge profits on the bodies of innocent men, women and children of Gaza have been named by Francesca Albanese the UN rapporteur for Palestine.

These companies are: Elbit Systems, Lockheed Martin (F35's), Leonardo S.p.A, Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), Boeing, BAE systems, Northrop Grumman (*the list is not complete*).

These companies are invited to the Indo Pacific Expo – a display subsidised and sponsored by the NSW and Federal Governments!

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Report on Cumberland Branch contingent to Canberra convergence event

CPA Cumberland Branch

A coalition of grassroots organisations focusing on solidarity with Palestine organised a nationwide convergence on Canberra from the 20 to 22 of July on the occasion of the opening of the 48th Parliament. The goal of the event was to call for effective sanctions on Israel.

The Cumberland Branch of the CPA took part. A contingent reached Canberra at around dinnertime. We met up with CPA comrades, both local and from branches such as Hunter. Arriving at the rally the next day, the most noticeable aspect was the attendance.

Despite the call to action for this rally being thrown across the entire nation, the turnout was disappointingly small, comparable to the earlier two days of the multi-day convergence. However, a higher body count was expected on the final day, which was presented as the crescendo of the event. After two days of marches, the convergence finished with a rally and speeches.

A total of twenty-four speeches were given by local Australian activists, Palestinian survivors of the ongoing Gaza genocide, and an Indigenous activist from the Treaty Before Sports campaign who highlighted the importance of maintaining solidarity between the struggles of the Indigenous peoples both in Australia and Palestine. As the speeches were being delivered, the crowd anxiously anticipated the cannon-blast that would indicate the opening of the 48th Parliament. It was infuriating, the knowledge that mere metres away, hundreds of genocide profiteers would be convening but for the purpose of defending Israel's mass slaughter of the Palestinians.

One political consequence came soon after as a result of the convergence in the form of a punishment for Senator Mehreen Faruqi, one of Palestine's few supporters in Parliament. The Greens Senator held up a sign reading 'Gaza Is Starving, Words Won't Feed Them, Sanction Israel' in the opening session of the Senate. These words seemed to infuriate Foreign Minister Penny Wong in a way that the systematic slaughter of children never could. Notably, One Nation Senators who turned their backs on the Welcome to Country attracted no penalty, while Faruqi faced a disciplinary motion for holding the sign. Wong accused Faruqi of protesting for "attention."

The rallies of today carry a different energy than the rallies of 2023. The mood in the crowds is that of a nation that is increasingly becoming disillusioned with the ideals of liberal democracy. Nearly two years of repeated shows of numerical force with little political change to show of it have gradually transformed the public's perception of their government from one that is unaware of popular support for Palestine to one that is well aware of Israel's unpopularity but will stand for genocide regardless. Hundreds of years of genocide, land theft, and imperialism has incurred upon Australia a great moral debt to humanity.

Our complicity in the Gaza genocide is yet more interest accrued. It's important to remember that no one march and no one political action will pay off this debt in its entirety, but after every march and every rally the plan is the same: we dust ourselves off and prepare for the next one.

An earlier protest in Canberra. Photo: Leo Bild – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Deliver the NDIS

A survey of almost 500 disability support workers has revealed an acute workforce crisis, with overwhelming concern about pay, chronic understaffing and burnout, and clear evidence that support and care quality is suffering.

The Health Services Union (HSU) has warned the situation needs urgent action from the Federal Government after the survey made alarming findings from disability workers:

- 55% have considered leaving in the past year; 91% have at least thought about it.
- 49% report they **often or always** lack enough staff for safe, quality care (86% say it happens at least sometimes).
- 71% say shortages have **already** impacted their ability to provide quality care (rising to 91% including those worried it could happen).
- 74% say their pay **doesn't** reflect their skill, responsibility and emotional labour.
- 62% report **frequent** or **constant** burnout; 72% say the workforce is not large or stable enough for current and future needs; and 86% fear wages could be cut without government action.

Employers and unions also came together for an NDIS Workforce Crisis Panel at Parliament House, Canberra where MPs and Senators heard first-hand from frontline workers and employers about the urgent need for federal intervention.

Unions representing the disability workforce and several major disability employers will also sign a pledge to work together, in codesign with people living with a disability, to lift the quality of services and supports.

The pledge calls for a Workforce Compact: a targeted funding pool of $5 per hour per worker (for workers employed by registered providers of core supports) to enable employers to negotiate with workers for better pay and conditions that stabilise the workforce and improve participant outcomes.

HSU National Secretary Lloyd Williams said: "These workers are the backbone of the NDIS. Right now, they're burnt out, underpaid and under-resourced. The people they support feel the consequences. The data unequivocally shows this is a workforce crisis.

"When almost half of the staff say they often or always don't have enough colleagues on shift, you don't get safe, high-quality care, you are escalating risk. That's not fair on workers or NDIS participants.

"A Workforce Compact of $5 an hour is a simple, targeted fix to keep skilled workers in the sector, lift wages and conditions, and deliver better supports for NDIS participants. This could be achieved with just a $900 million investment over three years.

"The government has a clear choice to make. They either invest in the people who deliver the NDIS, or watch more of them leave. While the sustainability of the NDIS has been in focus recently, what we're talking about is immediate and existential."

Health Services Union

Dairy workers strike

Beginning 8 September workers at dairy processor Fonterra Bayswater in Victoria have begun rolling strikes following weeks of industrial action over pay and conditions.

The escalation in industrial action follows 6 months of negotiations in which Fonterra Australia – which is being sold with a price tag of $4 billion – has failed to put forward an offer that addresses the inequality in pay and conditions between Bayswater and other Victorian Fonterra sites.

Fonterra workers at Bayswater are paid around $5 less than a Fonterra worker at other Victoria sites and are being short-changed on redundancy payouts by around 78 weeks. Other Fonterra workers receive 130 weeks redundancy compared to just 52 weeks at Bayswater.

The commencement of all-day rolling strikes follows two weeks of industrial action at the site, with two 1 hour stop works on 22 August and a stop work action across day and afternoon shifts.

United Workers Union (UWU) members at the Bayswater site have been pushing for a 4-year agreement, including an increase to the base rate of pay, improved redundancy payout to 60 weeks and greater work health and safety measures, overall lessening the gap in pay and entitlements between Bayswater and other Fonterra sites.

Neil Smith, UWU National Dairy Coordinator said: "At the end of the day it's about fairness. If Fonterra can afford higher wages and higher redundancy payouts at their other sites in Cobden, Darnum, and Stanhope, then they can afford what our members are asking for here at Bayswater."

All other Fonterra sites here in Victoria have 130 weeks redundancy and pay dairy workers up to $5 more per hour, thanks to UWU agreements.

"Meanwhile UWU members at Bayswater are asking for just 60 weeks in redundancy payouts. How cheap is Fonterra that they would fight us on this, when they can afford to pay more everywhere else?

"Our members have been the reasonable party in these negotiations. They have asked for cost-of-living improvements to their base rate of pay, a reasonable increase to their redundancy payout and a legitimate need for lifting devices on site to help prevent workplace injuries, all of which have been refused.

"These workers today are exercising their right to take protected industrial action, following over 6 months of negotiations with the company. Our members are out here on the picket line fighting for a fair pay deal, because their employer has refused to give them one."

United Workers Union

OP-ED: We are not doomed

Zdzislaw Z

The UN's top climate scientists have issued their final warning: the window to secure a livable future is "rapidly closing." Their 2023 AR6 Synthesis Report leaves no room for doubt. Human activity has unequivocally caused the warming of the planet, fuelling more frequent and intense extreme weather across every region of the world. These events are not distant threats. They are causing dangerous disruptions to water and food security for millions of vulnerable communities and pushing countless species toward extinction today.

Current pledges and policies are woefully insufficient, putting us on a path to warm between 2.2°C and 3.5°C by 2100. It's a far cry from the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Agreement. This isn't a future problem but an injustice of the present. An estimated 3.3 to 3.6 billion people, primarily in the Global South which often lacks protective infrastructure, live in places described as "highly vulnerable to climate change." These are often the communities least responsible for the crisis but are facing its most brutal consequences.

In this light, the rising tide of climate "doomism"; the feeling that all is lost and there's no point trying is an understandable, even rational, reaction. To give in to this despair is to misunderstand the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) full message. The same scientists state with high confidence that we have "multiple, feasible, and effective options" right now to cut global emissions in half by 2030 and achieve net zero by 2050 which would put us back on track to the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Agreement. Solar and wind power, coupled with energy storage, are now a cheaper alternative than fossil fuels in most regions. Huge progress has been made already, and faster and higher temperature rises have been avoided. The problem is not a lack of tools or technology, but a profound lack of political will to implement them at scale.

The obstacle to effective action against climate change is not an abstract "human nature," but the entrenched power of the fossil capital class. The corporations and investors whose immense wealth and political influence are directly tied to burning carbon. Their material interest lies in delaying action. It is here that doomism functions not as a rational response, but as an ideological weapon. A population paralyzed by despair is easier to manage than one demanding a systemic change. By promoting inaction, doomism lines up with the interests of the very forces causing the crisis.

Doomism is a luxury of those who believe they can insulate themselves from the worst impacts, even if only for a time. It is an idealist conclusion that blames an abstract humanity. For the well over three billion people already on the frontlines of climate disaster, surrender is not an option; they are engaged in a daily struggle for adaptation and survival, often being forced to flee to more 'habitable climates.' Climate change is not a single on-off 'apocalypse.' It's a gradual thing and it relentlessly exacerbates global inequalities, widening the gap between the rich and poor, between races, and between classes. Giving in to doomism means abandoning those already fighting the battle, effectively conceding victory to the forces creating the crisis.

The IPCC's message is a blueprint. It states that we have the physical tools, the economic capacity, and the scientific knowledge to act. The conflict is not between hope and gloom, but between two material forces: one of profiteering and inertia, and one of transformation and justice.

Our choice is not between a perfect world and a ruined one; it is between a future where we fight for every fraction of a degree of cooling, saving millions of lives and preserving ecosystems or a future where we let corporate interests burn it all. Every fraction of a degree of warming we prevent translates into a more livable world for generations to come.

This is not a task for individuals alone. While individual actions matter, the report is clear that a few more people cycling instead of driving will not change the outcome. It is the fundamental responsibility of our governments to make policies and force corporations into a systemic change which focuses on making sustainable choices the easy default choice for everyone. It calls for a rapid systemic transformation of our energy, transportation, and industrial systems.

There is no single 'point of no return.' Our collective future is a sliding scale of consequences. The rational, materialist response to doomism is to recognise the immense power that we still hold to shape our conditions, and take action to change our system.

Photo: Sueda Dilli– pexels (public domain)

Something to say?

Write to the Editor!

editor@cpa.org.au

GREEN NOTES

Norway's potential environmental disaster

Graham Holton

Norway has identified valuable deep-sea mineral deposits of copper, cobalt, rare earths, and sulphide deposits at Grøntua, across an undersea area of 280,000 km². In 2024, Norway's Parliament approved opening its territorial waters for commercial deep-sea mining exploration. This made it the first country to do so. In June 2024, the government announced its first exploration permits would be awarded in early 2025. Significant resistance from environmental groups delayed the first round of exploration until 2026.

The European Parliament and several countries expressed concern and called for a moratorium on deep-sea mining, because of the risks to biodiversity. Conservationists urged a halt until proper ecological studies were completed. UN bodies called for a moratorium on future mining.

The World Wildlife Fund and Greenpeace warned that deep-sea mining could violate biodiversity protection obligations under international law. WWF-Norway sued the government, alleging that the environmental impact assessment was inadequate as it had failed to comply with the Seabed Minerals Act. Critics warned of irreversible ecosystem damage to unknown deep-sea species.

The main environmental problems are associated with habitat destruction, toxic plumes, noise and light disruption, chemical leakage, carbon release, and the irreversibility of damage to fragile habitats. Deep-sea mining risks destroying vulnerable, unexplored Arctic ecosystems and disrupting global carbon cycles, with potentially irreversible biodiversity loss, habitat destruction, noise and light pollution, and the release of stored methane gas.

Critics argue there is an insufficient understanding of deep-sea biology. There are significant gaps in scientific understanding of deep-sea ecosystems, making it difficult to assess the true impact of mining activities. Mining machinery could create plumes of fine sediment that smother marine life and spread toxins over large areas, potentially impacting fish populations and ocean chemistry. Mining activities would cause irreversible damage to sulphide chimneys and sponge grounds, which are fragile, hosting unique species.

The dark, silent deep-sea environment relies on bioluminescence for communication and navigation. Mining operations would introduce significant noise and light pollution, which can mask ecological functions and irreversibly harm deep-sea organisms. The deep sea is a massive carbon storage area. Disturbing these environments could lead to the release of stored carbon and methane, potentially exacerbating climate change. Deep-sea mining could harm valuable fish stocks and disrupt sustainable fishing industries, a concern shared by Norwegian fishing associations.

The deep sea is one of the quietest and darkest ecosystems on Earth. Mining would introduce continuous noise, vibration, and artificial light, disrupting species adapted to silence and darkness, including deep-sea fish and marine mammals that rely on sound. These habitats took millennia to form and are often unique to small areas.

Mining machines churn the seabed, creating massive plumes of sediment. These clouds can spread far beyond the mining zone, smothering filter-feeding organisms, clogging gills, and reducing light penetration. Sediment may also contain toxic metals, such as mercury, cadmium, and arsenic, that can re-enter the food chain. Disturbing sulphide deposits risks releasing acidic, metal-rich fluids, which can cause acid mine drainage underwater, altering pH and poisoning organisms. Released metals could bioaccumulate up the food chain, threatening fisheries.

Many species are undiscovered and could be lost before being studied. Scientific knowledge of deep-sea ecology is still limited, meaning risks are largely unknown. The seabed recovers extremely slowly over hundreds to thousands of years. Once destroyed, habitats may never return.

Drawing wisdom and strength from history, guiding humanity's ship steadily forward

Consul General of the People's Republic of China in Sydney, **Wang Yu**

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War. On 3 September, China hosted a grand commemoration, joining people across the world, to bear history in mind, honour the fallen heroes, cherish peace, and forge ahead for a better future. 80 years ago, the forces of justice around the world, including China and Australia, stood united to defend humanity and peace. However, 80 years on, unilateralism runs rampant, bullying prevails, and historical nihilism resurfaces. Humanity's ship has approached branching waters, where the wisdom and strength from the history must guide our path and sustain our voyage.

We shall uphold and advocate the correct historical view of World War II, lighting up the beacon to guide our path. As the principal theatre of the World Anti-Fascist War in the East, the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression began the earliest, lasted the longest, pinned down the greatest number of troops, and incurred the greatest sacrifices. Under the banner of the anti-Japanese national united front advocated and established by the Communist Party of China, the Chinese people launched a great struggle for survival and national salvation, making an immense historic contribution to the global victory over fascism. As former US President Franklin D Roosevelt once said, "Had China not been fighting, or had China been defeated, how many Japanese troops do you think would then be deployed to other regions to fight? They would have captured Australia, and India all at once …"

History has proven that light will always overcome darkness, and that justice will ultimately prevail over evil. Regrettably, there are still those who attempt to deny the strategic significance of the Chinese battlefield, or even to reverse the verdict on the aggressors. The people of the whole world will not tolerate such a reversal of the course of history.

We shall resolutely safeguard the post-war international order, steadying the helm to steer the course. Not long ago, President Xi Jinping noted during a meeting with Prime Minister Albanese that all countries should work together to uphold international fairness and justice, safeguard multilateralism and free trade, defend the international system with the United Nations at its core and the international order based on international law, and make the international order more just and equitable. Taiwan's return to China is a victorious outcome of the World Anti-Fascist War and the post-war international order. Its historical and legal facts are indisputable, and any denial or challenge is a violation of the post-war international order and is doomed to fail.

We shall firmly defend international fairness and justice, raising the sail to speed us ahead. In the years of war, China and Australia stood side by side, leaving a legacy of moving memories. From the support shown by the Australian people to the Chinese seamen of the *SS Silksworth*, to the anti-war strike of Australian dockworkers in the Dalfram dispute, these stories embodied the resolute choice of the Chinese and Australian peoples to stand together on the right side of fairness and justice.

Today, as major countries in the Asia-Pacific, China and Australia are both committed to safeguarding and promoting peace, stability, and prosperity in our region and the world. We should therefore work together to further advance our relations for sound development, and join hands with all peace-loving peoples, to help the ship of human progress ride the winds and waves and sail toward the shore of a community with a shared future for humanity.

Racist division is the enemy of workers

Sajeev Kumar

In a capitalist world, the conditions of migration are created by capitalism itself: colonialism, which forced labour from one part of the world to another for profit; neo-colonialism, which creates harsh living conditions through neoliberal exploitation, forcing people to migrate for better lives; imperial interventions; globalisation, which facilitates the movement of capital and labour to enable the accumulation of capital; and climate change, throttled by the capitalist mode of production since the industrial revolution.

Liberty, equality, and fraternity are slogans of the French Revolution (1789). The reason they remain a distant dream is that capitalism is incompatible with these values. Wage slavery requires the exploitation of labour, for which unity is a hindrance; the wedge of racism keeps labour divided. Capitalism requires inequality, and racism enshrines it.

The history of migration begins from the days humans migrated from Africa to populate the world. Humans have a predisposition for xenophobia from primitive times towards other tribes, driven by fear of attack, diseases, and competition for natural resources. In modern societies, democratic structures are instituted to control these base instincts, protect minorities, and foster cooperation.

The litmus test for any democracy is the acceptance of diversity. One of the greatest intellectuals India has ever produced, Dr Ambedkar, said, "Democracy is the right to be different and not to be hunted on the basis of the difference."

With the emergence of capitalism, the creation of nation-states also created the passion of nationalism, which created the "other." The trait of hyper-nationalism that the right-wing possesses spreads hate for the "other," erasing humanism – a refusal to accept that we may not be identical, but we are all equal.

Imperialism could only justify the inhuman exploitation of colonies with racism and social Darwinism – a pseudo-science that uses the phrase "survival of the fittest" in a context far removed from its original meaning to argue that some races are superior to others and that racism is therefore right.

Racism is not natural; it has roots in a mode of production based on profits. Racism and capitalism go hand in hand. In a modern world where science is pondering planetary migrations in the future to sustain life, to hate migration and attack migrants is to be archaic and regressive.

Socialist Voice (edited for space)

MUA Queensland seafarer joins Global Flotilla to Gaza in historic humanitarian action

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) has proudly announced that Queensland member Hamish Paterson will captain a vessel as part of the Global Sumud Flotilla, an unprecedented international civilian fleet sailing to Gaza to challenge the illegal blockade and deliver urgently needed humanitarian aid.

Paterson will join frontline activist and filmmaker Juliet Lamont and her daughters Isla and Luca, forming part of the eight-strong Australian and New Zealand delegation. They will sail alongside vessels from 44 countries in the largest civilian flotilla in history.

"As a long-term member of the MUA and the trade union movement, I see this as a continuation of our proud tradition of international solidarity and peace," Paterson said. "If ordinary civilians can deliver aid, there is no excuse for governments to remain inactive while genocide continues."

Warren Smith, Deputy National Secretary, explained the Union's long history of peace activism and solidarity with oppressed peoples. "We have always stood against war, famine, injustice and apartheid. The war and siege of Gaza is an appalling and unbearable situation which workers and their unions, through global activism, must stand up to. The MUA congratulates the stand that our members are taking both at work and in their personal lives to alleviate the suffering and draw attention to the plight of Palestinians under occupation," Smith said.

The Queensland Branch of the MUA has thrown its support behind Paterson and Lamont, and encourages members and supporters of the union to contribute to the fundraiser page. Branch Assistant Secretary Paul Gallagher, reflected on the MUA's history of militant activism for progressive causes. "We have always been a union which fights from the front, and nothing captures that spirit more than Hamish setting sail and putting his seamanship towards a cause dear to his heart and which is a defining humanitarian issue facing this generation," Gallagher said.

The Global Sumud Flotilla is bringing together a diverse coalition of seafarers, doctors, clergy, humanitarians, and artists, including Greta Thunberg, Susan Sarandon, Carsie Blanton, and Tadhg Hickey.

Lamont, acting as first mate, said: "I have a profound hope that our collective action will open a humanitarian corridor and bring vital medical supplies to the people of occupied Palestine. The time is now. Direct action is an act of love."

Her daughters echoed the urgency of the mission. Luca said: "When the leaders of the world remain silent and complicit, we will set sail." Isla added: "As a young woman with privilege, I feel a responsibility to stand with Palestine and demand freedom."

The MUA stands shoulder to shoulder with the Peace Flotilla, recognising this historic journey as part of the union movement's longstanding commitment to peace, justice, and international solidarity.

At time of writing, it has been reported that the flotilla has been attacked by explosive-laden drones in Tunisia.

Maritime Union of Australia

Support for the Australian delegation can be provided at: chuffed.org/project/global-sumud-flotilla

The United Nations turns 80

VJ Prashad

Photo: mweber – flickr.com (CC BY-NC 2.0)

There is only one treaty in the world that, despite its limitations, binds nations together: the United Nations Charter. Representatives of fifty nations wrote and ratified the UN Charter in 1945, with others joining in the years that followed. The charter itself only sets the terms for the behaviour of nations. It does not and cannot create a new world. It depends on individual nations to either live by the charter or die without it.

The charter remains incomplete. It needed a Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and even that was contested as political and civil rights had to eventually be separated from the social and economic rights. Deep rifts in political visions created fissures in the UN system that have kept it from effectively addressing problems in the world.

The UN is now eighty. It is a miracle that it has lasted this long. The League of Nations was founded in 1920 and lasted for only eighteen years of relative peace (until World War II began in China in 1937).

The UN is only as strong as the community of nations that comprises it. If the community is weak, then the UN is weak. As an independent body, it cannot be expected to fly in like an angel and whisper into the ears of belligerents to stop them. The UN can only blow the whistle, an umpire for a game whose rules are routinely broken by the more powerful states. It offers a convenient punching bag for all sides of the political spectrum: it is blamed if crises are not solved and if relief efforts fall short. Can the UN stop the Israeli genocide in Gaza? UN officials have made strong statements during the genocide, with Secretary General António Guterres saying that "Gaza is a killing field – and civilians are in an endless death loop" and that the famine in Gaza is "not a mystery – it is a man-made disaster, a moral indictment, and a failure of humanity itself." These are powerful words, but they have amounted to nothing, calling into question the efficacy of the UN itself.

The UN is not one body but two halves. The most public face of the UN is the UN Security Council (UNSC), which has come to stand in as its executive arm. The UNSC is made up of fifteen countries. Five are permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and the others are elected for two-year terms. The five permanent members (the P5) hold veto power over the decisions of the council. If one of the P5 does not like a decision, they are able to scuttle it with their veto. Each time the UNSC has been presented with a resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, the United States has exercised its veto to quash it (since 1972, the United States has vetoed more than forty-five UNSC resolutions about the Israeli occupation of Palestine).

The UNSC stands in for the UN General Assembly (UNGA), whose one hundred and ninety-three members can pass resolutions that try to set the tone for world opinion but are often ignored. Since the start of the genocide, for instance, the UNGA has passed five key resolutions calling for a ceasefire (the first in October 2023 and the fifth in June 2025). But the UNGA has no real power in the UN system.

The other half of the UN is its myriad agencies, each set up to deal with this or that crisis of the modern age. Some predate the UN itself, such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which was created in 1919 and brought into the UN system in 1946 as its first specialised agency. Others would follow, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which advocates for the rights of children, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which promotes tolerance and respect for the world's cultures.

Over the decades, agencies have been created to advocate for and provide relief to refugees, to ensure nuclear energy is used for peace rather than war, to improve global telecommunications, and to expand development assistance. Their remit is impressive, although the outcomes are more modest. Meagre funding from the world's states is one limitation (in 2022, the UN's total expenditure was $67.5 billion, compared with over $2 trillion spent on the arms trade). This chronic underfunding is largely because the world's powers disagree over the direction of the UN and its agencies. Yet without them, the suffering in the world would neither be recorded nor addressed. The UN system has become the world's humanitarian organisation largely because neoliberal austerity and war have destroyed the capacity of most individual countries to do this work themselves, and because non-governmental organisations are too small to meaningfully fill in the gap.

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the entire balance of the world system changed and the UN went into a cycle of internal reform initiatives: from Boutros Boutros-Ghali's An Agenda for Peace (1992) and An Agenda for Development (1994) and Kofi Annan's Renewing the United Nations (1997) to Guterres' Our Common Agenda (2021), Summit of the Future (2024), and UN80 Task Force (2025).

The UN80 Task Force is the deepest reform imagined, but its three areas of interest (internal efficiency, mandate review, and programme alignment) have been attempted previously ("we've tried this exercise before, said Under-Secretary-General for Policy and Chair of the UN80 Task Force Guy Ryder). The agenda set by the UN is focused on its own organisational weaknesses and does not address the largely political questions that scuttle the UN's work. A broader agenda would need to include the following points:

Move the UN Secretariat to the Global South. Almost all UN agencies are headquartered in either Europe or the United States, where the UN Secretariat itself is located. There have been occasional proposals to move UNICEF, the UN Population Fund, and UN Women to Nairobi, Kenya, which already hosts the UN Environment Programme and UN-Habitat. It is about time that the UN Secretariat leave New York and go to the Global South, not least to prevent Washington from using visa denials to punish UN officials who criticise US or Israeli power. With the US preventing Palestinian officials from entering the US for the UN General Assembly, there have been calls already to move the UNGA meeting to Geneva. Why not permanently leave the United States?

Increase funding to the UN from the Global South. Currently, the largest funders of the UN system are the United States (22%) and China (20%), with seven close US allies contributing 28% (Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Canada, and South Korea). The Global South – without China – contributes about 26% to the UN budget; with China, its contribution is 46%, nearly half of the total budget. It is time for China to become the largest contributor to the UN, surpassing the US, which wields its funding as a weapon against the organisation.

Increase funding for humanitarianism within states. Countries should be spending more on alleviating human distress than on paying off wealthy bondholders. The UN should not be the main agency to assist those in need. As we have shown, several countries on the African continent spend more servicing debt than on education and healthcare. Unable to provide these essential functions, they come to rely on the UN through UNICEF, UNESCO, and the WHO. States should build up their own capacity rather than depend on this assistance.

Cut the global arms trade. Wars are waged not only for domination but for the profits of arms dealers. Annual international arms exports are nearing $150 billion, with the United States and Western European countries accounting for 73% of sales between 2020 and 2024. In 2023 alone, the top one hundred arms manufacturers made $632 billion (largely through sales by US companies to the US military). Meanwhile, the total UN peacekeeping budget is only $5.6 billion, and 92% of the peacekeepers come from the Global South. The Global North makes money on war, while the Global South sends its soldiers and policemen to try and prevent conflicts.

Strengthen regional peace and development structures. To disperse some of the power from the UNSC, regional peace and development structures such as the African Union must be strengthened and their views given priority. If there are no permanent members in the UNSC from Africa, the Arab world, or from Latin America, why should these regions be held captive by the veto wielded by the P5? If the power to settle disputes were to rest more in regional structures, then the absolute authority of the UNSC could be somewhat diluted.

Tricontinental

the USA wields its funding as a weapon against the UN

Letters to the Editor
The Guardian
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Don't rewrite history

On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the victory in the world anti-fascist war, please allow me to extend my sincere tribute to the people of Australia, especially the working class of Port Kembla and the Communist Party of Australia. The Chinese and Australian people made undeniable contributions to the victory in WW2.

We do not wish to see the outcomes of WW2 rewritten in future historical accounts with the surrender of fascist countries being recast as a "cessation of hostilities" among "democracies" and Germany and Japan portrayed as victims of the war. Any rhetoric that glorifies wars of aggression and colonial rule is an insult to human conscience. Every alteration of history today serves as a prelude to future calamities.

80 years on, a new fascism is perpetrating a holocaust against the Palestinian People and also the people of Cuba suffering from the US blockade. Only be extending our aid and fighting for human justice can we secure world peace.

Long live the great solidarity of the world's peoples!

Zhou Wei

Film Review: *Dead to Rights*

Reviewer: David Matters

While travelling in China I met a woman who was running a coffee shop. In conversation she talked about her history in China. She was an opera singer who had come from a wealthy family in Nanjing. The bitterness of what had happened to her family in Nanjing was very deep. She told me of the suffering of her family. Though what she told me was eye-opening it cannot compare to the stark and artistic painting that the film *Dead to Rights* manages.

The Chinese Consulate-General in Brisbane very kindly invited members of our society to a private showing of this remarkable film. Knowing that the film was shot as a portrayal of the lives of a segment of the people of Nanjing, I was a little worried whether I would be able to sit through it. The art of the filmmaker is on show, meaning the most brutal of scenes are not shot in a Hollywood manner but in such a way that you can personally identify with the people and identify the reality of their situation.

In the context of the current Gaza genocide there is much to reflect on. Skilled camera work and direction gives context to the residents and their lives when hell in the form of the Japanese Imperial army defeated the defending Chinese National army. It had not occurred to me how brutal the occupation was and how inescapable the terror and brutality it unleashed was.

I think that this film is a must-see for all Australians. It sets in context why so many of us are opposed to the current reactionary war drive and things like the rearmament of Japan. In a context where over 400,000 women were kept as sex slaves by the Japanese imperial forces across the whole of Asia and where brutal killings and mass rapes occurred by these fascistic forces, resistance to re-militarising is more than theoretical.

The contribution in the war against fascism and militarism made by the Chinese nation as a whole was phenomenal. A tremendous price was paid by over 35 million Chinese people killed in that war. Our current media have misrepresented China as it is now, as well as distorting or ignoring the historical events that have shaped the Chinese Nation. It was horror at the Nanjing massacre and the occupation of China that made Australian workers, in particular the waterside workers of Port Kembla refuse to load pig iron being sold to the Japanese militarists.

As another of our committee members said, "there was no escape." I would urge all who can to view this film. It is good to know that members of our own peace movement were in the audience and that efforts to increase exposure to this film will be undertaken by our society.

Book Review

Socialist Register 2025
OPENINGS AND CLOSURES:
Socialist strategy at a crossroads

Reviewer: Graham Holton

The sixteen articles that make up this annually published book are most suited to functionaries of the Australian Labor Party (and associated "think" tanks) and possibly the odd 'left' identifying politician, either in the Greens or the ALP, although some academics may find them interesting. There is some outside interest as the articles do in part explore the political situation in Britain, the USA, Pakistan, Turkey, Palestine and a number of South American countries.

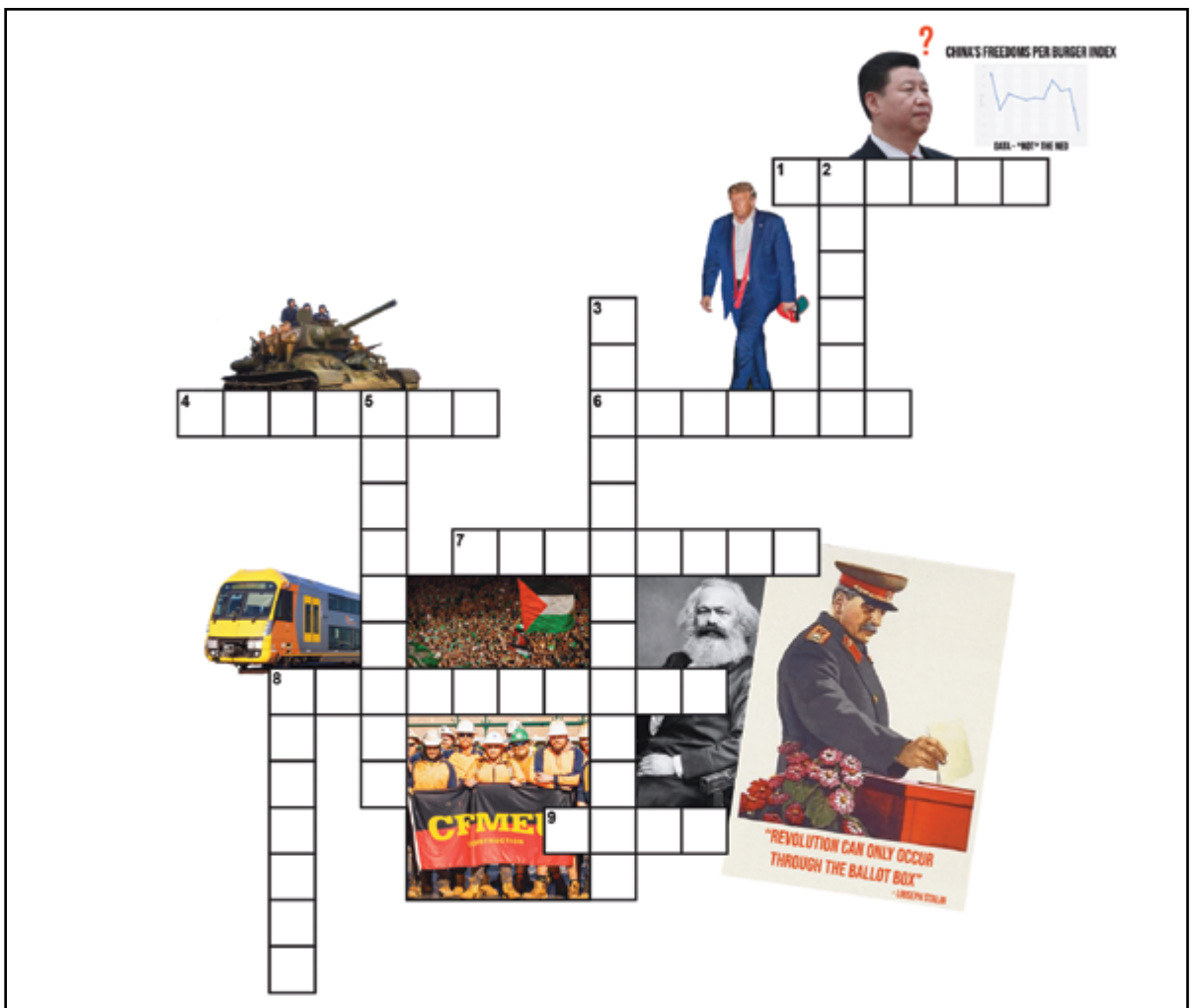
The academic background of the authors tends to mean the texts are peppered with non-everyday words and very carefully-worded and rather formal arguments. Whilst one article exposed the opportunism possible with movement politics most authors continued the call, like many a progressive publication for 'the left' to realise this or that and/or get organised to do this or that. There is an often repeated insistence that a popular 'left' has to be created from 'the mistakes' of the past, a very reactive and narrow view.

There is also some realisation that disciplined organisation is required for the overwhelming task of saving the planet/humanity for the climatic abyss and ravages of neoliberalism.

Ayyaz Mallick's article was informative about the tensions and contradictions facing modern Pakistan. The two articles on Palestine are informative but for *Guardian* readers not a great deal will be added to their understanding of the horrors of this national liberation struggle.

Ingar Solty's article, in outlining the challenge of responding to the rise of the "right" in Germany, articulates the shortcomings of the previous decades' forms of protest in failing to influence governments to act in the interests of the people. It rings a bell – many of us will remember how mass demonstrations and popular opposition to the war in Iraq couldn't prevent Australia's participation.

Without intending to do so, *Socialist Register 2025* exposes the bankruptcy of the liberal left and associated social democratic thought. Worse, as Vijay Prashad recently noted, this form of western leftism, in part, has helped pave the way for the stormtroopers of capitalism.



Across

[1] China's was awesome, Trump's a bit rubbish
[4] Defeated in 1945, still very defeatable
[6] Group demonised by Liberal senator
[7] Something Trump would like to be
[8] Theorists can be silly, but these things do happen
[9] What a leader is called when they lead a union

Down

[2] Say this with 'Palestine', get in trouble in the UK
[3] Selling government assets for short-term gain
[5] Albanese frets about China having this in the Pacific
[8] Never stops changing, often ignored by government

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Fidel's economics of national liberation

Shiran Illanperuma

Fidel Castro, Havana, 1978. Photo: Marcelo Montecino – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 2.0)

In the last ten years, the wealth of the top one per cent of the world's population has grown by over $33.9 trillion – enough to end poverty twenty-two times over. Perhaps it is time for new ideas.

13 August 2025 marked what would have been the 99th birthday of Cuban revolutionary Fidel Castro. It also marks the beginning of year-long celebrations for his centenary. Castro is known as many things: a hardened revolutionary, charismatic orator, skilled diplomat, and moral compass of the Third World project.

Castro was also a Marxist theoretician steeped in the practical struggle of revolution and socialist construction. He assumed leadership of a plantation economy that was the product of 400 years of colonisation, while facing unprecedented external constraints in the form of an over six-decade-long economic embargo by the United States. This meant that Castro probably had to think about economics and development more than most leaders. It was a fundamental question for Cuba's survival.

Now, when heightened protectionism, militarism, and unilateralism from the Global North threaten the prospects for peace and development for the global majority, it is worth revisiting some elements of Castro's economic thought.

INDUSTRIALISATION CANNOT WAIT FOREVER

In October 1953, following the heroic assault on the Moncada Barracks, Castro was arrested and brought to trial, where he delivered his iconic speech, "History Will Absolve Me." This speech provides some early insights into Castro's frustration with Cuba's underdevelopment, his analysis of its root causes, and his desire to trigger a social transformation:

"Except for a few food, lumber and textile industries, Cuba continues to be primarily a producer of raw materials. We export sugar to import candy, we export hides to import shoes, we export iron to import ploughs … Everyone agrees with the urgent need to industrialise the nation, that we need steel industries, paper and chemical industries, that we must improve our cattle and grain production, the technology and processing in our food industry in order to defend ourselves against the ruinous competition from Europe in cheese products, condensed milk, liquors and edible oils, and the United States in canned goods; that we need cargo ships; that tourism should be an enormous source of revenue. But the capitalists insist that the workers remain under the yoke. The state sits back with its arms crossed and industrialisation can wait forever".

A few key points can be gleaned from this passage. First, Castro's awareness of the international division of labour that had relegated Cuba to a producer of raw materials. Second, his understanding of the need for both heavy industrialisation and agricultural modernisation to develop the country. Third, that the local capitalist class, contrary to classical analysis, preferred to hold back the development of the productive forces in order to prevent further development of the working class. Fourth, that the existing state structures and the domestic class interests that governed it were fetters to the development of the country.

This short passage demonstrates that the then twenty-seven-year-old Castro already had a razor-sharp understanding of the problems of underdevelopment. Perhaps he came to this analysis through his own experiences in revolution and in discussion with his comrades.

FROM CUBAN LIBERATION TO GLOBAL SOUTH EMANCIPATION

Castro may have started his revolutionary career as a voice for Cuban liberation, but as his international stature grew, he soon became an icon for the emancipation of the entire Global South. In 1983, at the Seventh Summit of the Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in New Delhi, Castro presented a book-length report titled "The World Economic and Social Crisis: Its Impact on the Underdeveloped Countries, Its Somber Prospects, and the Need to Struggle if We Are to Survive." Though printed under Castro's name, the report's introduction acknowledges that it was a collective effort: a product of cooperation between economists from Cuba's World Economic Research Center and the International Economic Research Center of the University of Havana's School of Economics.

The report argued that the crises of 1979-1982 originated in a crisis of overproduction in the industrialised countries. The monetarist response to this (namely, the heightening of interest rates) helped externalise the crisis and transmit it to the unindustrialised countries, causing currency depreciation, widening trade deficits, high inflation, poverty and a general widening of the gap between the industrialised and unindustrialised countries. Castro's analysis was not a linear explanation of the crisis but a conjunctural analysis, taking into account a range of factors including the arms race and the food and energy crises.

The report ends with an exhaustive agenda for action, emphasising the need for unity within the Global South, while also making the case that a solution for the Global North's own crises would be to end the exploitation of the South:

"The economic backwardness, lack of financial means, severe contraction of foreign trade, hunger, unemployment and absence of even the most basic living conditions in the Third World cannot, in the long run, be beneficial to any of the developed capitalist countries. To the contrary, the positive outcome of our situation would have a favourable influence on the upsurge in world trade and would alleviate the unemployment, under-utilisation of installed capacities and stagnation of their economies. It is an obvious truth that, if our economies expanded, this would help reduce the tense crisis situation that has been generated in those countries. The continuation of the exploitation that is ruining the Third World would inexorably end in ruin for all."

Those last three words, "ruin for all," echo Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' warning in the *Communist Manifesto* that class struggles can culminate "either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes." Castro takes this prognosis and adapts it to the age of imperialism. He was for the revolutionary reconstitution of society.

Nearly two decades later, Castro cut a lonely figure at the UN Millennium Summit in Geneva. This was Castro's last speech at the UN and one delivered during the peak of neoliberal globalisation and the Washington Consensus. It was much shorter than his famous 1960 speech at the UN but no less significant. He began with a jab at the countries of the Global North, which "monopolise the economic, political and technological power" and "offer more of the same recipes that have only served to make us poorer, more exploited, and more dependent." He concluded that "There is nothing in the existing economic and political order that can serve the interests of humankind".

TOWARDS AN ECONOMICS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION

Economics has never been a value-neutral field of inquiry. Its formation into a distinct academic field is a result of the birth of capitalism. Economics as we know it has historically had to provide ideological cover for at least three distinct class struggles: first, the struggle between landed feudal interests and the emerging industrial capitalists; second, the struggle between the capitalists and workers; and third, the struggle between industrialised nations and the colonised and imperialised nations. These struggles have defined the morality (or lack thereof) of the field of economics.

Castro's economics was an economics of national liberation. It valued the sovereignty of nations and the dignity of its peoples. Like all economic models, it can be said to contain a few assumptions: There is an external constraint – the international division of labor enforced by multinational corporations and the existing international financial institutes. Additionally, any attempt to overcome this constraint leads to violence – coups, assassinations, sanctions, and embargoes. The majority of people in the Global South, and indeed across the world, have a common interest in uniting to put an end to this system of exploitation and the polarisation and crises that it begets.

In his last speech, delivered in 2017 at the 7th Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba, Castro said that "the ideas of the Cuban communists will remain as proof that on this planet, if we work with fervour and dignity, the material and cultural goods that human beings need can be produced."

According to the Oxfam report "Takers not Makers," the number of people living in poverty has barely changed since 1990. In the last ten years, the wealth of the top one per cent of the world's population has grown by over $33.9 trillion – enough to end poverty twenty-two times over. Perhaps it is time for new ideas.

Castro's economics valued the sovereignty of nations and the dignity of its peoples

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People's Dispatch

Trump is building a private army

C.J Atkins

President Donald Trump. Photo: State Department photo (Public Domain)

Not since the days of Hitler's SA has a leader in an advanced capitalist country wielded a private political army outside the regular military and police forces that is answerable only to them. If a new scheme hatched by President Donald Trump and his top adviser Stephen Miller comes to fruition, that may be exactly what the MAGA mogul will have.

A new executive order signed by Trump this month grabbed headlines for its creation of special "law and order" National Guard units that can be called out by the president and the Defense Secretary without having to go through state governors – who by law are the commanders of the Guard – for the purpose of "quelling domestic disturbances."

The move is raising serious questions about legality, the separation of powers, and civil liberties, but another part of the same executive order potentially poses even more dangerous possibilities.

It authorises a Trump-created task force to start recruiting civilian volunteers "with law enforcement or other relevant backgrounds and experience" to work alongside established federal law enforcement entities to carry out Trump's orders in places he designates as facing a "crime emergency."

DC was first on that list and would see the initial deployments of both the Trump-controlled National Guard units and the private MAGA army. His executive order explicitly says, however, that these troops could be sent "whenever the circumstances necessitate" to "other cities where public safety and order has been lost."

It will be at the president's sole discretion to make the call as to when the order has been lost. Chicago stands as the likely second target for this new vigilante unit.

'MAYBE WE LIKE A DICTATOR'

It can be expected that the private Trump army will be flooded with "volunteers" from the ranks of the president's political base. Ex-cops, former soldiers, and others eager to help round up immigrants and repress Trump's political opponents and the people's movements will likely be among the first to sign up.

Members of groups like the white supremacist Proud Boys and others who played the role of shock troops during Trump's 6 January 2021 coup attempt will have a new outlet for their violent propensities.

The order mandates the Miller-led task force, along with Pam Bondi's Department of Justice, to "immediately create and begin training, manning, hiring, and equipping" this "specialised unit." There are no indications where the funding will come from, but recruitment is to start immediately via the creation of an online application and intake portal.

The establishment of such a private armed body outside regular law enforcement channels – along with the takeover of the National Guard under Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth – takes the US further down the road toward fascism.

After signing the orders, Trump himself injected the idea of a dictatorship into public conversation. Purportedly responding to those opposed to his actions, Trump claimed he's not a dictator but said that Americans may actually like to have one. "They [critics] say: 'We don't need him. Freedom, freedom, he's a dictator, he's a dictator,'" Trump told the television cameras. But, he then alleged, "a lot of people are saying, 'Maybe we'd like a dictator.'"

It is not the first time Trump has dismissed criticism of his dictatorial moves while also signalling his interest in unlimited power. In December 2023, while running for another term, he said he would not be a dictator "except for Day 1." He later said he was being sarcastic but that "a lot of people" liked the idea of him being dictator, and he regularly muses about running for a third term, even though it's unconstitutional.

There is nothing sarcastic about the executive orders, though. They carry the country headlong down the road toward the establishment of a presidential dictatorship.

A poll from earlier this year showed that many could see what was coming. It showed 52% of people in the US saw Trump as "a dangerous dictator whose power should be limited before he destroys American democracy."

Almost half a year later – after the deportation blitzkrieg, the damaging trade war, the undermining of the courts, the gerrymandering of electoral districts, the campaign to destroy all labour laws, the military occupations of LA and DC, and now these newest executive actions – certainly even more people would agree.

Monday's executive orders also take other steps to strengthen executive branch control over DC, presumably previewing what is planned for other Black- and progressive-led cities across the country.

The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development is empowered to investigate "non-compliance with crime-prevention and safety requirements" by the District of Columbia Housing Authority or HUD housing landlords and to call out the police to deal with them. This sets the stage for an assault on residents in public and subsidised housing, who are overwhelmingly poor and working class people of colour.

Similarly, the door is opened to a crackdown on those who rely on public transit in DC, with the Secretary of Transportation given power to "take appropriate remedial action" if crime is determined to be an issue on trains or buses. As with other parts of the order, determining when crime is a problem is the sole prerogative of the executive branch.

The National Park Service is ordered to hire more US Park Police officers to patrol the parks and presumably kick out any unhoused people looking for a place to rest or demonstrators looking for a place to protest.

It's a ramping up of militarism in all areas of public life.

Taken as a whole, the executive order creates a double-sided framework for unrestricted presidential control over "law and order" nationwide: Hegseth's federalised National Guard and Trump's private MAGA army. Using the fake excuse of a crime emergency, it lays the foundation for domestic military operations throughout the United States.

People's World (edited for space)

Guyana Elections – oil wealth and Venezuela's territorial claims

Graham Holton

President Irfaan Ali, the leader of the People's Progressive Party (PPP), has secured a second term in the Guyana election on 1 September. The PPP victory will see continuity in major party policies, such as oil exploration and infrastructure development. Present offshore oil production is 900,000 barrels per day (bpd). The government will have to maintain a sharper scrutiny of how this oil windfall is shared and ensure good governance.

Guyana will need to navigate economic opportunity to ensure fair distribution. This will influence Guyana's path toward sustainable development and regional stability. Guyana has a population of 800,000, of which 40 per cent are in poverty. The oil windfall could do much to alleviate poverty throughout the country if properly managed.

Guyana's Natural Resource Fund (NRF), the sovereign wealth fund, operates under a 2021 law, amended in 2024, to allow faster withdrawals. The problem is that capital spending can cause the classic "resource curse" of high inflation. Since 2019 the PPP has channelled US$7.5 billion in oil revenue into infrastructure, education, health, and free university tuition, helping fuel rapid economic growth to yield a fivefold jump in GDP.

The PPP is likely to maintain its contract with the Exxon-led consortium, to keep Exxon/Hess/CNOOC projects on schedule. Higher output lifts the NRF allowing PPP increased spending.

A major problem is the intensifying territorial dispute with Venezuela. In May, the ICJ (International Court of Justice) ordered Venezuela to halt elections in the disputed, oil-rich Essequibo region. Caracas publicly rejected the ruling as the order buttresses Guyana's diplomatic and legal posture and helps lock in international support.

Venezuela's President Maduro has disputed Guyana's right to do exploration deals with oil corporations such as Exxon-Mobil, Chevron and the China National Offshore Company. Maduro's actions have maintained regional tensions.

Recently, Venezuela has deployed naval vessels near oil infrastructures prompting strong condemnation from Guyana.

Guyana has turned to the ICJ, seeking provisional measures to block Venezuelan actions and uphold territorial integrity under international law. Venezuela's complaints stem from an 1899 international arbitration ruling in Paris that settled the border between Venezuela and what was then British Guiana, losing the Essequibo region.

Escalating rhetoric and military posturing could spark regional instability, drawing in global powers which have vested interests in Guyana's oil. In March 2025, the US sent the US Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, to visit Guyana as part of a regional tour. The following month Britain held a high-level engagement in Guyana, centred on deepening and expanding bilateral relations between both countries.

Regional partners like Brazil and Trinidad and Tobago are closely watching the situation between Guyana and Venezuela to avoid border spillover tensions. Brazil has reinforced its Guyana border. Irfaan Ali has expressed appreciation for China's strategic frameworks and initiatives, such as the Belt Imitative (Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative).

Cuba has also had strong ties with Guyana. Guyana's ambassador to Cuba, Halim Majeed, emphasised the importance of strengthening economic cooperation between both nations. The Cuban government has been involved in public health and agricultural development, while Guyana has played a supportive role in Cuba's struggle against the illegal US blockade.

Indonesia

Time to choose: socialism or barbarism!

Coen Husain Pontoh

Since the demonstrations against the increase in allowances for members of the House of Representatives (DPR) erupted on 25 August, there has been no sign of abating. However, the protests over the allowance increase are only the tip of the iceberg of various anti-people government policies. This popular resistance is the result of the accumulated misery and oppression they have endured, not "foreign intervention" or "wild provocations from thugs who don't want Indonesia to rise."

In addition to a series of policies that choked the people, the people were then exposed to the arrogance, greed, and brutality of the elites who could do anything with impunity. The threshold of patience finally broke. Only when the flood of demonstrators was in front of their homes, or even managed to break into their yards and destroy and loot their property, did the ruling class open its eyes. However, they had no solution to address this crisis of people's suffering. What did these ignorant elites who had never suffered do? Some elites apologised en masse to the Indonesian people for their evil actions. Others played the conspiracy movement card: "This action was masterminded by foreign actors," then spouted moral exhortations "Hey, please protest peacefully, express your aspirations properly, don't be anarchic, don't destroy, don't loot."

Some time ago, in an article titled 'Prabowo and the Dictatorship of Capital,' I wrote about how Prabowo's government has been trapped in a capitalist dictatorship. The capitalist economic system, adopted by Indonesia since the 1965 genocide has forced this country and the ruling government to submit to the logic of capital accumulation if they want to continue to exist. The primary goal of capitalist logic is to maximise profits for the benefit of the capitalist class and its thugs, through, for example, the imposition of low tax rates, the liberalisation of markets for goods, services, and finance; extremely long-term land leases; easy access to bank loans; reckless granting of mining permits; the privatisation of public goods while drastically cutting public spending in the name of efficiency and effectiveness; and the weakening of labour union power through flexible labor markets, outsourcing, and precarious work. If there is a disruption to the smooth flow of investment, boots, shields and weapons are ready to secure it.

As a result of this servitude to capitalism, economic productivity appears to have increased rapidly. Jobs have been created, paved roads and skyscrapers have sprung up everywhere as symbols of progress. For a time, the choice of capitalism as the way to "build the nation's progress" was celebrated as an absolute truth. The other side of capital's dictatorship is the high price that must be paid. The price of capitalism has been widespread poverty, a stark gap between the rich minority and the poor majority; extremely poor public services, and the destruction of social solidarity as everyone is forced to compete with one another. It also led to the individualisation of social problems, leading to individual solutions; a widespread judicial mafia that has made it difficult for the people to obtain guarantees of justice under the law; mass corruption and the destruction of the environmental ecosystem due to the practice of reckless exploitation of nature.

This capitalist dictatorship then creates two contradictory worlds: the oligarchic world , and the world of the majority of the people. In the oligarchic world, everything is good, orderly, and predictable. In the world of the majority, people live a life of calculation, a bleak future, and a precarious daily existence. These contradictions are internally connected; they need each other but are also irreconcilably opposed. The contradictions can play out underground, in coffee shops, and on social media, but at any time they can explode as we are witnessing today.

Now we ask, do we want to continue living under a capitalist dictatorship, which now offers representative democracy as a way to maintain political life? Is it enough for us to point fingers at oligarchic family members like Ahmad Sahroni, Surya Utama, Eko Patrio, or Nafa Urbach as the root cause of this suffering? When the four of them are punished by their extended families, is that enough?

I don't think so. These massive, wave-like actions are not unprecedented. The result? The leaders of the capitalist dictatorship remain arrogant, refusing to back down even an inch from their policies. After the mass action with #DarkIndonesia that claimed so many victims, these oligarchs then issued a series of policies such as increasing their allowances, raising taxes, bestowing honorary titles on their loyal *punakwan* ('clown servants', from a traditional Indonesian story), and then crushing Affan Kurniawan (a gig worker, killed by police during a crackdown on protesters) to death.

Indonesia's leaders are not working for the majority; they are actually strengthening the oligarchic world because that is how they maintain this capitalist dictatorship. They will, if necessary, use barbaric means (militarism or fascism) to maintain their power and wealth.

Therefore, we must propose a new world order that serves the interests of the majority of the people. We have fought and will continue to fight with conviction and sacrifice against these 'bad children' of the oligarchic family line. With the same spirit and conviction, we must also fight to overthrow the dictatorship of capital that gave birth to these oligarchic families. Otherwise, barbarism will come knocking on our doorstep. This is the choice: Barbarism or Socialism.

IndoProgress

Student protests in Central Jakarta, February 2025.
Photo: David Wadie Fisher-Freberg – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Global Briefs

EU: Kaja Kallas, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and European Commission Vice President, has been criticised by Chinese commentators and others for denying the role of China and the Soviet Union in WW2. Kallas claimed that the "narrative" that Russia and China contributed to the defeat of fascism is "something new." Kallas then said that "nowadays people don't really read and remember history," expressing incredulity that "they buy these narratives." China was the first country to enter the World Anti-Fascist War through their resistance against Japanese invasion in 1931. China and Russia (as part of the Soviet Union) made massive sacrifice to defeat fascism, suffering the brunt of Germany and Japan's genocidal actions. Chinese President Xi Jinping has urged all countries to carry forward the correct historical perspective on WW2, recognising the contributions of China, the Soviet Union, and other non-Western countries.

Israel: Israel's genocide continues to be funded by Western nations. These include Norway's Government Pension Fund Global which continues to invest in dozens of Israeli companies, including Israeli banks which then invest in arms companies Norway was supposed to have divested from. Australia's Future Fund has invested hundreds of millions of Australians' dollars in companies such as Elbit Systems, an Israeli weapons manufacturer and genocide profiteer which has also been handed contracts by the Australian government.

Palestine: The Global Sumud Flotilla is on its way to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza to deliver urgently needed humanitarian aid. Comprised of more than 50 ships with volunteers from nearly as many countries, the Sumud Flotilla represents the largest coordinated attempt yet to break Israel's blockade. Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza have sent messages of support to the Sumud Flotilla volunteers. Israel's Ben-Gvir has labelled the Sumud Flotilla volunteers as "terrorists" who will be arrested and placed in high-security prisons. These prisons, full of Palestinians kidnapped and taken hostage by Israel, routinely use waterboarding, dogs, and sexual abuse as means of torture, as detailed in reports such as those from the United Nations. Ben-Gvir has said in response to such reports that he aims to "worsen the conditions of terrorists in the prisons."

Argentina: One third of Argentinian companies say that they are likely to face job cuts by the end of the year, with 50% of these having already done so during the first half of 2025. Argentina's working class continues to face challenges such as declining purchasing power and the highest rate of unemployment since the end of the COVID pandemic. Around 42% of Argentina's workforce is employed on an informal basis, meaning they lack protection from labour laws or employment benefits.

US: Thousands marched in Washington DC to protest the military occupation of the city and the ongoing arbitrary arrests and anti-immigration campaign of ICE. According to the Metropolitan Police Department, more than 1,000 arrests have been made following the federal takeover. The surge in defendants arrested over crime usually dealt with by lower courts but now facing federal offences has resulted in increased strain on the District Court, with one magistrate warning that suspects are being held in detention far longer than they should be due to the excessive numbers. The Trump administration has also threatened to militarise other cities, most notably Chicago, but also Baltimore, New Orleans, and others.

Syria after al-Assad

Vijay Prashad

Bashar al-Assad. Photo: Kremlin.ru – wikimedia.org (CC BY 4.0)

On 8 December 2024, the government of Bashar al-Assad collapsed as the army of the former al-Qaeda leader, Ahmad al-Sharaa entered Damascus and seized the institutions of the Syrian state. The Syrian Arab Army, which had remained loyal to the al-Assad government, appeared to dissolve. Rebel forces took over military functions, rebranding themselves as the General Security forces (after 20 December). Between December 2024 and January 2025, leading figures from the former al-Qaeda-affiliated Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham took over the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of the Interior. Many of the rebel forces remained independent but operated alongside the General Security forces.

As in 2003 when the United States occupied Iraq and the Iraqi armed forces disappeared to regroup as a resistance force, many of the Syrian Arab Army personnel decamped to their homes where they formed militia groups. Within weeks, these groups reconstituted themselves as defensive forces for their villages and towns. This was particularly the case in the largely Alawite and Christian towns and villages in the Qalamoun region and in coastal Latakia. But unlike in Iraq, these former Syrian Arab Army groups did not begin a well-organised insurgency against the al-Sharaa government, they remained a defensive force with only a few recorded attacks conducted against the new rulers of the state.

The General Security forces and their associates in the former militia groups, however, used their power to strike quickly against those who tried to regroup a resistance. For instance, on 23 January, General Security members raided the villages of Fahel and Mreimin in search of – those they claimed were – al-Assad government military officers. The General Security forces raided homes and detained large numbers of people. According to the report of the Independent Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, in Mreimin, the General Security troops "beat and tortured residents, looted multiple houses, and killed two civilians." During these "combing campaigns," the General Security forces used such terms as nusayri (a derogatory term for Alawites), "Alawi pig," "kuffar," and "whores" to describe those whom they beat, tortured, and detained. The crackdown against these defensive militias quickly took on a sectarian form. The point, it appeared, was to demoralise any resistance and to do so on strictly sectarian lines.

Between January and March 2025, these General Security forces rode rampant across the country, particularly in the coastal regions of the country. There is no proper account of how many people had been killed, tortured, or detained. But there is a very clear indication of the kind of violence experienced in the country by those who had either been part of the al-Assad government in even the most modest capacity and those communities (Alawites, Christians) seen to have benefited by it. When al-Assad left Syria in December, Alawi residents from the village of Anz rushed to safety elsewhere and waited to see what might happen. Anz is in Eastern Hama, on the edge of Salamiye. When these residents returned to their village, they found that their homes had been occupied, and their belongings destroyed. On 27 January, at 4am, four cars filled with masked men who identified themselves as General Security entered the village and began to search the homes of Alawi families. The Independent Commission's report tells the story clearly:

"The masked men gathered women and children in one room and forced them to hand over all valuables at gunpoint. The gunmen also stole the keys of a truck in which they put 40 sheep belonging to one of the families whose house was raided. At least 10 men were dragged outside at gunpoint and lined up in a square at the entrance of the village, their hands tied behind their backs. The armed men opened fire on them, killing five men, including one boy and an elderly person, and injuring five others. The attack was conducted in around 30 minutes."

The dead had to be buried in Tal Salhab, fifty kilometres from Anz, because the families did not feel safe returning to their village.

In March, gangs of fighters descended upon the villages in Latakia. They included men from the Ministry of Defence, the General Security, the Syrian National Army's Suleiman Shah Brigade and Al Hamza Division, the Sultan Murad Brigade, Ahrar al-Sham, and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham. These fighters detained men and boys, shouted derogatory names at them, tortured them, and then shot them in the head or chest. The majority of those killed were civilians and not former military men, and in many cases all the men in a family home were killed. Between March and May, 40,000 people fled these villages for the relative safety of Lebanon. At around the same time, men with Damascene accents, wearing black uniforms and masks, and calling themselves General Security raided the homes of Alawi families in the al-Qadam area of Damascus. They detained civilians, such as teachers and doctors, threatening families that if they make any complaints "we will send him back to you in a coffin."

Conversations with people in Syria makes it very clear that the attacks did not take place only in Western Syria, along the coastline, but also in interior towns in northwest Syria (the towns of al-Qardaha and Masyaf), in Western Syria (parts of the cities of Aleppo and Homs), and in Eastern Syria (in Deir-ez-Zor and in the Euphrates River Valley). These attacks follow a careful pattern: almost a pogrom not only against minorities, as they have been reported, but against any leaders of resistance to the new regime who have been trying to spark an insurgency.

This was a counterinsurgency operation carried through with efficiency and with brutal force, outside the eyes of the international media. Equally quietly, the new government suppressed the key logistical routes of the Alawi mountain villages to Lebanon, which had allowed them to rearm themselves in case of the breakout of a larger insurgency. Harsh raids by the former al-Qaeda groups into villages such as Deir al-Bishl, Harf Banmarah, and Talkalakh resulted in execution of civilians, detention and disappearance of key leaders, and ethnic cleansing of some of the villages (such as Balghonas). Some of this was documented by Human Rights Watch and by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, but received little international attention.

The Independent Commission showed that the perpetrators of this violence came from the rebel groups who now hold power in Damascus. Nonetheless, al-Sharaa's government had other ideas. His National Committee for Investigation and Fact-Finding argued that they had identified 265 suspects, all of whom "are members of outlawed rebel groups linked to the Assad regime." They do not accept the view of the Independent Commission, nor do they offer any tangible evidence why their findings are diametrically opposed to that of the United Nations. The UN investigators called the attacks "war crimes," a phrase that has been rejected by the Syrian government. Furthermore, rights groups urge the government to enact hate speech legislation to prevent the use of the kind of language used to frighten and target the Alawi community, but the government has rejected this as well.

Meanwhile, the Syrian government has been keen to deepen its normalisation process with Israel. Talks via the United Arab Emirates resulted in the return of the archive of the Israeli spy Eli Cohen (who had been executed in Damascus in 1965). Al-Sharaa told the media that "chances are high" that his government will conduct a security pact with Israel, the first open statement about normalisation (although he has said that Syria cannot join the Abraham Accords as long as the Golan Heights are under occupation).

The excuse given for these "security talk" is the protection of the Druze, although it is clear that the Israeli and Jordanian attacks on southern Syria have mostly to do with the drug trade and with the attempt to put down any insurgency against Damascus. There is no conversation anywhere about protection of the Alawi and Christian minorities, who have taken the brunt of the attacks by the government-led forces. But, in sum, these are not only attacks along sectarian lines; the key issue here is that the Damascus government has been given carte blanche to use maximum force against any threat to its continued rule.

a pogrom not only against minorities, but against any leaders resistance to the new regime

80 years of freedom: Vietnam celebrates independence, looks to socialist future

Amiad Horowitz

Hanoi: On 2 September the people of Vietnam filled the streets of their capital for the largest parade in the nation's history, marking the 80th anniversary of their independence. From dawn – and in many cases, more than 24 hours earlier – crowds gathered along the parade route to secure a glimpse of the military formations, civilian contingents, and honoured guests who came to commemorate a hard-won freedom that has inspired generations worldwide.

Vietnam was among the very first colonies to declare independence in the aftermath of World War II. On that September day in 1945, President Ho Chi Minh proclaimed to the world that Vietnam would never again submit to foreign domination. The victory of the Vietnamese revolution became a beacon for anti-colonial and socialist movements from Africa to Latin America, proving that the will of the people could defeat imperial powers.

At the opening of the parade, Communist Party General Secretary To Lam recalled the moment when Ho Chi Minh read the Declaration of Independence at Ba Dinh Square, giving birth to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, "the first People's Democratic State in Southeast Asia, ushering in an era of independence and freedom for the country." He stressed that all of Vietnam's victories "are closely associated with the right and clear-sighted leadership by the Party and the thought, moral example and style of Ho Chi Minh."

The General Secretary placed Vietnam's present achievements firmly in the lineage of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought. "Our Party," he said, "has stayed steadfast in the goal of national independence linked with socialism; creatively applied and developed Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's thought in accordance with the country's situation in each period; and put the interests of the fatherland and the people first and above all."

The parade in Hanoi was both a look back at that history and a demonstration of Vietnam's present achievements. Troops from Cambodia, Laos, China, and Russia (representing the former USSR) marched alongside the People's Army of Vietnam – nations that stood with Vietnam in its struggle for independence and reunification. Civilian delegations, representing Vietnam's diverse regions and industries, showcased a country transformed since the days of war and blockade.

Since 1986, when the nation embarked on its renovation program, Vietnam has grown from one of the poorest countries in the world into a booming regional power. Its economy has multiplied many times over, poverty rates have plummeted, and the country has become a hub of trade, manufacturing, and innovation. Unlike other nations, however, Vietnam has not followed the path of neoliberal globalisation but has instead charted its own socialist-oriented course – combining market development with a commitment to collective welfare and national independence.

To Lam emphasised that this path is rooted in the will of the people: "That strength stems from the people, belongs to the people, and is for the people; the strength of the great national solidarity bloc under the glorious flag of the Communist Party of Vietnam." He tied this people's strength to the future goals of the nation: By 2045, Vietnam's independence centennial, it aims to be "a powerful, prosperous, and happy nation. That is the aspiration of the entire nation, an oath of honour before history and the people."

While reaffirming Vietnam's readiness to defend its independence and sovereignty, To Lam made clear the country's commitment to peace: "We want to be a friend and reliable partner of all countries in the world. We respect international law and the United Nations Charter, resolving differences and disputes by peaceful measures." He insisted, however, that Vietnam "absolutely does not compromise with any plots or actions that violate independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity."

The presence of international friends from around the globe underscored the continuing relevance of Vietnam's struggle, a reminder that the world still looks to Vietnam as proof that even the most powerful empires can be defeated.

While media attention focused on the displays of Vietnam's modern military technology, the festivities also highlighted working-class and popular representation. Workers, farmers, and young people joined the military, police, and firefighters in marching through the streets of Hanoi.

Eighty years on, Vietnam remains a country shaped by sacrifice and solidarity, by a people who dared to break the chains of colonialism and who continue to follow their path to socialism, despite the pressures of a capitalist-dominated world. As To Lam concluded, "There are no obstacles or reasons that can stop us from reaching peace, prosperity, and an everlasting nation of development."

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Certainty

Certainty sounds nice but is only good some of the time. Certainty about your income for the next ten years would be nice, but if you're not being paid enough, it's not so hot.

Here, certainty is used to put lipstick on a pig – the pig being a dodgy royalties-avoidance deal with the Queensland LNP government (see *Guardian* #2160). Why yes, that's the same Queensland government that cuts social services because it doesn't have enough money coming in, however did you guess? Bravus' chief operating officer Mick Crowe said that this deal looks massively corrupt, but saves his company billions of dollars in return for political donations.

Just kidding. What Crowe said was that the deal will "create certainty" for the people who work on its mine, as though Bravus wouldn't have bothered with the mine if they had to pay royalties.

What *is* certain is that Bravus will drop those workers the moment it suits the company.

Being vocal

There's a range of weasel words that exist to make horrible behaviour look like high spirits; 'controversial,' 'feisty,' 'outspoken,' 'activist' have all made bigots look just enthusiastic. Former comedy writer Graham Linehan decided in 2018 to spend pretty much all his waking hours attacking trans people, both online and in person. One British newspaper said Linehan "has been vocal about trans issues on social media." This is a weaselly understatement – it's true as far as it goes, but makes Linehan's obsessive hate campaign seem like just an opinion.

Reasoned (see also sensible and considered)

Of course nobody wants to blame migrants for things migrants aren't responsible for. 'Nobody' doesn't include our two major political parties, who are both happy to throw migrants under the bus if they think it'll help at election time. It's kind of a 'have your cake and eat it' thing for the Coalition, which has done really well out of anti-immigrant racism for decades, but also doesn't want to lose the vote of migrants who feel insulted.

So it is that Coalition immigration spokesperson Senator Paul Scarr has called for a 'reasoned' debate on the topic of 'are migrants to blame for unemployment and the housing crisis?' Of course Scarr didn't spell it out like that, because the answer would be "no they aren't." But if you think the answer is "yes" or "maybe", Scarr and the Coalition are on your side.

Grovel

Actual grovelling is really hard on the back and not recommended for anyone over 50 years of age. Come to that, it's not a good idea for people under 50 either, unless they're in a fun drama that requires a bit of comedy grovelling. Former Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews is 53. Nine papers' resident China-disliker, Peter Hartcher has accused Andrews of grovelling to Chinese President Xi Jingping by attending a celebration of the defeat of fascism and standing within metres of the Chinese leader. Fortunately for Andrew's spinal column the grovelling was just metaphorical as well as only taking place in Hartcher's mind.

Real

We all know what real things are, but the word is weaselly when used to describe something that's either not real at all or at least debatable. US President Trump has 'shot the messenger' by sacking the head of his statistics outfit because Trump didn't like the unemployment figures. Now that some new job statistics are on the way, Trump was asked if he'd accept this lot of numbers. He said that the "real numbers" would come out in about a year once his economic plans have all been put into practice. Just so there's no doubt about what he meant, Kevin Hassett, Trump's director of the National Economic Council said in an interview that he expected the number of jobs to be "revised up." No doubt. Trump thinks the only real numbers are the ones he likes, which must be annoying at his birthday parties.

Gaza: where childhood cannot survive

Tess Ingram, Communication Manager for UNICEF's Middle East and North Africa Regional Office, recently spent nine days in Gaza, describing it as "a city of fear, flight and funerals."

"The last refuge for families in the northern Gaza Strip is fast becoming a place where childhood cannot survive," she said, speaking from the enclave to journalists in New York.

CHILDREN 'FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL'

Nearly a million people remain in Gaza City, where the collapse of essential services is leaving its youngest and most vulnerable residents "fighting for survival" as famine spreads and aid barely trickles in.

Only 44 out of 92 UNICEF-supported outpatient nutrition treatment centres are still functional, which means thousands of malnourished children lack access to these critical lifelines.

Meanwhile, hospitals "are on their knees." Only 11 are still partly functioning and only five have neonatal intensive care units.

"The 40 incubators between them are running at up to 200 per cent capacity, meaning there are as many as 80 babies fighting for life in overcrowded machines, utterly dependent on generators and medical supplies that may run dry at any moment," she said.

'SMALL BODIES SHREDDED BY SHRAPNEL'

In Gaza City, Ingram met displaced families on the run once again, children who have been separated from their parents, and mothers whose children either died from starvation or who fear their offspring will be next.

"I've spoken to kids in hospital beds, their small bodies shredded by shrapnel," she said. "The unthinkable is not looming. It is already here. The escalation is underway."

FAMINE

Famine was "everywhere I looked in Gaza City," Ingram said. "Just an hour in a nutrition clinic is enough to erase any questions about whether there is a famine," she added.

At these clinics, waiting rooms are filled with tearful parents, "children fighting the double punch of disease and malnutrition," mothers unable to breastfeed, and "babies losing their vision, their hair and their strength to walk."

Like elsewhere in the enclave, whole families are surviving on one bowl of lentils or rice a day from community kitchens. Parents often go without so that their children can have something to eat.

SAD REUNION

Last week, Ingram visited a stabilisation centre that treats malnourished children and was shocked to find a woman there called Nesma and her daughter, Jana.

UNICEF had evacuated the girl for treatment in southern Gaza more than a year ago and she recovered. Jana and her mother then returned to northern Gaza during the ceasefire earlier this year to reunite with the rest of their family.

"After the blockade on aid, hunger returned, and this time both of Nesma's children deteriorated." Her two-year-old daughter Jouri died from malnutrition last month and Jana "is barely hanging on."

A child suffering from malnutrition lies on a bed in the Patient Society Hospital in Gaza City .

'MORE CHILDREN WILL STARVE'

Ingram said that children like Jana "are returning to emergency wards or relapsing just weeks after finishing treatment for malnutrition because of the ongoing lack of food, safe water and other essential supplies" in the Gaza Strip.

She affirmed that "without immediate and increased access to food and nutrition treatments, this recurring nightmare will deepen and more children will starve – a fate that is entirely preventable."

Rally for Palestine in Boorloo/Perth on 5 September.

UNICEF continues to respond to the crisis and in the past two weeks provided partners on the ground with enough ready-to-use therapeutic food to support more than 3,000 acutely malnourished children over the six-week course of treatment.

The agency also provided complimentary food to support more than 1,400 infants as well as high-energy biscuits for more than 4,600 pregnant and breastfeeding women, among other assistance such as safe drinking water and construction of temporary learning centres.

"Our team is doing everything in their power to help children, but we could do far more, reach every child here, if our operations on the ground were enabled at scale and we were well funded," she said.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

UNICEF is seeking $716 million this year for its response in Gaza, where needs are immense and childhood malnutrition continues to rise. In February, just over 2,000 youngsters were admitted for treatment. In July, the number climbed to 13,000 and by mid-August had already reached 7,200.

The agency continues to call on Israel to review its rules of engagement to ensure that children are protected, and for Hamas and other armed groups to release all remaining hostages, Ingram said.

She underlined the need for Israel to allow sufficient aid to enter, while humanitarians must be able to safely reach families where they are.

Her final plea was for the international community, especially states and stakeholders with influence, to use their leverage to end the war now: "because the cost of inaction will be measured in the lives of children buried in the rubble, wasted by hunger and silenced before they even had a chance to speak."

UNICEF

The Communist Party of Australia supports Apheda Union Aid Abroad. Visit apheda.org.au to donate.

Back to school? Not for the 660,000 children of Gaza

Zo Hederekh

This is the third year that the school year in the Gaza Strip has not started due to the war. According to data from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), approximately 660,000 children in the Gaza Strip are out of school due to the war of annihilation that has been going on for 23 months.

In a statement, UNRWA noted that "the war in Gaza is a war against children, and it must stop. Children must be protected at all times," while emphasising children's basic right to education.

It was also reported that "in Gaza, children are in danger of becoming a lost generation." The UN agency called for an immediate ceasefire in the Strip, which would allow children to return to school and their lives.

The nutritional status of children in Gaza continues to deteriorate. According to UN data, in July, almost 13,000 new children were recorded as being admitted for treatment of acute malnutrition. Moreover, the severity of cases continues to increase; last month, it was found that out of approximately 13,000 cases of acute malnutrition, more than 2,800 cases (22%) were of severe acute malnutrition.

In the Gaza Strip, 106 outpatient malnutrition treatment sites have been opened, reporting the most severe cases of children suffering from severe acute malnutrition with complications, requiring hospitalisation and treatment in stabilisation centres. In July alone, 129 cases were identified, compared to 125 cases between January and June.

Despite the increasing number of patients, there are only five stabilisation centres for severe acute malnutrition in Gaza, two in Gaza City, one in Deir al-Balah and two in Khan Yunis, which can only treat 43 children – not enough to cope with the high number of cases.

It should be noted that the health system in the Gaza Strip reported that the death toll from hunger since the beginning of the war is 339 people, of whom 124 are children. The Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip also announced that dozens of people continue to be killed by fire from Israeli occupation forces, including while trying to obtain aid.

According to data from the Ministry of Health in Gaza, the death toll in the Gaza Strip since the outbreak of the war has risen to 63,459, including more than 19,000 children, and the number of injured now stands at 160,256.

People's World

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