

CLASS POWER and the POLITICAL ECONOMY of the AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

Third Edition

Jeremy Cloward, Ph.D.

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Publisher & Director of Business Development: Richard Schofield

Production and Fulfillment Manager: Janai Escobedo Custom Textbook Typesetter: Suzanne Schmidt

Textbook Specialist: Christine Davies

Cover photo: Shutterstock

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eBook^{Plus} ISBN: 978-1-5178-1412-0

Textbook Plus Loose-Leaf Bundle ISBN: 978-1-5178-1436-6

Soft Cover ISBN: 978-1-5178-1410-6

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BR122021SS

"A very clear and highly informative treatment of the interests, ideologies, and history that have fashioned the US political system. Cloward's book will be of much value to both students and laypersons."

MICHAEL PARENTI, author of The Face of Imperialism and Profit Pathology and Other Indecencies

"A much-needed tour de force that fills a vast academic vacuum concerning the actuality of US political culture and history. Not since Michael Parenti's *Democracy for the Few* has there been such an impressive, all-encompassing, and accessible work for both the classroom and the general reading public on such affairs. From Beardian skepticism of the Founders to Marxist theory long abandoned by mainstream institutions, Cloward reminds us why intellectual criticism of capitalism and US policies is as relevant as ever in the 21st Century. ... This should be required reading for the Millennial Generation and those who are quickly coming afterward if they want to really understand the plutocratic realities of contemporary America."

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"Class Power & the Political Economy of the American Political System is a courageous intellectual compendium for anyone teaching in the twenty-first century academy. Cloward's bold employment of a radical political economy approach destabilizes the naturalized disciplinary segregation of the study of politics from the study of economics. By introducing a new generation to the egoist logic underlying classical liberal political philosophy, Class Power provides an analytic template, guiding students toward critical examinations of contemporary domestic and international political rhetoric and public policy fostering corporate-driven political practices and perpetual imperial wars of aggression."

PHYLLIS JACKSON, Professor at Pomona College and former Central Committee Member of the Black Panther Party

Dedication

This book is dedicated to all those who work for equality and justice.

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Preface

In most studies of the United States government, critical components—such as class power, the nature of the economic system, and the impact of powerful commercial interests on the political system—are left out. Indeed, many popular texts and college-level critiques which claim to explain American politics do so with little consideration of the most important forces that move the political system. In order to more fully understand American government, this book examines the political *and* economic dynamics of the United States political system which, in turn, helps to shape the political, economic, and social reality for hundreds of millions of people in the United States and billions more around the world.

Jeremy Cloward Pleasant Hill, CA, 2022

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Sam Sherwood and Charles Sprague for their helpful comments in proofreading the manuscript. And I would like to thank James Thomas Cloward, Sr., Frances Marie Nemeth, Samuel Joseph Sherwood, James Thomas Cloward, Jr., Julie Ann Cloward, Laurie Maile Mason, Makenna Kalani McDonald, Mason Lee McDonald, Terry Homer Miles, Sarah Danielle Miles, Gwendolyn Marie Miles, and Jules Cloward—all that matters.

About the Author

Jeremy Cloward, Ph.D. is a political science professor and author living and working in the San Francisco Bay Area. He has taught at the junior college and university level for the past 16 years and is the author of three books and multiple articles that have been published in the *Oakland Post*, the *Hampton Institute*, *Socialist Worker*, *Project Censored*, and the *East Bay Times*.

His college-level American Politics textbook, *Class Power and the Political Economy of the American Political System*, is now in its third edition and has been endorsed by the progressive author Michael Parenti, the director of *Project Censored*, Mickey Huff, and the professor and former central committee member of the Black Panther Party, Phyllis Jackson. The book is currently being marketed to a national audience of political science professors throughout the country.

In addition, Dr. Cloward has run for public office on three separate occasions (Congress 2009, 2010, and City Council 2012) and has appeared in a variety of media outlets, including FOX and the Pacifica Radio Network (KPFA). Today, he continues to remain involved in the politics of peace, justice, and equality for all.





Introduction

'To understand what goes on in the world today, it is necessary to understand the economic [forces] that stand behind the political events.'

—Kwame Nkrumah (First President of Ghana, 1909–1972)

The United States is the most powerful nation in the world. Its government and transnational corporations (TNCs) help to shape the political, economic, and social reality of more than 300 million people in the United States—and at times, billions of people around the world. Though the political and economic systems appear to be separate things, each is closely related to the other. Indeed, American political institutions help shape economic reality; and conversely, economic forces help to shape and drive both political institutions and national policy. We might refer to this arrangement as the political-economic or politico-economic system.

When powerful commercial interests and government institutions work together, as they often do in American politics, the results can be dramatic for citizens of the United States and people around the world. For example, the United States government has been responsible for the deaths of at least 1 million people during the US war on Iraq (2003–present) which was initiated by the Bush Administration (2001–2009).² Iraq is a nation of just 39 million people. In comparative terms, this would be equivalent to more than 8 million (instead of 5,000) US citizens losing their lives during the war in Iraq.

Why was the war fought? According to former chairman of the Federal Reserve Alan Greenspan (1926–present), the war primarily served commercial interests, as the war itself was "largely about oil."³



US President George W. Bush (1946–present) (Wikimedia Commons)

However, energy reserves were not the only consideration during the war. In an example of an all-too-close relationship between government and private capital, there is the ethically problematic case of family war-profiteering by the supposedly liberal Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein (1933–present) of California. Feinstein's husband is Richard Blum, the major shareholder of the construction company Perini Co. As a member of the powerful Senate Military Construction Appropriations subcommittee, Feinstein authorized contracts for work in Iraq for her husband's firm totaling more than \$3 billion.

Yet, the war in Iraq is just one of many cases that can help make clear the relationship between the US government and multinational corporations. For certain, in a second case illustrating the power of corporate interests and the US government in the life of a faraway nation is the example of Nike Corporation. Nike, which is considered to be the 13th

most valuable brand in the world, ⁴ was founded in 1964 by Phil Knight (1938–present), the 25th wealthiest person in the world today, with a net worth of nearly 50 billion dollars. ⁵ While its "world headquarters" is located in Oregon, Nike produces shoes in poor countries around the world, such as Indonesia, where it pays its workers just \$4.33 a day—or about \$100 per month. This type of pay would be acceptable to some, provided the cost of living in Indonesia was proportionate to the day's wage. However, just a cursory glance at the cost of living in Indonesia illustrates how out-of-line Nike's wage is with what a Nike employee needs to survive. For instance, the average cost of a loaf of bread in Indonesia is roughly \$1; a pair of Levi's blue jeans is about \$50; a three-bedroom apartment runs somewhere in the neighborhood of \$1,000 a month; and a pair of Nike shoes, made and sold in Jakarta, Indonesia, are priced at approximately \$75.6 In other words, a Nike factory worker living in Indonesia would need to spend approximately three-fourths of his or her *monthly* Nike salary just to purchase one pair of Nike running shoes. A three-bedroom apartment is simply out of the question.

Yet, why does Nike make its shoes in poor countries such as Indonesia, China, or Vietnam? Because the United States federal government is unwilling to place *any* import tax on Nike's products. Doing so would prevent Nike (and other such companies) from using cheap labor in the Third World. Instead, US-based multinational corporations (MNCs) such as Nike would be forced to use reasonably well-paid American workers, which would not only *decrease* unemployment in the United States but would also *increase* US local, state, and national tax contributions. Why is this the federal government's position? Because hundreds of major corporations within powerful industrial centers and financial sectors within the United States economy, including Nike, spend billions of dollars each year "influencing" national and international policy in the US by providing massive campaign contributions and lobbying dollars to federal office holders.

Why? Because the main goal of US "corporate citizens" is the maintenance and spread of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism might be thought of as an extreme variant of state-regulated capitalism. The idea of neoliberalism was first developed by the so-called "Chicago Boys" in the 1970s and consists of: (1) the reduction or elimination of government spending on social programs such as education, health care, and programs for the poor, and (2) the deregulation of private industry and the transfer of government services such as electricity, water, and oil into corporate hands. The purpose behind all of this is to allow capital to move around the globe unhindered by the state in its never-ending pursuit of more capital. In the end, as we shall see, with powerful corporate interests' near-uncontested ability to shape national policy, we often find that the "national interest" and transnational corporate interests are one and the same.

To be sure, in a third case of corporate power and government institutions working together, we have the example of US involvement in Haiti. As the poorest nation in the



A boy down by the river in the Cite Soleil slum in Haiti. Home to some 200,000-400,000 people (Wikimedia Commons)

Western Hemisphere and one of the poorest in the world, Haiti produces clothes for American companies such as Levi's, Hanes, Dockers, Fruit of the Loom, and Nautica. Strikingly, each company refused to increase the pay of Haitian garment workers from \$0.22 an hour to \$0.61 an hour (or \$5 a day), as mandated by the Haitian Parliament in a unanimous vote in 2009. With Haitian garment workers in the streets protesting their wages and working conditions, factory executives contacted the US State Department which, in turn, contacted Haitian President Rene Preval (1943–present) and "encouraged" him to intervene in the dispute, "or risk the political environment [in Haiti] spinning out of control."

Preval had the recent historical example of priest and former Haitian President Jean Bertrand Aristide (1953–present) in the political background to help him make his decision of whether or not to intervene in the situation. While president, Aristide—a populist reformer—focused on reducing poverty in his country, which resulted in his being forced from power in a coup "supported by Washington, DC" in 2004 and sent into exile in South Africa. Shortly afterward, in 2006, Preval became president of Haiti. While the circumstances surrounding the 2004 coup are somewhat unclear, the reason why the United States wanted Aristide out of Haiti are all too clear. According to US cables intercepted in 2008, US Ambassador Janet Sanderson wrote that an early departure of United Nations (UN) troops (who were then occupying Haiti after Aristide's ousting) would leave the Haitian government "vulnerable to … resurgent populist and anti-market economy political forces." In other words, if the UN left Haiti, Aristide—who had been the most popular political leader in the country—might return and may once again try to improve the living and working conditions of the Haitian poor.

In the end, Preval negotiated a minimum wage increase of *just* \$0.37 an hour (or \$3 a day)—\$2 a day less than the increase voted on by the Haitian Parliament. As was known by the State Department, the majority of the Haitian population was exceedingly poor. In fact, some 80 percent of the Haitian population lives on \$2 or less a day, with some people becoming so poor that they have resorted to eating "mud-cakes"—a mix of oil, water, salt, and clay—to stave off hunger. Yet, here we had the United States government intervening on behalf of factory owners contracting with US firms to prevent them from *improving* the conditions of at least a portion of the Haitian working class. How exactly the "political environment" would have spun "out of control" from increased wages for Haitian workers was never made clear by the State Department, which was guided by Hillary Clinton (1947–present) at the time.

In a final case, we have the United States government working on behalf of powerful commercial interests with respect to the nation's health-care policy. From 2000 through 2014, the conservative polling agency Gallup reported that the majority of US citizens supported a publicly financed universal health-care system. However, today, the United States remains the only country in the industrialized First World without free universal health care. Why is this the case? The answer is because no industry from 2000-2014 spent more money on campaign contributions and lobbying the federal government than the health-care industry. In 2008, the year President Barack Obama (1961-present) was elected, the health-care industry contributed nearly \$50 million to the campaigns of Democratic and Republican Congressional office-seekers to ensure that there was no deep revision to privatized health care.¹⁵ In 2009, the health-care industry spent some \$550 million lobbying Congress and the president to make sure that privatized health care in the United States remained in the hands of private capital. 16 In fact, no industry spent more money lobbying the federal government in 2009—including the oil industry and the armaments industry, which ranked second and third respectively—than the privatized health-care industry to ensure that their policy wants were met.

So, how wealthy are these corporations that so heavily influence US domestic and foreign policy? Even a brief look illustrates not only their great wealth but also demonstrates that, as a group, they have no global peer. In 2013, according to the business magazine *Forbes*, 38 of the world's 50 most valuable "brands" were US multinational corporations (with the remaining 12 split amongst 7 separate countries).¹⁷ Three of the world's top five publicly traded corporations were located in the United States.¹⁸ And the most profitable corporation on the planet was ExxonMobil, earning some \$44.9 billion during that year.¹⁹ In fact, US commercial interests have become so powerful today that they have helped create a situation where the 3 richest people living in the United States have more wealth than the bottom half, or almost 170 million American citizens, combined.²⁰

Not only do US corporations generate hundreds of billions of dollars for their CEOs and major shareholders each year, they also often receive large tax breaks or refunds from the federal government. For instance, in 2010, ExxonMobil and Citigroup paid no taxes while General Electric (GE) and Bank of America received tax refunds in excess of \$1 billion each. More recently, Amazon paid no federal taxes at all in 2018 despite the company being listed as the world's most valuable brand and its chairman, Jeff Bezos, ranked as the richest person on Earth. The reason being, as we shall see, is not simply because corporate America plays the central role in funding electoral campaigns, but also because many people who serve in Congress are invested in these giant corporations, which is equally as concerning for democratic government.

All the same, in each of our examples above we see the political and economic system working together. In fact, political and economic phenomena in our world are the products of an identifiable political and economic system. That system may generally be called liberal-capitalism. It is the system that most of the world's nation-states are adherents to and proponents of. If we are to fully understand it, it is necessary for us to develop some system of analysis, some systemic way of thinking about how it operates. Indeed, we need some viewpoint or vantage point in which to not only describe the world but also to explain it.

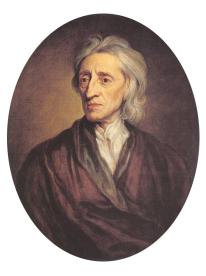
1.1 Liberalism and Pluralism

The American political system can be understood from any number of vantage points. The most well-known include behavioralism, institutionalism, interpretivism, pluralism, positivism, radical political economy, rational choice theory, realism, structuralism, and post-structuralism. However, the most common approach is liberal-pluralism. When we say liberal, we are not referring to someone who supports the Democratic Party. Instead, what we mean is small "l" liberal, as in the political philosophy of liberalism, which holds as virtues private property (i.e., literal property ownership as well as capital, capital accumulation, and the capitalist economic system), limited government, individual rights, political equality, self-interest, and reason. This is the political philosophy that was established by the Enlightenment (1650–1800) writings of the English political philosopher

John Locke (1632–1704) and the Scottish moral philosopher and economist Adam Smith (1723–1790), among others. ²¹ Liberalism may be viewed as a political theory, ideology, value system, or a set of assumptions about "good" and "bad," and can be used to assess a given society.

While not interchangeable with liberalism, the liberal political philosophy is closely associated with, and often critiqued by, a political theory known as pluralism. Pluralism, as articulated most notably by the American political scientists Robert Dahl (1915–2014)²² and Seymour Martin Lipset (1922–2006), is a way of looking at the political (and economic) world focusing most prominently on the idea that there are multiple competing factions or groups in any society who try to get the government to serve their interests, with no one group dominating the state or government itself. Important to the pluralist conception of political reality is the notion that the state is the entity in society with the most power.

While pluralism is the political theory that is most often used to critique American politics, liberalism is the political philosophy that lies at the foundation of our most important political documents and institutions. Whether it is the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, or the Bill of Rights, we see in each of these documents a valuing of the



'The preservation of property [is] the end of government.' —John Locke (Wikimedia Commons)

most basic ideals that form the basis of the liberal political philosophy. For example, whether it is the famous "all men are created equal" phrase from the Declaration of Independence, the Contract Clause in Article I, Section 10 of the Constitution, or the protection of speech as spelled out in the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights, each of the principles articulated in these documents reflects the virtues of the political philosophy of liberalism.

In fact, both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party can be considered to be small "l" liberal parties in that they each value the basic ideological merits of liberalism. In more accurately describing each party, we might refer to the Republican Party as "classical liberals"—those who subscribe to the original formulation of the political ideology as described above. On the other hand, the Democrats might more correctly be identified as "modern liberals"—those who support the basic tenets of liberalism but have advocated for the state to play a larger role in resolving social concerns (e.g., education, health care, poverty, etc.) than what had originally been conceived of by the classical liberals.

The liberal value system and ideology has its advantages, as does the pluralist analysis of liberal-capitalist society. However, things become problematic when we begin to examine the impact private property and the accumulation of capital have on the political system and society. Liberals find little problem with the acquisition (even extreme accumulation) of capital by some within society, while the pluralists tend to discount or downplay the impact of wealth and class power on the state and government policy. Neither sees any real connection between wealth and poverty, nor views great wealth or extreme poverty as a product of a very specific ideology and economic system.

Without a doubt, pluralism and liberalism *underestimate* the impact of capital, capital accumulation, and the capitalist economic system on democratic government in general, and the United States government in particular. In so doing, when used as an explanatory tool, whether the issue is war or health care, the liberal valuing of capital accumulation and the pluralist tendency to undervalue its importance results in the American political system not being understood as it actually exists. Furthermore, neither perspective is able to explain *why* the political system functions the way that it does. Consequently, a more dynamic viewpoint or vantage point is needed to understand the American political system than what the liberal-pluralist vantage point can offer. That viewpoint is radical political economy.

1.2 What Is Radical Political Economy (RPE)?

Radical means root. Political economy is an approach to politics and economics that examines how politics and economics interact and impact one another. Accordingly, radical political economy is a political and economic philosophy (centered in the Marxist tradition) which attempts to get at the root causes of political, economic, and social phenomena by evaluating the fundamental origins and interconnectedness of political, economic, and societal events. This is done by examining both the whole of a given politico-economic and social system as well as by exploring concerns that are either neglected or are not emphasized enough by mainstream political science approaches. For instance, central to understanding the political, economic, and social world from an RPE perspective is recognizing and understanding the role of class in the American political system and society.

By using class as an instrument of analysis (as we will see), it is possible to derive systematic and, in fact, systemic conclusions about the workings of the American politico-economic system and society that are not generally found in mainstream political science. The notion of class—or evaluating political, economic, and social phenomena

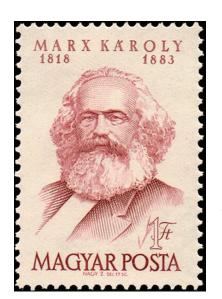
from a class perspective—is most closely associated with the historical figure of Karl Marx (1818–1883), who was most prominently influenced by the much-respected German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831). Marx attempted to describe the nature of the world through a system of analysis and thought that he created—which is known today as radical political economy, class analysis, or simply Marxism.

Marxism, or radical political economy, tends to turn parts of liberal-capitalism or the liberal-pluralist critique of liberal-capitalist society upside down. Two of the most valued components of the liberal belief system—limited government and private property—are seen by radical political economy quite differently than from the liberal-pluralist perspective. Some RPE scholars would recognize the theoretical need for a limited state, or in fact no state at all (e.g., the proponents of anarchism)²³ for the purpose of individual freedom, while others would argue that a large state which is ordered specifically along socialist lines would best serve the interests of the people. Nevertheless, it is more than likely that each type of RPE scholar would point to the fact that, at least in US society, the notion of a limited state is nothing more than an idea. Instead of being a "limited state" to help protect individual freedom (so the liberal-pluralist argument goes), for the RPE scholar, the American state has become massive in size and too often serves the interests of the rich rather than the people or human dignity.

On the other hand, private property, or the accumulation of private property and the gathering of surplus value (i.e., profit made by a capitalist from paying a worker less than the value of the commodity which he or she produces), is seen not as a virtue but as a vice: the major source of man's exploitation of man. To be certain, private property is seen from the RPE vantage point as politically, economically, and socially harmful for the great majority of society. In fact, ironically, the father of liberalism himself, John Locke, noted, "where there is no property, there is no injustice." ²⁴

Marx's Contribution

Marx's major contribution to political and economic thought is his critique of capitalism that he laid out in a three-volume set titled *Capital*. Among other topics, he discusses his



Karl Marx: German philosopher, economist, and revolutionary socialist (Wikimedia Commons)

thoughts on labor, value, commodities, class, capital accumulation, and what are sometimes referred to as the means of production, the productive forces of society (or the economy) or the commanding heights of the economy (i.e., that which is needed to produce the goods and services for a society to function, e.g., farms, factories, etc.). He wrote only a comparatively small amount about his notions of what a socialist society might look like. Yet, his critiques of capitalism and political economy, in addition to the many thinkers that have developed and added to some of his basic ideas, have created an approach to examining politics, economics, and society that is more dynamic, more systemically exposing, and is a closer approximation of political reality than what the liberal-pluralist approach has developed to date. As will become clear, the RPE approach goes beyond merely describing the world (or just parts of it), but instead tries to include all aspects of how a politico-economic and social system works as one unit—and in so doing, tells us why something is happening. Or, as the much-noted progressive American political scientist and Pulitzer Prize-nominated author Michael Parenti (1933-present) tells it, "Marxism [or radical political economy] has an explanatory power that is superior to ... mainstream social science because it deals with the imperatives of class power and political economy, the motor forces of society and history."25

1.3 Capitalism

Central to understanding the political system from a radical political economy perspective is the inclusion of the economic system. In the United States, as well as in nearly every country around the world, the economic system that is used and ties the world together is, in fact, the economic system known as capitalism. Capitalism as an economic system first emerged in the 1400s when it began to slowly replace the economic system of the Middle Ages in Europe (400 AD–1500 AD), known as feudalism. Feudalism involved large land-owners known as lords who required serfs to work the lord's property in return for a small portion of the lord's property to use as the serfs saw fit—which was generally used to grow food for their families. Serfs were also allowed to use the lords' property for hunting, trapping, or whatever else was needed for their survival. All of this meant that serfs had little need for a job as we understand it today (though they did work hard), let alone any real need for any type of currency.²⁶

Eventually, as capitalism emerged as a viable economic system and slowly replaced feudalism, the massive land tracts that the lords presided over became private property that could be bought and sold with "no social obligations" connected to the ownership of the property.²⁷ Thus, serfs were turned into property-less workers who were forced to "sell" their labor to property owners in exchange for wages. In this new organization of the economic system, property-holders began to accumulate more and more capital as they extracted more and more surplus value from their workers. As capitalism developed, the economic system began to spread across the whole of the globe. Today, with the end of the Cold War (1945–1991), there are only a handful of countries that have prevented the capitalist economic system from dominating their national economic system.

So, what is the purpose of capitalism? In a word, profit. Whether it is a conservative economist or a socialist economic theorist, it is generally agreed that the capitalist economic system (and its current modern manifestation, neoliberalism) is organized along the lines of this overriding principle. In fact, many argue that it has only one principle, drive, impulse, or pursuit: the accumulation of capital. Without a doubt, the economic system is structured toward the gathering of wealth for those who own the productive forces of the economy. This is done by keeping wages low and, conversely, keeping rent, health care, school, transportation, fuel, and food costs high.²⁸ This gathering of riches—or the constant pursuit of accumulating more and more capital which drives the system and is valued above all others—is rooted in the human impulse of greed, or the desire to possess wealth. However, there are multiple human impulses. For example, within all human beings there is the impulse for kindness, violence, compassion, love, hate, sex, empathy, anger, and personal development. Yet, if a society embraces an economic system (or if that system is imposed on the society) which predominately rewards just one impulse greed—then a multiplicity of problems is sure to follow. For certain, as we shall see, a whole series of problems is the logical consequence of an economic system that is oriented toward one single-minded ambition: the accumulation of capital for those that own the productive forces of the national and, at times, global economy.



Class in the United States

'The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.'

-Karl Marx (Author of Capital, 1818-1883)

From an RPE perspective, the natural ordering of society is based upon equality. That is to say, society should be democratic and *classless*. Divisions—such as nation-states, ethnicity, and class—are viewed as manmade, which only work to further separate human beings from one another. Society in the United States (and almost all capitalist nations) can be divided into five economic classes: the international bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie, the proletariat, and the lumpen proletariat. Membership in a specific class is predicated not on income, profession, or where an individual lives, but is determined instead by one's relationship to the means of production. That is to say, whether one is subject to or has dominion over the productive forces of society.²

2.1 The International Bourgeoisie

If we view class in the United States as a top-down hierarchy, we see at the top of the class structure the most powerful political and economic class in the country—the US-based international bourgeoisie (also known as the US-based cosmopolitan bourgeoisie or US-based international capital). In understanding the relationship of this class to the state we, in turn, become aware of why the state regularly works inconsistently with most people's concerns but, nevertheless, behaves consistently with the interests of a specific group of individuals and economic forces. It is not that the state fails to serve anyone's interests, but rather that it actually serves the class interests of those who control the state: the US-based international bourgeoisie.³

The US-based international bourgeoisie owns the means (or major means) of production, whose workings and capital ownership is literally international. In fact, if we are to look at the upper strata of this class, we will see just how wealthy they are. Indeed, the Nobel Prize—winning economist Paul Krugman (1953—present) has shown just how rich these individuals are by calculating that the wealthiest quarter of this 1 percent has more wealth than the other 99 percent of the US population combined. This class's major sources of wealth are inheritance, corporate ownership, property ownership, and stock and bond holdings.

In the United States, whoever owns the means of production (be it farms, weapons factories, oil conglomerates, pharmaceutical laboratories, or whatever other industry we might name) is provided with three significant things: (1) an immense personal fortune that can be used for a life of luxury; (2) extensive excess wealth to "influence" the state through campaign contributions and lobbying to provide a market for their commodities and services or have the capital necessary to serve in government themselves; and (3) enormous surplus capital which can be invested at home or abroad to generate more capital still. In so doing, the owners of the means of production gather more wealth—which generates, in turn, more political power—which, again, creates more wealth in an ever-upward cycle of more wealth and more political power.

The result is that the United States government, the economic system, and the direction of the whole of US society (and often, the whole of the planet) is steered



Larry Ellison, business magnate and executive chairman of Oracle Corporation, a member of the international bourgeoisie (Wikimedia Commons)

in one direction—the direction which benefits those who own the productive forces of society. As we are beginning to see today, these political and economic decisions are being made with very little consideration for the future of the United States or the world in mind.

Examples of members in this class include Bill Gates (1955–present); the Bush family; Warren Buffet (1930–present); US Senator John D. Rockefeller IV (1937–present); Secretary of State John Kerry (1943–present) and his wife Teresa Heinz; former Vice President Dick Cheney (1941–present); Larry Ellison (1944–present) of Oracle; the Koch Brothers; Phil Knight (1938–present); the Walton family (owners of Walmart); Senator Dianne Feinstein (1933–present) and her husband Richard Blum; President Donald Trump (1946–present); and the board of directors and major shareholders of corporations—such as ExxonMobil, ChevronTexaco, Bechtel Corporation, Nike Corporation, Kaiser Inc., A.I.G., JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs, Wells Fargo, Citigroup, PepsiCo, Coca-Cola Inc., Microsoft, General Electric, and Halliburton, to name a few. This class has for all practical purposes seized control of the state and has made the state work or act on its behalf to the detriment of nearly all other classes, and, most importantly, working people.

2.2 The Bourgeoisie

The second economic class in the RPE hierarchy understanding of class in the United States is the bourgeoisie. In the United States, the bourgeoisie is most notably characterized as the domestic owners of the means of production. We segregate this class from the US-based international bourgeoisie through its capital ownership (property and money). The bourgeoisie's capital, unlike the US-based international bourgeoisie, is confined to the nation's borders. For example, they are owners of relatively small businesses, such as grocery stores, car dealerships, construction companies, and real estate companies. This class overwhelmingly votes Democratic or Republican and supports the economic system which has allowed it to prosper financially. Members of this class tend to believe that "the system works" since they are beneficiaries of the existing political and economic order.

2.3 The Petty Bourgeoisie

The third class within the top-down hierarchy of the United States is the petty bourgeoisie. The petty bourgeoisie might be described as an "in-between class." It is literally in between the bourgeoisie and the class below it, the proletariat. The petty bourgeoisie sees itself as upwardly mobile. The class consists of independent but minor businessmen or tradesmen, such as a plumber, a liquor store owner, an accountant, or an electrician who is in business for himself and either has no employees or one or two employees that he or she works alongside. In addition, professional people—such as bankers, lawyers, doctors, or college professors who do not own their own banks, firms, practices, or schools—fit into this class. The petty bourgeoisie generally possesses little or no capital in terms of property ownership, with the exception being a house or even a vacation house for its more well-to-do members. Often, for the more wealthy members of this class, their concerns are literally "petty"—that is, "Do I buy a boat or do we vacation in Europe this summer?" Members of the petty bourgeoisie also overwhelming vote Democrat or Republican. However, there is some consideration of third parties, such as the Libertarians, Greens, and so on, within the petty bourgeoisie, which is indicative of this class producing some educated and semi-educated people who try to participate politically in a "socially conscious" way.

2.4 The Proletariat

For the Marxist, the most significant tier in this hierarchy is the fourth class—the proletariat. This historical class, which the vast majority of the American people are members of, includes blue-collar and white-collar workers who are owners of little or no property or capital other than possibly a family home. However, many members of this class are simply rent payers. The proletariat (or working class or working people) make their money from "selling" their labor to the petty bourgeoisie, bourgeoisie, and the international bourgeoisie. The vocations represented in the American proletariat range widely from mid-to-low-paid office workers to waitresses, construction workers, and teachers. Politically, the proletariat in the United States, much like the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, almost wholly votes Democrat or Republican, with a very small but more



The proletariat is the class that Marx and RPE scholars in general believe has the historical role of taking control of the means of production from the bourgeoisie and bringing into existence a socialist state and society based on justice and equality. His belief, as is the belief of many RPE thinkers, was that the socialist state created by workers would figuratively and literally act as an intermediate stage between liberal capitalist society and the establishment of a communal society with no state. The creation of a communist world, according to Marx, was inevitable.

Critically important to this process is recognition by the proletariat of its membership in this class, which requires overcoming its false consciousness. False consciousness (which is explored in more detail in Chapter 10) is a term that refers to a state of mind of an individual or a group of people who neither understand their class interests nor act consistently with their political



A member of the proletariat (a proletarian) (Wikimedia Commons)

concerns. Politically, in the case of the United States, false consciousness manifests itself through working people's continued support of the Democrat and Republican parties—two parties (as will become clear) that are overwhelmingly dominated by the international bourgeoisie.

2.5 The Lumpen Proletariat

The last class in the Marxist class hierarchy is the lumpen proletariat. The lumpen proletariat in the United States (and in any society, for that matter) is made up of the poor, the homeless, the drug and alcohol addicted living on the street, the uncared-for mentally ill, and people in prison, among others. They are possessors of no property and little or no capital. Members of the lumpen proletariat are often too caught up in their own troubles to participate in politics at all. The state pays little attention to this class, with the exception of excessive funding for the overcrowded prison system and minimal funding for rehabilitation programs and halfway houses.

These five classes, then, compose the class structure and hierarchy of the politico-economic and social system in the United States. The interests of the owners and workers—those that control the productive forces of society and those that are subject to them—are diametrically opposed to one another and have placed them on a collision course with one another that has already played itself out multiple times throughout history (e.g., the French Revolution [1789–1799], the Haitian Revolution [1791–1804], the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Cuban Revolution [1953–1959], etc.). In each historical example, as the socialist theorist C.L.R. James (1901–1989) wrote, "the struggle of classes [ended] either in the reconstruction of society or in the common ruin of the contending classes." Whatever the case has been, to fully understand the significance and ramifications of class power in the US, it is necessary to also make clear the role of the state in American politics.



The Role of the State in American Politics

'States are not moral agents. They act in their own interests. And that means the interests of powerful forces within them.' 1

—Noam Chomsky (Linguist and philosopher, 1928–present)

The *state* is the governing institution or apparatus in society that is responsible for law and order and the provision of social services, and has the "monopoly on violence" within that social order. In the United States, the word *state* may refer to the federal, state, or local government, or any combination of all three. However, in general (but not always), when we are discussing the state, we are referring to the national government of a country, or

in the case of the United States, the federal government located in Washington, DC.



The State: Julius Caesar (100 BC-44 BC) and the Roman Senate (Wikimedia Commons)

3.1 The Liberal-Pluralist View of the State

From a liberal-pluralist view, there is no more powerful entity in a society than that of the state. The state is there to safeguard and enhance individual rights, whether by protecting rights that already exist or by bringing into existence new rights which are consistent with increased personal freedom. For the pluralists, the US political system is viewed as a place where individuals or groups of individuals can use their rights as citizens to gain access to the political system and improve their individual or

group standing. This is the defining idea of the pluralist conception of political reality—that is, government is influenced by multiple individuals and groups within society.² If this is not the case, then the pluralists conclude the state is not conforming to the liberal-pluralist conception of the state and is not in accordance with the necessary structure of a society that is governed democratically. For most liberal-pluralist scholars that study the US political system, the United States conforms to this political design.

The much-respected Yale University political and pluralist theorist Robert Dahl developed the principal criteria for determining if democracy (or more specifically, polyarchy—i.e., multiple groups that both compete for government attention and help shape government policy) is present in a society. Dahl's criteria include elected officials, free and fair elections, inclusive suffrage, the right to run for office, freedom of expression and alternative information, and associational autonomy.³ In other words, the liberal-pluralist conception of government looks a lot like what the United States government is *supposed* to look like. Provided these principles do exist, so the pluralists argue, then the many competing groups or factions within American society can have their interests realized. Dahl himself concluded that the United States is, if not a democracy, then at least a polyarchy.

The liberal-pluralist conception of the state rarely goes further than the above analysis. To be sure, there is little need for any detailed assessment of the impact of capitalism or capital accumulation on the state. In fact, capitalism (or the free market system) and the process of capital accumulation are both taken as things that are to be valued as "good," or even left out of the equation altogether, when developing a procedure or methodology for examining the American political system by the pluralists.

To look at just one example, in a "textbook" case of a liberal-pluralist assessment of the American political system uncritically accepting the capitalist economic system as a "good," we might examine a fairly common view of a typical college-level political science textbook. Indeed, in *America's Democratic Republic*, in one seemingly harmless passage about interest groups, the authors state, "It is widely and not entirely unreasonably believed that what is good for business is good for America." In other words, what is good for the corporation is good for everyone. Yet, the truth is that, if corporate executives are benefiting from drawing large amounts of surplus capital for themselves, then, consistent with the workings of the economic system, someone or some group within society is *not* benefiting from them doing so.

Ironically, the authors' statement is located in a chapter about interest groups, where a reader might expect to see some critical commentary on the uneven advantage corporations have over other groups in society and the political system because of their ability to amass immense quantities of wealth. In American politics, wealth (as noted earlier, and as we shall see throughout) translates into political power, and political power translates into additional wealth. However, the authors of *America's Democratic Republic*, and the liberal-pluralist conception of the state in general, are silent on this point. For certain, as first spelled out in Chapter 1, silence on the role of class power and wealth is quite common within the liberal-pluralist conception and criticism of political reality.

Instead, the liberal analysis of politics and economics tends to come from *liberal economists* (not political scientists) debating what role the *political system* should have or does have on the economy, as opposed to the impact of economics or corporate power on public policy. For instance, the liberal economist John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946) argued that government should intervene in the economy during times of recession or depression to stimulate economic growth.⁵ His ideas, known today as Keynesian economics, have shaped a number of economic schools of thought. At the same time, Keynes' understanding of economics has been rejected by notable classical-liberal or neoliberal scholars, such as Milton Friedman (1912–2006), who have argued that the market should be left alone, unhindered by government restrictions or intervention during times of recession or depression.⁶ However, with both Keynes and Friedman, we are still left with an assessment of how the American political system can improve the market and capital accumulation in general—*not* how either one negatively impacts government or society.

3.2 The Radical Political Economy View of the State

From an RPE vantage point, the state is controlled or has been "captured" by the international bourgeoisie. Scholars who utilize an RPE perspective tend to view national policy as a result of the wealthiest members of society taking possession (in one form or the other) of the governing apparatus of society. As a consequence, national policy is steered in the interests of the most affluent members of society and can be understood, in general, as a manifestation of their class interests. In other words, national policy is a logical conclusion of class power. In the United States, while the great majority of the American people have sometimes made social and economic gains (e.g., voting rights for African Americans and women, child labor laws, unionization, etc.) RPE tends to view the federal government as an instrument which is used by those who control the industrial and productive centers in the US economy to further their class interests.

A Radical Political Economy Assessment of Dahl

As noted, Robert Dahl concluded that the United States minimally meets the requirements that are necessary to be considered a polyarchy. Yet, Dahl's analysis fails to include private property's impact on American politics. In so doing, his analysis does not fully describe how the American political system functions, why it does what it does, or for whom. The first problem with his model is that Dahl separates his criteria for polyarchy into seven separate components. However, in actuality, each criterion is a part of an interconnected whole where each component is often dependent upon another. That problem is not very serious, and still allows us to assess Dahl's criteria either one at a time or by combining two or more criteria together. However, from a radical political economy vantage point, Dahl's model breaks down in explaining, or even accurately describing, the United States political system because it does not possess any meaningful economic component. That is to say, his model for the presence of polyarchy does not include the impact of capital, capital accumulation, private property, or the economic system on government in any significant way. Because it does not, the criteria that form Dahl's model simply do not fit reality. In other words, the model itself is a poor representation of reality, so how could it explain reality? Nonetheless, there is still a need to assess Dahl's model and determine if the United States is a polyarchy, even if Dahl does not include the impact of capitalism within his model. Again, polyarchy is a system of government where multiple sovereign groups rule. Thus, to assess the accuracy of this statement (i.e., is it true or false), we might develop our own system of analysis to represent each one of Dahl's criteria, such as the ones found in Table 3.1:

TABLE 3.1 Robert Dahl's Criteria for Polyarchy						
(1) = Elected Officials	(5) = Freedom Of Expression					
(2) = Free And Fair Elections	(6) = Alternative Information					
(3) = Inclusive Suffrage	(7) = Associational Autonomy					
(4) = The Right To Run For Office						

In analyzing Dahl's model we find the following to be true:

Question #1: Are officials elected in the United States where elections are free and fair, where everyone's vote is equal, where anyone can run for public office, and where everyone has the right to speak freely (**Criteria 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5**)?

When we include private property or economic power (one actually comes from the other) to any one of these criteria, or each of these criteria, we see that Dahl's explanation of the US political system is, at best, limited. Indeed, the United States has become a money-flooded "republic" where only individuals who possess large campaign bank accounts have any chance of winning. For example, in 2014, the average cost to win a seat in the United States House of Representatives was \$1.7 million, while the average cost to win a seat in the United States Senate was \$10.4 million. Today, the totals have reached heights not seen before in US history with the Democratic candidate Jon Ossoff raising some \$153 million to win his Senate seat during the 2020 election. How does one gain a large campaign bank account? Two ways: (1) Be independently wealthy before you ever run for office, in which case you are unlikely to understand in any self-experienced way the concerns of the overwhelming majority of the American people; or (2) accept campaign contributions from powerful corporate interests who may now donate an unlimited amount of money to a political office-seeker for the purpose of political advertising.

Why can corporations do this? Because preventing a corporation from donating an unlimited dollar amount to a candidate is a violation of a corporation's First Amendment free speech rights. The notion that corporations have unlimited "free speech rights" in the form of campaign contributions was established by the Supreme Court in the recent *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010). Yet, with large campaign contributions from corporations comes a political expectation for Congressional officeholders or the president to make decisions that benefit their specific corporate interests. Whoever donates the most amount of money to a candidate has the best chance of getting his or her concerns heard by government. In the US, the result of this arrangement is that whether it is agribusiness, the oil industry, or the health-care industry, the state ends up overwhelmingly working on behalf of a very specific class (i.e., international capital)—and at the same time *against* the class interests of working people.

Question #2: Is there alternative information in the United States (Criteria 6)? Yes, to a point. An "alternative press" or "non-corporate press" does exist in the United States, and the federal government has not been able to control the flow of information on the Internet. However, most people do not read, listen to, or watch "alternative" or "non-corporate" news sources. Instead, most people in the United States, including much of the working class, to the degree that they are engaged in the daily news at all, are dialed into the mainstream press—that is, the corporate press. Who controls the corporate press? Large corporations or, in RPE terms, the international bourgeoisie. In fact, today, there are six media conglomerates that control 90 percent of the media market in the United States. These media conglomerates are powerful corporations whose CEOs' and board members' interests are inconsistent with the great majority of the American people's interests—and in actuality, the vast majority of the people around the world. As we shall see in Chapter 11, the way in which news issues are framed and the inclusion (or exclusion) of some issues over others emanates from the prevailing ideological and class vantage point within a very narrow sector of the cosmopolitan bourgeoisie which controls the corporate press.

For instance, in terms of framing of issues, whether it is CNN, ABC News, or *Time* magazine (each of which is owned by the Walt Disney Company), universal health care (which the majority of Americans support) is viewed as an "inefficient" and "costly" program that makes patients wait for long periods of time for simple operations. Or, in terms of what is included or excluded from the nightly news, we have the example of universal education. The United States is one of the few First World countries that are without

free education for its college- and graduate-level students. Yet, a free education could easily be provided for each of the United States' 19 million higher-education students with a relatively modest reduction of \$200 billion a year from the United States' exorbitantly funded, second-to-none military budget, which itself is a topic that is regularly excluded from any critical analysis by the mainstream press. For certain, the fact that the United States government already has all the money it needs in the federal budget to provide a free education for its college and graduate-level students is regularly ignored—not explored or not taken seriously in any meaningful way by the mainstream media.

Question #3: Can American citizens associate with whomever they want and discuss whatever they so choose (**Criteria 5 & 7**)? Yes, but again, to a point. For instance, an American citizen *cannot* do the following:

- Be involved in activity (i.e., speech, the written word, etc.) which might generate "imminent lawless action" as was decided in Brandenburg v. Ohio (1969). Even though it is inconsistent with the wording of the First Amendment and it is probably impossible to know beforehand what type of speech will lead to lawless action, Brandenburg does provide reasonable parameters for societal behavior. Yet, government has often had a difficult time meeting its own prescribed standard of permissible speech. To take just one example, the Occupy Wall Street movement (2011-present) involved almost no violence whatsoever. Instead, it predominantly involved speeches, marches, and occupations in and around influential US corporations and it still resulted in thousands of arrests and wide-scale government infiltration by local, state, and federal government authorities. 10 This same pattern held true more recently with the "Black Lives Matter" movement during the summer of 2020 to protest police brutality and racial injustice. Indeed, while some 93 percent of all demonstrations remained peaceful, almost fifteen thousand arrests were conducted by government officials.11
- » Advocate for the overthrow of the United States government as spelled out in *Gitlow v. New York* (1912) if there is any chance of it actually happening as articulated by the Court in *Brandenburg*. The right to overturn an unjust government was considered to be a right by Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), which he made clear in the Declaration of Independence more than 200 years ago. In fact, at one point, it was unlawful to advocate, *teach*, *organize*, *or be a member* of any group dedicated to overthrowing the United States government as was decided by the Court in *Dennis v. United States* (1951).
- » Speak against the military draft through the written word as decided in Schenck v. United States (1919), or argue against US involvement in war and praise individuals who resist the draft during a speech as opinioned by the Court in Debs v. United States (1919) if either of these might lead to "imminent lawless action." However, the framers considered there to be no more important governmental power than that of taking the nation from a state of peace to a state of war. If one cannot speak out against the draft and other war-making powers of the state, which occur during one of the most critical times in the life of a nation and may well result in extreme (and even violent) conflict between the state and its citizens, then we might ask of what value is a citizen's "right" to free speech? After all, historically in the United States, it has overwhelmingly been the American people that have peacefully spoken out against what they perceive to be unjustifiable wars that has led the state, and not the people, to react violently.

» Provide "support" to enemies of the United States or its coalition partners as spelled out in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2012. The real question is, what does it mean to "support" enemies of the United States or its coalition partners? Is it providing military aid to Iraqi citizens in their fight against the United States occupation of that country (i.e., "enemies of the United States")? Or could it mean providing literature to the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in their fight against the British government (i.e., "coalition partners")? To date, the answer is not clear. Yet, the consequences of doing so are being arrested by the US military and held indefinitely.

In sum, from a liberal-pluralist view, nearly every one of Dahl's criteria for polyarchy seems to be present in the American political system. However, when we look just a little bit closer and include the impact of private property on any one of Dahl's principles (and on each of his criteria, in fact), we see that none of them exist in a way that is consistent with the defining democratic principle of "rule by the people" or even the defining polyarchy principle of "rule by multiple groups." Instead, we see a political and economic order emerge that is shaped not by *multiple groups* in US society but rather overwhelming by just *one group*—the most powerful class in the United States, the cosmopolitan bourgeoisie.

In the end, whatever the virtues are of the liberal-pluralist perspective, it ultimately does not include enough detailed political, and most importantly, *economic* phenomena to be used as an effective analytical tool in which to examine, describe, explain, or understand American politics. Accordingly, even with this limited assessment, we might already be able to see that Dahl's conclusion about the United States being a polyarchy is simply not accurate, and his criteria to make that claim lacks any real depth in which to fully illuminate the workings of the American political system.

3.3 The State and Capital Accumulation

So, what then is the purpose of the state from an RPE perspective? In general, RPE tends to view the state as an institution by which the cosmopolitan bourgeoisie legitimizes its control over the means of production and uses it to perpetuate its own accumulation of capital. The result of the state being largely in the grasp of a small group of economically powerful individuals is what is known as a plutocracy; i.e., a nation that is ruled by the rich, where wealth is valued over "goodness." In the United States, the political system is largely controlled by those who steer some of the most powerful companies on the planet. With their massive funding of political officeholders, the rich have made it difficult for the United States government to serve the interests of the American people. Indeed, the US-based cosmopolitan bourgeoisie has created a type of Wall Street Republic, where officeholders are viewed almost like a commodity or security to be purchased because of their potential for a return on their investment.

To be sure, from an RPE perspective, wars are fought for the dual purpose of creating a market for the investment of surplus capital, as well as for gathering that which is needed to fuel (at times, literally) the commanding heights of the economy; i.e., land, labor, and resources. Solvable politico-economic problems, from global warming to expensive private health care, persist because putting an end to them would also put an end to the profits of those who benefit from their continuance. This great gathering of wealth translates into unmatched political power within US society that, in turn, has made it possible for the wealthy to pursue their own interests without regard to how it may impact the rest of the world.¹²



The 'Kingfish,' Huey P. Long, governor and senator of Louisiana, 1928–1935 (U.S. Senate Historical Office)

Now, is the state completely in the hands of powerful economic forces and commercial interests? In a word, no. Popular movements—and on occasion populist politicians—that can and do shape public policy come to power. Probably the most notable example of a populist politician trying to shape national policy today is that of Independent Senator-turned-presidential-candidate Bernie Sanders from Vermont, who describes himself as a democratic socialist. Yet, Sanders is more often than not a lone voice of opposition to the predominant political and economic orthodoxy in the United States Senate, which favors the wealthy, rather than someone who is actually shaping policy for the American people.

However, Sanders is not the only populist senator to be elected to the Senate. The most well-known, and one of the most talented political figures in the history of the United States, was Huey P. Long (1893–1935), the governor and senator from Louisiana. Long, known as the "Kingfish," began his career as a lawyer after passing the Louisiana State Bar after just one year of formal law school. He took cases solely on behalf of working people and made his entrance into Louisiana politics at the age of 25 after winning election to the Louisiana Railroad Commission on an anti–Standard Oil platform. Standard Oil was owned

by John D. Rockefeller (1839–1937). At the time, Standard Oil dominated the political and economic landscape of Louisiana. While commissioner, Long argued and won a case before the United States Supreme Court against the Louisiana Telephone Company for overcharging the citizens of Louisiana, prompting Chief Justice (and later 27th president) William Howard Taft (1857–1930) to declare that Long was "the most brilliant lawyer who ever practiced before the Supreme Court."¹⁴

In 1924, Long ran for governor of Louisiana, finishing third but establishing himself as a progressive and viable future gubernatorial candidate with his continued stance against Standard Oil. In 1928, he won the governorship running with the campaign slogan "Every Man a King, but No One Wears a Crown." In four years, he had more roads, bridges, and highways built than all of his predecessors combined. In so doing, Louisiana employed 10 percent of the nation's highway workers—more than any other state in the nation. He made available free adult literacy classes to the poor; eliminated poll taxes (which almost doubled the size of the electorate); provided kids with free school textbooks (which he forced Standard Oil to pay for); reduced utility rates; expanded charity hospitals; decreased tax rates for poor farmers; and increased tax rates for industry. In 1929, Governor Long called a "special session" of the Louisiana state legislature to impose a 5-cent tax on production of oil in Louisiana to help fund his social and economic programs. The result: "Standard Oil's legislative allies" led a successful attempt to impeach him in the Louisiana House of Representatives, but ultimately failed to remove him from office in a trial in the Senate. Is

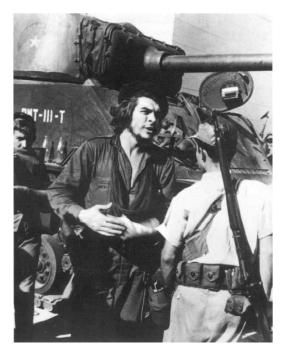
In 1932, Long successfully ran for the US Senate, where he proposed a national "Share Our Wealth" program (i.e., a redistribution of wealth from the rich to everyone else). As a member of the Senate, Long declared that he would run for president against Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882–1945) at the end of FDR's first term in 1936. However, in September 1935, Long was assassinated in the Louisiana State Capital (where he still had de facto control over the Governor's Office) by the son-in-law of a man against whom Long had drafted legislation to gerrymander out of office. Long's progressive stance earned him many powerful enemies throughout Louisiana and the United States, yet he was widely respected and admired among the working class and the poor of Louisiana. Indeed, as Edmond Riggs, a poor African American resident of St. Martinville, Louisiana, said, "No poor people ever hated him ... the poor people loved him; and the schoolchildren, too." 19

Nonetheless, the examples of Long and Sanders prove a rule in American politics rather than point to some vague notion of Dahl's "multiple groups" governing society. Indeed, Long and Sanders are the exception to decision-making in the American political system. Their elections, and the fact that they stand out as solitary figures going against the grain in the political arena, illustrates that popular forces in the United States do not have real power within the American political system. On the contrary, Sanders and Long show us that the political and economic system is defined and controlled not by multiple competing groups but instead, almost always by powerful economic forces. Otherwise, neither one of them would stand out at all.

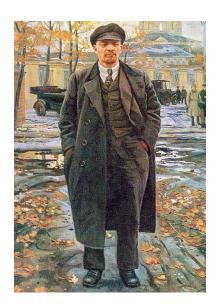
Without a doubt, while Sanders' critique of the political-economic system tends to be more nuanced and sophisticated, Long's assessment of the political-economic system was straightforward, blunt, and clear to everyone. He openly called for the nation's wealth to be redistributed; he took on corporate power in the state of Louisiana and won concessions for the people of the state; and he never shied away from openly attacking the rich rhetorically—and more importantly—in terms of public policy. If Sanders or Long focused only on abortion, gun rights, or even gay marriage, both would have gained little notice. However, by focusing their politics on the inequalities created by the process of capital accumulation by the rich over the great majority of the people and trying to take from the rich to give to the poor, Sanders and Long placed themselves squarely outside the mainstream of American political and economic thought. Indeed, the fact that Sanders' and Long's political-economic thought and platforms are considered to be heterodox, and in contradiction to the prevailing political-economic viewpoint of the state, illustrates for us who has real power in the United States and who, in fact, is most often in a position of powerlessness. That said, Sanders' recent rise on a national scale as a presidential candidate during the 2016 and 2020 elections indicates just how attractive progressive politics can be to the American people, particularly during periods of economic difficulty, even if those views ultimately find no expression in the state.

3.4 Modes of State Domination in Foreign Affairs

State power within international affairs can be viewed from multiple perspectives. From a radical political economy perspective, the most common view of state power is through the prism of empire, imperialism, neocolonialism, and globalization. An empire is a nation that dominates or exerts power over the political, economic, and social life of a multitude of states, generally for the benefit of the empire or the elites of the empire. Today, the recognized global empire or "hegemon" is the United States. It has no equal. Imperialism, on the other hand, is the act of the empire or a single nation exploiting the land, labor, or resources of another nation for the benefit of the elites of the empire (and exploiting, occasionally, the nation itself). During the early stages of capitalist development, the domestic bourgeoisie began to transform itself into an international bourgeoisie in search of new markets outside of the territorial confines of its own country, generally with the assistance of the state. Today, imperialism involves both the state opening the door of foreign markets for international capital and international capital clearing the way to faraway sources of wealth for itself (as was the case with private military firms in the US war in Iraq) in order to exploit the riches of a poorer nation.



'We must bear in mind that imperialism is a world system, the last stage of capitalism—and it must be defeated in a world confrontation.' —Ernesto 'Che' Guevara (Wikimedia Commons)



Russian revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin (1930) (Wikimedia Commons)

Imperialism has most prominently been written about by J. A. Hobson (1858–1940),²⁰ who later influenced the ideas of V. I. Lenin (1870–1924),²¹ the leader of the Russian Revolution of 1917. Lenin, in turn, was one of the inspirations of Cuban revolutionary leader Ernesto "Che" Guevara (1928–1967). Guevara wrote and spoke regularly about imperialism, viewing it as the central problem of the global order. Yet, he is most well-known for acting on his beliefs. Indeed, the Argentinian-born revolutionary not only saw imperialism as a world-wide system of exploitation of the poor by the rich but also risked his own life on two different continents and in multiple instances to defeat it.²² In 1967, while attempting to improve the lives of the peasants and bring an end to military rule, Guevara was killed by "Bolivian soldiers, trained, equipped, and guided by US Green Berets and [the] CIA."²³

Nonetheless, in laying the foundation for the modern understanding of imperialism, Hobson believed that it was a necessary development of capitalism, as large trusts needed new markets to invest surplus value or profits. Indeed, he wrote at the turn of the twentieth century, "It is sufficient to point out that the manufacturing power of a country like the United States would grow so fast as to exceed the demands of the home market." And so Hobson concluded that "it was this sudden demand for foreign markets for manufactures and for investments which was avowedly responsible for the adoption of Imperialism as a political policy" by

the United States.25

While Hobson was one of the first thinkers to write about imperialism, Lenin is the historical figure that is most closely associated with the concept. He viewed imperialism much the same as Hobson, identifying it as the final stage (or highest stage) of capitalist development. Lenin essentially agreed with Hobson's theory of imperialism. He argued that, as capitalism matured, the banks played the central role in modern capitalist nations, monopolizing large parts of key industries and the economy. In turn, the banks (as well as other industries) began to accumulate huge surpluses of capital. As domestic markets became saturated, the domestic bourgeoisie needed to find exterior markets or the domestic economy would begin to stagnate. So they invested their surplus capital in foreign markets and became a part of the cosmopolitan bourgeoisie. ²⁶

However, Hobson and Lenin differ in that Hobson believed capitalism could be reformed, whereas Lenin saw the overturning of the capitalist economic system as the only resolution to the unequal distribution of wealth amongst the world's people, which both he and Hobson viewed as the natural consequence of capitalism and capital accumulation. Many other thinkers have developed the theory of imperialism further as capitalism has moved around the whole world, impacting the lives of billions of people.²⁷

One of the more prominent thinkers is the Pan-African leader Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. He argued that neocolonialism (the newest version of colonialism) was the last stage of imperialism. In Nkrumah's conception of neocolonialism, he explains that the central form of domination is through outside economic forces. Indeed, he wrote that "the essence of neocolonialism is that the State ... is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty [but in] reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside." Nkrumah then went on to write:

The methods and form of [neo-colonialism] can take various shapes. For example, in an extreme case the troops of the imperial power may garrison the territory of the neo-colonial State and control the government of it. More often, however, neo-colonialist control is exercised through economic or monetary means. ... Where neo-colonialism exists the power exercising control is often the State which formerly ruled the territory in question.

... The result of neo-colonialism is that foreign capital is used for the exploitation rather than for the development of the less developed parts of the world. Investment under neo-colonialism increases rather than decreases the gap between the rich and the poor countries of the world.²⁹

In other words, a country that is in the grasp of neocolonialism is or has been dominated by an outside state, and its economy is largely controlled by economic interests outside of the country. This is done not for the benefit of the neocolonial state but for the benefit of those external interests. Unfortunately for the people of the United States and Iraq, the war and occupation of Iraq by the United States government is probably the best present-day example of this form of imperial domination. As we will see in our examination of the US war on Iraq in Chapter 6, while Iraq appears to be an independent political state, its most important economic sectors are largely dominated by external transnational corporations.

Finally, globalization is the notion that the world has become (or is becoming) one global unit that is integrated politically, economically, and socially for the benefit of all. However, from a radical political economy perspective, globalization is, in reality, capitalism on a worldwide scale—where capitalists use labor and resources from the Third World to generate huge profits. This global system

has not been for the benefit of all, but instead a bonanza to a very specific class, and at the same time, to the detriment of billions of people around the world. If globalization is First World elites using the land, labor, and resources of the people of South America, Asia, and Africa for the purpose of generating ever-larger profits for the owners of some of the most significant productive centers of society, then globalization, at a fundamental level, is no different than empire, imperialism, or neocolonialism. It is a global order brought into existence through Western political influence, done so through military might (if necessary) for the purpose of securing international markets for global capital. Thus, RPE views the state in the international arena as the primary instrument which transnational capital uses to open foreign markets, exploit Third World labor and resources, and protect the dual "national interests" abroad of capital and capital accumulation.



The 'African Lenin,' President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana (Wikimedia Commons)



The Constitution and Founding Considerations

'Oligarchy exists where those who have property are the sovereign authority of the constitution; and conversely, democracy exists where the sovereign authority is composed of the poorer classes, who are without much property.'

—Aristotle (Greek philosopher, 384 BC–322 BC)

The structure of the political system and, to some degree, the economic system of the



Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, PA (May 25–Sept. 17, 1787) (Wikimedia Commons)

United States, was laid out more than 200 years ago, in 1787, at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In many ways, the Constitution is an admirable document which, for one of the first times in modern history, attempted to create on paper something other than a monarchy. To be sure, the "leading men" of the country created a republic, something that had not been seen since ancient Greece and Rome.

However, the republic laid out in the Constitution and the nation shaped by the Founding Fathers, much like Greece and Rome before it, were created by a specific economic class within American society. In multiple instances in the early American republic, we witness the elite's political ideals as well as their support and institutionalization of an economic system that very much favors their class interests.

4.1 A Class Perspective of the Framers, Founders, and Property

In the years before the writing of the Constitution and the founding of the United States, colonial America was already a society deeply divided along class lines. By 1700, 75 percent of the acreage in the state of New York was owned by less than 12 people, 2 more than 1.7 million acres within central Virginia was controlled by just 7 people, and "by 1760, fewer than 500 men in 5 colonial cities controlled most of the commerce, shipping,

banking, mining, and manufacturing on the eastern seaboard." In fact, "only 3 percent of the population had truly large holdings and could be considered wealthy" at the time of the founding of the nation.⁴ The founders of the United States and the framers of the Constitution were drawn from this group of individuals. They were relatively young, educated, and the international bourgeoisie of their day.

The most celebrated founder in American history is George Washington (1732–1799). Washington, who "presided" over the Convention but played no active role in drafting the Constitution, is not only one of the richest presidents in the history of the United States, but is also (when adjusted for inflation) one of the hundred wealthiest Americans of all time. Not discounting the fact that the Constitution was and is a political document, it is also an economic document constructed, at least in part, to service the interests of those who wrote it. In surveying the economic histories of the framers, the distinguished American historian Charles Beard (1874–1948) concluded that "the overwhelming majority of members, at least five-sixths, were ... to a greater or less[er] extent economic beneficiaries from the adoption of the Constitution." In fact, some 40 of the 55 framers of the Constitution "appear on the Records of the Treasury Department" because they had money owed to them by the US government. Beard also makes clear the industries from which the framers had been drawn. Indeed, he explains:

A majority of the members were lawyers by profession. Most of the members came from towns, on or near the coasts, that is, from the regions in which personalty [private property] was largely concentrated. ... Public securities were extensively represented ... with the exception of New York, and possibly Delaware, each state had one or more prominent representatives in the Convention who held more than a negligible amount of securities, and who could therefore speak with ... authority on the question of providing in the new Constitution for the full discharge of the public debt ... personalty invested in lands for speculation was represented by at least fourteen members ... personalty in the form of money loaned at interest was represented by at least twenty-four members ... personalty in mercantile, manufacturing, and shipping lines was represented by at least eleven members ... [and] personalty in slaves was represented by at least fifteen members.⁸

From this, the framers' class location is obvious. Now, one may disagree with Beard's conclusion that the framers were somehow financially "interested in the outcome" of the Convention. But it cannot be said that there was one person in attendance in Philadelphia from May 1787 through September 1787 that was interested in or represented the interests of (1) women, who made up more than 50 percent of the population; (2) small farmers, who accounted for roughly 30 percent of the population; (3) working people of all kinds; (4) indentured servants; (5) slaves, who numbered 20 percent of the population; or (5) Native Americans. Thus, by definition and from an economic class perspective, the only individuals who remained and did, in fact, lay out the political and economic foundation of the new nation were those who dominated the American economy in the late 1700s; i.e., a small fraction of the richest 1 percent of the US population. To think that these individuals had no personal interests at stake when drafting the Constitution is contradicted by the fact of whom they excluded from participating in the writing of that document.

Yet, those who met at the Constitutional Convention were not the only influential individuals in the early republic that participated in the political arena. For example, Thomas Jefferson is one of the most significant Founding Fathers and "leading men" in American history. He is generally considered to be one of the most intelligent political figures to have ever served in public office and is, at the same time, probably the

most successful politician in the history of the United States. Indeed, Jefferson served as an elected member of the Virginia House of Delegates, governor of Virginia, member of the Continental Congress, ambassador to France, Secretary of State under George Washington, and Vice President under John Adams (1735–1826). Jefferson topped these accomplishments off by serving as the third president of the United States, where his most notable contribution was the purchase of the Louisiana Territory—some 828,000 square

miles, for less than \$0.03 an acre (or \$15 million), which nearly doubled the size of the country—from Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) of France in 1803.

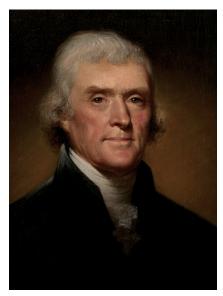
Additionally, Jefferson was very much a child and shaper of the Enlightenment. He established Virginia's first separation of church and state law by authoring the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom. The statute disestablished the Church of England in the state and granted religious freedom to all citizens. Written in 1777 and signed into law in 1786, it was the forerunner to the First Amendment's Establishment of Religion Clause. Jefferson was also a scholar who read widely, covering multiple subjects. Sometimes referred to as a polymath who spoke five languages, he possessed the largest personal library in the early republic, which consisted of some six thousand books that he eventually sold to the Library of Congress to help ease his debts—some \$100,000, or more than \$10 million in today's money. The Library of Congress used these books as its founding collection. Jefferson eventually repurchased all of his books, famously stating, "I cannot live without books." Significantly, he founded and designed the University of Virginia (which looks very similar to his own home, Monticello, which he also designed). And finally, he is most famous for being the chief author of the Declaration of Independence, with its internationally respected and historically important phrase, "We holds

these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

However, for all of his political accomplishments, Thomas Jefferson was very much a man of wealth who participated in one of the most vulgar aspects of capitalism that has ever existed—slavery. Jefferson was born into a wealthy family who owned slaves. As an adult, at a time when less than 10 percent of the US population were slave owners, and of those that did own slaves, the majority owned 20 or fewer individuals, Jefferson owned some 200 slaves and as many as 600 during his lifetime. What's more, in an example of truly licentious behavior, it is widely accepted by even mainstream historians that Thomas Jefferson began a relationship with one of his slaves, Sally Hemings, when he was 43 and serving as ambassador to France and she was just 14 (an adult by 18th century standards). In fact, DNA evidence developed in 1998, and accepted by the Thomas Jefferson Foundation itself, concluded that there is "a high probability that Thomas Jefferson fathered Eston Hemings, and that he most likely was the father of all six of Sally Hemings's children," including two who died in infancy.

Whatever Jefferson's relationship to Sally Hemings was, Washington, the framers of the Constitution, and founders such as Jefferson all help to illustrate an important point about the early republic. In each example, we have wealthy individuals, who are also in politically powerful positions, defining and shaping the political and economic reality for millions of people. Unquestionably, men of wealth and property have always been responsible for creating the political-economic order and value system in the United States. The founding of the country was no exception to the rule.

In fact, when we examine what the framers of the Constitution actually said, we find that, in both idea and in fact, wealth and property are considered to be the central



'But do not mistake me. I am not advocating slavery.' —Thomas Jefferson (Wikimedia Commons)

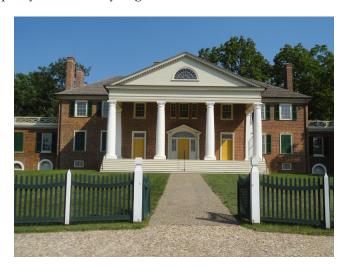
concerns of government and should be a key part of the structuring of any government. To be certain, a brief review of comments by some of the most prominent men at the Convention makes this point clear. For instance, Gouverneur Morris (1752–1816), credited as the author of the preamble of the Constitution, stated that "property ought to be" taken into account when considering representation in the House of Representatives and that "property was the main object of society" and "of government." John Rutledge (1739–1800), who chaired the Committee of Detail, which was charged with drafting much of what ended up in the Constitution, agreed with Morris, declaring that "property was certainly the principal object of Society" and that the "admission of wealth" should be considered when determining representation. ¹³

Another framer, Rufus King (1755–1827), who later became a candidate for president of the United States for the Federalist Party, agreed with both Morris and Rutledge, stating that "property was the primary object of Society." An even more to-the-point example of the significance of wealth and property in the minds of the framers is the example of Pierce Butler (1744–1822) from South Carolina. Butler was one of the largest and wealthiest slave holders in the United States and introduced the Fugitive Slave Clause at the Convention. He argued that "property was the only just measure of representation," that property was the "great object of government," and the government that they were building was "instituted principally for the protection of property, and was itself to be supported by property." In other words, the government that was being created was to be run by the rich, for the rich.

Later, James Madison (1751–1836), recognized as the father of the Constitution and chief author of the Bill of Rights, famously declared in *Federalist #10* that "the diversity in the faculties of men" [i.e., the varying inherent mental or physical power or talent of different people] are "from which the rights of property originate" and that "the protection of these faculties is the first object of government." Yet, in the same discussion about property and government, Madison recognized that inequality within society originates

from the "unequal distribution of property" and that "factions" within society (i.e., divisions centered on a particular issue) are primarily created from the amassing of great amounts of property by the few.¹⁷

Nevertheless, none of his thinking prevented Madison from owning a great amount of property himself. He was a large slave-plantation owner, with his 22-room estate, Montpelier, sitting on more than 4,000 acres of land in Virginia. Instead of arguing for some equitable distribution of property or its outright elimination, Madison decided that the "effects" from the unequal distribution of property, which create opposing factions within society, should be controlled. For Madison, if the faction consisted of a "minority" of the population, then it could be brought under control by the "republican principle"—i.e., the vote. However, the effect that most concerned Madison (and some of his fellow framers) was a "majority faction"—or more



James Madison's plantation estate, Montpelier, near Orange, VA (Wikimedia Commons/George G. Milford)

simply, the people. His fear was that the great majority of the people, at some point in time, might call for a redistribution of property and wealth as well as an end to class privilege. In other words, Madison was concerned about a majority of the people taking from a minority of the people, in which he meant *the poor taking from the rich*.

Indeed, Madison argues, "To secure the public good, and private rights [chief among them being property rights], against the danger of such a [majority] faction, and at the

same time to preserve the spirit and the form of popular government, is then the great object to which our inquiries are directed." This, however, is an impossible task—but not for the reasons which Madison states. His concern is that "a pure democracy" has "no cure for the mischiefs of faction," and that "such democracies have ever been ... incompatible with ... the rights of property ... and have, in general, been as short in their lives, as they have been violent in their deaths." Yet the real problem with private property and popular rule is that private property tends to dominate democracies (and even republics) to the detriment of the people. Thus, the only real cure for factions, if one wants to preserve democracy either in "fact" or in "form," is to eliminate private property. Nonetheless, Madison remains interested in the "form" of popular government, more so than the "fact" of popular control of government. Accordingly, he and the rest of the framers ultimately decided not on a democracy, but a republic, with all of its built-in safeguards against "a pure democracy."

From the very beginning of US history, then, private property, including the right to own another person, has been considered a virtue and has dictated political and economic outcomes for the whole of the nation ever since. Before the writing of the Constitution, only white men who held property could vote. After the Constitution was adopted in 1788, most states continued to allow only white males with property to vote. In fact, at times, the right to vote was dependent on the amount of property owned—for example, one needed 50 acres of land to vote in Delaware before its founding. Other times, the right to vote was based on the value of the land. Running for office was also tied to wealth. For instance, in the 1700s in Maryland, one needed to own 5,000 pounds of property" to run for governor and 1,000 pounds for state senator, I resulting in "90 percent of the population" being "excluded from holding office" in the state. Thus, property, or the lack of it, was the gateway—or the stopgap—for entrance into the political system. The most dramatic consequence of property and the property qualification on the political system in the early republic was that only a small portion of the population were even eligible to vote or run for office.

4.2 What Did the Framers of the Constitution Create?

In January 1786, on Madison's recommendation, the Virginia Legislature asked each state to send representatives to meet in Annapolis, Maryland, to discuss some of the problems of the Articles of Confederation. Chief amongst the founders' concerns was how to regulate commerce. However, with only twelve delegates from five states meeting in Annapolis, Alexander Hamilton (1755 or 1757–1804) wrote a resolution calling for a convention to be held in Philadelphia in May 1787. From this gathering, known as the Constitutional Convention, came the United States Constitution, which was adopted on September 17, 1787, ratified by eleven of thirteen states on June 21, 1788, and went into effect on March 4, 1789.

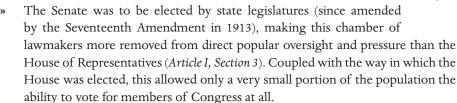
The document created by the framers brought into existence a number of respectable political attributes that had no modern equivalent. The political order that emerges on the pages of the Constitution is based on republican principles. Yet, within that structure of government the framers did allow for *some* democratic impulses to be realized, such as the following:

» Legislative power was vested in the most democratic branch of government— Congress (Article I, Section 1)—and bills for "raising revenue" were only allowed to originate in the House of Representatives, the more democratic of the two chambers of Congress (*Article I, Section 7*). Similarly, the ability to tax the people rested with their elected representatives in Congress (*Article I, Section 8*).

- » The House was elected by popular vote (*Article I, Section 2*).
- » Likely the most important power in the Constitution—the power to take the country from a state of peace to a state of war—was specifically to reside within Congress (*Article I, Section 8*). That is to say, Congress has the power "to declare war." The president was only to be the "Commander-in-Chief" of the military when called into the "actual service" of the nation (*Article II, Section 2*).
- » Congress was permitted to "override" a presidential veto with a two-thirds vote, giving the more democratic of the two branches more say over the nation's laws (Article I, Section 7).
- » The writ of habeas corpus, which is used to bring a prisoner before a court to determine if the person's imprisonment is lawful, is a power that rests within Congress. Among other things, habeas corpus *should* prevent the indefinite detention of citizens without charge and was a Constitutional guarantee except in times of rebellion (*Article I, Section 9*).
- » Bills of attainder (or jury trials) were assured (Article I, Section 9).
- » No title of nobility was to be placed on any public official (Article I, Section 9).
- » Consistent with the teachings of Montesquieu (1689–1755), all of this fit into a system of governmental checks, balances, and separated powers in an effort to guard against tyrannical government.

However, the framers of the Constitution made sure to protect their own class interests as well—chief among them were commerce, debt, and slavery. Indeed, the framers ensured in the nation's founding charter that capital accumulation would remain a fixture of the American economic system, and at the same time, popular forces would be limited as follows:

- » The southern states were allowed to count three-fifths of their slave population for the purpose of representation in the House of Representatives; yet, at the same time, black people were given no vote (Article I, Section 2).
- Woting for the House of Representatives, the most democratic chamber, was to be done "by the People of the several States" (Article I, Section 2). This technically gave the people the right to vote, but was based on whether or not one could vote in their state elections. Most states required an individual to be both male and a property owner. Thus, ultimately this meant that some nine-tenths of the population was excluded from voting in Congressional House elections.





The US Constitution, drafted in Philadelphia, PA, in 1787 (U.S. National Archives)

- » The Constitution neither ended slavery nor put an end to the slave trade. Instead, the framers put on hold any decision about the importation of slaves until 1808, at which time Congress could decide its legality and morality (Article I, Section 9 and Article 5).
- » The "Contract Clause" was included as a way to ensure that state legislatures could not allow people to be relieved of paying their debts to wealthy creditors as states were apt to do under the Articles of Confederation (Article I, Section 10).
- » A group of "electors" (i.e., the Electoral College) was chosen as the method in which to elect the president instead of by popular vote (*Article II*, *Section 1*).
- » Escaped slaves were to be returned to their rightful owners (*Article IV, Section 2*).
- » Finally, the new Constitution ensured that all debts owed by the new government would be paid. This meant that the government would repay bankers in France from whom it had borrowed to help fight the Revolutionary War (1775–1783). However, it also guaranteed that wealthy investors who had bought up (or speculated in) government scrip (i.e., paper money issued by the early government that had a narrow circulation) for pennies on the dollar would be paid as well. Many of the delegates at the Constitutional Convention had speculated in this near-worthless scrip. Hamilton, as Secretary of the Treasury, decided that the federal government would pay full value for the government-issued scrip, which made its holders very wealthy. RPE scholar Michael Parenti argues that this was one of the first examples in American history where the government, with its new power to tax the people, did so, resulting in a sizable transfer of the nation's tax dollars into the hands of wealthy individuals through the purchasing of the government scrip. These wealthy individuals made up the first members of the US finance capital class (*Article VI*).²³

Thus, while the framers placed republican principles at the center of the Constitution, so too did they concern themselves with economic considerations and popular impulses. Undoubtedly, more often than not, the economic concerns addressed by the framers at the Convention directly affected their class position and were often resolved in their favor. The liberal-pluralist assessment of the American Constitution regularly notes the finer political points of the document. However, where the pluralist approach succeeds in illuminating the political virtues of the nation's founding charter, it just as often fails to recognize, in any meaningful way, the impact that class and class power had on the structuring of the United States' most significant founding document. Both of these points are evident through any detailed look at the document itself.

4.3 Slavery in the United States

The first African brought to the United States for the purpose of slavery arrived in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619. Millions of Africans died during the slave raids within the interior of Africa, during the trip across the Atlantic Ocean, and while enslaved in colonial America and the early republic. The first Census of the United States, conducted in 1790, counts some 3.9 million total people—700,000 of whom were slaves. By 1860, the slave population had reached 4 million people. In the South, as many as one in four families owned slaves. Nationwide, the number was considerably lower, with just 8 percent of the nation's population identified as slave owners. In total, about one out of every seventy people in the United States in 1860 owned slaves, with most not owning more than

ten slaves. While Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Butler and many other "leading men" were slaveholders, not all of them were. In fact, some of the most significant shapers of the early American republic did not own slaves, including John Adams and Alexander Hamilton.

That said, the 1860 US Census makes clear that the "peculiar institution" was dominated by a very small group of wealthy individuals. In fact, the following statistics are noted in the year before the American Civil War (1861–1865):

- » Considerably less than 1 percent of the entire United States population (i.e., just 230 people out of a population of more than 31 million) owned more than 200 slaves.
- » Fourteen slaveholders possessed 500 or more slaves.
- » Just one person, the largest slaveholder in the United States, Joshua John Ward (1800–1853) of South Carolina, owned more than 1,000 slaves (the actual number was 1,100).²⁴



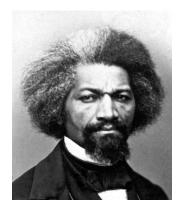
Gordon, an escaped slave from a Mississippi plantation (March 1863) (Wikimedia Commons)

In other words, in the early republic and antebellum period (i.e., pre—Civil War), it is not correct to say that "all people owned slaves," but instead that slavery was primarily a practice of the rich—and, on a much smaller scale, about 20 percent of white families in the South.

Yet, the United States was involved in a particularly brutal form of slavery. An African who had been "bought" by a white slave-owner could be hit, kicked, slapped, beat, sold, whipped, shackled, branded, burned, raped, hanged, mutilated, imprisoned, or killed by his or her "master," and there was rarely any law whatsoever that prevented him or her from doing so. One consequence for individuals who were forced into slavery is that their personal histories, including their age and family heritage, became unknown to them.

To be sure, according to the famous abolitionist and escaped slave Frederick Douglass (1818–1895), he knew neither his age nor his father. At the time of the writing of his much-noted autobiography in 1845, Douglass neither knew his own age (he believed himself to be 27 or 28 years old) nor remembered "to have ever met a slave who could tell of his birthday."²⁵

He believed his own father was a white man who was "whispered" to be his own master. ²⁶ When white masters took "slave-mistresses" which resulted in children, Douglass observed that it was a common occurrence among slaves and those who are believed to be the master's "slave-child" to be treated worse than other slaves, as they were hated by the slave master's own wife more so than any other slave. This often led to the slave master being forced into selling his own child. ²⁷ If the child were not sold, the slave-master was put into a position where he must allow one white son to "tie up his [slave] brother ... and ply the gory lash to his naked back" while showing no sign of disapproval, which would have made "a bad matter worse" with his own wife. ²⁸



Frederick Douglass, escaped slave and abolitionist (c. 1860s) (Wikimedia Commons)

In terms of work, from a radical political economy perspective, slaves were a captured, nonpaid proletariat in early America who picked cotton, tobacco, sugar, and rice. Slave codes made it illegal to teach a slave to read or write out of fear of rebellion and codified in law that a slave should generally be viewed as property. When one famous slave, Dred Scott (1795–1858), sued for his freedom in the Supreme Court, Chief Justice Roger Taney (1777–1864)—one of the nation's most prominent authorities on ethics, law, and justice—was charged with writing the opinion for the Court. A former slave-owner himself, Taney declared that Scott and all Africans in the United States were, in fact, not citizens and "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect." ²⁹

Slave men, women, and children were made to work in the fields six and sometimes seven days a week, from sun up until sun down, year around, with generally not more than one or two days off a year. With terrible working and living conditions, though not regularly noted in mainstream history and political science textbooks, it was little surprise that many enslaved people disobeyed, resisted, fought back, escaped, and outright rebelled against their rich, white slave-masters. Or as C. L. R. James wrote in his study of the San Domingo slave revolt (1791–1804), which created Haiti (the second republic in the Americas and the only nation in the history of the world established by former slaves):

"The difficulty was that though one could trap them like animals, transport them in pens, work them alongside an ass or a horse and beat both with the same stick, stable them and starve them, they remained, despite their black skins and curly hair ... human beings; with the intelligence and resentments of human beings." ³⁰

In fact, those enslaved in the United States tried multiple times to try and bring an end to their miserable condition. Some attempted and *succeeded* in revolts before they even entered the United States. For instance, the captured Africans on board the slave ship *La Amistad* rose up against their enslavers during the "Amistad Revolt" of 1839. Led by a brave individual named Joseph Cinque (circa 1814–1879), the enslaved Africans broke out of their chains, armed themselves with swords, killed a few of their captors, and commandeered the ship. However, the Africans were intercepted off the shores of New



Joseph Cinque (circa 1839) (Wikimedia Commons)

York by the United States Navy and imprisoned in Connecticut for murder. Their fate was ultimately decided in the now historically famous case known as *United States v. Amistad* (1841), which saw the Africans go free after much resistance from the US government.³¹

In another well-known revolt, the slave Nat Turner (1800–1831), who claimed to be inspired by spiritual visions, gathered up a small group of slaves on the morning of August 22, 1831, in Southampton County, Virginia. Armed with axes, knives, and other farm tools, Turner and his group went about killing every white person on the plantation where he lived. Over the course of the next 24 hours after the start of the revolt, he and his group gathered together more than 70 slaves, free black people, horses, and guns, and went quickly from farm to farm killing every white man, woman, and child whom they came into contact with.³² The revolt resulted in the deaths of close to 60 white people.³³ Once the revolt was put down, the State of Virginia executed more than 50 slaves suspected of being involved in the so-called "Nat Turner Rebellion." In addition, militia-type groups of white men rounded up and killed as many as 200 other black people in "retribution" for the uprising. Turner was sentenced

to death and hanged.

Yet slaves were not the only individuals who were willing to take up arms to end slavery. Believing slavery to be immoral, the famous American abolitionist John Brown (1800–1859) attacked the federal armory at Harper's Ferry in West Virginia in 1859 with 18 white people and black people in an attempt to start a nationwide slave revolt. Once captured and on trial, Brown submitted a new "Provisional Constitution" for the nation to the court, in which he stated that "slavery, throughout its entire existence in the United States, is none other than the most barbarous, unprovoked and unjustifiable war of one portion of its citizens against another portion."³⁴ Unbelievably today, but not totally out of step with the times, Brown's own attorney submitted his Provisional Constitution as evidence that he was "insane." Pulling the nation's situation squarely into focus during a prison interview while on trial, Brown warned the South "to prepare yourselves for a settlement of this question [i.e., slavery], that must come up for settlement sooner than you are prepared."³⁵ Brown's words came true less than 18 months later with the first shots of the American Civil War. Finally, making clear his understanding of the class dimensions

of slavery, the "Old Man," as he was known, declared in his speech to the court after his conviction for the raid on Harper's Ferry, "had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful ... or any of that class ... it would have been alright." Like Turner before him, Brown was sentenced to death and hanged.

At the Constitutional Convention, Gouverneur Morris said of slavery and the South that he "did not believe those States would ever confederate on terms that would deprive them of that trade." So, out of fear that the Southern states would not join the North in creating a new nation, the Northern states agreed to the Three-Fifths Compromise (i.e., allowing slave states to count three-fifths of their population for purposes of representation in the House of Representatives). In doing so, the North also agreed to *not* end slavery in the United States. Yet this decision, as John Brown predicted, would ultimately prove to be a deal with the devil. In their attempt to protect the interests of a small portion of their class and unite the nation in the interest of the "public good," the wealthy men who framed the Constitution at the end of the 1700s ultimately sowed the seeds of a bitter harvest that the entire nation would reap when the Civil War tore the nation apart during the middle of the next century. To be sure, the war the pitted the North against the South and resulted



John Brown, insurrectionary abolitionist (circa 1846) (Wikimedia Commons)

in the deaths of some 750,000 American lives—more than all other deaths from all the wars fought by the United States combined. To this day, no reparations have been paid to the descendants of those forced to create so much wealth in the United States—and no apology has been issued by the federal government or any state government for allowing slavery to exist.



United States Domestic Policy: National Priorities

'Unless political power and philosophy coincide ... there can be no end to political troubles ... or even human troubles in general.'

—Plato (Greek philosopher, circa 420s–340s BC)

From an RPE perspective, domestic policy is primarily shaped by the interests of international capital. Whether we evaluate the United States' national budget, social welfare programs, or state involvement in financial markets, more often than not, we find that powerful corporate interests are setting national priorities. Domestic policy is supposed to be developed for the "public good" and the benefit of all. However, in the United States, the international bourgeoisie's grip on domestic policy has become so pronounced that two separate "welfare states" have emerged—one for the rich and one for everyone else.

5.1 The Federal Budget and National Debt

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), a bureaucracy overseen by the Executive Branch, develops the budget of the United States. The president's closest economic advisors write the budget about a year before the fiscal year (FY) begins and submit it to Congress for debate, revision, and approval. The fiscal year for the federal government runs from October 1 of the year before the budget is dated to September 30 of the year in which the budget is named. The budget has two parts: (1) discretionary spending; i.e., programs which are optional, and (2) mandatory spending; i.e., programs that fund the so-called "welfare state." In recent years, the US government has passed budgets that are so out of alignment with tax revenues that, by FY 2019, federal expenditures were more than \$4.4 trillion while tax revenues were just \$3.5 trillion—a budget deficit of almost \$1 trillion.

This trend has been on the rise since the beginning of George W. Bush's first term in 2001. At least part of the reason why the United States has been dealing with budget shortfalls or budget deficits is because Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump have submitted budgets and pursued policies that have favored the rich. That is to

say, each administration (supported by Congress) has approved budgets that have continued the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan which have generated massive profits for weapons manufactures, oil companies, and private military firms, among others; continued the Bush-era tax cuts for the "top income earners" that were not ended by President Obama until his second term and were then followed by a new round of tax cuts for the rich by the Trump administration; allowed the cost of health care, which is paid for by the federal government through programs such as Medicaid and Medicare, to rise; and signed off on the financial bailouts of 2008–2009.

At least one result is that, as of 2021, the public debt has climbed to some \$28 trillion, or more than \$85,000 for every person living in the United States. To place this number in more realistic terms, this would mean that if the US actually wanted to pay off its debt, it would have to collect more than \$226,000 from every taxpaying citizen in the United States. When George W. Bush came to office, the national debt was just under \$5 trillion—still within reason. By the time he left office, it stood at almost \$10 trillion. Within just 8 years of being in office, President Obama (with the help of the United States Congress) increased the national debt another \$8 trillion. By the time Trump had left office, the US had increased its national debt by another \$9 trillion (\$3 trillion of which was in response to the health crisis and economic damage done to the national economy as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic). Without a doubt, these three presidencies, along with the Congresses that accompanied them, have driven the country into debt through their policy choices. The most serious consequence of increased public debt is that, over time, the United States could suffer both a decline in the value of the dollar and a decline in its standard of living.

Those who loan money to the United States to fund the public debt do so by buying United States Treasury bonds. Eventually, as the United States slips further into debt, bond purchasers are likely to ask for higher interest rates because other countries (such as China and Japan) and banks that buy bonds will want more money in return for their loans. If countries lose confidence in the United States' ability to pay its debts, then they may lose confidence in the dollar itself, causing its value to drop. This could also lead to other countries requesting that the dollar no longer be used as the international reserve currency, which would further impact the value of the dollar. The result is that economic growth would stagnate; the US government would have less money to spend on jobs and benefits, resulting in fewer tax dollars; and there would be more strain on the welfare state—all indicating a general decline in the standard of living. In addition, Treasury bonds are used as a yardstick for interest rates for other types of loans, such as school loans, business loans, home loans, car loans, and credit cards. If interest rates climb for Treasury bonds, then they will likely climb for loans used for commodities as well. If the dollar simultaneously falls in value, the combination of the two will push people further into debt as interest rates rise, the price of commodities rise, and the dollar loses its value.²

5.2 The Nature of the 'Welfare State' for the People of the United States

Multiple programs in the United States make up what is known as the "welfare state," i.e., programs which provide some type of government assistance to people who are in need. One of the most important social programs in a society is the provision of quality, inexpensive health care. Many countries that provide free health care for their citizens view it as a basic human right, much like education. The United States does not have a government-funded health-care system. Instead, the health-care system in the US is private,

i.e., for profit. The World Health Organization (WHO) of the United Nations ranks the American health care system as just the 37th best health-care system in the world. President Obama has labeled his health-care plan "universal health care." However, the plan, the Affordable Care Act, is a mere revision of privatized health care. Yet, since at least 2000, according to the Gallup polling organization, the majority of people in the United States prefer free, universal health care.

In fact, the United States is the only country in the industrialized First World that does not have universal health care. (Notably, some poor countries, such as Cuba, provide free health care for not only their citizens, but also for any individual who visits that country). However, at the same time, the US spends more money on health care than any other nation in the world—approximately \$8,000 per person. About half of that \$8,000 is private money, money which comes out of the American peoples' own pockets, whereas the other half is public money—Medicare, Medicaid, and the government subsidies provided by President Obama's health-care plan.

If we are to look at just one example of a country that does have universal health care, Canada, we see that providing free health care in the United States is easily within reach. Canada spends about \$4,500 per person to provide a free national health-care system to each of its citizens. Thus, most of the money needed for universal health-care coverage in the United States is already in the federal, state, and local budgets. With even slight cost reductions for prescription medications, hospital stays, doctor visits, and an elimination of the needless private insurance companies altogether, the United States would have enough money in its public coffers to implement a universal health-care system. Before President's Obama's plan, the United States had 50 million people without health insurance. Even if everyone who qualifies for Obama's plan actually signs up, which would be about 20 million people, the country would still have some 30 million people without health insurance. Today, approximately half, or 11 million people, have actually signed up for President Obama's plan. In other words, there are still some 39 million people in the US without health-care coverage.

In fact, in spite of broad support for free health care in the United States, to say that the federal government has been unwilling to fund it would be an understatement. To be sure, with even a brief look at the money spent by the health-care industry and labor groups to "influence" policy in Washington, we can expect to see many more years of privatized health care, if current spending trends continue. As noted in Chapter 1, in 2009 the health-care industry spent almost \$545 million lobbying Congress and the President while American labor groups spent a mere \$44 million lobbying the same two branches of government, a ratio of more than 10 to 1.3 By 2020, the dollar amounts increased for the health care industry (\$621) and labor groups (\$49 million), but so too had the spending ratio which now stands at 12.5 to 1.4

Yet more troubling is the way in which the American working class chose to disburse its Political Action Committee (PAC) dollars. Without a doubt, during the 2008 election cycle, US labor groups donated some \$66 million through their PACs to all federal Democratic and Republican candidates,⁵ while the health-care industry contributed just \$49 million.⁶ The disbursement of campaign contributions and lobbying dollars through 2021 has largely remained the same as in 2008–2009. Yet, these are the same Democratic and Republican candidates who, on the whole, did not (and still have not) even considered proposing universal health-care coverage for the American people to Congress for deliberation—and who, at the same time, are provided with free, excellent health-care coverage, paid for by taxpayers' dollars. In other words, organized labor has been financially supporting national candidates who are openly working on behalf of the US-based international bourgeoisie's interests and not on behalf of working people. That is to say,

privatized health care serves the interests of Kaiser, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and Aetna—not those that have to purchase health-care coverage from one of those companies.

The political spending habits of the American working class and their reaction to President Obama's health-care bill have been largely consistent with acting *inconsistently* with their own class interests. In general, we have witnessed the American working class either support President Obama's *non*-universal health care bill or blame him for getting the government too involved with the provision of health-care services. Some have, unbelievably, called President Obama a "socialist" or claimed that he is turning the United States into a European-style welfare state—all the while not realizing that, if either were true, it would be a step in the right direction for working people.⁷

Health care is not the only program that seems to be not working at full capacity for working people or the poor in the United States. The basic infrastructure of the welfare state in the United States was first created in 1935 when President Franklin D. Roosevelt proposed a number of social and economic programs as part of the "New Deal" (1933–1938). Many of the programs were created for people who were hungry, poor, unemployed, sick, disabled, and old, as well as for people who had lost loved ones or children who had no parents. During the 20th century, existing programs were expanded and other programs were added, such as housing, education, and programs for poor women and their children. In total, of the some 1,600 total government programs that are overseen by the federal government today, approximately *just 80* can be counted as a part of the US welfare state. They are financed at least in part by working people and are found within the mandatory budget. Among the most well known are the following:

Education: The education (and health) of a nation's citizens should be the highest aim of any society. Public education in the United States first began after the American Revolution (1765-1783). With mass public education expanding over time, the United States today provides free, taxpayer-supported public education to all people (legal resident or not) in the US for its kindergarten through 12th grade population. The federal government provides a small percentage of the total funding for education to each state, but the states administer and largely fund their own school systems. At the federal level, the Department of Education is the smallest federal bureaucracy, with just 4,500 employees. In spite of that, the 1980 Republican Party platform called for its total elimination. During the administration of Donald Trump, the Department of Education and public education in general were frequently under threat with the appointment of the Republican billionaire Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education. DeVos had a proven track record of not only supporting charter schools and school voucher programs (i.e., education programs that fund private schooling with public money), but had shown herself to have a very limited understanding of public education altogether. Through multiple budget proposals, though without success, Trump pushed to cut billions of dollars from the Department of Education consistent with his stated policy goal of trying to "largely... eliminate the Department of Education" itself.8

While K–12 education is free in the United States, higher education is not. In fact, the United States spends less than 1 percent of its entire federal budget on higher education. It is one of the few First World nations that does not provide a free college and graduate school education for its citizens. In fact, there are a few notable Third World countries that do provide free higher education for the all of their residents. With higher education becoming more expensive, the United States has seen an ever-increasing amount of students financing their degrees with student loans. This has led to relatively long-term debt concerns, with some 40 percent of all households which are "led by someone 35 or younger [having] student loan debt." Today, student loan

debt has grown to an all-time high of \$1.7 trillion, resulting in more student loan debt than all credit-card debt combined in the United States.

Social Security, or OASDI: First established in 1935, Social Security (Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance) provides money to people who are old, disabled, or who have lost a spouse. In 2013, Social Security accounted for approximately \$1.3 trillion, or 33 percent, of total federal tax expenditures. In recent years, conservatives in government have argued that it is necessary to end Social Security because the program will be bankrupt, as more people are retiring than can be paid. Instead, the argument goes, Social Security recipients should be allowed to invest their Social Security payments in the stock market. Yet the reality is that Social Security is one of the few government programs that run annually at a surplus, and according to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), it will continue to do so past the year 2050. 10 That said, Social Security payments are relatively modest, averaging about \$1,400 per month.11 All the same, President Obama proposed reducing the annual Social Security allocation for each recipient in the 2015 budget. And in April 2017, the Republican-controlled Congress proposed going even further than Obama by eliminating the highly successful (if underfunded) Social Security program and replacing it with a privatized retirement system that had the full support of President Trump. As of 2021, though tax revenues have increased by some \$1 trillion as compared to that of FY 2013, mandatory spending on Social Security has actually been reduced by \$200 billion.

Unemployment insurance: Developed in 1935, unemployment insurance is provided by the state and federal government for a limited amount of time to people who are out of work. Funded by a payroll tax on employers in the United States, out-of-work individuals receive about 40 to 50 percent of their regular weekly income, but generally for no longer than 6 months. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the national unemployment rate in 2010 was almost 10 percent. During that same year, the number of underemployed workers (unemployed or part-time workers who want full-time work) increased to more than 20 percent.¹² The size of the labor force in the United States during 2010 was 154 million people, with over 30 million people underemployed. By 2014, unemployment had decreased to 8.6 percent, while underemployed workers remained close to the same rate, standing at some 18.6 percent of the population.¹³ With the global coronavirus pandemic (i.e., the pandemic caused by COVID-19) causing the largest economic downturn in the United States since the Great Depression (1929-1940s), unemployment rose to some 22% of the work force in 2020. Nevertheless, today with the unemployment rate returning to close to pre-pandemic levels the average cash benefit for out-of-work individuals still does not exceed \$1,500 per month.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or food stamps): Created in 1939, food stamps consist of money provided to poor families to purchase food. While often criticized as an "entitlement" or a "handout," food stamps provide a very small amount of money to a fairly large group of poor people. In 2014, more than 46 million American citizens, or nearly 1 in 7 people in the United States, received food stamps, with the average benefit not exceeding \$4.37 per day or \$1.45 per meal. Unbelievably, in 2013, the United States Congress (approved by President Obama) allowed the food stamp program to be *cut* by some 13.6 percent of its annual budget, reducing the already modest amount of money for food for the poorest American citizens even further. Under Trump's even more radical budget proposals, funding for other nutrition programs, such as Meals on Wheels, which provides food to homebound seniors were also reduced. In fact, the program, which was already lightly funded, was targeted by the administration to be eliminated altogether. With the election of President Joseph Biden (1942–present), the average food stamp benefit for each person was increased by \$36 a month—or *just* .39 a meal.

Medicare: Introduced in 1965, Medicare is a government health-care program created for people 65 years old and over, as well those who are young and disabled. It is funded by taxpayer dollars and "covers" almost 50 million US citizens—40 million of whom are elderly. However, the program generally does not cover more than 50 percent of the health-care costs for a Medicare recipient, leaving the balance of the fees to be paid by the recipient. Notably, in 2014, when an automatic reduction to decrease doctors' fees was about to go into effect, Congress quickly resolved the matter, working to ensure that doctors would continue to receive their often exorbitant Medicare payments from the federal government.¹⁴ On top of this, as part of his health-care plan, President Obama reduced Medicare home-health-care funds by some 14 percent over 4 years, which negatively impacted "an estimated 3.5 million poor and ill homebound senior citizens." 15 In addition, President Obama proposed reducing funding for Medicare Part D, which is a program that assists seniors in paying for their prescription drugs. And in 2019, Trump signed Executive Order 13890 titled, "Protecting and Improving Medicare for Our Nation's Seniors" which was actually an attempt to privatize the Medicare system. Regardless of its outcome, it should come as little surprise then that from these policy decisions and the structure of Medicare in general, that more than 60 percent of all bankruptcies in the United States are a direct result of unpaid health-care bills. 16

Medicaid: Established in 1965, Medicaid is a government health-care program for the poor that is funded by the federal and state governments. The program is administered by the states and provides free health-care coverage to citizens and legal residents of the United States with incomes of 133 percent of the poverty line. In the United States, the poverty line is defined as a family of four with an annual income of \$23,850 per year. So, 133 percent of the poverty line would be a family of four that has a total family income of just \$31,721 per year. In other words, nearly 30 percent of all people in the United States live on incomes of less than \$31,721 a year and therefore qualify for Medicaid. That said, the Trump administration attempted to roll back President Obama's Affordable Healthcare

Act which essentially expanded Medicaid for the poor and working class. In addition, his administration tried to reduce funding for Medicaid itself, including cuts to benefits for some 5 million Americans with disabilities.¹⁷

Head Start Program: Developed in 1965 as a program to provide comprehensive health care, education, nutrition, and parent involvement to poor children, Head Start Program is primarily funded by the federal government, which provides more than \$8 billion per year. However, in 2013, as a result of the so-called sequester (i.e., automatic budget cuts based on a failure to agree on a budget by the House and Senate), Congress, with the approval of President Obama, cut some \$400 million from the Head Start budget, resulting in the exclusion of more than 50 thousand children from the program.¹⁸



Poverty in the United States, Camden, NJ (2009) (Wikimedia Commons)

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC):

Created in 1972, WIC is a health-care and nutrition program for poor women and their children who are under 5 years of age. Enrollment in WIC is based on a family of four that has an annual income below 185 percent of the poverty line. In fact, WIC "provides for" some 53 percent of "all infants born in the United States" today. 19 Notably, in 2011, House Republicans voted to reduce the WIC budget by some \$868 million, or 13 percent

of the program's total budget.²⁰ President Trump's proposed WIC budgets included another \$600 million in cuts to the program and required recipients to work to receive benefits from the plan.

Social Security Insurance (SSI): Created in 1974, SSI provides additional supplementary benefits to some 8 million poor people who are retired, disabled, or blind. In 2014, President Obama proposed cutting benefits to those receiving SSI, ironically remarking that he was willing to accept the cuts "only if they contain protections for the most vulnerable of Americans." Trump's 2021 budget proposed reductions to both Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income of some \$45 billion.²²

Section 8 Housing: Originally introduced in 1937, Section 8 housing was formally created in the United States in 1974. The program assists poor and low-income people in paying their rent by providing government subsidies directly to landlords. However, "low-income seniors, people with disabilities, and working families with children eligible for the voucher program often must wait years for assistance." Some 2 million people use vouchers to pay for some type of living space, whether in a private residence or public housing. Yet today, only one in four families actually receive Section 8 voucher payments because the program does not have enough revenue to fund everyone that qualifies for it. And as another consequence of the 2013 sequester, some 70 thousand vouchers were cut from the program (equivalent to \$1 billion) by the federal government, resulting in 70 thousand households losing their public assistance to help pay for basic shelter. In spite of the housing program for the poor already being underfunded, "each year that President Donald Trump [was] in office... he... proposed massive cuts to federal affordable housing programs... [including reducing] the budget for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) by a whopping \$9.6 billion."

Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP): Introduced in 1997, CHIP is designed to provide health insurance to children who are poor but do not qualify for Medicaid. President George W. Bush rejected an attempt to expand the program during his presidency, and in 2013, the House Republicans remarkably voted to defund the CHIP program by \$13 billion, or some 70 percent, for the 8 million working-poor Americans who qualify for it.²⁵ President Trump and the Republican Party threatened to cut CHIP further if Congress did not give in to their demands to eliminate Obama's Affordable Care Act. And eventually, in the shadow of providing a \$1 trillion tax cut for the rich (including for him and his family), Trump requested that \$7 billion be slashed from the CHIP program regardless of its demonstrated ability to help care for the nation's poorest children.²⁶

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF): TANF was established in 1997, replacing the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, which was a New Deal social policy program created in 1935. TANF provides a government income to poor families for a limited period of time. The cash benefit is popularly referred to as "welfare." The maximum federal time period for a recipient to receive welfare payments is 60 months. Some states have limited this time period to fewer months and are permitted to eliminate aid altogether if they see fit.

Within 24 months of receiving government assistance, an individual is required to find a job. In 2014, less than 4 million people received TANF payments. Today, with some 22 percent of the nation's workforce underemployed, which is higher than any time since the Great Depression, "the number of people receiving cash assistance" has *dropped* by two-thirds since 1996—and government spending on the program to provide for the poorest members of society has been cut by *half*.²⁷ In other words, despite still-high

underemployment and low wages, government spending for the poor is 50 percent less than what it was during the Clinton Administration (1993–2001), with just one-third of the total number of people who would have been receiving "welfare" in the 1990s actually receiving it now.

The Child Tax Credit: The CTC was originally established in 1997 and has traditionally reduced the taxable income liability for people with children. The program has changed over time and with the election of President Biden has now become "the largest Child Tax Credit ever" by providing as much as \$3,600 annually for working families for each child under the age of 18.²⁸ And, according to Columbia University's Center on Poverty and Social Policy, the enhanced program is now estimated to reduce child poverty in the United States by as much as 45 percent.²⁹

Each program within the American welfare state is an admirable program, is modestly funded, and serves hundreds of millions of Americans. Yet the welfare state in the United States serves a secondary or possibly even a primary purpose from an RPE viewpoint. Each program is central to ensuring that the process of capital accumulation can continue for the very rich. Without the social welfare state, the United States would have mass poverty, which could potentially lead to social unrest (which is one of the reasons why it was created in the first place) and a marketplace with a diminished buying capacity to purchase the goods and services produced by those who control the commanding heights of the US economy.

However, at least since the administration of Ronald Reagan (1981–1989), again and again, both working people and the poor have seen funding for the programs that are supposed to serve them, with the exception of the Child Tax Credit, receive fewer and fewer tax dollars. As a result of decreased buying power by these two economic groups, small business owners and even mid-sized corporations have been left with a smaller share of the nation's wealth. However, not all classes have been negatively impacted by cuts to the social welfare state. Indeed, the US-based international bourgeoisie has not been impacted one iota by the reduction of state spending on social programs. In fact, the gap between the wealthiest 1 percent of "income earners" in US society and everyone else is greater today than at any time since 1928—a year before the Great Depression. Without a doubt, since 1980, the working class and the poor have increasingly received less of the nation's wealth while the rich have received a larger portion of the economic pie. How has this happened? One way is through a process that we might refer to as "welfare for the rich."

5.3 'Welfare for the Rich': Bailouts, Tax Breaks, and Federal Subsidies

"Welfare for the rich" involves the state intervening on behalf of international capital to protect that class's ability to accumulate capital. The so-called "Great Recession" (2008–2009) is illustrative of this point. Thomas Jefferson once somewhat famously wrote, "I believe that banking institutions are more dangerous to our liberties than standing armies." Whether this is true or not depends on one's perspective. However, what is true is that private banks *do* have the power to help fund governments that, in turn, can fund standing armies. Standing armies can then open markets for finance capital (and capital, in general) to invest in newly opened markets abroad, which allows corporate interests to accumulate more capital to, among other things, further finance government. This, of course, leads to additional markets being opened by the state in a never-ending

cycle of private capital funding the state so the state can open markets and help private capital exploit land, labor, and resources at home and abroad.

That said, at the turn of the 21st century, the United States experienced its most significant economic downturn since the Great Depression. Undoubtedly, with the Ayn Rand (1905–1982) disciple Alan Greenspan fully entrenched as Chairman of the Federal Reserve and the last safeguards of the Glass-Steagall Act (1933-1999) repealed by Congress, it was probably only a matter of time before the US would witness just how reckless the wealthy could be in their pursuit of profits. With nothing preventing them from doing so, leaders of the most powerful banks in the world gave their loan officers the green light to lend money to what seemed like anyone who walked through the door (in some instances, this was literally the case, with the advent of the NINJA loan, where banks provided loans to borrowers with No Income, No Job and No Assets). The loans—known as sub-prime loans—were not given out by commercial banks with the hope of being paid back by new homeowners but instead so they could be sold to investment banks for a short-term profit by the commercial banks. The investment banks would then turn around and set up socalled "special-purpose entity" corporations (SPEs), which then divided up the home loan (or often, thousands of home loans) and created a security, known as a mortgage-backed security, which investors were then allowed to purchase.

The banks then "bet" (they call it "investing in a derivative") whether or not a person who took a home loan would default on it. At least some of the money that was used to make these bets (as was the financing of some of the home loans) was made with the bank's deposits, i.e., the American people's money which had been deposited in banks such as Wells Fargo and Bank of America. If this was not enough, insurance companies like AIG got into the game by "insuring" the financial bets. The insuring of the bets was (and is) known as a credit default swap (or CDS). The problem was that AIG insured \$400 billion worth of derivatives yet was valued at only \$200 billion. Eventually, the banks lent out too much money and bet too much money on people defaulting on their loans, resulting in a "credit crunch." The credit crunch meant that the banks did not have enough money to refinance borrower's sub-prime mortgages, which resulted in millions of people losing their homes.

What was the fate of the banks? Toward the end of 2008 and during the course of 2009, first President Bush and then President Obama approved a federal bailout of the banks, the insurers, and the auto industry to the tune of some \$2.5 trillion—more than the total US federal tax revenues for FY 2012. Not one nickel was given to a homeowner. Why? Because the banks in the United States were almost as "generous" with their campaign contributions and lobbying dollars as the health-care industry had been with theirs. It probably didn't hurt that the secretary of the Treasury at the time was Henry Paulson, a former corporate officer and large stockholder of Goldman Sachs, which, incidentally, also received a massive multibillion-dollar taxpayer-provided bailout.³²

In spite of the impact of the "Great Recession" on nearly the whole of the country, the offering of both sub-prime loans and the derivatives market are still perfectly legal. In fact, the derivatives market today stands at a whopping \$600 trillion. Yet the "Great Recession," which was caused by the deregulation of the housing and securities markets, is not the only instance when the United States government has intervened on behalf of the very rich. In fact, the state regularly protects immense, US-based transnational corporations from paying their full share of taxes, or actually provides them with large tax rebates at taxpayers' expense. Consider the following:

- » In 2008, Chevron's tax rate was 1 percent.³³
- » In 2008, 22 massive US companies paid no federal taxes and received tax rebates totaling some \$3.3 billion.³⁴

- » In 2009, ExxonMobil made \$45 billion, the largest profit in US history, yet it did not pay one nickel in taxes.³⁵
- » In 2009, some 49 separate TNCs paid no taxes or received tax rebates from the federal government. In fact, as a group, the 49 corporations had annual profits of more than \$78 billion and received tax rebates of more than \$10 billion.³⁶
- » In at least one year from 2008–2010, 78 of the most powerful corporations in the United States did not pay any income taxes whatsoever, or actually received tax rebates from the federal government.³⁷
- » Citigroup had more than \$10 billion in profits in 2010—yet it paid no federal taxes at all.³⁸



The New York Stock Exchange, New York City, NY (Wikimedia Commons)

- » In 2010, 37 MNCs paid no taxes and were given tax rebates in excess of \$7.8 billion.³⁹
- » In 2010, 25 of the 100 "highest paid US CEOs earned more … than their companies paid in federal income tax," including eBay, Boeing, and General Electric (GE).⁴⁰
- » Wells Fargo, Goldman Sachs, and Capital One did not pay any income tax during at least one year, from 2008–2010. At the same time, each of the banks received multi-billion-dollar bailouts from the federal government. These bailouts were used, among other things, to give bonuses to their companies' top executives.⁴¹
- » From 2008–2010, GE, PG&E, DuPont, Verizon, Boeing, Wells Fargo, Corning, and Mattel were among 30 of the United States' top corporations that paid no taxes. In fact, those 30 top corporations received tax rebates totaling more than \$10 billion. GE alone received some \$4 billion back from the federal government, while PG&E received more than \$1 billion in federal tax rebates during the 2008–2010 time period. 42
- » In 2018, "at least 60 of the nation's biggest corporations," including Chevron, Delta Airlines, GM, Goodyear, Halliburton, IBM, JetBlue Airways, Salesforce, and US Steel did not pay one cent in federal income tax. They did so while collectively receiving \$4 billion in federal tax rebates (which were funded by US tax-payers) and in spite of the fact that they had amassed more than \$79 billion in total corporate profits.
- In 2018, Amazon generated profits in excess of \$11 billion, paid no taxes at all, and received a tax rebate of \$100 million. By 2019, this global-corporategiant had increased its profits to \$13 billion and still managed to pay barely 1 percent in total income taxes. In fact on average, from 2010–2020, Amazon did not pay more than 5 percent in annual corporate income taxes in any one year.⁴⁴



Wall Street, New York City, NY (Wikimedia Commons/JSquish)

» In 2020, 55 US-based global multinational corporations, including Nike, FedEx, Salesforce, Archer Daniels Midland, and the Dish Network did not pay one dime in income tax. 45

When not receiving tax breaks or tax rebates, other corporations chose to look for "tax shelters" or "tax havens" overseas by placing capital holdings in foreign banks so that the companies could claim a lower tax rate in the United States. In addition, other "US corporations" shelter their earnings from US tax codes by going so far as to incorporate their companies in foreign countries to avoid tax rates imposed by the United States government. Still other US multinational corporations receive large subsidies from the federal government. Indeed, consider the following:

- » The oil industry receives \$7 billion in subsidies each year from the federal government. 46
- » The federal government spends roughly \$1 trillion annually on a variety of agricultural programs. Originally begun during the New Deal to keep farm prices stable and farmers from going bankrupt, the farming industry has received some \$20 billion a year in taxpayer-provided subsidies to grow products—such as wheat, corn, rice, and sugar. Yet today, instead of helping small farmers, 75 percent of the subsidies are paid out to "10 percent of [the] farming companies, including Riceland Foods Inc., Pilgrim's Pride Corp., and Archer Daniels Midland."⁴⁷ Once First World markets are saturated by US products, they are "dumped" on Third World markets—such as Haiti, Mexico, and Indonesia, to name just a few—where farmers do not receive any government assistance at all. The result for Third World farmers is often bankruptcy, increased hunger, poverty, and even increased rates of suicide, as has been the case in India.
- The health-care industry is guaranteed payment of as many as 20 million new patients by the federal government as a result of President Obama's Affordable Care Act. In addition, Medicare is the largest purchaser of pharmaceutical drugs in the United States. Executives for any individual drug company within the pharmaceutical industry can charge Medicare recipients whatever price they choose, as the program is prohibited by law from seeking out better prices from other competing drug companies. In fact, from 2003–2012, 11 pharmaceutical corporations—including Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, and Merck—made profits totaling more than \$700 billion, with at least some portion of their profits coming directly out of public funds through "price gouging" the Medicare program. Moreover, the research and development of drugs are subsidized with billions of dollars annually by taxpayers, which has created, at least in part, a public-risk but private-profit state of affairs for the pharmaceutical industry.
- » The armaments industry receives between \$6 billion and \$7 billion a year in taxpayer-provided subsidies. The weapons manufactures have even successfully lobbied the federal government to lend money to foreign countries to purchase US corporate—made and US government—subsidized weapons.⁴⁹ Again, risk is shared among the American people, yet profits are privatized for those who control the productive forces of the industry.

So, what are the national priorities of the United States? In the review above, it is clear that the federal government, at least in recent years, has protected the interests of the very wealthy and has often done so to the detriment of the remaining classes within US society. Based on federal dollars allocated by class, it is clear that the priority of the United States federal government is to ensure that the richest members of US society are protected, helped along, and made richer still. At the same time, the American working class and almost everyone else have seen little or no help from the state—and as often as not, have seen domestic policy move in a direction that is inconsistent with their own class interests.

Edward Gibbon (1737–1794), author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, wrote that among "the five marks of the Roman decaying culture" was an "increased demand to live off the state." In ancient Rome, Gibbon was referring to Rome's working class and poor living off the state. However, in looking at US domestic policy, Gibbon's maxim is turned on its head. With their continued public financing through tax breaks, rebates, state subsidies, and bailouts, the "Titans of Wall Street" are not only living off the state, but are draining the republic of its wealth—all the while more firmly establishing their power over society and the state itself. Yet this increased grasp on the nation's wealth by the rich and their ever-increasing demand to get more and more from the state while the rest of the American people receive less and less may, paradoxically, be undermining both their grip on the state and their own class position.

How is this so? History teaches us that when those who control the economic system of a society extract such large amounts of surplus value from the working class, social unrest, including revolution, is almost sure to follow. Will this be the case in the United States? Only time will tell; however, in recent years the country has witnessed a general awakening to the reality of powerful economic forces dominating not just the US economy, but the political system as well. This has most notably been represented on a mass scale in the United States by the Occupy Wall Street movement, which began in September 2011 in the wake of the "Great Recession." Participants in the movement had become so aware of the political and economic inequalities generated by class power that they accurately summed up the reality of wealth, class, and power in the US with their central slogan—"We are the 99 percent!"—making clear that from their view, the United States political and economic system is ordered toward serving the class interests of the 1 percent, not the American people.



Empire and US Foreign Policy

'War is a matter of vital importance to the State ... the road to survival or ruin.

It is mandatory that it be thoroughly studied.'

—Sun Tzu (Chinese military general, strategist, and philosopher, circa 544 BC-496 BC)

In terms of foreign policy, almost no country on the planet is untouched by the United States government. In fact, the United States not only has the most powerful military on Earth but the most powerful military in the history of the world. Throughout time, there has been no more important "affair of the state" during the life of a nation than its participation in war. Yet, as we shall see, as often as not, the US government uses the military and other institutions to intervene in foreign affairs, not for the "common defense" of all, but instead on behalf of the US-based international bourgeoisie, often to the detriment of the majority of the people in the United States and billions of people around the world.

6.1 The Most Powerful Military on the Planet

The US military budget for FY 2021 was approximately \$705 billion. However, when funds allocated for nuclear weapons, space defense, military aid, supplemental war spending, Homeland Security, interest on past military spending, as well as benefits and care for US veterans are included, the actual military budget exceeded \$1.2 trillion. This is almost half of the total United States federal tax revenue and is likely more than the military budgets of all other 194 countries combined. China was second in defense spending, with a reported military budget of \$210 billion for FY 2021. In other words, the United States could have reduced its FY 2021 military spending by 80 percent (from \$1.2 trillion to \$240 billion) and still outspent second-place China by \$30 billion.

Multiple programs and national concerns draw their money from the military budget. For instance, the US war in Iraq alone is projected to cost some \$3 trillion.² The Department of Defense (DOD or Pentagon) employs more than 3.2 million soldiers and civilians each year, making it the largest employer in the world.³ In the United States, a few hundred billion dollars are spent each year to take care of wounded soldiers from past wars. This includes money allocated for long-term treatment of some 30 percent of the Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans who have returned home with part of their minds broken; i.e., post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).⁴ The US nuclear weapons budget

accounts for \$50 billion annually, threatening the whole of humanity yet President Obama actually increased the budget allocation for nuclear arms during his time in office and Donald Trump increased it further still. The network of military bases maintained by the United States around the world is unlike that of any other nation on the planet and is the clearest sign of the US maintenance of some form of empire. While difficult to know for sure, within the United States and its territories, the US maintains upward of 5,000 bases. Outside of its territories and geographical borders, it is estimated that the United States possesses some 750 military bases in over 130 countries around the world, on every continent except for Antarctica, in addition to troops stationed in more than 150 separate nations.



The Department of Defense, Washington, DC (Wikimedia Commons/David B. Gleason)

In fact, the Department of Defense claims that it "manages a global real property portfolio that consists of more than 555,000 facilities [buildings and structures] located on over 5,000 sites worldwide and covering over 28 million acres," making it the largest real-estate holder in the entire world. The United States provides military aid to more than 150 separate nations each year, including \$3 billion to Israel and \$1 billion to Egypt annually. Notably, with the exception of Syria, the national leaders of nearly every one of the 18 countries that saw some form of social unrest, uprising, or outright revolution in response to autocratic rule, corruption, wealth inequality, and an overall poor standard of living during the "Arab Spring" (December 2010–present) in the Middle East had been allied with the United States government. To be certain, the political elites of each country had either received some type of foreign aid, allowed US military bases to be stationed in their country, had powerful US corporate interests operating within their nation's borders, or all three. In addition, the federal government and American transnational corporations sell more weapons to the rest of the world than any other nation on Earth.

Without question, the United States military has grown so powerful in recent years that it is now permitted to arrest and indefinitely detain US citizens living within the United States without trial. This power originates in the NDAA (National Defense Authorization Act) of 2012, which allows for individuals who have been identified by the federal government as someone "who was part of or substantially supported Al Qaeda, the Taliban, or associated forces that are engaged in hostilities against the United States or its coalition partners" to be arrested and indefinitely detained. A government imprisoning a citizen without charge or trial is a violation of habeas corpus, which in the US is protected under Article I, Section 9 of the United States Constitution.

Habeas corpus is a Latin term which means "You have the body," or "Produce the body," requiring the government to formally charge a person suspected of a crime—which, in the case of US law, is commonly done so within 48 hours, or, if the person has already been convicted of the crime, a writ of habeas corpus requires the government to present the person to the court to make sure that he or she is legally detained. Internationally, habeas corpus is considered a basic human right dating back to 1305 in England. In the United States, according to the Constitution, the only branch of government that can suspend habeas corpus is Congress, and only during times of domestic "rebellion or invasion." In fact, historically, the right *against* the suspension of habeas corpus has been taken so seriously by the Supreme Court that it ruled in *Ex parte Merryman* (1861) that Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865) had acted in contradiction to the Constitution when he ordered the arrest and detainment of members of the Confederacy without the approval of Congress during the American Civil War.

Nonetheless, the real question for citizens of the United States is—what is meant by the accusation that one has "substantially supported" the enemies of the United States? If a US citizen has picked up a weapon and fired it at US soldiers in a foreign country, then it is within reason to argue that this individual has become an enemy of the United States (though, possibly, he or she is simply actively resisting what he or she considers to be an "unjust war" by the US government). However, can a citizen be considered to have "substantially supported" the enemy by making a speech against the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan? The fact of the matter is that we don't know. But if this is ever the case, then meaningful free speech will have disappeared from the American political landscape.

If we think this is an unrealistic scenario, we might remember the case of Chelsea (formerly Bradley) Manning (1987–present), who was charged, convicted, and sentenced in 2013 under the Espionage Act of 1917 to 35 years in prison for leaking classified government documents to the transparency organization WikiLeaks. The documents were the largest ever released in US history by a whistleblower and mostly provided documentation of government secrets and, sometimes, video evidence of wrongdoing abroad. Most troubling for future prosecutions, the government argued (unsuccessfully) that Manning's attempt to shed light on the government's illegal activities by providing documents to WikiLeaks was a crime punishable by death for "aiding the enemy." In other words, her exposure and publication of government misbehavior and the reality of US foreign policy was not used by the government to correct transgressions of high-ranking officials but was instead viewed as an act of treason. Yet, wasn't Manning's charge of "aiding the enemy" the same as or similar to "substantially supporting" the enemy under the NDAA of 2012? And if it is, then the US government did not need to charge Manning under the Espionage Act. Instead, the military simply could have arrested Manning and held her indefinitely without a trial or conviction on a charge of "substantially supporting" the enemy for as long as they saw fit. In the end, Manning was finally offered clemency by Obama in the last days of his Presidency, and was released in May of 2017.

Nevertheless, while promising transparency in government when first elected in 2008, President Obama was regularly on the wrong side of the struggle for more transparency during his years in office. Notably, one of things that Obama had been most transparent about, which is clearly illegal, was his so-called "kill list." The "kill list" was reviewed each Tuesday with his closest military advisors. Sitting with members of the national security state, he acted as judge, jury, and executioner in the "targeted killings" of "enemies of the United States" including, on more than one occasion, a citizen of the United States. This obviously sets a very dangerous precedent, indeed, and should surprise no one as President Trump continued to take advantage of this illegal, but already established, presidential war power.

6.2 Neocolonialism: A Case Study of the US War and Occupation of Iraq

President Obama declared the war in Iraq to be over in December 2011.⁷ However, as of 2021, there are still some 2,500 US military troops and thousands of private military contractors stationed in Iraq. In addition, an estimated 13,500 US soldiers are posted on the Iraqi border in neighboring Kuwait. These numbers and the US establishment of the largest embassy in the world in Baghdad (which cost more than \$1 billion to build) indicate that, minimally, the occupation of Iraq continues. Sun Tzu wrote in the *Art of War*: "There has never been a protracted war from which a country has benefited." Yet, with Iraq, this is not entirely true for all groups within American society. When looking at the war, we can see that it *has improved* the financial standing of a very specific economic class

within the United States and has, at the same time, very much mirrored Nkrumah's conception of neocolonialism. Without a doubt, if neocolonialism is primarily characterized by external forces controlling the internal economy of a country, then the US war and occupation of Iraq is a case in point of this type of imperial domination.

In looking at the war, despite the Bush administration's claims that the United States' primary goal in Iraq was to "spread democracy" (after the weapons-of-mass destruction rationale proved false), former chairman of the Federal Reserve and loyal Republican Party member Alan Greenspan explained quite clearly why the US invaded Iraq. He wrote that, while it may be "politically inconvenient to acknowledge what everyone knows," the reality is that the US war on Iraq, as noted in Chapter 1, was "largely about oil." Echoing Greenspan, Obama's Secretary of Defense (and former senator) Chuck Hagel agreed, stating, "People say we are not fighting for oil. Of course we are. They talk

about America's national interest. What ... do you think they're talking about?" ¹⁰ In an attempt to make the United States' national interest clear, longtime advisor to Western nations regarding Middle Eastern oil, Dr. Abdulhay Yahya Zalloum, says that the US interest in the Middle East (including Iraq) "is not about democracy—it is about oil." ¹¹

Even if the United States were interested in democracy, of the 180 countries that were evaluated in 2020 by Transparency International, Iraq was ranked as the 160th most corrupt country in the world—certainly not a primary feature of any understanding of democratic government. Some think that the argument that the United States invaded Iraq because it had the second largest known oil reserves in the world is a "conspiracy." We should not think of one country trying to get at the resources (natural or otherwise) of another country as conspiracy. It only becomes so when the political and military



US soldiers board the Al Basrah oil terminal.
According to the Pentagon, '80 percent of Iraq's GDP is pumped through pipelines and onto tankers' at this terminal. (Wikimedia Commons)

leaders of a nation attempt to *lie* about the real reasons why they want to do so. Thus, the political and military leaders of a country create the conspiracy, namely, the conspiracy to hide the truth from the people so that some unseemly political, economic, or military end can be met.

Nonetheless, on the whole, these types of government practices, such as the US war on Iraq, primarily serve an economic end. Perhaps Jules Ferry (1832–1893), the Premier of the Chamber of Deputies of France, said it best in 1885 when explaining the purpose behind the "Scramble for Africa," which had begun four years earlier in 1881. Paying no mind to the "White Man's Burden" (see: "spreading democracy," circa 2003), Ferry argued that two of the main reasons why European powers "desire[d] colonies" is so that "they may have access to the raw materials of the colonies" and "as a field for the investment of surplus capital." In other words, colonies were created as a source for *capital investment and capital accumulation*. In examining Iraq, we see Ferry's words to be no less true today than when they were first spoken during the 19th century.

While it is common knowledge that the US military took control of Iraq's oil fields after the war began, the US State Department actually made plans as early as January 2003 (two months before the beginning of the war) to "secure" Iraqi oil fields as "issue number one." In fact, a US military spokesperson stated that plans were "already in place" to protect oil fields from any type of destruction similar to the Gulf War (1990–1991) when Saddam Hussein (1937–2006) set aflame hundreds of oil wells to prevent them from being brought under the control of the United States. Nevertheless, after invading the country, setting up hundreds of military bases, securing Iraqi oil fields, arresting the president (i.e., Hussein), and overseeing his execution, it was time for US political leaders and American

scholars to set in place the instruments needed to begin the process of capital extraction. How did they do this? By spreading a little democracy.

Immediately after the invasion of Iraq, the so-called Coalition Provision Authority (CPA) was set up by the US government as a type of colonial government to oversee the country during the first year of the war. L. Paul Bremer (1941–present) was put in charge and given absolute authority to make executive, legislative, and judicial decisions for the whole of Iraq on behalf of the United States government. Early on, making clear what would be the new (or should we say, neoliberal) design of the Iraqi economy, Bremer signed CPA Order 39, which stated that all economic sectors within Iraq, including water, electricity, and sewage, would be made open, without delay, to privatization by "foreign investors." In short order, a number of US firms were awarded contracts to "rebuild" or manage many of these publicly controlled industries for the Iraqi people. The only industries that were excluded from privatization by the CPA were oil and gas. However, the writing of the Iraqi Constitution would soon solve that.

Indeed, once the CPA had established its grip over the Iraqi political system and economy, the United States oversaw the drafting of the Iraqi constitution. Setting aside the fact that a sovereign nation cannot have another nation "oversee" the writing of its constitution (imagine if the British government did this after the American Revolutionary War), US political leaders and American academics put together a new constitution for Iraq. Whatever virtues it might have had politically (it looks a lot like the United States Constitution), as an economic document it cleared the way for global capital to "invest" in Iraq's most important source of national wealth. Indeed, Articles 25, 26, and the second part of Article 109 of the Iraqi Constitution removed any doubt about the role of foreign capital and privatization in the reconfiguring of the Iraqi economy.

To be sure, the Articles stated that oil and gas were to be developed "in a way that achieves the highest benefit to the Iraqi people," and were somehow supposed to be done so by "using the most advanced techniques of the market … and [through the] encourage [-ment of] investment." The average Iraqi citizen is poor, with the median Iraqi income not exceeding \$6,000 per year—a little less than \$17 a day. 16 So, how can the overwhelming majority of citizens in Iraq invest in their nation's most important source of wealth? The fact of the matter is that they cannot. Who, then, can "invest" in the oil wealth of the country that was already nationalized for the benefit of the people, at least to some degree, under Saddam Hussein? The answer is clear—international capital.

Who Owns Iraq's Wealth?

Much has been made in the mainstream press that only two American oil companies, ExxonMobil and Occidental Petroleum, have been awarded contracts by Iraq's Oil Ministry to "develop" parts of just two of Iraq's 15 "super-giant" oil fields. This is given as proof that the US war on Iraq was not about oil. The rest of the oil contracts have gone to corporations from Russia (Lukoil); China (Bohai and the China National Petroleum Corporation); England (British Petroleum); France (Total); the Netherlands (Royal Dutch Shell); Italy (ENI); Switzerland (Sataream and Weatherford, which was founded in and operates out of Houston, Texas); Norway (Statoil); Malaysia (Petronas); South Korea (KOGAS); and Turkey (TPAO). While only two oil contracts have been awarded to American oil companies, and the Iraqi state still technically remains in control of Iraq's oil (at least for the purpose of issuing oil contracts), the fine point of it is that the war on Iraq made it possible for global capital to gain control over Iraq's chief raw material for their benefit, and not the benefit of the Iraqi people.

Even if we accept the argument that the war was not about oil, today, most of the revenue being generated in Iraq is not as a result of producing or selling oil anyway. Instead, the lion's share of the wealth being expropriated from Iraq (billions annually) is being done by US-based oil corporations which are in the business of *servicing* Iraq's oil fields. Indeed, most of the international oil companies who have signed contracts to pull oil from Iraq's oil fields have enlisted the services of the Texas-based "oil services companies ... [such as] Halliburton, Baker Hughes, Weatherford International and Schlumberger to drill for oil, build wells and refurbish old equipment." ¹⁷

It is worth noting here that, while not discounting the fact that Saddam Hussein was a brutal dictator who was responsible for a number of atrocities, Iraqi citizens



US Army soldiers stand guard near a burning oil well at the Rumaylah oil fields in Iraq (Wikimedia Commons)

had the highest standard of living in the Middle East under the Hussein government (1979–2003) which was generated, at least in part, by Iraq's oil wealth. Indeed, two of the benefits enjoyed under Hussein for Iraqi men and *women* were a free kindergarten through graduate-school education and the provision of free health-care services for every Iraqi citizen. Each is an impressive social benefit that not even the government of the richest country on the planet—the United States—can lay claim to providing for its citizens.

Was Iraq's oil wealth used to fight wars, buy arms on the international market (including from the US), and allow Hussein and high-ranking Ba'ath Party officials to live lives of luxury? Yes. However, since the Hussein government has been removed, the quality of universal health care has declined to such an extent that, at times, it has become almost nonexistent. At the same time, the educational system in Iraq has suffered horrors so sad that they are difficult to imagine. For example, more than 2,700 public and private schools, kindergarten through graduate school, including 84 percent of colleges and universities, have been "damaged," destroyed, looted, closed, or have become too dangerous to attend. He had more than 500 professors have been assassinated in Iraq since the beginning of the war—a number that is almost impossible to transpose onto US society. Creating the conditions that allow for the destruction of education within a society is the surest sign of moral decay. Yet, the above realities are regularly ignored by our political leaders (and the corporate press) who have created this war.

In addition to the severe strain placed on public health care and the outright violence committed against education, the average Iraqi citizen is forced to do without basic utilities for long periods of time. For instance, electrical power in Iraq has been reduced to such an extent that many Iraqi citizens are without electricity "from 15 to 20 hours per day throughout the year." What's more, "most of the country lacks effective sanitation," with "only 32 percent of the population" having "access to clean drinking water, and only 19 percent" having "access to a good sewage system." After more than 10 years of privatization, what is becoming clear is that the selling of Iraq's oil wealth to global capital and the transferring of public utilities to the private sphere has not resulted in providing the "highest benefit to the Iraqi people." Instead, the reorganization of the Iraqi economy in accordance with neoliberal economic principles has helped wreck the Iraqi economy and created more suffering for the Iraqi people.

The Wrongdoings of Government Officials in the US War on Iraq

The invasion of Iraq in March 2003 involved some 200,000 troops from the "Coalition of the Willing." Sounding hardly like a coalition, the invading force included 150,000 troops from the US, 46,000 from Great Britain, and 4,000 from 38 other countries. Nevertheless, in a unique example in modern history of capital assisting in opening up a market for capital investment (instead of the state being solely responsible for opening up a market for capital), the US war on Iraq included somewhere between 120,000 and 180,000 private military contractors. The reason why it is said "somewhere between 120,000–180,000"



One of the innocent victims of the US War on Iraq (Wikimedia Commons/James Gordon)

is because the United States government has never been able to identify exactly how many private military contractors were actually operating in Iraq. Whatever the actual number, the war itself has been a financial windfall for these private military corporations. In an example of an all-too-close relationship between the state and private wealth, we have a number of examples where the very people making decisions about waging war on Iraq were also financially benefiting from the initiation and continuation of the war.

For instance, the largest contracts awarded for work in Iraq were to the private military corporation known as Halliburton and, more specifically, its subsidiary Kellogg Brown & Root, or KBR. The former CEO of Halliburton was none other than George W. Bush's vice president, Dick Cheney. KBR was awarded contracts for work in Iraq in excess of \$40 billion. Often the contracts were "no-bid" (or formally, sole-source) contracts, meaning

that there was only one individual or company bidding on a given project. Though this practice is illegal and unethical, then Vice President Dick Cheney continued to hold options to purchase stock in Halliburton during the course of the war and received deferred payments from the company while he was Vice President.²²

In fact, Bush cabinet members so lost their moral direction during the lead-up to and execution of the war in Iraq that President Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice (1954–present), Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld (1932–2021), Deputy-Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz (1943–present), and Secretary of State Colin Powell (1937–present) are each solid candidates to be indicted for war crimes as spelled out in the Nuremburg Principles.

The Nuremburg Principles were established in 1950 by the United Nations after the Nuremburg Trials of the Nazi-Germany politico-military high command in 1945. The Principles were developed in an attempt to segregate between what is internationally permissible in war and what is not, and are considered to be "customary international law" which "civilized nations" agree to refrain from violating. Specifically, each Bush cabinet member violated Principle VI of the Nuremburg Principles (there are a total of seven) by committing the following indictable offenses:

(A) Crimes Against Peace: Planning, preparation, initiation or waging of a war of aggression or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances:

- **(B)** War Crimes: Violations of the laws or customs of war which include, but are not limited to murder ... of civilian population ... murder or ill-treatment of prisoners of war ... plunder of public or private property ...
- (C) Crimes Against Humanity: Namely, murder ... and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population, before or during the war.²³

In making a prima facie case against top Bush cabinet members, the facts which are not in dispute are that each individual:

Violated Principle VI, Section (A), by "planning, preparing for and waging a war of aggression." They called it "pre-emptive war" or the "Bush Doctrine." Yet, the fact of the matter is that before March 20, 2003, the sovereign nation-state of Iraq was not responsible for the death of one US citizen. Nor was the government of Iraq planning or preparing in any way for an attack against the United States. Thus, the war was neither a "defensive war," nor was it, most importantly, justified;

Violated Principle VI, Section (B), which deals with, among other issues, the war crime of murder. As noted in Chapter 1, ranking political (and military) officials of the Bush Administration waged a war that resulted in the deaths of 1 million Iraqi citizens.

If we accept that the war in Iraq is not a war of aggression but rather a war of defense and therefore "just" (which it is not), then some of these casualties might be dismissed as "collateral damage" and therefore do not fit the legal definition of murder. However, as "major combat operations" were declared over by George Bush a mere 6 weeks after the war began, the great majority of these deaths cannot be considered to be unintentional deaths as a consequence of normal military operations during wartime. No, we must call them what they are. In the United States, when one person is killed by another person and it is not justified, it is called murder. So too must it be defined in the same way for the people of Iraq. Principle VI, Section (B) also makes the "plunder of public or private property" a war crime. The plundering of "public property," i.e., oil, as noted in Chapter 1 and above by Alan Greenspan and Chuck Hagel, was the central purpose of the war and is, therefore, a prosecutable war crime. Lastly, Principle VI, Section (B) identifies the "ill-treatment of prisoners of war" as a war crime. The torture of



An Iraqi woman holds her dead son during the US war on Iraq in 2007 (AP Photo/Adem Hadei)

Iraqi civilians has been well-documented and acknowledged by President Obama. George Bush even unbelievably made the rounds of the TV political talk show circuit and stated that he ordered the use of waterboarding²⁴ on "suspected terrorists." Waterboarding is an internationally recognized form of torture and is therefore an indictable war crime;

Violated Principle VI, Section (C), through the "murder ... and other inhumane acts committed against [a] civilian population," which in this case would be the people of Iraq. The death or bodily disfigurement of even one individual because of a "lie" by a government official is *inhumane* and should be prosecuted as such. Both well-known instances of torture as well as the murder of innocent civilians, are acts committed by US leaders that would fall under this final Nuremburg Principle.

Members of the Bush administration were not the only individuals who forgot their ethics when it came to the war in Iraq. Demonstrating that virtue can be corrupted no matter which party one belongs to, the supposedly liberal Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein of California made more than one decision about the US war in Iraq that might be viewed as being less than virtuous. Besides voting to give President Bush the "authority" to invade Iraq, she also voted, as mentioned in Chapter 1, to award her husband's firm massive contracts for "work" in Iraq valued at more than \$3 billion. Some wonder how Feinstein



Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein, CA (Wikimedia Commons)

could have remained objective when making political decisions about the war in Iraq when her family was to be so richly rewarded—with public funds, no less. The fact is that she couldn't. And if we are to call her what she is, then we would call her a war profiteer.

Notably, Feinstein and Cheney are not the first elites in American history to have been involved in war profiteering. In fact, some have done business not with the US government but with *enemies* of the United States. For instance, as the National Archives make clear, Senator Prescott Bush (1895–1972), the father of Bush Sr. and the grandfather of Bush Jr., had his company's assets seized by the federal government in 1942 under the Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917 for continuing to do business with Nazi Germany *after* the start of the World War II (1941–1945).²⁵ That is to say, he was providing Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) with material to fight a war against the United States after the war had begun. Others, such as GM and Ford Motor Company "went along with the conversion of their German plants to military production at a time when U.S. government documents show they were still resisting calls by the Roosevelt administration to step up military production in their plants" at home for the benefit of the US government and American troops.²⁶

Ultimately, the Senate's Ethics Committee did not investigate Feinstein after she stepped down from the Senate's Military Construction Appropriations subcommittee because of the "appearance" of a conflict of interest. The conflict of interest, of course, was that she was signing off on contacts that were providing her husband's firm with hun-



ExxonMobil Headquarters, Houston, TX (Wikimedia Commons)

dreds of millions of dollars that were being financed by the American people. ²⁷ This is not the only time Feinstein has filled her family's bank account with public funds. In 2009 in the wake of the "Great Recession," she introduced, apparently without a hint of shame, "legislation to route \$25 billion in taxpayer money to a government agency that had just awarded her husband's real estate firm a lucrative contract to sell foreclosed properties at compensation rates higher than the industry norms." Again, the Senator took the American people's money for her own family's use, and again, no investigation was conducted by her fellow senators.

Here we see at least *a part* of the problem. While we have looked so far only at the case of Iraq, often when examining the United States government that not only does it literally serve the interests of the rich, but is, in fact, made up of individuals who are themselves very

wealthy. These powerful decision-makers are in a position to make themselves, those closest to them, and those who are willing to generously fund their reelection campaigns richer still, at the expense of everyone else. At the same time, these directors of national policy remain politically situated to prevent any type of meaningful oversight into their wrongdoings by the very positions that they hold.

So, if neither the American nor Iraqi people have benefited from the war in Iraq, then who has? The answer is clear—the corporate rich. For example, the opening of Iraqi oil fields to foreign investment as mandated by the Iraqi Constitution led (somewhat unexpectedly) to an increase in the price of oil in the United States. In 2003, before the war in Iraq had begun, oil sold for \$23 a barrel on the world market. Yet, by the summer of 2008, a barrel of oil had inflated to some \$150 dollars—an increase of almost 600 percent. This does not mean that US firms were making large profits by *exporting* Iraqi oil—in spite of companies such as ExxonMobil being awarded "oil development" deals from the US-backed Iraqi government. However, US oil firms did make record profits by *increasing* the price of a gallon of gasoline. In fact, the largest annual profit by any company in the

history of the United States was achieved by Exxon, in 2008, when its end-of-the-year profits totaled some \$45 billion. In no way, shape, or form did this help the overwhelming majority of the American people but, rather, simply meant higher gas prices at the gaspump for them. Instead, the war in Iraq made already wealthy oil speculators, and the CEOs, boards of directors, and major shareholders of corporations like ExxonMobil even more wealthy.

During this time, some of the oil speculators who contributed to the rising cost of oil moved their dollars from the failed housing market into the oil futures market. Interestingly enough, some of the very corporations that drove the United States into recession have been some of the main oil speculators that have kept gasoline prices unnecessarily high, including Goldman Sachs, Lehman Brothers, JPMorgan Chase Bank, and Citigroup. By 2014, with the US still struggling with more than 18 percent underemployment, oil had remained expensive, selling at some \$100 per barrel—an increase of more than 300 percent from 2003. Today, gas prices in the United States are twice as high as they were at the beginning of the US war on Iraq almost two decades ago.

This is not to say that oil firms and speculators are the only multinational corporations that have benefited during the war in Iraq. Far from it; the list would have to include private military firms, such as TITAN, CACI, and XE (formerly Blackwater USA), which have directly benefited from the wars. Each company signed contracts for more than a billion dollars for the provision of military services in Iraq. Of course, no list would be complete without noting the major weapons providers, such as Boeing Corporation, Lockheed Martin, and Northrop Grumann, whose profit margins have all increased since the beginning of the war. In fact, multiple sectors within the US economy have been tied directly to the war, including armaments, defense, construction, transportation, oil, gas, energy, communications, electronics, labor, health, agribusiness, banking, and finance. Each industry has spent millions of dollars in campaign contributions and lobbying fees, which, in turn, have helped them realize their corporate and industry goals for "investment opportunities" in foreign markets. However, this has also created a situation where each industry has become dependent, at least in part, on overseas investments made possible by war.

Montesquieu once wrote, "An empire founded by war has to sustain itself by war." This certainly has been true in the case of the US war on Iraq. However, in the end, Nkrumah argued that "neo-colonialism has created a situation, ... which can only be fought and eradicated by armed revolution and armed struggle." For the people of the United States and Iraq, let us hope this is not how US involvement in Iraq is brought to an end. Yet, even a cursory look at the war currently being fought by the people of Iraq against the United States would suggest that Nkrumah's conclusion is correct.

The 'US Global War on Terror' (2001-present)

While we have only examined the case of Iraq, US political leaders have been responsible for the deaths of many people across the globe as a result of nonstop war on an evergrowing list of nations. After September 11, 2001, the United States began a "Global War on Terror," sometimes referred to as a state of "permanent war," to presumably seek out and destroy those who are interested in harming the United States. In spite of some of the questions that arose from September 11th,³⁰ since 2000 the US government has waged war upon or begun military operations within the sovereign nations of Sierra Leone (2000); Nigeria (2000); Yemen (2000; 2001; 2004–present); East Timor (2001); China—the Hainan Incident (2001); Afghanistan (2001–present); Somalia (2001–present); the Philippines (2002); Cote d'Ivoire (2002); Sahara (2001–present); Iraq (2003–present); Liberia (2003); Georgia (2003; 2008); Haiti (2004); Pakistan (2004–present); Kenya (2004);



Alexander Hamilton (1806) (Wikimedia Commons)

Syria (2004; 2008; 2012–present); Ethiopia (2004); Eritrea (2004); Lebanon (2006); Uganda (2011; 2014); Libya (2011); Sudan (2011–present); Jordan (2012); Turkey (2012); Chad (2012); Mali (2013); South Sudan (2013); Ukraine (2015); and Poland (2017).

In fact, since almost the inception of the United States, US armed forces have been deployed more than 270 separate times, with more than 100 of those deployments coming since 1945.³¹ Many of the troop deployments from 1798–1941 were for the "protection of US citizens," the "American consulate," or to protect the "US embassy." However, equally as often, the reason given for the deployment of US troops was to "protect American commerce," "protect American property," "quell a riot taking place on American property," "maintain order during a period of … threatened insurrection," "protect American interests during an attempted revolution," or to protect American interests or property during an "insurrection" or actual "revolution." Since 1945, as often as not wars have been fought to protect the capitalist economic system or open

markets for capital penetration, with not one "war" (limited or otherwise) formally declared by the United States Congress as required by the Constitution.

As stated in Article I, Section 8, Congress is the *only* branch of government that has the power to move the nation from a state of peace to a state of war through its power to declare war. The framers of the United States Constitution were very specific in their placement of the "war power" with the most democratic branch of government, as they were gaining independence from a nation (i.e., England) ruled by a king who had, on more than one instance, used the nation's purse and military to enrich himself and those closest to him. The rather conservative (but non-slaveholding) Alexander Hamilton, who was one of the most talented political figures in the history of the United States, wrote in *Federalist #69*:

"The President is to be commander in chief of the army and navy of the United States. In this respect his authority would be nominally the same with that of the king of Great Britain, but in substance much inferior to it [italics added]. It would amount to nothing more than the supreme command and direction of the military and naval forces, as first general and admiral of the confederacy: while that of the British king extends to the declaring of war, and to the raising and regulating of fleets and armies; all which, by the constitution under consideration [which was adopted], would appertain to the legislature [italics added to legislature only]."³⁴

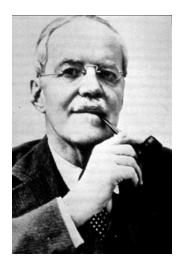
In other words, Congress was given the power to raise, fund, and regulate the military while the President of the United States, by Constitutional configuration (Article II, Section 2, Clause 1), is to be only the "Commander-in-chief" of the military "when called into the actual service" of the country. The political body that "calls" the President into the "actual service" of the nation is the United States Congress through a declaration of war. Accordingly, the President's war powers are latent and not active until Congress makes them so. In conclusion, regarding the war in Iraq and the US "Global War on Terror," it might be worth hearing the words of Sun Tzu again. In the *Art of War*, Tzu wrote that the result of military activity and waging war is that the "wealth of the nation is exhausted." While the many US wars have not exhausted the public funds of the United States, they have increased the public debt and reduced funding for social programs for the American people. Without a doubt, US spending on the wars has had serious implications for millions of people in the United States and billions more around the world, as the republic has suffered from an ever-decreasing amount of revenue while the empire has grown more powerful than any other in history.

6.3 The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA): Protecting US Capital

The US government has seventeen separate intelligence agencies. As a group, they are known as the United States Intelligence Community (IC) and are led by the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) who reports directly to the president.³⁶ Of all the intelligence agencies, the CIA is the largest and has been the most active in foreign affairs. The agency grew out of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The OSS was created during World War II to carry out surveillance of enemy forces. At the war's end, the OSS was dissolved and its responsibilities were integrated into the Department of State and the Department of War. Two years later, in 1947, the National Security Act established the CIA, transfer-

ring those responsibilities to that agency. Today, with a "classified black budget" of \$15 billion, the CIA is responsible for collecting, analyzing, and providing foreign intelligence to policy-makers as well as carrying out covert (secret) operations abroad. Yet this last charge, the "carrying-out of covert of activities," is overwhelmingly how much of the world has come to know the CIA.

To be sure, popular movements and government leaders who have attempted to nationalize resources, redistribute wealth, or have kept US transnational corporations from exploiting their nation's riches have often been the target of CIA assassinations and coup d'états (overthrowing of foreign governments). In fact, even conservative or nationalist leaders who have attempted to keep US capital out of their country have become targets for the CIA. Since 1945, the CIA has assassinated, attempted to assassinate, or played a role in the assassination of at least 50 foreign leaders or heads of state³⁷ and tried to topple at least 30 separate foreign governments. Moreover, the CIA helped capture South African anti-apartheid leader Nelson Mandela (1918–2013) in 1962, as well as capture and kill the revolutionary leader Ernesto "Che" Guevara in Bolivia in October 1967. Below is a *partial* list of governments that have been overthrown and leaders who have been assassinated by or with the assistance of the Central Intelligence Agency since 1945:

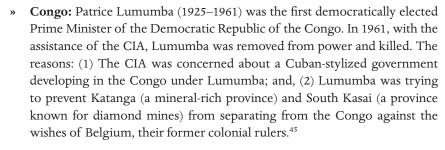


Allen Dulles, director of the CIA (1953–1961) (Wikimedia Commons)

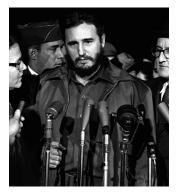
- » Syria: In 1949, the CIA backed the overthrow of the Syrian government because it had resisted calls to construct a Trans-Arabian oil pipeline by the US-based engineering firm Bechtel Corporation. The pipeline itself was a joint venture between what would become Chevron and ExxonMobil. After the US-backed coup, the pipeline was built.³⁸ Still unhappy with developments in the country, the CIA twice more tried to overthrow the Syrian government during the 1950s.³⁹
- » Iran: In 1953, after a unanimous vote by the Iranian Parliament to nationalize Iran's oil industry, the CIA overthrew the democratically elected Prime Minister of Iran, Mohammed Mossadeq (1882–1967), after he began to carry out his government's decision. Mossadeq was replaced by the US-backed Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (1919–1980), who had been the country's ruling monarch. Once in power and supported by the CIA, the Shah authorized the killing and torture of thousands of Iranians, which included the torture of children in front of their parents and parents in front of their children, including cutting off the arms of a young boy in front of his father. 40 The CIA only publicly acknowledged their role in the coup in August of 2013.
- » Guatemala: In 1954, the CIA overthrew the democratically elected President Jacobo Arbenz (1913–1971), replacing him with a military junta after Arbenz

began modest land reforms by nationalizing small tracts of land held by the United Fruit Company—a massive US-based multinational corporation. Notably, in a blatant example of the very rich using the state to advance their economic interests, Allen Dulles (1893–1969), the Director of the CIA during the coup, was also a member of the board of trustees of the United Fruit Company.⁴¹

- » Tibet: In 1959, Tibetan rebels were trained and funded by the CIA in an uprising in Tibet against Chinese Communist Party rule.
- » Indonesia: In 1958, Indonesian rebels received arms and aid from the CIA in their struggle against the independence leader and first president of Indonesia, Sukarno (1901–1970), who embraced a socialist path for the Indonesian people. The CIA also made its own plans to assassinate Sukarno.⁴² With at least the quiet support of the US, he was eventually overthrown by Indonesian generals.
 - Cuba: Most prominently, in 1961, the CIA financed and trained Cuban exiles in their invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs, which was put down by Fidel Castro (1926–2016) within two days. ⁴³ Castro is most famous for leading the Cuban Revolution and nationalizing Cuba's industrial and farming sectors, which had been dominated by US corporations under US-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista (1901–1973). At the end of the Cuban Revolution, Batista was forced out of Cuba and went into exile on January 1, 1959. Since 1959, the CIA has attempted to assassinate Castro on multiple occasions, with the Cuban government counting as many as 638 separate plots. ⁴⁴ In addition, the United States has developed at least two programs to destabilize Cuba and overthrow the government: Operation Mongoose and Operation 40.



- **Dominican Republic:** General Rafael Trujillo (1891–1961) was the autocratic, repressive, and conservative ruler of the Dominican Republic from 1930–1961 who amassed a fortune for himself and his family during his time in power. Originally allied with the United States, once Trujillo fell out of favor, he was eventually assassinated, with the CIA admitting to "extensive Agency involvement" in his assassination.⁴⁶
- of South Vietnam: In 1963, during the Vietnam War (1955–1975), President of South Vietnam Ngo Dinh Diem (1901–1963) was overthrown and assassinated by generals within the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), who were given funds and support from the CIA.⁴⁷
- **Iraq:** In 1960, Prime Minister Abd al-Karim Qasim (1914–1963) nationalized 99 percent of the oil held by a giant Western-owned oil company known as the Iraqi Petroleum Company in Iraq. The result: in 1963, Qasim was overthrown and executed (by firing squad) by the Ba'ath Party. The CIA did not object to his killing and had previously sent an "incapacitating agent" to the popular prime minister before the Ba'ath Party's coup in their own attempt to remove him from power.⁴⁸ The most prominent figure to emerge from the Ba'ath Party was Saddam Hussein.



Cuban leader and 'Public Hero' Fidel Castro (1959) (Library of Congress)



President of the Congo, Patrice Lumumba (1961) (Wikimedia Commons)

- Brazil: In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson (1908–1973), the US military, and the CIA supported the overthrow of the democratically elected left-leaning President of Brazil, Joao Goulart (1918–1976).⁴⁹ Goulart was targeted by the United States and the Brazilian military for his plans to redistribute wealth, including that held by US corporations operating in Brazil. A military regime was put in his place, friendly to the United States, and remained in power until 1985.
- Bolivia: In 1964, with the support of the CIA, the Bolivian military overthrew the democratically elected and left-leaning President of Bolivia, Victor Paz (1907–2001).⁵⁰
- » Ghana: In 1966, the great Pan-African socialist leader and president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, was overthrown by a police and military coup supported by the CIA.⁵¹
- » Greece: In 1967, with the support of the CIA, right-wing military officers seized power in Athens just weeks ahead of scheduled democratic elections.



Prime Minister of Iraq, Abd al-Karim Qasim (circa 1958) (Wikimedia Commons)

- » Chile: In September of 1973, the first democratically elected socialist leader in the history of the world, President Salvador Allende (1908–1973) of Chile,
 - was overthrown and died during a military coup led by General Augusto Pinochet (1915–2006). One of the best and most thoughtful men to have ever graced the political stage, Allende tried to breathe life into a new conception of government and society in his country. After his election in 1970, he began to transition Chile's economy, which was primarily controlled by the Chilean and US owning class, into a socialist economy that would be presided over by a democratic-socialist state and the Chilean working class. The coup was supported by US President Richard M. Nixon (1913–1994) and the CIA. Following the overthrow of Allende, the Pinochet government instituted "free market" reforms under the neoliberal designs of the "Chicago Boys" and imprisoned,



Socialist President Salvador Allende of Chile (1973) (Wikimedia Commons)

tortured, and killed thousands of Chilean citizens during Pinochet's 17 years in power. ⁵² During the whole of his time in power, Pinochet was supported by the United States government.

- » Argentina: After the right-wing military coup in 1976, the CIA supported the Argentinian military junta in its "Dirty War" (1976–1983) against its civilian population. The "Dirty War" saw thousands of left-leaning and progressive Argentinians killed, tortured, or "disappeared." 53
- » Afghanistan: From 1979–1989, the United States government and the CIA "successfully" funded anti-Communist militants (known as the "mujahedeen") against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The multibillion-dollar project produced, most notably, Osama bin Laden (1957–2011). 54 The Central Intelligence Agency remains active in Afghanistan until this day.
- » Turkey: In 1980, at least diplomatically, the US government and the CIA supported the right-wing military coup in Turkey.

- » Cambodia: From 1980–1995, the United States government and the CIA funded anti-Vietnamese dissident groups in Cambodia, including former members of the Khmer Rouge government (1975–1979) in an attempt to remove Vietnam from Cambodia. Vietnam liberated Cambodia from the Khmer Rouge, where between 1 and 2 million people had died during their time in power through torture, disease, execution, or by being worked to death.⁵⁵
- » Nicaragua: From 1981–1990, the Reagan Administration and the Bush Sr. Administration (1989–1993) ordered the CIA to train, fund, and assist Contra rebels in overthrowing the social-democratic Nicaraguan government. The Contras were funded by weapons sales by the Reagan Administration to Iran in violation of a US-imposed arms embargo against Iran. The revenue from the sales to Iran was then given to the Contras in violation of a Congressional prohibition against further funding of the right-wing Contra rebel group.
- » Grenada: Beginning in 1981, "the CIA had engaged in efforts to destabilize" Grenada "politically and economically." The small nation was guided by the Marxist political figure Maurice Bishop (1943–1983), who was eventually overthrown by his own party and executed just days before the US invasion.
- » Iraq: The CIA had been a part of the first US war on Iraq in 1990–1991 and again during the second war beginning in 2003. The 2003 invasion saw the end of the Hussein government and his execution, after which, international capital was allowed to exploit Iraq's most valuable resource—oil.
- » Libya: In 2011, the US military and CIA, deployed by President Obama, helped overthrow and kill the leader of oil-rich Libya, Muammar Gaddafi (1942–2011).
- » Syria: Since 2012, President Obama has authorized the CIA to fund, train, and arm Syrian rebels in their attempt to overthrow the President of Syria, Bashar al-Assad (1965–present) which continued until the end of Obama's presidency and continues today under the administration of President Joseph Biden.

Other nations that have been subject to CIA interventions include the Soviet Union (1917–1991) and its Eastern European allies during the Cold War; China (1945–1960s); Italy (off and on since 1947); Korea (1945–present); Costa Rica (1950s); Laos (1957–1973); Ecuador (1960–1963); Peru (1960s); Uruguay (1964–1970); Jamaica (1976–1980s); El Salvador and the Congo in the 1980s; the overthrow of Manuel Noriega (1934–2017) of Panama in 1989; the Philippines (ongoing since 1898); Venezuela throughout the first decade of the 2000s under Hugo Chavez (1954–2013); the overthrow of the first democratically elected president of Haiti (and former priest) Jean Bertrand Aristide in 2004; and the launching of air strikes and drone attacks (but not officially occupying) multiple countries, primarily in the Middle East, since the early 2000s.

Not one time has the CIA worked to protect a democratic government, improve the living conditions of the poor, or assist a popular movement. Instead, each time the CIA has overthrown or assassinated a foreign leader or armed, funded, or trained a right-wing organization, it was done on behalf of the interests of a specific class. Whether a popular leader was attempting to redistribute wealth, nationalize resources, or move the country in a socialist direction, every CIA intervention was undertaken to prevent those efforts. In fact, even when conservative leaders such as Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Hussein in Iraq, or al-Assad in Syria attempted to control their nation's resources, they became targets of the Central Intelligence Agency. Indeed, what is consistent about every single CIA intervention is that in each instance, their involvement in a foreign country has been for *the protection of capital and capital accumulation* for those who control the commanding heights of the global economy.

6.4 Nuclear Weapons: A Threat to the Whole of Human Existence

Today, the most serious threat to the human race is the existence of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are considered to be a Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD). Other WMDs include chemical weapons (nerve agents such as Agent Orange, mustard gas, etc.); biological weapons (germ warfare where bacteria, fungi, or viruses such as malaria or anthrax are used as a weapon); and radiological weapons (the "Dirty Bomb," i.e., the "poor man's nuclear weapon," where traditional explosives are mixed with a small amount of nuclear material and typically detonated in an airport or a train station).

There are currently nine separate countries that possess nuclear weapons—five legally and four illegally. In addition, some members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) store nuclear weapons within the confines of their national borders. The countries that possess nuclear weapons legally are the countries that are the permanent members of the UN Security Council, which is charged with the "maintenance of international peace and security" and comprises the victors of World War II. The Security Council includes the United States, the United Kingdom (UK), France, China, and Russia. The countries that possess nuclear weapons illegally include India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea. These nine countries make up the so-called "nuclear club."

A Brief History of Nuclear Weapons

The first nation that attempted to develop nuclear weapons was Germany, in April 1939. However, by 1942, Germany decided to halt its program, as it was believed that nuclear weapons would not have a significant impact in ending World War II.⁵⁷ Out of concern that Adolf Hitler would not only develop nuclear weapons but also would use them, a group of prominent scientists, including Albert Einstein (1879–1955), wrote a memo to President Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882–1945), urging him to a develop a nuclear program. The communication, known as the Einstein-Szilard letter, recommended that the United States develop its own nuclear weapons. Agreeing with the scientists, FDR initiated the Manhattan Project (1942–1947), a program located in Los Alamos, New Mexico, to develop nuclear weapons for the United States. It was headed by the noted physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904–1967) and included some 6,000 people.

After a relatively short period of time, Oppenheimer and his team of scientists had developed a working nuclear bomb (i.e., an atomic bomb) in July 1945. However, the scientists first needed to test the weapons before turning them over to the military, whose new commander-in-chief, after the death of FDR, was President Harry S. Truman (1884-1972). Accordingly, at the White Sands Proving Ground in New Mexico, Oppenheimer and his group of scientists detonated the first nuclear device in the history of the world during a test, code-named "Trinity," and officially ushered in the so-called "Atomic Age." Oppenheimer later said, upon seeing the explosion of that first nuclear bomb in the New Mexico desert, "We knew the world would not be the same," and that he remembered the Hindu scripture that read, "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds." 58 With the newly developed weapons, President Truman quickly attempted to put an end to the war in the Pacific with Japan. Indeed, on August 6, 1945, President Truman ordered the bombing of Hiroshima with the nuclear bomb "Little Boy." In a split second, more than 100,000 people were killed, with many disappearing completely from the face of the Earth, and thousands more eventually dying from radiation burns and poisoning, totaling some 140,000 people in all.

Probably the most famous victim of the bombing of Hiroshima was the young girl Sadako Sasaki (1943–1955), who was blown out of the window of her family's house (which was located just outside the city of Hiroshima) by the explosion. While Sadako

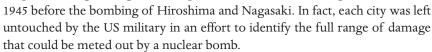


Sadako Sasaki (Courtesy of Sadako Legacy)

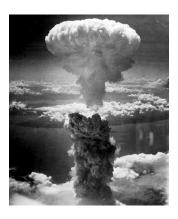
survived the bombing, she and her family soon learned that she was sick with "atom bomb disease" (i.e., leukemia). By the time Sadako was 11 years old, she was forced to leave school, was hospitalized, and was given a year to live. Once hospitalized, Sadako acted on the ancient Japanese myth which held that whoever folds 1,000 origami paper cranes will have their wish granted by the gods. Sadako's wish was to live. She went to work folding her paper cranes, eventually reaching some 644. However, early on the morning of October 25, 1955, Sadako died of leukemia at the age of 12 without finishing her task. Later, in a symbolic gesture to Sadako, her friends completed the remaining cranes and buried them with her. ⁵⁹ If such a thing can be measured, Sadako Sasaki's death is one of the most important deaths in human history, as she has come to represent all innocent victims of war and the moment in time when the human race developed the technological capacity to destroy itself.

Nevertheless, upon hearing of the bombing of Hiroshima, President Truman remarked, "It was the greatest thing in history." ⁶⁰ Three days later, on August 9, 1945, Truman ordered the bombing of Nagasaki. When "Fat Man" was dropped on the city, some 50,000 people were killed almost instantly, with

thousands of others dying from burns and nuclear poisoning, totaling more than 80,000 people. Truman argued after the war that the United States had no other choice but to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, as is well known today, the United States was aware that Japan was negotiating terms of peace with the USSR during the summer of



At the end of World War II, the United States embarked on a series of nuclear tests—most famously in the South Pacific on the Bikini Atoll Islands. (In the US, many nuclear tests have been carried out, with more than 900 tests conducted in the state of Nevada alone). At Bikini Atoll, the US first relocated the 200 or so inhabitants and then proceeded to detonate 23 nuclear devices upon the islands from 1946 to 1958. Each bomb was 1,000 times more powerful than those detonated over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The result—the explosions chipped off a part of the largest island, created a mile-long crater in the lagoon located in the middle of the atoll, and one small island was blasted completely off the map. In fact, the islands are still too polluted with radioactive material for people to live there, and the original inhabitants continue to receive reparations from the federal government for the loss of their island home to this day.



Mushroom cloud over Nagasaki, August 1945 (Wikimedia Commons)

Nuclear Weapons Today

Today, the total number of nuclear weapons in the world exceeds 13,000 warheads. With more than 3,100 cities (defined as 100,000 people or more) in the world, the United States or Russia possess nearly enough nuclear weapons for either country to destroy every single city on the planet two times over. While difficult to know for sure, the estimated global nuclear weapons stockpile is as follows:

TABLE 6.1 Global Nuclear Weapons Stockpile 62

Nation	Nuclear Weapons
1) Russia	6,255
2) United States	5,550
3) China	350
4) France	290
5) United Kingdom	225
6) Pakistan	165
7) India	156
8) Israel	90
9) North Korea	40–50
Total	13,080

Yet, the detonation of possibly as few as 25 to 100 nuclear devices could push the whole world into a "nuclear winter," a hypothetical model (hypothetical because it cannot be tested) which predicts that a low-scale nuclear war would result in the burning of so many cities to such a degree that smoke and soot would rise into the Earth's stratosphere, blocking out or severely reducing the amount of sunlight it receives for months or even years. The planet would become colder, making it harder to grow food and raise livestock; and at least a part of the global food supply would be poisoned from nuclear radiation and fallout.

Presently, the average nuclear weapon that the United States possesses is just under 1 megaton, equal to 1 million tons of TNT. (In fact, if you were to transport the explosive force of the average US nuclear weapon you would need 25,000 tractor-trailers (i.e., commercial trucks) fully loaded end to end with dynamite). Each one of these 1-megaton nuclear bombs is 70 times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. The largest bomb ever exploded in the history of the world is a 50-megaton bomb that was detonated by the USSR. Known as the "Tsar Bomb," it was reduced from a 100-megaton bomb and detonated on an island in the Arctic Circle in 1961. The Tsar Bomb was 10 times more powerful than all the explosives detonated during WWII *combined*.

The incredible power of the global nuclear arsenal has left some to contemplate the fate of the human race. Indeed, it is worth considering that the average lifespan of any species which has existed on Earth is about 100,000 years. Human beings have walked the planet for roughly 200,000 years. Thus, some have concluded that nuclear weapons, in conjunction with other unresolved politico-economic problems such as global warming, poverty, HIV/AIDS, and war itself, could potentially push the human race to the edge of extinction. Nonetheless, this possibility has not slowed the United States from continuing to develop evermore deadly nuclear weapons and steadily increasing an already multibillion-dollar nuclear weapons budget that has the potential to "turn the lights out" on the whole of humanity.

6.5 The United States and International Institutions

The United States government is a key player in multiple international organizations. Among the most prominent are the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Yet, to more fully illuminate US power, we might first examine two economic organizations that play a vital role in the US global empire—the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (or the World Bank Group).

The International Monetary Fund and World Bank

The IMF and World Bank are neoliberal financial institutions created at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire in 1944 at the end of World War II. Sometimes referred to as the "Bretton Woods Institutions," the World Bank and IMF are technically a part of the UN, but remain autonomous in their decision-making. Each is funded by their 188 member nations, as well as through the bonds it sells on the global market to wealthy corporate investors and other investing nations. Voting within the institutions is based upon monetary contributions by member states. As the US government regularly provides the Bretton Woods Institutions with the highest dollar amount, it has a strong influence over the direction of monetary policy within each institution. Originally, the World Bank was designed to loan money to countries to help rebuild after World War II, whereas the IMF was created to assist in reconstructing the world's international payment system.

Today, the World Bank is charged with poverty reduction and economic development by loaning money to poor countries for projects such as roads, bridges, and dams. On the other hand, the IMF is supposed to help prevent currency collapses of largely poor nations by loaning money to help the cash-poor nation pay its creditors. Whatever the Bretton Woods Institutions are supposed to do, each has evolved into massive corporate-backed financial institutions that primarily loan money to Third World countries, which generate large profits for their corporate financiers.

To be sure, while China or Russia can invest in an IMF or World Bank security, so, too, can Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase, Wells Fargo, Citigroup, and Goldman Sachs. Each loan (in the form of a purchased security) to the IMF and World Bank is repaid over time to each investor, with interest. The IMF and World Bank then use their investors' capital to loan money to Third World countries that want to develop some public works project or are having a difficult time meeting their debt obligations. However, significantly, each institution requires the recipient nation to accept a structural adjustment program (SAP) as a condition of accepting the loan. A SAP is a series of neoliberal policies that are imposed on a recipient nation that are sometimes referred to as "conditionalities," "austerity measures," or economic "shock therapy." For example, if a nation wishes to borrow money from the World Bank to build a dam to transport water to the nation's farmers or for fresh drinking water for its citizens, then that government must agree to do at least one, and possibly all, of the following:

- » Reduce or eliminate funding for social programs such as education, health care, Social Security, unemployment, welfare, food subsidies, and day care. Sometimes, this also includes reducing or eliminating state workers and cutting benefits and pensions for government employees.
- » Focus the domestic economy on exports. This was very similar to rule under colonialism for many Third World countries, where economies were developed to produce a handful of commodities, or even just a single commodity, for the "home country."
- » Devalue the nation's currency and tie it to a foreign currency such as the US dollar. This has the obvious effect of making poor people even poorer as their currency buys less.
- » Open the country for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and develop a domestic stock market, which allows for transnational capital to invest in the recipient nation's publicly traded firms.

- » Reduce or eliminate government protections of the domestic market, such as high tariffs for imported goods, price controls on domestic commodities and services, state subsidies to domestic industries, etc.
- » **Privatize state-owned industries** such as oil, gas, electricity, and water.

While the World Bank's motto is "Working for a World Free of Poverty," the reality is that its austerity measures often drive poor countries into further economic hardship. The result is that recipient nations end up borrowing additional money from the IMF to pay their debts, including borrowing money from the IMF to pay the World Bank. The borrowing of more money from the IMF to prevent a currency collapse because a recipient nation cannot pay its debts often brings more rounds of austerity measures, which, in turn, creates more economic hardship. It is true that dams, bridges, and factories do get built with World Bank loans, and debts do get paid by IMF financing. However, by laying off state workers, devaluing currencies, privatizing public industries, and reducing or eliminating the social welfare state for working people and the poor, the Bretton Woods Institutions help create a situation where people have less money in their pockets (which is already worth less from devaluation) and the state has fewer tax dollars being generated to fund state programs and pay debts.

This is not to say that nobody is benefitting from IMF and World Bank loans. Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase, Wells Fargo, Citigroup, and Goldman Sachs, among others, continue to make billions of dollars annually by "investing" in IMF and World Bank bonds. Significantly, by spending tens of millions of dollars lobbying the federal government each year, these already powerful banks ensure that the United States government continues to push a neoliberal ordering of IMF and World Bank loan policies, which, in turn, provides opportunities for them to generate more capital still. ⁶³ Though no bombs are dropped and no people are directly killed by IMF and World Bank austerity measures, the economies of recipient nations can be greatly harmed—and so too, the lives of billions of people—for the benefit of a handful of very wealthy individuals who are drawn largely from the financial sector of the US economy.

The United States, the UN, and NATO

In addition to the IMF and World Bank, the United States shapes the political, economic, and social reality of many parts of the world through its position in the United Nations. The United Nations was created in San Francisco, California, at the end of World War II

in 1945 and is presently located in New York City. The UN consists of five separate "organs," including the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat. Each member nation has one vote in the General Assembly (which is similar to a world Congress); however, significantly, the General Assembly is not permitted to bring into existence any of its own decisions. Instead, it may only make "recommendations" to the Security Council.

The UN Security Council has five permanent members—the US, UK, France, Russia, and China—and ten non-permanent members that rotate into the Security Council from the General Assembly every two years. The Security Council is charged with maintaining international peace and security, as well as authorizing all UN



The flag of the United Nations (Wikimedia Commons)

military action. Importantly, within the Security Council rests the power to *veto* a General Assembly recommendation. While it takes nine Security Council members to pass a resolution, *just one* permanent member can veto any decision made by the Security Council, including one that has been "recommended" by every country in the world through the General Assembly.

Nonetheless, the great majority of the General Assembly's resolutions come into existence because they remain unopposed (passed by unanimous consent) by the Security Council, as often as not. When the Security Council does reject a General Assembly resolution, it is often the United States that is using its veto power. Below is an incomplete but representative list dating back to the 1970s of the kinds of resolutions that the US has *opposed* in the face of unanimous (or near unanimous) global support within the General Assembly and the Security Council. Indeed, the United States has *vetoed* the following:

1970s

- » Resolution 33/136 by a vote of 119–1, which asked wealthy countries to provide more assistance to poor countries
- » Resolution 33/196 by a vote of 111–1, which requested protection of Third World nations' exports
- » Resolution 34/46 by a vote of 136–1, which requested all countries to improve human rights and human freedoms
- » Resolution 34/100 by a vote of 104–2 (US, Israel), which asked all nations to not intervene in the internal or external affairs of sovereign nation-states
- » Resolution 34/136 by a vote of 118–2 (US, Israel), which asked all countries to respect national sovereignty over national resources in occupied Arab territories
- Resolution 34/199 by a vote of 112–1, which attempted to safeguard the rights of Third World countries in multinational trade negotiations

1980s

- » Resolution 35/57 by a vote of 134–1, which sought a new international economic order to promote the growth of poor countries and international cooperation
- » Resolution 35/145A by a vote of 111–2 (US, UK), which asked all nations to cease nuclear test explosions
- **Resolution 35/154** by a vote of 110–2 (US, Albania), which asked nuclear states to not use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states
- » Resolution 35/174 by a vote of 120–1, which emphasized that the development of nations and individuals is a human right
- » Resolution 36/18 by a vote 123–1, which promoted cooperative movements in Third World countries
- » Resolution 36/19 by a vote of 126-1, which provided for the right of every state to choose its economic and social system in accord with the will of its people, without outside interference in whatever form it takes

- » Resolution 36/84 by a vote of 118–2 (US, UK), which called for an end to all test explosions of nuclear weapons
- **Resolution 37/83** by a vote of 138–1, which attempted to prevent an arms race in outer space
- **Resolution 37/137** by a vote of 146–1, which attempted to protect against products harmful to human health and the environment
- **Resolution 38/124** by a vote of 132–1, which declared that education, work, health care, proper nourishment, and national development are human rights
- » Resolution 38/182 by a vote of 116–1, which prohibited the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction
- Resolution 40/445 by a vote of 133-1, which asked for international cooperation in the interrelated areas of money, finance, debt, trade, and development
- **Resolution 41/450** by a vote of 146–1, which provided measures to improve the situation and ensure the human rights and dignity of all migrant workers

1990s

» Eight separate resolutions by votes ranging from 157–2 (US, Israel) to 59–2 (US, Israel), to end the US embargo against Cuba

2000s

- » Multiple resolutions to again end the US embargo against Cuba
- » Multiple resolutions to ban new weapons of mass destruction and brokering of illicit arms sales
- » Multiple resolutions to assist the Palestinians in a variety of ways
- » Resolution 58/179 by a vote of 181–1, which called on all nations to increase access to medication in the context of pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria
- **Resolution 63/87** by a vote of 181–1, which called for a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty (multiple instances)
- » Resolution 63/187 by a vote of 184–1, which established a right to food (multiple instances)
- » Resolution 63/241 by a vote of 159–1, which was a call to protect the rights of children (multiple instances)
- **Resolution 63/40** by a vote of 177–1 (with 1 abstention, Israel), which called for the prevention of an arms race in outer space⁶⁴

2010s

» Multiple resolutions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian question which...reaffirm "the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War...to the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the other Arab territories occupied since 1967...or [condemn] the continuation of settlement activities by Israel, the occupying Power...in violation of international humanitarian law and relevant resolutions."

2020s

» The so-called Indonesian Draft Resolution which reaffirmed "that terrorism in all forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security." 66 Yet, in the face of the US global war on terror, why would US political leaders choose to reject this resolution? Though difficult to know for sure, some might wonder if the reason why is because the resolution required that:

"Member States must ensure that any measures taken to counter terrorism comply with all their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law, international refugee law, and international humanitarian law [and failing to do so] is one of the factors contributing to increased radicalization to terrorism and fosters a sense of impunity." ⁶⁷

As illustrated by the vote count on the above resolutions, the United States, on multiple occasions, has used its veto power to protect US capital, limit the expansion of human rights, and maintain a global order dominated by the United States. In addition to its veto power, the United States has, on a number of occasions, used its position within the Security Council to push for war, sanctions, and embargoes. Probably the most notable example was the US drive for sanctions against Iraq in the early 1990s. Indeed, in August 1990, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 661, imposing an almost complete trade and financial embargo against Iraq after Iraq's invasion of the oil-rich nation of Kuwait just south of the Iraqi border. After Iraq was removed from Kuwait by the United States (known as the Gulf War), the sanctions remained until May 2003, the beginning of the US war on Iraq. In 1991, at the end of the Gulf War, the Security Council passed Resolution 687, which called on Iraq to remove its chemical and biological weapons and pay Kuwait reparations.

Why did the United States care about Kuwait? In a word, oil. British and US oil firms had been involved with Kuwait since 1951 when oil was first discovered in the country. Many US and British corporations have won oil "concessions" from the Kuwaiti government since the 1950s or have done business with the Kuwaiti government, including Shell, BP, ChevronTexaco, ExxonMobil, Gulf Oil, and Getty Oil. If Iraq was to occupy Kuwait, Hussein may have nationalized Kuwaiti oil—which would have pushed US and Western oil interests out of Kuwait. And, minimally with Hussein in control of Kuwait, the US had good reason to believe that he would not be "friendly" to the US oil industry, as had already been the case with American oil companies and the Iraqi government.

Whatever the exact reasons for the war, economic sanctions imposed on Iraq by the UN and backed by the United States were very destructive for the people of Iraq. In fact, according to the UN, some 567,000 children died as a result of the economic sanctions from a lack of basic necessities such as food and medicine. Notably, former US Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright (1937–present) was asked during a television interview on 60 Minutes in May 1996 if, in light of all the children who had died in Iraq from the US-backed UN sanctions, she thought that the price had been worth it. Her response, "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price—we think the price is worth it." An unbelievable statement from any person who is responsible for not just representing their own nation but furthering the cause of human dignity amongst nations.

NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was created after World War II in April 1949. Located in Brussels, Belgium, it was developed for the purpose of defending member nations, primarily in Western Europe and North America, from the Soviet Union. In addition, NATO was created to help prevent European militarism and encourage political integration in Europe. The guiding principle of NATO is that an attack on one will be considered an attack on all. With a powerful combination of militarized nations, 70 percent of all global military spending is done by the 28 NATO members, with the United States ranked at the very top which, all by itself, accounts for more than 70 percent of the total NATO military budget.⁶⁹

While NATO did not conduct military operations during the Cold War, there have been a few notable NATO "interventions" since its end, with the United States often playing a leading role. For example, since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, NATO enforced a no-fly zone with airstrikes in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1993–1995, bombed Yugoslavia in 1999,⁷⁰ "secured" Kabul in Afghanistan in 2001, and continues to have a presence there as of 2021. NATO also deployed warships to protected maritime commerce from Somali pirates in 2009 and enforced a no-fly zone and economic embargo in Libya in 2011. All of these countries had, of course, been "unfriendly" to US capital.

A Final Word on US Foreign Policy and Empire

At the end of his second term in 1961, president and former general Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890–1969) famously remarked during his farewell address:

We ... must avoid the impulse to live only for today, plundering for our own ease and convenience the precious resources of tomorrow. ... Until the latest of our world conflicts, the United States had no armaments industry. ... We have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. ... Now this conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence ... is felt in every city, every Statehouse, every office of the Federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet, we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. ... In the councils of government we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex.⁷¹

While Eisenhower recognized the potentially corrupting impact of a massive military on democratic government, he at the same time said that he understood the need for it. This immense-sized military was needed to defeat the Axis Powers during World War II and then, so the argument goes, to defeat the Soviet Union and put an end to the Cold War. However, WWII ended 75 years ago and the Cold War has been over for more than 30 years. Yet, the US military is bigger and more powerful today than it has ever been in the history of the United States. The Axis Powers, led by Nazi Germany, were a global threat on the march throughout Europe, Asia, and into North Africa. The Soviet Union was a large country, with many countries that were directly under its control with a total population numbering in the hundreds of millions. However, today, one of the United States' chief enemies—Al Qaeda—numbers not more than 45,000 individuals worldwide.⁷² And, notably, not all people within the Al Qaeda network are considered to be enemies of the United States, as President Obama armed Al Qaeda—associated rebel forces to fight against the Syrian government in its civil war in direct contradiction to the "associated forces" clause of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2012.⁷³

So, the real question is, why does the United States continue to maintain a massive military? In part, because the armaments industry is regularly one of the top two or three industries that lobbies the federal government each year. The most immediate consequence of those lobbying efforts is that the military has become "itself ... a direct source of immense capital accumulation"⁷⁴ irrespective of whether or not there is a real enemy in the world that justifies their massive profit margins.

However, there is a second reason, one based in historical fact and present-day reality. Indeed, Sun Tzu wrote that war must be "thoroughly studied," as it is "the road to survival or ruin." Yet, if we have learned anything from our study of war and empire, it is that the United States military has been (and continues to be) spread around the world fighting war after war, not for the survival or ruin of the nation, but instead for one overarching purpose—to create and protect a global order where transnational capital is able to continue its pursuit of the accumulation of capital.



The United States Congress

'As you see, the Republic, the Senate, dignity dwelt in none of us.'1

—Cicero (Roman politician and philosopher, 106 BC–43 BC)

The United States Congress is an elected, two-part chamber consisting of the United States Senate and the US House of Representatives. The House consists of 435 members who serve 2-year terms, whereas the Senate numbers 100 individuals who serve 6-year

terms. House seats are apportioned based on the population of the state (i.e., the larger the population, the more House seats given to that state) whereas the Senate is fixed at two seats per state. Term limits do not exist in either the House or the Senate. By Constitutional design, to serve in the House of Representatives, one needs to be a resident of the country for at least 7 years and be at least 25 years of age. To serve in the United States Senate, it is required that an individual be a citizen of the United States for at least 9 years and have reached the age of 30.

From the liberal-pluralist view, the United States Congress is the most prominent national political institution where a multiplicity of interests come together to do the "nation's business." Primarily, the nation's business involves money and ethics. The main work that the United States Congress



United States Capitol Building, Washington, DC (Wikimedia Commons/Martin Falbisoner)

does with its more than 200 committees and subcommittees is to decide which national programs should be funded—and significantly, to what degree—with the people's taxes. However, Congress does not exist in a vacuum. Instead, Congressmen and women, in general, come from a fairly specific socio-economic background and bring with them a set of ideas about politics and economics that are largely consistent with their own class positions. In addition, to run for office and to be reelected takes money—a lot of money—which has to be generated from somewhere if the candidate is not personally wealthy. This need for revenue to serve in public office has a direct effect on national policy and the "public good."

7.1 Who Are They?

Members of Congress are overwhelming white (77 percent), Christian (88 percent), male (73 percent), and educated (94 percent have college degrees) at a greater rate relative to the general population of the United States (about 30 percent higher).² Yet, as of 2012, for the first time in US history, the majority of congressmen and women are also millionaires. Indeed, more than 320 (out of a total of 535) members of Congress had an average net worth of at least \$1 million in 2012 with the average net worth (i.e., assets minus liabilities) in Congress was more than \$1,008,000.³ Broken down by chamber, the median net worth for all members of the House of Representatives in 2012 was \$896,000 while the median net worth for all US Senate members was \$2.7 million.⁴ Yet, notably, the average American household net worth in 2011 did not exceed \$68,000.⁵ To think about this another way, while more than 50 percent of congressional office-holders are millionaires, just 1 percent of the American people can be placed in that same economic category. Table 7.1 lists the 20 wealthiest members of the 113th Congress:

TABLE 7.1 Net Worth of the Twenty Wealthiest Members of Congress (2013) ⁶	
1) Representative Darrell Issa (R-CA)	\$464,115,018
2) Senator Mark Warner (D-VA)	\$257,481,658
3) Representative Jared Polis (D-CO)	\$197,945,705
4) Representative John K. Delaney (D-MD)	\$154,601,580
5) Representative Michael McCaul (R-TX)	\$143,153,910
6) Representative Scott Peters (D-CA)	\$112,467,040
7) Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CN)	\$103,803,192
8) Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-WV)	\$101,290,514
9) Representative Vernon Buchanan (R-FL)	\$88,802,066
10) Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)	\$87,997,030
11) Representative Diane Black (R-TN)	\$69,569,042
12) Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA)	\$68,446,578
13) Representative Tom Rooney (R-FL)	\$64,314,955
14) Representative Chris Collins (R-NY)	\$59,104,518
15) Representative Robert Pittenger (R-NC)	\$54,791,526
16) Representative Suzan DelBene (D-WA)	\$54,251,531
17) Senator James E. Risch (R-ID)	\$53,517,527
18) Senator Bob Corker (R-TN)	\$49,114,509
19) Representative Gary Miller (R-CA)	\$46,542,523
20) Representative Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ)	\$45,402,595

The table illustrates that not only are some members of Congress quite wealthy, but also that the degree of their wealth was insignificant in determining party identification in the 113th Congress. Without question, seven of the top ten wealthiest congressional office-holders were not from the Republican Party, as one might expect, but instead from the "opposition party"—the Democratic Party. In fact, looking at a list of all 320 millionaires in the 113th Congress reveals a similar pattern, in which we see nearly an equal amount in each party. Today, while wealth amongst members of Congress remains high, we now find that the

Republican Party has the greatest number of individuals listed in the wealthiest 20 members of Congress. Indeed, Table 7.2 below ranks the 20 richest members of the 115th Congress:

TABLE 7.2 Net Worth of the Twenty Wealthiest Mem	bers of Congress (2018) ⁷
1) Senator Mark Warner (D-VA)	\$214,100,000
2) Representative Greg Gianforte (R-MT)	\$189,300,000
3) Representative Paul Mitchell (R-MI)	\$179,600,000
4) Representative Vernon Buchanon (R-FL)	\$157,200,000
5) Representative Chris Collins (R-NY)	\$154,500,000
6) Representative Don Beyer (D-VA)	\$124,900,000
7) Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)	\$114,700,000
8) Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA)	\$87,900,000
9) Representative Suzan DelBene (D-WA)	\$79,400,000
10) Representative Fred Upton (R-MI)	\$79,000,000
11) Representative Roger Williams (R-TX)	\$67,000,000
12) Representative Kevin Hern (R-OK)	\$61,000,000
13) Representative Scott Peters (D-CA)	\$60,500,000
14) Representative Rick W. Allen (R-GA)	\$52,100,000
15) Senator John Hoeven (R-ND)	\$46,700,000
16) Representative Joe Kennedy III (D-MA)	\$46,500,000
17) Representative Ralph Norman (R-SC)	\$43,400,000
18) Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA)	\$43,000,000
19) Senator Jim Risch (R-ID)	\$41,800,000
20) Senator Ron Johnson (R-WI)	\$39,200,000

Members of Congress have made—and continue to make—their money in a variety of ways. One of the most prominent ways is through their investments in the stock market. Indeed, the top investments for Congressional office-holders include GE (74 members); Wells Fargo (58 members); Procter & Gamble (57 members); Apple Inc. (52 members); Bank of America (51 members); JPMorgan Chase (49 members); IBM Corporation (45 members); and AT&T Inc. (44 members). Of course, some of these corporations have also received bailouts from the government as well as large military contracts for the war in Iraq. It is hard to imagine that a member of Congress who is invested in one of the above companies would not have voted to award a contract to or vote to bailout a company that he or she has a financial stake in.

7.2 Who Do They Serve?

Congressional candidates need money to run for office. In fact, the average winning House campaign in 2014 cost \$1.6 million, whereas the average winning Senate campaign cost some \$10.4 million. By 2018, those numbers had increased to almost \$16 million in the Senate and \$2 million in the House. Today, some campaigns are spending tens of millions of dollars and even moving past the \$100 million mark to win, and sometimes lose, a Senate seat. As previously noted in Chapter 3, Jon Ossoff spent \$150 million in winning his 2020

Senate race to represent the state of Georgia. Whereas Jaime Harrison spent more than \$130 million on his campaign and lost his Senate race in the state of South Carolina. The majority of citizens in the United States do not contribute to political campaigns. Even when they do, the dollar amounts are relatively small. So, where does the lion's share of Congressional candidates' money come from? Powerful corporate and financial sectors within the American economy. To ensure that their interests are met, all of the most significant industries in the United States lobby Congress and contribute campaign dollars to political candidates. Below is a list of the top contributors of campaign dollars to Congress in 2013–2014:

TABLE 7.3 Top Campaign Contributors to Congress by Sector (2013–2014)¹¹

1) Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	\$464,350,782
2) Ideology/Single Issue	\$335,668,041
3) Other	\$257,679,927
4) Misc. Business	\$215,657,965
5) Lawyers & Lobbyists	\$145,087,918
6) Health	\$134,548,323
7) Labor	\$132,584,959
8) Communications/Electronics	\$107,564,564
9) Energy/Natural Resources	\$103,972,928
10) Agribusiness	\$70,881,926
11) Construction	\$62,589,150
12) Transportation	\$57,836,310
13) Defense	\$24,479,070

Yet with even a cursory look at the campaign contributions spent today it is clear that some of the most powerful sectors in US society are providing congressional office-holders with even more money to try and help determine the outcome of congressional policy-making. Below is a list of the top contributors of campaign dollars to Congress in 2019–2020:

TABLE 7.4 Top Campaign Contributors to Congress by Sector (2019–2020)¹²

1) Other	\$2,382,877,058
2) Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	\$1,954,648,468
3) Ideology/Single Issue	\$1,848,904,690
4) Misc. Business	\$836,986,537
5) Health	\$637,577,534
6) Communications/Electronics	\$612,125,924
7) Lawyers & Lobbyists	\$374,322,575
8) Labor	\$259,371,009
9) Energy/Natural Resources	\$222,200,721
10) Construction	\$202,353,565
11) Agribusiness	\$193,489,129
12) Transportation	\$147,045,013
13) Defense	\$46,019,740

Once Congress is elected, many of these same interests continue to pressure or lobby Congress and the federal government. The majority of money spent lobbying the federal government is spent on Congress, with a smaller amount spent trying to influence other federal agencies, such as the Department of Defense, the Treasury Department, and the White House. Table 7.5 shows a list of the top industries that lobbied Congress and other federal bureaucracies in Washington, DC, during 2013:

TABLE 7.5 Top Twenty Industries Lobbying Congress and Other Federal Agencies (2013)¹³

1) Pharmaceuticals/Health Products	\$228,259,456
2) Insurance	\$153,512,759
3) Oil & Gas	\$144,941,531
4) Computers/Internet	\$141,743,648
5) Electric Utilities	\$129,592,074
6) TV/Movies/Music	\$118,486,958
7) Business Associations	\$109,333,902
8) Securities & Investment	\$98,167,423
9) Misc. Manufacturing & Distributing	\$95,280,082
10) Hospitals/Nursing Homes	\$92,295,758
11) Health Professionals	\$85,886,466
12) Education	\$84,839,344
13) Real Estate	\$82,304,985
14) Air Transport	\$78,848,483
15) Civil Servants/Public Officials	\$72,759,521
16) Health Services/HMOs	\$70,941,067
17) Commercial Banks	\$62,298,596
18) Chemical & Related Manufacturing	\$61,585,087
19) Defense Aerospace	\$58,347,286
20) Automotive	\$58,278,857

Yet in a relatively short period of time, we see that many of these same industries have increased their lobbying dollars spent on congressional officeholders in their attempt to further shape the "nation's business." Table 7.6 lists the top industries that lobbied Congress in Washington, DC, during 2020:

TABLE 7.6 Top Twenty Industries Lobbying	Congress (2020) ¹⁴
1) Pharmaceuticals/Health Products	\$309,019,988
2) Electronics Manufacturing & Equipment	\$160,713,769
3) Insurance	\$154,088,164
4) Real Estate	\$131,799,597
5) Business Associations	\$120,341,131
6) Oil & Gas	\$112,132,376
7) Hospitals/Nursing Homes	\$110,632,090
8) Electric Utilities	\$108,328,019
9) Air Transport	\$106,108,918
10) Misc Manufacturing & Distributing	\$105,577,993
11) Telecom Services	\$105,429,377
12) Securities & Inves	\$104,284,218
13) Health Services/HMOs	\$100,759,669
14) Health Professionals	\$89,969,027
15) Education	\$81,995,469
16) Internet	\$80,734,317
17) Civil Servants/Public Officials	\$79,638,596
18) Automotive	\$62,261,225
19) Commercial Banks	\$62,050,133
20) Misc Energy	\$50,827,563

The above tables help to explain national policy in the United States. In looking at the top industries petitioning the federal government, it should not come as a surprise to anyone that the United States has privatized medicine, fights wars in multiple countries, continues to promote the use of fossil fuels despite their global repercussions, and offers bailouts to powerful financial interests. Whether it is campaign contributions or lobbying dollars, the United States Congress is overwhelming "influenced" by a powerful coterie of transnational corporate interests.

7.3 Ensuring Capital Accumulation (and Enhancing State Power)

The first session of the 113th Congress, which ended in December 2013, passed just 60 new laws—a record low in the post–World War II era. In fact, Truman's "Do Nothing Congress"—the 80th Congress, which ran from 1947 to 1949—passed 906 bills. The bills passed by the 113th Congress have ranged from an Act to further appropriate money to the military and other large bureaucracies (Public Law 113-6) to naming a bridge in Missouri after a retired baseball player (Public Law 113-18). Yet, since 2000, Congress has passed

some of the most significant legislation in the history of the United States. Beginning in 2001, shortly after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Congress passed Public Law 107-56, the so-called the USA PATRIOT Act. The PATRIOT Act has helped to create a more extensive surveillance state that runs contrary to traditionally understood notions of the Fourth Amendment's "search and seizure" clause. Throughout history, the Fourth Amendment has always required law enforcement agencies to acquire a valid search warrant from a judge before a search can be executed on a home or business, and all searches must be based on probable cause or, at least, reasonable suspicion.

In contradiction to this legal tradition, the PATRIOT Act allows the federal government and its law enforcement agencies to search a person's home or business without their knowledge or consent. In addition, it increases law enforcement agencies' access to their businesses, library accounts, and financial records. The PATRIOT Act also expands the use of the so-called National Security Letters (NSL)—a type of subpoena issued by the FBI—to search the American people's telephones, emails, and bank accounts without a court order signed by a judge. Equally as concerning, under the expanded definition of the Act, the FBI may search the records of any person "deemed relevant to a terrorism investigation even if that person is not suspected of unlawful behavior." ¹⁵

Done in the name of surrendering some civil liberties for personal security, the PATRIOT Act violates the famous maxim of one of the most well-known Founding Fathers of the United States, Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790). Known as "the First American," Franklin famously remarked that those who "give up ... liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." However, in this case, the American people didn't give up one of their essential liberties, but instead had it legislated away by their elected leaders. In political science, there is a long-standing belief that when a state begins to extend its reach into the world militarily, civil liberties will be suppressed at home. The reasons why, of course, are obvious. With increased wars, so too will there be increased popular resistance, particularly when state justifications for war cannot be sustained. Accordingly, the state suppresses the ability of citizens to resist, which itself can be an indication of imperial expanse.

While the PATRIOT Act can be viewed as a natural byproduct of a state at war (which is itself driven by capital considerations), the other significant legislation passed by Congress has overwhelmingly been designed to protect the interests of transnational corporations—and to a lesser extent, further enhance state power over the people. Recent congressional legislation, with few exceptions—most notably the increase to the Child Tax Credit in 2021 and President Biden's American Families Plan—have been passed to protect, prop up, or further the class interests of the cosmopolitan bourgeoisie, not those of working people. This is not to say that no laws whatsoever have been passed by Congress attempting to address other concerns. The fact of the matter is that there have been laws passed by Congress to (1) protect the rights of children (Public Law 108-21); (2) ban a type of late-term abortion (Public Law 108-105); and (3) monitor anti-Semitism around the world (Public Law 108–332). However, the "money bills" and security bills passed by Congress since 2000 have not helped working people in any significant way. Instead, they have further enriched the wealthiest sectors within American society and, at the same time, increased the scope of government authority over the people of the United States. Indeed, consider the following:

Acts Passed by the 107th Congress (2001–2003)

Public Law 107-171: The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 initiated a program that provides approximately \$16.5 billion of funding in agricultural subsidies each year to wealthy farmers and prevents fair trade with

Third World countries that do not subsidize their domestic crops. Some of the billionaire "farmers" who have received taxpayer-funded support include Paul Allen (cofounder of Microsoft); Charles Schwab (founder of Charles Schwab Corporation); Charles Ergen (cofounder of the DISH Network); and David Rockefeller, Sr. (former chairman and chief executive of Chase Manhattan Bank). Though this bill is renewed annually, the subsidy recipients of the 2014 Farm Bill have been kept *undisclosed* by Congress, making it impossible for the American people to review these wealthy beneficiaries of US taxpayer dollars.

- Public Law 107-16: The Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 and Public Law 108-27: The Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2003 were a group of tax reductions known as the "Bush-era tax cuts" for the rich and were extended by President Obama. While the tax breaks lowered federal income tax rates for all income earners, they also lowered capital gains taxes and the tax rate on dividends, prevented the elimination of personal exemptions for higher-income taxpayers, prevented the elimination of itemized deductions, and eliminated the estate tax—all of which were a financial boon to the wealthiest members of US society.
- » Public Law 107-243: The Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Act was passed by Congress, "authorizing" the US war on Iraq, which generated huge revenues for weapons manufacturers, oil corporations, reconstruction firms, and private military companies.
- Public Law 107-296: The Homeland Security Act created the Department of Homeland Security, increasing the overall law enforcement presence throughout the United States. It is home to, among other agencies, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). The somewhat controversial security agency is charged with "protecting" US citizens at, among other places and most notably, their own airports through full-body scans and, at times, invasive searches.

Acts Passed by the 108th Congress (2003–2005)

- » Public Law 108-173: The Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act provided a subsidy for prescription drugs for seniors, but also locked in the high cost of those drugs paid out to pharmaceutical companies with taxpayer funds.
- » Public Law 108-458: The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act created the position of Director of National Intelligence, as well as the so-called "Lone Wolf" provision, which permits secret intelligence surveillance of non-US citizens who are unaffiliated with any specific foreign terror or non-terror organization.

Acts Passed by the 109th Congress (2005–2007)

» Public Law 109-8: The Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act made it more difficult for the vast majority of the American people to file for bankruptcy under Chapter 7.

- Public Law 109-53: The Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (CAFTA) ends tariffs on about 80 percent of US exports to CAFTA-participating nations within 10 years, which has the potential to notably increase the profit margins of participating companies.
- » Public Law 109-222: The Tax Increase Prevention and Reconciliation Act of 2005 allows for an extension of the reduced tax rate on capital gains and dividends for the rich.

Acts Passed by the 110th Congress (2007–2009)

- » Public Law 110-234: The Food and Energy Security Act of 2007 (also known as the "Farm Bill") provided a \$288 billion subsidy to farmers and the farming industry. The bill was \$136 billion more than the so-called Economic Stimulus Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-185), which was supposed to help hundreds of millions of US citizens get through the "Great Recession."
- Public Law 110-343: The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 authorized United States Secretary of the Treasury Henry Paulson to spend \$700 billion to purchase mortgage-backed securities and supply cash directly to major US banks. This was the first taxpayer-funded bailout of the major banks following the start of the "Great Recession."

Acts Passed by the 111th Congress (2009–2011)

- » Public Law 111-148: The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act prevented insurance companies from not insuring people who had pre-existing conditions, but also guaranteed government payment to the health-care industry of some 20 million new customers.
- Public Law 111-195: The Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 applied economic sanctions on Iran and punishes anyone who assists the Iranian petroleum industry. The stated purpose for the sanctions is based on Iran's development of nuclear technology. However, the most serious consequence of the sanctions on Iran is that the Iranian rial—the nation's currency—lost some 60–75 percent of its value against the US dollar since the sanctions went into effect.
- Public Law 111-312: The Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010 was passed as an extension of the Bush-era tax cuts for the rich, allowing the wealthiest 1 percent of the US population to continue to pay less than their fair share of taxes.

Acts Passed by the 112th Congress (2011–2013)

» Public Law 112-41: The United States-Korea Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act is expected to eliminate 95 percent of US-Korea tariffs on goods within five years of its initiation and also provides new protections for multinational financial services and other industries. It is the first of three trade

- agreements passed by the 112th Congress that will help make US corporations more profitable in international trade.
- » Public Law 112-42: The United States-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement Implementation Act (CTPA) is a wide-ranging agreement between the US and Colombia that eliminates tariffs and other issues related to trade in commodities and services. The US is Colombia's largest trading partner. It is the second trade agreement passed by the 112th Congress that will be of increased financial benefit to US capital.
- » Public Law 112-43a: The United States-Panama Trade Promotion Agreement Implementation Act is a trade agreement between Panama and the United States, which eliminates trade barriers and favors private investment in and between both countries. It is the third trade pact agreed upon by the 112th Congress that will enhance the ability of US MNCs to accumulate more capital on the international market in coming years.
- Public Law 112-81: The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 is the military budget for 2012. The United States Congress passes a military budget each year (some \$1.2 trillion) that provides huge dollar amounts to the military and defense industries. The military budget is a massive source of wealth for private corporations, with more money allocated to corporate America from the defense budget than from any other part of the entire federal budget each year. However, NDAA 2012 is different. Not only is it immense in size, providing money for ongoing US wars around the world, but it also provides, as noted earlier, for the arrest and indefinite imprisonment of US citizens who are considered to be "supporting" enemies of the United States. Indefinite detention is a violation of the Constitutional right of habeas corpus, and, providing "support" to enemies of the United States has been so poorly defined that some types of speech criticizing US foreign policy may result in American citizens being arrested and incarcerated for an indeterminate length of time.

Acts Passed by the 113th (2013-2015) Congress

Public Law 113-41: The Organization of American States Revitalization and Reform Act of 2013 continues to provide support for the Organization of American States (OAS), which has excluded Cuba since 1962 because it is noncapitalist. (The OAS voted to include Cuba in 2009, though Cuba chose to remain a non-member.) Public Law 113-41 is an example of the kind of laws passed by the US government in international affairs in support of the wider global economic system itself.

Acts Passed by the 114th (2015–2017) Congress

Public Law 114-01: "The Terrorism Risk Insurance Act" was first signed into law under George W. Bush in November of 2002. It was reauthorized by the 114th Congress and later extended in 2019 through 2027. It is a publicly-funded insurance program, now valued at some \$100 billion annually, to provide money to insurance corporations that have insured other corporations against acts of terrorism.

Public Law 114-195: The "Global Food Security Strategy Act of 2016" was passed by the 114th Congress to require the president to develop an approach for addressing global poverty and hunger wherever it may exist throughout the world. While an admirable goal and praised by a number of human rights organizations, the stated purpose of the law was not based on a respect for human dignity, but instead because poverty and people going hungry were determined by Congress to be a threat to "US national security" [emphasis added].

Acts Passed by the 115th (2017–2019) Congress

- Public Law 115-04: The Republican-led 115th Congress passed the "Repeal of the Disclosure of Payments by Resource Extraction Issuers Rule." The so-called "Disclosure of Payments" regulation was a part of the "Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act" which was signed in the aftermath of the Great Recession to more closely regulate the financial sector and give added protection to American citizens from the banking industry. The Disclosure of Payments component of the Dodd-Frank Act (now repealed) was aimed at preventing the American oil and gas industry from bribing foreign governments for contracts to exploit those nations resources. Without it, there is nothing stopping ExxonMobil, ChevronTexaco or any other US oil corporation from bribing the governments of Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Angola or any other state with energy reserves to get at that nation's oil riches and further add to the corruption the US government so often complains about is a part of Third World governance.
- » Public Law 115-97: The "Tax Cuts and Jobs Acts of 2017" was a \$1.45 trillion tax giveaway to some of the most powerful US-based corporations in the world. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the most significant impact of the tax-break advocated by the Trump White House and congressional Republicans is that \$2.3 trillion will be added to the already massive-sized national debt.

Acts Passed by the 116th (2019–2021) Congress

Public Law 116-136: "The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act" (or the CARES Act) was passed by the 116th Congress in March of 2020 in response to the severe economic impact brought on by the global coronavirus pandemic. It provided \$300 billion to working families (or just \$1,200 per qualifying adult), \$260 billion in increased spending on unemployment benefits, some \$670 billion in forgivable loans to small businesses, \$500 billion in loans to large corporations, and \$340 billion to state and local governments throughout the United States. In December 2020, an additional \$900 billion was added to the original spending bill. In March of 2021, the 117th Congress passed Public Law 117-2: "The American Rescue Plan Act" which added an additional \$1.9 trillion in tax-payer provided assistance to the whole of the US politico-economic system and each economic class. The CARES Act by itself, totaling some \$2.2 trillion, was the largest "bailout" of the American economic (and political) system in history. Taken altogether, the United States Congress authorized more than \$4 trillion in tax-payer provided revenue to address the economic repercussions of the global pandemic—a number that is greater than the entire United States total tax revenue for 2021. The handling of the global pandemic in the United States at the federal level, and particularly by the Trump administration, have led some to conclude that this massive sum of federal tax dollars could have been spent on more constructive domestic programs provided the pandemic had been addressed correctly. So, the argument goes, had the White House, guided by science and data, worked quickly similar to other countries, the US may have had a different outcome. To be sure, and in taking just one example, while the United States, the wealthiest country on the planet, has watched in horror as more than 800,000 of their fellow citizens have died from the advanced stages of COVID-19—a number that is greater than all Americans killed in WWI, WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq combined—New Zealand, led by the young and thoughtful Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern (1980–present), has lost less than 30 people *in total* throughout the whole of the global pandemic.

In the end, the basic pattern that emerges from a review of the major legislation passed by the United States Congress since 2000 is that it is not an institution which carries out the whole of the nation's business. On the contrary, what we instead see is that multiple wealthy and powerful industries and interests are the primary movers and beneficiaries of Congressional law-making. This should come as no surprise, since they are the ones spending the most money lobbying Congress.

In fact, the idea that the United States is ruled by the rich is becoming so widespread that even some liberal scholars have begun to advance the notion. To be sure, the "mainstream" Northwestern University professor Benjamin I. Page and Princeton's Martin Gilens have concluded that, based on a multivariate analysis, "economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on US government policy, while average citizens and mass-based interest groups have little or no independent influence." Or, said another way but still using Page's and Gilens' words, the United States government has become, in their view, an oligarchy—a government that is ruled by the (wealthy) few.



The President of the United States

'For can there be a good government without a good executive?'1

—Alexander Hamilton (Founding Father, 1755 or 1757–1804)

The office of the President of the United States is the most powerful office in the world. Whoever becomes president has more influence over national policy and global events, and more public visibility than any other person on the planet. In short, the chief executive of the United States is the most powerful person on Earth.

8.1 The Powers of the President

The president has a number of constitutional responsibilities. As spelled out in Article II of the Constitution, the holder of the office is to be a natural-born citizen and at least 35

years of age. He or she is elected to a four-year term for no more than two terms, or ten years in total as amended by the 22nd Amendment. The president receives compensation for his or her service (\$400,000 per year), is required to take an oath of office, and is, importantly, "Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States ... when called into the actual Service of the United States." He or she has the power to grant pardons except in the case of impeachment; the power to make treaties with the advice and consent of two-thirds of the Senate (ACS); and alongside the ACS, appoints ambassadors, ministers, judges of the Supreme Court, and all other officers of the federal government. The president has the power to fill vacancies for a limited time during recesses in the Senate, issue a state of the union, receive ambassadors and other public ministers, "take care that the laws be faithfully executed" (i.e., the "Take Care" Clause of Article II, Section 3), and commission all officers of the United



The White House, Washington, DC (Wikimedia Commons)

States. Finally, the president of the United States can be "removed from office" by impeachment "for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other High crimes and Misdemeanors."

In addition to these constitutionally granted powers, some traditions have become a part of the presidency that were not a part of the original conception of the office by the framers of the Constitution. For example, the president is the chief spokesperson of the nation and speaks publicly multiple times a day about public policy or as a part of a public event or ceremony. While not forbidden by the Constitution, US presidents did not make regular speeches about policy in any way whatsoever from 1790 until almost 1900. The most notable exception to this rule was Andrew Johnson (1808–1875), who made a number of policy speeches in his attempt to reintegrate the South with the North during the Reconstruction Era (1863–1877) following the Civil War. To a lesser extent, speech-making was also performed by Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War, as well as by Benjamin Harrison (1833–1901) and William McKinley (1843–1901) toward the end of the 19th century.

In fact, Thomas Jefferson did not make more than forty public speeches during his eight years in office, with none of them discussing public policy. In illustrating the limited use of rhetoric by early presidents, John Adams, his son John Q. Adams (1767–1848), Andrew Jackson (1767–1845), and John Tyler (1790–1862) did not make more than eight public speeches during their presidencies (averaging between one and two a year). And, James Madison and William Henry Harrison (1773–1841) made no public speeches *at all* during their time in the White House. It was not until the first part of the 20th century, with the presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919) and Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924), that the office of the president incorporated the use of rhetoric into its institutional framework.²

Furthermore, though not in the Constitution, the president is also the nation's chief legislative leader. As designed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the president develops the nation's budget, which is then submitted to Congress for consideration by a member of his party. As often as not, when the president does speak publicly, it is for the purpose of advocating some aspect of the administration's budget that is either in dispute or is somehow advantageous to the president's party or other policy goals. Yet, these are not the only powers or traditions that have become a part of the office of the president. Below are other significant *extra*-constitutional powers and traditions which have become a part of the American presidency.

Extralegal War Powers

By constitutional design, the president is to be "Commander-in-Chief" of the nation's military "when called into the actual service" of the country. As discussed in Chapter 6, Federalist #69 makes it clear that the president, unlike the king of England, cannot declare war or regulate the United States military. Those responsibilities are left specifically for the nation's most popular body—the United States Congress. However, as we have seen on multiple occasions, US presidents have sent troops abroad or ordered the bombing of a foreign nation on some one hundred separate instances since the end of World War II without a declaration of war from Congress.³ In an attempt to reign in presidential war powers, Congress passed the War Powers Resolution Act of 1973. Yet, instead of drawing back presidential war powers to their constitutional designs, the War Powers Resolution allowed the president to send troops abroad for up to 90 days without obtaining any kind of approval from Congress (i.e., a declaration of war). According to Louis Fisher—probably the finest presidential scholar working today—the War Powers Resolution "legalizes a scope for independent Presidential power that would have astonished the framers," as it provided presidents with war powers that the framers never envisioned.⁴

Executive Orders

An executive order (EO) is a directive issued by the president to bring into existence some specific desire that has not been legislated by Congress. It is considered to be the same as a law and can be reviewed by the Supreme Court. Executive orders have created reservations for Native Americans, job programs for millions of Americans, commissions to investigate assassinations, boards to regulate industries, and instructions to prohibit discrimination. Though there is no constitutional provision for executive orders, every president except William Henry Harrison has issued at least one executive order, for a total of more than 14,000 since the founding of the nation. No one has issued more executive orders than FDR, who signed off on over 3,500 of them. To place that number in context, modern presidents from Truman to Obama have signed noticeably fewer, averaging between 150-500 executive orders during their presidencies.⁵ Some argue that the president must have the power to sign executive orders consistent with his constitutional responsibility to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed." Yet, in circumventing constitutional restrictions on the Executive Branch, executive orders can and do have dramatic implications for the American people. To be sure, one of the more well-known executive orders ever issued was done so by FDR in February of 1942. Indeed, he signed EO 9066, which relocated more than 120,000 Japanese-Americans on the West Coast into internment camps. In so doing, the United States government was eventually required to pay reparations to every Japanese-American who was incarcerated or detained during the war and both the executive order and the interment of tens of thousands of US citizens remains a black mark in American history.

However, in recent years, the whole idea of executive orders have become even more problematic for the American people and the republic. Indeed, Donald Trump signed EO 13769 in January of 2017 which barred entry of immigrants and refugees to the United States from multiple countries including, Iraq, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. Known as the "Muslim ban," the executive order is concerning for two basic reasons: 1) It attempted to prevent entry of people into the United States from countries that US foreign policy has had a devastating effect upon-not least among them, undeclared, and therefore unconstitutional wars, and 2) Because it was signed by the President at all. Without a doubt, Article I, Section 8, Clause 4 of the United States Constitution makes it clear that Congress, not the president, is responsible for "establish[ing] an uniform Rule of Naturalization [i.e., immigration]." In other words, by constitutional design the framers of the Constitution made it the responsibility of Congress to determine immigration law. When the president of the United States, be it George Bush, Barak Obama, or some other president tries to make immigration law their prerogative instead of that of Congress then not only is that an act in direct contradiction with the Constitution but also the very foundation of what the American republic was founded on—a separation of power amongst the three branches of government. When this formulation of governmental power becomes common practice, then there is no republic. Instead, merely rule by one person. The "Muslim Ban" was later replaced and updated by EO 13780 and made permanent by Presidential Proclamation 9645. Most troubling and showing an apparent lack of understanding of the Constitution itself, the United States Supreme Court upheld the President's authority to impose the immigration restrictions in Trump v. Hawaii (2018). In so doing, the Court made "official" this formulation of government decision-making.

Later, in February of 2020, through a constitutionally nonexistent mandate known as a "reprogramming action," Present Trump diverted nearly \$4 billion from the congressionally approved military budget to help construct a border wall along the US border with Mexico. Not only is the "reprogramming action" unconstitutional but the framers of the Constitution purposely placed control of the nation's tax dollars in the hands of the people's representatives—Congress. For a president to move congressionally appropriated money to programs that they are not intended for undermines the whole idea of the "power of the purse" being placed in Congress's hands and, similar to the "Muslim Ban," further erodes the American understanding of republican government. Most concerning, much like *Trump v. Hawaii* (2018), the Supreme Court approved of the president's actions to do so in their decision in *Trump v. Sierra Club* (2019).

Signing Statements

A signing statement is a written statement attached to a bill by the president when he signs into law a piece of legislation passed by Congress. The signing statement can be fairly harmless where it merely states that the law just passed will provide for some public good. However, other presidential signing statements serve as a way for the president to get around the will of Congress and undermine the well-thought-out and constitutionally-fixed governmental system of checks and balances. According to the Constitution, a president can either sign or veto an act of Congress. Yet nearly all Democratic and Republican presidents have used signing statements to carry out some policy preference that Congress has not legislated. In fact, signing statements have been on the rise since the Reagan presidency, with President George W. Bush challenging some "1,100 sections of bills—more than all previous presidents combined." The result is that the president is able to reshape a law that has been passed by Congress, which is inconsistent with not only Congress's intentions but is also at odds with the original design of the Constitution itself.

Executive Privilege

When pressed by the United States Congress, a court, or a federal bureaucracy, presidents have sometimes invoked the notion of *executive privilege*. Though not recognized in the Constitution, executive privilege is the idea that some matters regarding the executive branch should be kept from other political institutions or the public. With some form of presidential privilege dating back to George Washington, it has been most famously invoked by Richard Nixon (1913–1994) during the Watergate Scandal in the early 1970s to prevent the release of tape recordings of his White House conversations. The Supreme Court ultimately rejected his claim in *United States v. Nixon* (1974) arguing that, except in instances of military or diplomatic matters (what is today known as "national security"), the president has to make public all of his conversations and letters.

However, recent presidents have invoked executive privilege, not on behalf of national security questions, but instead on issues that seem quite removed from the protection of the nation. For instance, Bill Clinton (1946–present) invoked executive privilege 14 separate times including when he attempted to prevent his aides from testifying in the Monica Lewinsky sex scandal (1998), which was a clear case of trying to use executive privilege in a matter that had nothing to do with national security. George W. Bush invoked executive privilege on six occasions, including (1) to deny disclosure of the FBI's use of the Winter-Hill gang leader James "Whitey" Bulger (1929–2018), who was protected against prosecution for committing all types of crimes in South Boston, in

exchange for information on other gangs; (2) to keep VP Dick Cheney's meetings with oil executives (among others) to develop the nation's energy policy secret; (3) to prevent Karl Rove from testifying in front of the Senate about fired federal prosecutors who had allegedly been dismissed because they were out of step with the administration politically; and (4) to prevent the administration's general counsel from answering questions before Congress about why the SEC did not act on good information to investigate securities fraud committed by con-artist Bernie Madoff. President Obama invoked executive privilege to prevent investigation into the so-called Fast and Furious operation (2006-2011). The operation allowed weapons to be sold to illegal buyers in hopes of tracking the guns to Mexican drug cartels. Ultimately, the weapons turned up at crimes scenes on both sides of the border and resulted in the death of US border patrol agent Brian Terry. Not one member of a drug cartel has yet been arrested. Finally, Donald Trump exerted executive privilege in his attempt to suppress the "Mueller Report" of 2019 which, as is well-known now, found that "the Russian government interfered in the 2016 presidential election in sweeping and systematic fashion." In fact, the Mueller Report established that on more than 100 instances during his campaign, candidate Trump and his subordinates were in contact with, asked for, and received assistance from Russia to gain access to the White House. While the president denied (or lied about) this, the intelligence community,⁷ the Mueller Report, 8 and a joint Senate Intelligence Committee9 are all in agreement with this basic fact.

8.2 Presidential Campaign Spending

As the president is the most powerful political figure in the United States, his support is sought by multiple groups within US society. This is overwhelming done through campaign contributions and lobbying dollars. In 2012, President Obama and his Republican challenger, Mitt Romney, raised more than \$1 billion in campaign contributions. Obama raised more than \$715 million, while Romney gathered just over \$445 million. Campaign contributions to President Obama by sector are listed in Table 8.1 below:

TABLE 8.1 Campaign Contributions to President Barack Obama by Sector (2012) ¹⁰	
1) Other	\$91,951,390
2) Lawyers & Lobbyists	\$27,969,192
3) Misc. Business	\$22,614,472
4) Communications/Electronics	\$20,725,228
5) Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	\$20,437,371
6) Health	\$18,919,174
7) Ideological/Single-Issue	\$17,287,692
8) Construction	\$4,179,990
9) Energy & Natural Resources	\$2,413,362
10) Agribusiness	\$2,068,275
11) Transportation	\$1,380,856
12) Defense	\$1,141,330
13) Labor	\$494,094

By 2020, President Biden and his Republican challenger, Donald Trump, had raised nearly \$2 billion in campaign contributions. Biden raised more than \$1 billion, the first American candidate to ever raise that dollar amount, while Trump brought in some \$775 million in campaign contributions. Campaign contributions to President Biden by sector are listed in Table 8.2 below:

TABLE 8.2 Campaign Contributions to President Joseph Biden by Sector (2020)11

1) Other	\$288,696,181
2) Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	\$252,603,648
3) Ideological/Single-Issue	\$202,496,117
4) Communications/Electronics	\$132,608,916
5) Health	\$70,784,456
6) Misc Business	\$68,070,452
7) Lawyers & Lobbyists	\$62,073,254
8) Labor	\$27,618,480
9) Construction	\$13,360,643
10) Transportation	\$8,382,266
11) Energy & Natural Resources	\$7,165,289
12) Agribusiness	\$6,928,442
13) Defense	\$3,322,048

Similar to campaign contributions to congressional candidates, some of the most powerful industrial centers and financial interests within the American economy were contributing large dollar amounts to the president and his challenger. Again, as with Congress, it should again come as no surprise that the agricultural industry continued to receive massive taxpayer-provided federal subsidies, that the military budget remained larger than that of any other nation by a \$1 trillion margin, or that the derivatives market and banking industry remain largely unchecked since the "Great Recession." Equally true is an explanation as to why the United States is the richest nation in the world—yet neither President Obama nor President Biden support free health care, free higher education, or an inexpensive mass transit system, as was and is the case with nearly every other First World country on the planet.

8.3 An Assessment of the Trump Presidency: an American Caligula?¹²

After more than 35 years of neoliberalism being imposed on the United States, the American people coalesced around two candidates during the 2016 presidential election who should not have been entirely unpredictable. Indeed, with the gap between the wealthiest 1% and the rest of the population greater than at any time since 1928—a year before the start of the Great Depression—two candidates emerged who were clearly responding to the impact of those policies. Who were they? Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont on the left and one of the main beneficiaries of neoliberalism on the right, Donald Trump.

Of course, Hillary Clinton won the Democratic nomination for president to run against the "surprise candidacy" of Trump, but not without the assistance of the Democratic Party establishment itself. As we know now, the outcome of the Democratic primary was being orchestrated by the Democratic National Committee (DNC) to benefit Clinton, and not Sanders. Nevertheless, a man who openly referred to himself as a "socialist"—long one of the most misunderstood words in American politics—won some 43% of the popular vote during the Democratic primary, indicating that a large portion of the population had "awoken" and was now aligning itself with a candidate who was directly addressing their class concerns. However, Sanders did not win the primary, and Clinton did not win the presidency. Instead, one of the world's richest men who was unpredictable and potentially dangerous, gathered the 270 Electoral College votes necessary to ascend to the most powerful office in the world.

According to the corporate-owned media, there was a very specific reason why Trump won the White House. Overwhelmingly, the argument coming from the "mainstream media" was that he had provided the "right message" to some of the most important voters in the country. Who were they? The Rust Belt voters. What is the Rust Belt? Just a handful of states, including all of Ohio and parts of New York, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin. This region of the country was once known as the "industrial heartland" of the United States. In fact, before neoliberalism came to the United States, it was known variously as the Steel Belt, the Manufacturing Belt, or the Factory Belt—indicating the industrial significance of the region. However, since the arrival of neoliberalism, the Steel Belt has experienced a steady loss of factory, coal, and steel jobs, a decrease in population, an increase of violence in the inner cities, a general decay of its infrastructure, and a rise in poverty. Thus, the Steel Belt became known as the Rust Belt.

The news media claimed that Trump "spoke" to these voters. And, specifically, he spoke to the working class in this region. Indeed, in what turned out to be the Electoral College–significant states of Pennsylvania (48.8% Trump vs. 47.6% Clinton), Wisconsin (47.9% Trump vs. 46.9% Clinton), and Michigan (47.6% Trump vs. 47.3% Clinton), Trump's victory was chalked up to "hidden" or "pocket" voters; i.e., unexpected working-class voters who turned out to tip the election in his favor. Ohio (52.1% Trump vs. Clinton 43.5%) was also considered to be significant but was not as close in the popular vote (and, consequently, the Electoral College) as were the other states. Regardless of whether or not the media's assessment was correct, and despite losing the popular vote to Hillary Clinton by 2.9 million votes, Trump formally became 45th president of the United States on November 8, 2016.

Yet to fully understand the Trump presidency we might examine not just his presidency but also look back into history—and specifically, to the Roman Empire under Caligula (12 AD–34 AD)—to gain a deeper understanding of his time in power. By the time Trump had ascended to the American presidency the United States had a number of comparable features with ancient Rome under the Roman emperor. Indeed, similar to the Roman Empire, the long and violent history of American involvement all around the world is a legacy that it will leave to future generations. In fact, future generations may well one day think of this time in history, with American troops spread all around the globe, the many ongoing deadly wars that the US is now prosecuting, the seemingly non-stop social violence throughout the country, the ravenous greed of the rich, and an increasingly corrupt government that was led by Trump, as the beginning of the end of the American republic. Like children wandering through the ruins of their ancestors and confronted with the vicious truth of a powerful empire that they have inherited, they may well wonder why those who came before them seem to have tried to bring back into existence some of the darkest days of the Roman Empire.

In fact, the parallels between Rome under Caligula and the United States under Trump might be quite striking for them. The historical record is in almost complete agreement that Caligula was insane, self-obsessed, cruel, a tyrant, and a sexual deviant. Or as Anthony Barrett writes, he was a "self-indulgent and unpredictable ruler devoid of any sense of moral responsibility. Totally unsuited to the task of governing, without training and with little talent for administration." While his debased personality traits likely would have made him noteworthy in Roman history, his actual rule as emperor brought about or exacerbated a whole series of problems that Rome was already facing. In just four years, he further undermined the Roman notion of republican government and the rule of law and made it even more remote that this once promising city-state would ever return to its previous formulation as a republic.

Caligula's time in power included not only waging costly wars but also sending Roman troops on meaningless military excursions. He worked to increase the political power of the emperor to almost unlimited degrees and used state funds to build grand scale and self-aggrandizing "public-works" projects. Never shy to enhance his own wealth and prestige, while emperor Caligula continued to build expensive residences for himself with it not always clear if the money that was spent came from the state or himself. After squandering much of Rome's money, Caligula tried to replenish the republic's treasury through a series of unpopular tax measures and legally doubtful and dishonest expropriations. With Rome knocked askew from his unscrupulous rule, Caligula announced that he was going to Egypt to be worshipped as a living god. After making his horse a priest, this decision was apparently one step too far for the Roman elite. His announcement led to an assemblage of murderous-minded senators and property owners to coalesce around him which led to his assassination by a member of the Pretorian Guard—one of the very men assigned to protect him. Though removed from the political scene, the damage Caligula had done to Ancient Rome cast a dark shadow over the once great city-state long after his death. Today, his rule echoes down through history as an example of the toxic mix of power and madness.

Yet when we think of the United States and consider the actions of the man who led the American republic and empire from 2016–2020 can we really conclude that the US was so different than Rome was under Caligula? President Trump too had debased personality traits, was self-obsessed, cruel, ignorant, a sexual deviant, lacked any real morality, and very much appeared to be of an unsound mind. With respect to his governing style, as president, he pushed the limits of power of his once venerated office to bounds never before seen in American history and not intended by the framers of the Constitution. He openly violated the Constitution and the rule of law as well as disrespected the republican principle of a separation of powers by trying to fund a "public works" project (i.e., the US border wall with Mexico) with money that had not been approved for it by Congress and regularly ruled through constitutionally doubtful decrees (i.e., executive orders). In so doing, he undermined the very foundation of American government.

With a military already unrivaled in world history, he further turned plowshares into swords by increasing the size of the military budget and then sent American troops on a meaningless military expedition to the US-Mexico border. In fact, some of his actions were more reminiscent of the grim character Fames in the Roman poet Virgil's "Aeneid" than they are of Caligula. Fames—or "Hunger"—loitered in front of the "Gates of Hell" urging people to commit crimes. Yet in the United States, instead of loitering as the embodiment of hunger, the American president gave massive tax-cuts to the rich including himself and his family members. (In fact, before he became president, he paid no taxes whatsoever in 10 of the 15 years prior to his 2016 inauguration. And, then once he became president, though he claimed to be a multi-billionaire, he paid only \$750 a year in total income taxes in each of the first two years of his presidency). At the same time,

while president, he and his party made deep cuts to important social programs for the people and the poor, all the while requiring hundreds of thousands of federal employees to work without pay. Then the president and his wealthy cabinet members wondered mindlessly why some federal employees couldn't "make ends meet" by simply taking out a loan, borrowing from their local grocery store, or relying on a food bank. Like a thief for the rich (and not unlike Fames), he tempted the American people to become similar to a modern-day Jean Valjean, an otherwise honest man whose poverty drives him to steal bread so he might simply continue to stay alive.

While Caligula was assassinated for his misdeeds, Trump suffered a much less violent fate. He was instead impeached by the House of Representatives. In fact, he was impeached on two separate occasions—the first president to have had such a punishment exacted upon him. Trump's first impeachment occurred on December 18, 2019, when the House adopted two articles of impeachment against him: abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. The articles came about from a House inquiry which concluded that the president had requested a foreign country's assistance in the 2020 US presidential election for his re-election and then obstructed the congressional inquiry by telling members of his administration to ignore subpoenas from Congress. Specifically, the inquiry found that the president withheld \$400 million of much needed military aid to an ally of the United States, Ukraine, which was fighting an enemy of the United States, Russia, until Ukraine agreed to open an investigation into Trump's chief political opponent in the upcoming presidential race, Joseph Biden. In addition to withholding money from Ukraine, Trump also asked that nation's president to lie and say that it was Ukraine and not Russia that had interfered in the US 2016 election.

Trump was impeached for the second time on January 13, 2021, when Congress adopted one article of impeachment against him for "incitement of insurrection." Specifically, Congress had concluded that he had incited an attack on the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, while Congress was certifying the 2020 presidential election which Trump had lost to Joseph Biden. The attack on Congress by supporters of the President were not only unprecedented in American history but resulted in the deaths of five people and were preceded by months of lies by Trump about the 2020 election being "rigged" and "stolen" from him. In fact, after the 2020 presidential election, Trump's lawyers, in more than 60 separate cases, including twice before the Supreme Court, argued that the election was somehow fraudulent. Yet, in every instance the Trump administration was unable to produce a single piece of evidence to convince one court of their position. The final result—nine of Trump's attorneys were sanctioned by a federal judge for bringing frivolous lawsuits before the court. And they were required to take law education classes as well as referred to the Michigan attorney grievance commission where they may face disbarment. Indeed, the judge wrote what Trump and his lawyers had attempted was "a historic and profound abuse of the judicial process... [and that] this case was never about fraud—it was about undermining the People's faith in our democracy and debasing the judicial process to do so."14

No doubt about it, possibly the worst thing that Donald Trump did as president was his attack on Truth. Almost unbelievably, Trump told more than 30,000 lies during his four years in the White House. Too often, in ruling unchecked it was hard not to read the daily newspapers about one of the President's delusions or lies while he was in office and not wonder how far away his mind was from considering if not he too should be worshipped as a living-God, much like Caligula once did. Nonetheless, and more troubling still, it is not just the ex-President that was delusional (or lying) about his reelection but so too were many Americans and most of the political leaders from the Republican Party. In fact, not only did a full 147 out of 272 (or 54 percent) of congressional Republicans vote to overturn the election but between 50–70 percent of all Republicans in the United States continue to believe

that the 2020 presidential election was "stolen" from the ex-President irrespective of the fact that there remains not one scintilla of evidence which would indicate that to be the case.

How is this possible? Unfortunately, too often ill-informed or unthoughtful people take their political cues from their political leaders. So, if political leaders are lying or delusional about something then we can expect that at least some portion of the population will be so as well. In fact, to understand this relationship at a psychological level, it is worth hearing the words of the Yale-trained psychiatrist Dr. Bandy X. Lee who has written two fairly well-known books—*The Danger Case of Donald Trump* and *Profile of a Nation: Trump's Mind, America's Soul*—assessing the ex-President from a psychological perspective. An expert in violence, as Lee tells it, the Trump presidency and his logic-defying followers' allegiance to him is rooted in the psycho-emotional trauma of both the ex-President and his supporters. Without a doubt, Lee concludes that there are:

"Two major emotional drives [that have brought Trump and the 'Trump-Republicans' together]: narcissistic symbiosis and shared psychosis. Narcissistic symbiosis refers to the developmental wounds that make the leader-follower relationship magnetically attractive. The leader, hungry for adulation to compensate for an inner lack of self-worth, projects grandiose omnipotence—while the followers, rendered needy by societal stress or developmental injury, yearn for a parental figure. When such wounded individuals are given positions of power, they arouse similar pathology in the population that creates a "lock and key" relationship. Shared psychosis"—which is also called "folie à millions" ["madness for millions"] when occurring at the national level or "induced delusions"—refers to the infectiousness of severe symptoms that goes beyond ordinary group psychology. When a highly symptomatic individual is placed in an influential position, the person's symptoms can spread through the population through emotional bonds, heightening existing pathologies and inducing delusions, paranoia and propensity for violence—even in previously healthy individuals. The treatment is removal of exposure."15

Politically, the House of Representatives tried to accomplish exactly what Dr. Lee had prescribed (i.e., "removal of exposure"). However, unlike during Nixon's impeachment hearings in 1973–1974, Senate Republicans could not find their courage to simply follow the law and the Constitution during the impeachment trials of President Trump and instead put questions of personal fame and power ahead of the good of the American republic.

Nevertheless, aside from Dr. Lee's thoughtful psychological diagnosis of Donald Trump and a historical comparison of him to the ancient Roman ruler Caligula, it might help us to further understand the Trump presidency by examining it from a broader political and economic view rooted in the history of the United States, itself. Indeed, in the end, while many Americans would like to think of themselves as Martin Luther King Jr., the truth of the matter is that Donald Trump is very much a product of the United States. Indeed, he is merely a reflection of the dirty, crude, and vile underbelly of the American political, economic, and social order. He is a creation of US culture and of American capitalism. His nasty ways are simply a reflection of the nastiness that has existed in American society since its inception—a society born of an "owning-class" revolt—one that placed into power, in ten out of the first twelve presidents as well as a sizable portion of Congress and two of the first three Chief Justices, some of the largest slaveholders in the country. They were the original white supremacists, practicing one of the crudest forms of capitalism to have ever existed—slavery. When their rule came to an end through a bloody civil war, a system of oppression was put in its place with the passing of Jim Crow laws, lynchings, and the Ku Klux Klan—who showed up in, of all places, the very seats of government.

Shortly thereafter, the country moved through a difficult Industrial Revolution that turned men, women, and children into little more than alienated appendages of their tools in the factories, mines, and fields where they worked. And all for what? To further enrich men exactly like Trump. When FDR implemented the New Deal and tried to ease some of capitalism's self-destructive inclinations, the United States moved into an era when blacks, women, homosexuals, and others had to fight to be treated as equal within the politico-economic system itself. After a brief lull, but in due time, Ronald Reagan was elected and implemented the devastating effects of neoliberalism.

Today, with the impact of that system being felt around the world and with US troops spread across the entire planet to enforce it—a thoroughly fooled and frustrated American working class helped put into power a mean-spirited man with no shame who had every institutional and personal requirement necessary to become the first American dictator. No doubt about it, he was the worst kind of man with the worst kind of power sitting atop the entire political and economic system itself. With his hand on the "wheel of history," Trump for a time anyway, was able to change what it meant to be "an American."

Still, whatever the outcome of US history, the hour that has just passed in the American experience likely will be remembered as a troubled time. A period where our nation as a functioning republic may well have begun its descent. Only time will tell but there is no mistaking that from 2016–2020 there was a nastiness in the air. A graceless age, when a stupidity ran nearly unconstrained through the American republic. In fact, if it is not the many bloody and unconstitutional wars that will come to symbolize this age, then it may just well be possibly the saddest incident to have occurred during this time. That was the day a two-year old girl, Fernanda Jacqueline Davila of Honduras, was put on trial all in the United States by herself. She sat in court and wept heart-breaking but ultimately bitter tears in front of a judge to answer for her crime of coming to the land of the "tired, the poor, [and] the huddled masses"—to escape poverty and violence in her own. An undocumented immigrant in search of the American Dream. A dream that was once offered to the world but had become a nightmare for an increasing number of people who acted on the words engraved on the Statue of Liberty.

In time, and in empathetic wonderment, the children of the United States may well look back and ask, "Why did any of this happen?" There will be no good answer to give to them. But possibly the only response that will make any sense to them is that this all occurred because the American people and their political leaders forgot one of the most important teachings that supposedly guided their republic and one that the American President never bothered to learn: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Whatever they conclude, just like in Ancient Rome under Caligula and any other nation that has ever had its constitutional and moral foundation denigrated from an unscrupulous ruler, it will be left for those that come after to put things right.

8.4 The Electoral College

Regardless of who funds presidential campaigns in the United States, the president is elected in a rather unique way as compared to almost any other country. Indeed, the framers of the Constitution decided to create a barrier between the American people and those who might serve in the nation's highest office. That barrier is known as the Electoral College. While initially envisioning the president to be elected by the national legislature, the framers ultimately decided upon electing the president by a group of "electors" who would be chosen by each state, as detailed in Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution. There are *multiple* reasons why the framers chose to create the Electoral College (including, notably for the 2016 election, to guard against a "foreign power"

from interfering in the election of the president). In fact, no topic was discussed more at the Constitutional Convention than the election of the president as the framers, lacking a historical precedent to follow, were not exactly sure how to go about electing a chief executive.

That said, the Electoral College was created for two basic reasons. First, a number of the framers were concerned not only about democracy in general, but specifically, about the popular election of the president. With a few notable exceptions, such as Benjamin Franklin and Gouverneur Morris, framers such as Elbridge Gerry were concerned about the "ignorance of the people" potentially leading to the election of a deceptive individual with self-interested motives. ¹⁶ In joining Gerry, the wealthy slave-owners Charles Pinckney (1757–1824) and Pierce Butler held similar concerns about a popularly elected executive and the lack of ability of "the people" to be trusted to elect the chief executive.

Or, as Hamilton explained in *Federalist* #68, the president should be elected, *not* by the people, but "by men most capable of analyzing the qualities" necessary for selecting a president (i.e., a group of electors).¹⁷ For Hamilton, this meant that "a small number of persons" who themselves had been "selected by their fellow citizens" would ultimately choose the president.¹⁸ This hope was somewhat, and likely unexpectedly, undermined by the fact that those who serve in the Electoral College are generally hard-core party loyalists and have sworn to cast their votes in favor of their party's candidate, should he or she win the popular vote in their state. Thus, one of the framers' intents, which was to limit the possibility of an "unfit" person from becoming president, has been eroded to a serious degree by the political party identification of the electors themselves.

Though not explicitly stated, this small group of men would necessarily come from the propertied class, as the framers wrote the Constitution so that each state could decide how they would pick their electors (i.e., through voting). As mentioned in Chapter 4, at the time of the founding the states required an individual to own property in order to vote. Therefore, to be an elector and cast a vote in a presidential election, one would also have to be a property owner. That said, the second reason why the framers created the Electoral College was to provide states with small populations a more equal voice vis-à-vis larger states. This was accomplished by having Electoral College votes weighted more heavily for smaller states than are those with larger populations.

How Does the Electoral College Work?

There are a total of 538 Electoral College votes—535 votes are apportioned throughout the 50 states with 3 votes for Washington, DC. By Constitutional design, Electoral College votes are distributed to each state based upon the number of House of Representative and Senators in each state. For example, California is the largest state in the union with 53 House seats and 2 senators, so California is provided with 55 total Electoral College votes in any one presidential election. Wyoming, on the other hand, is the smallest state in the Union and is apportioned with one Electoral College vote for its one House seat and two Electoral College votes for its two Senate seats, equaling three total Electoral College votes. The presidential candidate who wins the popular vote in any one state is awarded all the Electoral College votes from his or her party in that state, whereas the candidate from the opposition party receives no Electoral College votes at all. This winner-takesall system is set up in every state except for Nebraska and Maine, which instead utilize the Congressional District Method. The Congressional District Method consists of the winner of each district being awarded that district's electoral vote, and the winner of the statewide vote is then awarded the state's two remaining (Senate) electoral votes.

A total of 270 votes is needed to win the presidency in the Electoral College. A tie can occur when each candidate receives 269 votes, or an election in a race of three or more candidates results in no one candidate receiving a majority of votes. In that case, the House picks the president and the Senate chooses the vice president. Electors are selected in almost every state by each state's political parties. For instance, in California, each party on the ballot would select 55 electors to represent their party in the Electoral College in the event that their party's candidate wins the popular election. Thus, in the US presidential elections, people are not directly voting for a candidate, but instead for a slate of electors who are pledged to vote for their party's candidate, provided that he or she should win that state. When the popular vote totals are tallied, the Electoral College does not meet as an institution but, instead, each elector notifies Washington how they have voted—which is almost always predictable, as very few electors have ever voted for another candidate other than the one elected by their party (i.e., the so-called "faithless elector").

Winning the Popular Vote but Losing in the Electoral College?

As an example of the design of the Electoral College thwarting popular will, on five separate occasions in American history, presidential candidates have won the popular vote but have lost in the Electoral College. This occurred when: (1) Andrew Jackson won more popular votes than John Quincy Adams in the 1824 election, but Adams was named president by the House of Representatives after no candidate received a majority of popular votes; (2) Samuel Tilden (1814–1886) gained more popular votes than Rutherford B. Hayes (1822–1893), but lost to Hayes in the Electoral College in the 1876 election; (3) Grover Cleveland (1837–1908) received more of the nation's votes than did Benjamin Harrison, but lost to Harrison in the Electoral College in the 1888 election; (4) Al Gore (1948–present) won more popular votes than George W. Bush, but lost in the Electoral College in the 2000 presidential election, and, finally: (5) Hillary Clinton won the popular vote by almost three million votes but lost to Donald Trump in the 2016 election.

Why does this happen? Presidents can win the popular vote but lose in the Electoral College because, as noted, votes within the Electoral College are not weighted equally. In addition to their concerns about democracy, the framers feared that small states would be ignored in presidential elections. So, they created a system that allowed for the valuing of an Electoral College vote to decrease in value the larger the population of the state or increase in value the smaller the population of the state. How does that work? If we look at California and Wyoming as an example, we might see more clearly how this balancing act plays itself out. Indeed, California has 55 Electoral College votes and 40 million people, whereas Wyoming has 3 Electoral College votes and 590,000 people—yet the value of one California Electoral College vote is not equal to that of one Wyoming Electoral College vote. Why? Because one California Electoral College vote is equal to about 727,272 popular votes, whereas one Wyoming Electoral College vote is equal to about 196,666 popular votes. In other words, it is easier to get one Electoral College vote in a small state such as Wyoming or New Hampshire than it is in a large state such as California or New York.

How was this done? By assigning Electoral College votes based upon representation in Congress. Whether it is a large state or a small state, every state receives at least two Electoral College votes for the state's two senators and one Electoral College vote for each of the state's House seats. Thus, if a candidate can put together a number of victories in small states (or even win a couple of narrow victories in large states), then he or she may end up actually losing the popular vote, but winning in the Electoral College.

Accordingly, as the Electoral College seems to go against the most basic principles of republican government, the American people have proposed more Constitutional Amendments to reform or eliminate it than they have for any other issue in US history.

8.5 The Assassination of John F. Kennedy (JFK): Two Opposing Views

In all of American presidential history, there is likely no more important presidency than that of John F. Kennedy (1917–1963). John (or "Jack") Kennedy was born to a wealthy, politically connected family. His father, Joseph Kennedy, was the youngest president of a bank in the history of the United States, having been promoted to that position at just



President John F. Kennedy (Wikimedia Commons)

26 years of age. However, Joseph Kennedy also made his money though extralegal means by selling alcohol during Prohibition (1920–1933). In fact, Joseph Kennedy became so wealthy from his work that he gave \$1 million to each of his nine children on their 21st birthdays. Eventually, his interests turned political, which culminated in his appointment to England as US Ambassador in 1937 by FDR. He took nearly the whole of his family with him to London, including his wife and seven of his nine children, while his two oldest sons, Joseph Jr. and John, remained in the United States studying at Harvard.

When World War II began, both Joseph Jr. and John Kennedy enlisted in the military. Joe Jr. was a naval aviator, while Jack was the captain of a PT (Patrol Torpedo) boat. The high political expectations for Joseph Kennedy Jr. ended when he was killed in action during World War II in 1944. JFK, on the other hand, was seriously wounded when his PT boat was rammed by a Japanese destroyer, further injuring an already damaged and painful back. For his attempts to help save his PT boat crew, Kennedy was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal—the highest noncombat medal awarded for heroism by

the Navy. In 1946, a year after returning home, Kennedy ran for and won a seat in the House of Representatives for Massachusetts, serving until 1952. In 1953, he won a seat in the US Senate and served there until 1960. In 1960, Kennedy focused his political ambitions on the presidency, narrowly defeating Vice President Richard Nixon by one of the smallest margins in the history of the United States and becoming the youngest person ever elected to the White House at just 43 years of age. After serving less than three years, Kennedy was assassinated at Dealey Plaza in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963.

The Kennedy Presidency: The Beginning

JFK was elected president during the Cold War. Kennedy himself was a "cold warrior"—someone who believed that the Cold War had to be won or lost militarily. However, at the same time, Kennedy opposed the notion of war from at least the age of 28 (during his initial campaign for Congress) and realized during the course of his presidency that, because of the recent advent of nuclear weapons, the Cold War could not be won militarily. At the end of World War II, only the United States possessed nuclear weapons. But in short order, the USSR had developed them as well. Just six months into his presidency, in September 1961, Kennedy made clear the serious dangers of a possible nuclear war. Indeed, he famously remarked in a speech before the United Nations:

"War appeals no longer as a rational alternative. Unconditional war can no longer lead to unconditional victory. It can no longer serve to settle disputes. It can no longer concern the great powers alone. For a nuclear disaster, spread by wind and water and fear, could well engulf the great and the small, the rich and the poor. ... Mankind must put an end to war — or war will put an end to mankind."19

Yet putting an end to war would be filled with difficulty, as Kennedy was to face one trying foreign policy decision after another during his short time in office.

The Bay of Pigs

A year prior to Kennedy's election, Fidel Castro had forced the US-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista from power in Cuba and nationalized all US-held property and corporations. In response, the United States imposed an economic trade embargo against Cuba in October 1960, which remains in place to this day. Kennedy was elected in November 1960, took office in March 1961, and was confronted with a decision about Cuba a month later in April 1961. He inherited a foreign policy toward Cuba from the Eisenhower Administration (1953-1961) that sought to overthrow the Castro government. Kennedy ultimately decided to continue Eisenhower's policy against Cuba with the development of a covert program known as the Cuban Project, or "Operation Mongoose."

Operation Mongoose culminated in the CIA-led invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. Before the invasion, the CIA organized and trained some 1,500 Cuban exiles opposed to Castro.²⁰ The Central Intelligence Agency had told Kennedy that an invasion would be supported by the people of Cuba and that they would rise up against Castro and help overthrow him. While Kennedy supported the plan, he also informed the CIA that there would be no military support and falsely assured the American people that there would be no invasion. Nevertheless, the invasion began on April 17, 1961, but was almost immediately brought to a standstill by the Cuban military, led by Castro himself. Upon being pinned down on the southern beaches of Cuba, the CIA telephoned Kennedy asking for military backing. Kennedy, staying true to his word to the CIA, said, "No." On April 19, 1961, just three days after it had begun, the Bay of Pigs invasion was fully defeated by the Cuban military.

After the invasion, Kennedy apparently felt deceived by the top planners of the Cuban invasion, including CIA Director Allen Dulles, Deputy Director Richard Bissell, Jr., and Deputy Director General Charles Cabell. In trying to right a perceived wrong, he asked for and received each of their resignations. Concerned about the CIA's increased role in military affairs, JFK signed a series of National Security Action Memoranda (NSAM 55, 56, and 57) designating the Joint Chiefs of Staff (i.e., a body of senior uniformed leaders in the Pentagon) as the "principal advisors" 21 to the president for Cold War operations. While it is not possible to know for sure, Kennedy may have written the memoranda just a few days after the fiasco in Cuba in an attempt to push the CIA away from continued involvement in military affairs. Whatever may be the case, the CIA remained involved in military actions throughout Kennedy's presidency and remains involved to this day. Nevertheless, apparently still upset with the CIA for misrepresenting the degree of popular discontent in Cuba, Kennedy famously remarked that he wanted to "splinter the CIA into a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds."22

Initial Steps Toward Peace, the Berlin Crisis, and the Cuban Missile Crisis

Six months after the Bay of Pigs and the firing of the top men at the CIA, a minor diplomatic clash in Berlin, Germany, left Kennedy facing a second international dispute, known as the Berlin Crisis. The Berlin Crisis saw US and Soviet tanks square off with



President Kennedy speaking at Rice University (1962) (U.S. National Archives)

one another for about a week across the Berlin Wall in late October 1961. Ultimately, the standoff was resolved when Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev (1894–1971) agreed to withdraw their tanks—first the Soviet Union and then the United States. Unknown until 1993, Kennedy and Khrushchev had begun a quiet correspondence in late September 1961, just one month prior to the Berlin Crisis. The correspondence saw them exchange some 21 personal letters (120 communications in total) addressing their mutual concerns about a possible nuclear war and the Cold War in general. Their correspondence continued throughout the early 1960s and came to an end only with Kennedy's death.

As noted above, also in late September 1961, Kennedy spoke to the United Nations regarding his concerns about the Cold War and nuclear weapons. After first declaring that "mankind must put an end to war," Kennedy then stated his plan for doing so. Admirably, he

declared that "it is... our intention to challenge the Soviet Union, not to an arms race, but to a peace race—to advance together step by step, stage by stage, until *general and complete disarmament* [of all nuclear weapons] has been achieved... together we shall save our planet, or together we shall perish in its flames [italics added]."²³ Yet, instead of improved relations between the US and USSR, Kennedy was forced to deal with a potential nuclear war just one year later, during the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962.

Out of concern for a second US-backed invasion, Fidel Castro allowed the Soviet Union to place nuclear weapons in Cuba, pointing them directly at the United States. While recognizing the serious threat of nuclear weapons in Cuba, Kennedy also made it known to a televised audience that "we will not prematurely or unnecessarily risk the costs of worldwide nuclear war in which even the fruits of victory would be ashes in our mouth." During 13 tense days among the 3 countries, JFK was advised by General Curtis LeMay, chief of staff of the Air Force (the Joint Chiefs now being Kennedy's "principal advisors" on military affairs), to undertake a surprise attack against the Russian missiles in Cuba. Kennedy rejected LeMay's proposal, resolving the crisis through diplomacy. The diplomatic solution consisted of the Soviet Union agreeing to withdraw its missiles from Cuba provided the US agreed to withdraw its own nuclear weapons from Italy and Turkey as well as not to attack Cuba in the future. This was all done to the dismay of both Castro and some of the top military advisors in the United States. ²⁵

The American University Speech and the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

In May 1963, Kennedy signed NSAM 239. In the memorandum, Kennedy notes that the US and USSR have made "almost no progress" toward a "general and complete disarmament" of nuclear weapons, nor have they taken significant steps toward a test ban treaty.

In restating his goals before the United Nations in September of 1961, Kennedy writes that he has "in no way changed my views of the desirability of a test ban treaty or the value of our proposals on general and complete disarmament" and that "the events of the last two years [i.e., the Bay of Pigs, the Berlin Crisis, the Cuban Missile Crisis, etc.] have increased my concern for the consequences of an unchecked continuation of the arms race between ourselves and the Soviet Bloc." However, in light of the two nations' lack of success in this direction, Kennedy ordered that, at least in the short term, his administration and the national security state (i.e., secretary of defense, secretary of state, head of the CIA, chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, etc.) should look for "significant measures short of general and complete disarmament" to achieve his goal of peace between the two nations.²⁷

In support of this view, one month later in June 1963, Kennedy delivered his famous commencement speech at American University entitled "A Strategy for Peace." He began his comments by quoting the English poet John Masefield, stating that "there are few Earthly things more beautiful than a university, as it is 'a place where those who hate ignorance may strive to know, where those who perceive truth may strive to make others see." Accordingly, Kennedy stated that this is the reason why he has "chosen this time and this place to discuss a topic on which ignorance too often abounds and the truth is too rarely perceived—yet it is the most important topic on Earth: world peace." As is widely remembered now, he famously remarked:

"What kind of peace do I mean? What kind of peace do we seek? Not a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war. ... I am talking about genuine peace, the kind of peace that makes life on Earth worth living, the kind that enables men and nations to grow and to hope and to build a better life for their children—not merely peace for Americans but peace for all men and women—not merely peace in our time but peace for all time." ²⁸

While recognizing that nuclear weapons are the most serious threat to the continued existence of mankind, Kennedy ultimately declared that "our problems are manmade—therefore, they can be solved by man."

Next in his speech, JFK extended an olive branch to the Soviet Union. In fact, he did so multiple times throughout his commencement address, and stated that, while the US is at odds with the Soviet Union, "we can still hail the Russian people for their many achievements-in science and space, in economic and industrial growth, in culture and in acts of courage." Kennedy then submitted that the US and Soviet Union have things in common, such as "our mutual abhorrence of war" and that "almost unique among the major world powers, we have never been at war with each other." Furthermore, in showing compassion for the Soviet people, Kennedy remarked, "No nation in the history of battle ever suffered more than the Soviet Union suffered in the course of the Second World War." In so doing, he paid tribute to the 20 million Russians who died during the war as well as the many homes, farms, factories, and industrial centers which were destroyed.



Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev and United States President John F. Kennedy (1961) (U.S. National Archives)

Again, in explaining the danger posed by nuclear weapons, Kennedy declared, "Should total war ever break out again...all we have built, all we have worked for would be destroyed in the first 24 hours...for in the final analysis, our most basic common link

is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal." Toward that end, JFK closed his speech by calling again for a "general and complete disarmament" of nuclear weapons.²⁹

While Kennedy's speech at American University was well-received by the audience, it was not widely reported on by the American press. Nonetheless, on October 7, 1963, Kennedy and Khrushchev signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT), prohibiting all atmospheric nuclear testing. It was signed in hopes of slowing the arms race, warming up relations between the two countries, and halting the harmful effects of nuclear fallout in the Earth's atmosphere. In his televised remarks in support of the treaty, JFK quotes Khrushchev and again identified the potential destruction of a nuclear war:

"A war today or tomorrow, if it led to nuclear war, would not be like any war in history. A full-scale nuclear exchange, lasting less than 60 minutes, with the weapons now in existence, could wipe out more than 300 million Americans, Europeans, and Russians, as well as untold numbers elsewhere. And the survivors, as Chairman Khrushchev warned, ... "The survivors would envy the dead." For they would inherit a world so devastated by explosions and poison and fire that today we cannot even conceive of its horrors. So let us try to turn the world away from war. Let us make the most of this opportunity, and every opportunity, to reduce tension, to slow down the perilous nuclear arms race, and to check the world's slide toward final annihilation." ³⁰

It has generally been concluded that Kennedy and Khrushchev's ongoing correspondence (private and otherwise) and Kennedy's speech at American University were the deciding factors in moving the two nations toward signing the Limited Test Ban Treaty—a treaty which has been unsurpassed to this day.

The Vietnam War

In keeping with his attempts to negotiate an end to the Cold War, Kennedy decided to end US involvement in Vietnam in October 1963. Vietnam had been a French colony until France's defeat at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, which was led by the Marxist-Leninist national liberation leader Ho Chi Minh (1890–1969). In the resulting negotiations in Geneva, Switzerland at the Geneva Conference (which produced the Geneva Accords of 1954), the French colonial administration was dissolved, and the country was divided into two halves along the 17th parallel. The Communist north was led by Minh, and the south was led by Bao Dai (1913–1997). Dai was the last emperor of the Nguyen Dynasty and had a close relationship with the colonial French government. The Geneva Accords made clear that the partition was to be ended with national elections in 1956. However, in 1955, Ngo Dinh Diem—with backing from the United States—pushed Dai from power and declared himself the president of the Republic of Vietnam.³¹ Diem, as mentioned earlier, was later assassinated in 1963 by his own generals with the support of the CIA.

While initially increasing US troop personnel in Vietnam, on October 11, 1963, JFK signed NSAM 263, ordering the withdrawal of "1,000 US military personnel" out of Vietnam "by the end of 1963." More significantly, Kennedy *approved* withdrawal of the "bulk of US personnel" from Vietnam by the end of 1965 (one year after the 1964 election) as part of a long-term and complete withdrawal from the country. After Kennedy's death, however, President Lyndon B. Johnson steadily increased US troop involvement in Vietnam from 16,000 troops (under Kennedy) to some 500,000 troops by 1968 at the height of the Vietnam War. In reversing Kennedy's policy of withdrawal from Vietnam, first Johnson's and then Nixon's continued involvement in Southeast Asia

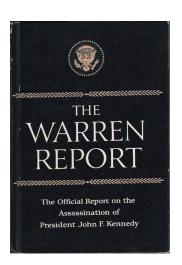
resulted in the deaths of between 2–3 million Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian men, women, and children, as well as the deaths of more than 58,000 Americans.

Who, How, and Why Was Kennedy Assassinated?

Some say that the assassination of John F. Kennedy is an American tragedy, even pointing to the fact that he was killed on Elm Street in the heart of the United States—Dallas, Texas. After Kennedy was declared dead at Parkland Hospital, Vice President Lyndon Johnson was sworn in as president aboard Air Force One with Kennedy's wife, Jacqueline Kennedy (1929–1994), standing at his side. Wearing the same blood-soaked dress she had been wearing when Kennedy was shot, Mrs. Kennedy famously remarked to Lady Bird Johnson, upon being asked if she wanted to change her dress, "Oh, no… I want them to see what they have done to Jack." Today, more than 50 years have passed since his death, and there still remains no unified agreement about who killed Kennedy, how Kennedy was killed, or why. Instead, two basic narratives have emerged to explain his assassination.

Viewpoint #1: The Warren Commission

Seven days after Kennedy's death on November 22, 1963, President Johnson created the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy. Known as the Warren Commission and led by Chief Justice Earl Warren (1891–1963), the Commission was charged with investigating the circumstances surrounding Kennedy's death. Johnson appointed seven core members and twenty-seven counselors to the Commission. The most prominent among them was the former director of the CIA, Allen Dulles (who had been fired by Kennedy after the Bay of Pigs) and future president Gerald R. Ford (1913–2006). The final report, entitled the Warren Report, was released on September 24, 1964. It was almost 900 pages long and included an additional 26 volumes of hearings, exhibits, and evidence. The Warren Commission concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald (1939-1964), a former Marine who was both a "Communist" and had previously defected to the Soviet Union, had killed Kennedy. In short, the Commission concluded that Oswald had fired three bullets from an Italianmade bolt-action rifle (known as a Carcano) at the presidential motorcade as it made its way down Elm Street, wounding Governor John Connally of Texas and killing President Kennedy.



The Warren Commission Report (Wikimedia Commons)

Indeed, firing from *behind* the president's motorcade from the Texas School Book Depository, the Warren Commission found that one of the three shots fired by Oswald—likely the first—missed the motorcade completely. A second shot entered Kennedy's back, moved upward, exited the front of his throat, moved slightly down, entered Connally's back (who was sitting on the passenger side of the front seat and directly in front of Kennedy, who was seated in the back seat), exited his chest, turned down again, entered and exited his right wrist, then moved left, and lodged in Governor Connally's left thigh. In other words, seven total wounds to two men with one bullet. The trajectory of the shot was referred to as the "single-bullet theory." The bullet, which came to be known as the "Magic Bullet," was later discovered on Governor Connally's stretcher in almost perfect condition at Parkland Hospital. Finally, a third shot, the Commission concluded, struck Kennedy in the *back right portion* of his head, delivering a fatal wound. Kennedy was officially declared dead at Parkland Hospital at one o'clock in the afternoon approximately one half-hour after the shooting.

Though interviewed extensively in the three days immediately following the assassination, Oswald never admitted to shooting President Kennedy and declared live on TV that he "didn't shoot anybody" and that he was "just a patsy." A trial to determine if Oswald was the killer of President Kennedy would never take place. Instead, Oswald was shot and killed by Jack Ruby (1911–1967) on Sunday night, November 24—three days after Kennedy's assassination—in the parking garage of the Dallas Police Department. Oswald later died, ironically, in the same place as Kennedy, Parkland Hospital.³⁵



New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison (Wikimedia Commons/Hoffa2)

Viewpoint #2: New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, and Other Investigations

After Kennedy was shot in Dallas, the elected district attorney of New Orleans, Louisiana, Earling Carothers "Jim" Garrison (1921–1992), watched on television, with much of the rest of the United States, the events that unfolded immediately following Kennedy's death. Garrison discovered, along with everyone else, that Oswald had worked in New Orleans during the summer of 1963, just a few months before allegedly killing the president. After Oswald was killed by Ruby, Garrison began a brief investigation into Oswald's whereabouts in New Orleans. At the completion of the investigation, his office turned over their findings to the FBI. The FBI dismissed the results of the investigation by Garrison's office. Garrison, who was a veteran of World War II and a former FBI man himself, accepted the FBI's decision and resumed his normal prosecutorial work as district attorney of New Orleans. About three years later, after having a series

of conversations about the assassination, reading the Warren Commission Report, and examining all 26 volumes of evidence produced by the Warren Commission, Garrison decided to reexamine the case. With just a few people from his staff, Garrison discovered and eventually presented evidence of the murder of JFK to a jury in the case known as the *State of Louisiana v. Clay L. Shaw* (1969). In his case against the prominent New Orleans businessman Clay Shaw (1913–1974), Garrison told a different story of the assassination of President Kennedy than that of the Warren Commission.

Indeed, during the course of his investigation into the death of the president, Garrison issued a subpoena for the "Zapruder film" to Time-Life Co. Abraham Zapruder (1905–1970) had been filming Kennedy's motorcade in Dealey Plaza and had inadvertently filmed Kennedy's assassination. The film was being held by Time-Life Co., as they had purchased the rights to it from Zapruder. Yet, after examining the Zapruder film, Garrison concluded that at least *five to six shots* (and possibly more) were fired at President Kennedy's motorcade. In fact, Jim Garrison contended the following:

- » Shot #1: The first shot, sounding like a backfire, missed the limousine entirely—similar to the conclusion of the Warren Commission.
- » Shot #2: The second shot hit Kennedy in the throat, which he grabbed with both hands as if choking (beginning at about frame 225—with some arguing as early as frame 193—and fully clasping his throat with both hands by frame 230). Shot #2 is significant for two reasons. First, two doctors that were a part of the autopsy of Kennedy at Parkland Hospital on the night of the assassination were asked by news reporters, "Where was the entrance wound?" Dr. Malcolm Perry responded by stating, "There was an entrance wound in the neck." That question was followed by a second question, asking, "Which way was the bullet coming on the neck wound? At him?" Dr. Perry replied by saying that "it appeared to be coming at him." Finally, Dr. Perry is asked to "describe the entrance wound. You think from the front in

the throat?" Dr. Perry responds by saying, "the wound appeared to be an entrance wound in the front of the throat; yes, that is correct." In other words, immediately after the assassination, in Dr. Malcolm Perry's estimation, Shot #2 was fired at President Kennedy not from the rear of the vehicle but from in-front of it, from the so-called "grassy knoll" area. It would have been impossible for Oswald to fire this shot if he was behind the presidential motorcade as the Warren Commission had concluded. Second, according to the Warren Commission's "single-bullet theory," the bullet which entered Kennedy's back and exited his throat also entered and exited Governor Connally's back and chest, then entered and exited his right forearm before finally lodging in his left thigh. These wounds, caused by a rifle, would have happened almost instantaneously. Yet, when examining the Zapruder film, it is obvious that Governor Connally continues to hold his hat in his right hand at least until frame 275, long after Kennedy is shot in the throat. Garrison argues that it would have been difficult for Connally to continue to hold his hat in his hand if he had a broken right wrist, which had almost immediately been shattered by the bullet that had just exited Kennedy's throat.

- » Shot #3: The third shot hit Kennedy in the back.
- » Shot #4: The fourth shot (frame 238 and possibly consisting of multiple rounds) hit Governor Connally in the back, chest, right arm, and left leg.
- » Shot #5: The fifth shot ricocheted off of Elm Street, bounced up, and hit bystander James Tague (1936–2014), who was standing under the railroad overpass above Elm Street, on the right cheek. Tague testified that he believed the shots fired at the president's motorcade had come from the direction of the grassy knoll, or the "monument," as he identified the location during his sworn testimony before the Warren Commission.
- » Shot #6: The sixth shot (frame 313) hit President John F. Kennedy in the front right portion of his head, knocking him back and to the left, inconsistent with a round being fired from the School Book Depository, but instead consistent with a shot being fired from in front of the presidential motorcade and originating from the direction of the grassy knoll. The shot, which explodes the front-right part of President Kennedy's skull, prompts Mrs. Kennedy to climb onto the rear trunk of the vehicle to retrieve pieces of her husband's brain and skull which she sees fly over the top of him. This final shot also resulted in blood and brain being splattered on motorcycle policeman Bobby Hargis who was riding alongside the presidential limousine to the back left of the car, indicating that the so-called "kill shot" had been fired from in front of Kennedy.

During his investigation, not only did Garrison begin to doubt the Warren Commission's theory of the shooting, but he also began to question the identity of Oswald. For instance, the more Garrison looked into Oswald and some of the people surrounding him, the more Garrison began to disbelieve that Oswald was a genuine defector to the Soviet Union or even a "Communist." Among the individuals surrounding Oswald in the early 1960s, Garrison noticed that a number of them were tied to the intelligence community in the United States or were a part of right-wing anti-Castro organizations and groups. Most notable among them were the businessman and ex-Vichy intelligence man George de Mohrenschildt (1911–1977), who had ties to the CIA; David Ferrie (1918–1967), who seemed to be connected to the CIA, FBI, and parts of the mafia underworld; Jack Ruby, a Dallas mobster with connections to the FBI and Dallas police; and Guy Bannister (1901–1964), a former FBI man.

In fact, a number of years after Garrison's investigation, through declassified government documents and other testimony, multiple researchers have connected Oswald to both the CIA and FBI—either as an informant or provocateur. During the summer of 1963, Oswald had been seen in the company of Clay Shaw, the well-known businessman and director of the International Trade Mart in New Orleans. Later, during Shaw's trial in 1969, testimony was given that Oswald, Ferrie, and Shaw had been seen together in the largely black town of



Clay Shaw: Businessman and Director of the International Trade Mart in New Orleans (1968) (Wikimedia Commons)

Clinton, Louisiana, during a voter registration drive for black residents. It was also established that Ferrie and Oswald had actually been in the same Civil Air Patrol unit in the 1950s. Garrison suspected Shaw of being connected to the CIA, which was denied by Shaw on multiple occasions during his trial, but later confirmed by the former director of the CIA, Richard Helms (1913–2002). Indeed, in 1979, during sworn testimony before Congress, Helms testified that Shaw had been a contact agent with the CIA, reporting on his travels abroad during the time that he had denied being an agent of the CIA or knowing Lee Harvey Oswald.

On top of this, Garrison discovered that, on the day of the parade, the route through Dallas had been rerouted from Main Street, which was much further away from the "sniper's nest," to Elm Street, directly in front of the very building in which Oswald worked—the Texas School Book Depository. It also came to Garrison's attention that, on the day of Oswald's arrest, he was given a nitrate test at the Dallas Police Department to determine if he had recently fired a weapon. The results of the exam came back negative, indicating that Oswald had not fired a rifle in the previous 24 hours. Eventually, Garrison resolved to make full use of the Warren Commission's Report, including information that: the majority of witnesses in Dealey Plaza—a full 92 out of 124 people—looked or ran *toward* the grassy knoll immediately after the shots were fired;³⁶ as aggregated from data within the Warren Report, 58 of 90 witnesses that had been interviewed by the

Commission, the FBI, the Secret Service, or the Dallas Police Department had said that "shots came from the direction of the grassy knoll;" Once at Parkland Hospital, 21 of the 22 doctors, nurses, and Secret Service agents said that they saw a large exit wound in the right rear (occipital) area of JFK's head, further indicating that a shot from *in front* of Kennedy killed the president. Yet, when Garrison tried to retrieve Kennedy's brain (which had been set in formaldehyde after the autopsy) in an attempt to determine from which direction the fatal head shot had come from, the response by the federal government was that President Kennedy's brain had *disappeared*—and remains missing til this very day.

This all resulted in Garrison arresting Clay Shaw in March 1967 and placing him on trial for conspiring to murder President Kennedy. In the case against Shaw, jurors concluded that JFK had been killed by a "conspiracy" but were nevertheless unsure how Clay Shaw was involved, which resulted in a verdict of not guilty. Garrison remained convinced until the day he died that Kennedy had been killed by "a number of the men who... were former employees of the CIA" made up of "fanatic anti-Communists and Cuban exiles" because he had been "working for a reconciliation with the U.S.S.R. and Castro's Cuba." Whether correct or not, a number of researchers have picked up where Garrison left off. 39

Subsequent Findings

After the Shaw trial, the Congressional House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) was formed in 1976, concluding its business in 1978. The committee was charged with investigating the deaths of Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968). At the end of its hearings, the HSCA concluded that Kennedy was "probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy" and leveled some criticism against the Warren Commission, CIA, FBI, and Secret Service. However, the HSCA *excluded* all US intelligence agencies from any active participation

in Kennedy's murder, yet conceded that they could not rule out *individual members* from those agencies. Notably, among other findings, the HSCA acknowledged, "that there was at least a possibility that Oswald and [former FBI agent] Guy Bannister were acquainted."⁴⁰

In the midst of the HSCA hearings, former high-ranking CIA member Victor Marchetti (1929–present) wrote an article for the conservative magazine *The Spotlight*, which had been printed by Liberty Lobby. In his article, Marchetti claimed that the HSCA possessed an internal CIA memo from 1966 that revealed that CIA agent E. Howard Hunt (1918–2007), the famed Watergate burglar, was in Dallas on November 22, 1963. Marchetti went on to write that the CIA was going to expose Hunt and a few others, either dead or discredited, including CIA and anti-Castro figures Frank Sturgis and Gerry Patrick Hemming, as part of the plot in Dallas to kill Kennedy. The reason given by Marchetti was that the CIA was trying to prevent a deeper investigation into Kennedy's death and the CIA's role in it. Additionally, Marchetti wrote that named individuals would be painted by the CIA as operating on their own without the consent of their superiors.

Hunt, in turn, sued Liberty Lobby for defamation in 1981 and won damages in court totaling \$650,000. Hunt had claimed that he was not in Dallas on the day of the assassination, but instead was with his family in Washington, DC. Liberty Lobby hired attorney and former New York state assemblymen Mark Lane to appeal the court's decision. Lane won the case on appeal—and in the process discredited Hunt's alibi for November 22, 1963 altogether. The jury's decision in the case, known as *E. Howard Hunt v. Liberty Lobby* (1983), was summarized by the forewoman of the jury, Leslie Armstrong, who stated during an interview for the evening TV news that, "When we examined the evidence closely, we were compelled to conclude that the CIA had indeed killed President Kennedy." 41

Concluding Remarks

Today, the assassination of President Kennedy remains locked in place around these two basic narratives. On the one hand is the government's argument that President Kennedy had been killed by Lee Harvey Oswald to advance the causes of Communism. While willing to accept that Oswald likely did not act alone, as concluded by the HSCA, the government's case *denies* that Oswald acted in concert with or on behalf of any intelligence agency. On the other hand, beginning with Jim Garrison, many scholars, researchers, and former government employees have presented enough evidence to make it difficult to ignore that something is not quite right with the government's position.

Whatever the case may be, in the end, if Kennedy's assassination was the work of a lone gunman who had no real political, economic, or military ties to any other individual, group, or institution, then his death is a family tragedy, which nevertheless resulted in a change in the approach to the Cold War by Washington, DC. Yet, if more powerful forces were involved in his death, then Kennedy's assassination is a national tragedy, which not only resulted in a change in the approach to the Cold War, but also has more serious national (and, in fact, international) implications, meriting continued investigation. Whichever is the case, the American people are left with incomplete information to make a final decision. While all published materials by the Warren Commission were transferred to the National Archives after official publication in 1964, all unpublished records were sealed for another 75 years until the year 2039. However, after the passage of the JFK Records Act of 1992, all remaining unpublished records from the Warren Commission Report were scheduled to be released in 2017. Yet, as of today, the unpublished files on the Kennedy assassination remain locked away in the National Archives leaving the American people to wonder why a government which they own continues to keep some of the most important information that it possesses from them.



The United States Supreme Court

'Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is ... organized ... to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe.'

—Frederick Douglass (Escaped slave and abolitionist, 1818–1895)



The United States Supreme Court (Wikimedia Commons)

The Supreme Court is responsible for interpreting the Constitution of the United States. The Court seats nine judges (also called *justices*) who are appointed by the president, with the advice and consent of the Senate, for lifetime terms. Of the 115 total justices whom have served on the Court, 108 have been white males, two have been black men, and five have been women, one of which is a Latina woman. Approximately 10,000 cases are submitted to the Court each year, of which the justices hear arguments for about one hundred. In general, the Supreme Court writes decisions (or opinions) for roughly 60 cases each term—or less than 1 percent of all the cases that are appealed to the Court.

As the final authority on laws passed, the Court has one of the most important responsibilities in the whole of the US political system. The responsibility of the

Court is to ensure that the lives and rights of the American people are protected through the application of one of the highest virtues that exists in organized society—justice. Thus, the Supreme Court, as much as any political institution in the United States, is charged with not simply determining which laws are constitutional, but helping to establish an ethical legal code rooted in reason and equality *for the whole of US society*.

9.1 Early Decisions by the Supreme Court

The Supreme Court's chief responsibility—interpreting the Constitution—was not explicitly stated in Article III of the Constitution, which formally establishes the Court. Instead, the Court's role was determined in the most important case to ever come

before it—Marbury v. Madison (1803). William Marbury had been appointed a judge by President John Adams before Adams left office, having lost the 1800 presidential election to Thomas Jefferson. Newly elected President Jefferson had refused to honor Marbury's appointment, so Marbury sued Secretary of State James Madison in an attempt to receive his commission under the Judiciary Act of 1789.

The Court's decision, written by Chief Justice John Marshall (1755–1835), ruled that the Constitution was "the fundamental and paramount law of the nation" (essentially restating the powers given to the Constitution in the Supremacy Clause of Article VI) and that "an act of the legislature repugnant to the constitution is void." In other words, with Marshall's opinion, the Court formally established its own role within US government—judicial review; i.e., the right to review laws passed by Congress to determine if they are consistent with or in contradiction to the Constitution of the United States. Marshall concluded, "It is emphatically the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is ... this is of the very essence of judicial duty." In so doing, the Supreme Court established itself as a coequal branch within the three branches of government, creating a means for it to check and balance Congress and the president. With the Court's newly appointed powers created in Marbury v. Madison (1803), the Supreme Court began its formal history of hearing cases and making decisions about their constitutionality.

Following *Marbury*, one of the most significant early cases heard by the Court was *Barron v. Baltimore* (1833). John Barron owned a wharf in the Baltimore harbor that he used to earn income by charging cargo ships to dock. As the city grew, large amounts of sand from construction and water diversions collected at the bottom of the harbor near Barron's wharf, to the point where his dock became unusable. John Barron sued the city of Baltimore, arguing that the city took his property without just compensation. His lawsuit was based upon the Fifth Amendment's Takings Clause, which holds that private property shall not be taken for "public use without just compensation." Significantly, the Supreme Court ruled that neither the Fifth Amendment nor any other Amendment listed in the Bill of Rights were intended to pertain to state cases. Instead, in Marshall's view, the framers intended the Bill of Rights to serve as protections only for federal cases. In short, the Bill of Rights, the Court ruled, did not apply to the states.

The implications of *Barron* have been almost as profound as *Marbury*. While *Barron* is not possible without *Marbury*, *Barron* created a situation in the United States in which every state could deny any right contained within the Bill of Rights to citizens of their state. For example, if Alabama chose to pass a law legalizing the use of torture (Eighth Amendment), or if Texas decided that there is no such thing as free speech (First Amendment), or if Mississippi decided that Christianity is the official religion of the state (First Amendment), then there is no clause within the Constitution, according to the Court, which forbids them from doing so. This resulted in a situation in which each Amendment to the Constitution has had to be "incorporated"—i.e., made applicable to the states, on a case-by-case and clause-by-clause basis, since 1833. In fact, today there are *still* a handful of clauses within the Bill of Rights which have not been made binding on the states. For example, neither the Fifth Amendment's "right to indictment by a grand jury," the Sixth Amendment's "right to a jury selected from residents of the state and district where the crime occurred," nor the Seventh Amendment's "right to jury trial in civil cases" have been incorporated against the states.

A third notable early case heard by the Court was *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857). Scott was a slave who sued for his freedom in St. Louis, Missouri, based on the fact that he had lived in free states and territories, including Illinois and Minnesota, from 1833–1843. The question that the Court was asked to consider is this: "Was Dred Scott free or a slave?" In ruling 7–2 against Scott, Chief Justice Taney, as we saw in Chapter 4, wrote that no individual who was descended from American slaves had ever been considered a



The un-freed slave Dred Scott (circa 1857) (Wikimedia Commons)

citizen under Article III of the Constitution. As Scott was not a citizen of the United States, he had none of the privileges of citizenship, including filing a lawsuit in a court of law against another citizen. With the Court's ruling, we see for neither the first nor last time this institution—which is supposed to be guided by "Justice, the guarding of liberty," as it says on the Court's walls—turn this phrase upside down and read it in the exact opposite way of its intended meaning. As Montesquieu once wrote, "There is no crueler tyranny than that which is perpetuated under the shield of law and in the name of justice." Yet, with its decision in *Dred Scott*, the Court seemingly took Montesquieu's warning as a virtue and more firmly established institutionalized racism and slavery in the United States, likely helping push the nation one step closer to civil war.⁴

Whatever the case may be, the true power of the Supreme Court was made clear in *Barron* and *Dred Scott*. In the first case, the Court removed the protection of the Bill of Rights from all state cases, which today make up roughly 99 percent of all US cases (less than 1 percent being federal cases). In the second case, the Supreme Court firmly established that one whole segment of US society—African Americans—were not considered to be citizens at all. We might recall

that *not everyone* owned slaves in the late 1850s. Indeed, in the decade prior to the Civil War, slavery was a "practice" reserved for a relatively small and rich sector with American society. However, at about the same time the Court was making its decision about Scott and all black people, slaves comprised some 4 million people, or one-sixth of the *entire* US population.

9.2 On the Question of Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

Civil liberties are rights that are formally listed in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, such as the right to free speech, the right against cruel and unusual punishment, and the right of habeas corpus. Civil rights, on the other hand, focus on the right to be free from unequal application of the law based on one's membership in a social, economic, or political group. Group membership might include being Native American, gay, a Jehovah's Witness, or a member of a radical right-wing political organization. The Court determines how civil liberties and civil rights apply to real-life situations through a variety of methods. In fact, there are at least six recognized ways to interpret the Constitution, including the following:

- 1. **Textualism**, which involves *consulting* the actual language of the Constitution
- Strict Constructionism, which requires one to interpret the Constitution literally, as it is written
- 3. **Historical** or **Originalism**, which consists of interpreting the Constitution based upon the *original* meaning or intent of the Constitution and the framers
- 4. **Structuralism**, which requires understanding a constitutional principle in the *context* of the document as a whole
- 5. **Precedent** or **Doctrinalism**, consisting of understanding the Constitution based upon *precedent* or prior decisions
- 6. Prudentialism, which discourages judges from laying out broad rules drawn from the Constitution to make decisions about future cases and focuses instead on judges making decisions based on a practical view of the case itself

Thus, at least three and possibly four of the six methods used employ some form of a *direct reading* of the actual language of the Constitution. Yet, particularly with respect to civil liberties and civil rights, we often do not see the justices rely on the actual text of the Constitution, but instead on their own interpretation which frequently seems to be rooted in a very specific ideological viewpoint. As we shall see below, throughout the history of the Court, the tendency by Supreme Court justices has been to limit free speech, curtail or even prevent the advancement of civil rights and civil liberties, and develop a rationale in which to view corporations—the most powerful political force in American politics today—as people in the "eyes of the law."

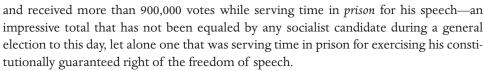
First Amendment: Speech

The First Amendment to the Constitution reads, "Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech." However, again and again, the Court has regularly failed to interpret this clause as it is written. For instance, in *Schenck v. United States* (1919), Charles Schenck, the Secretary of the Socialist Party of America, had mailed leaflets to draftees which were essentially an anti–World War I (1914–1918) mailer urging US citizens to oppose the war and the draft. Schenck was charged with violating the Espionage Act of 1917. Oliver Wendell Holmes (1841–1935), supposedly one of the most intelligent Supreme Court justices in the history of the United States, spoke for a unanimous Court by concluding that Schenck's words were not protected by the First Amendment. How come?

The answer to that question lies in Holmes' famous opinion. He wrote, "The question in every case is whether the words used are used in such circumstances and are of such a nature as to create a clear and present danger that they will bring about the substantive evils that Congress has a right to prevent." Making clear what that means, Holmes posits that words spoken during times of peace may not be protected by the First Amendment during times of war. Regardless of how respected Holmes may be, if people living in a democracy

cannot speak freely during the most important period of time in the life of their nation, then it cannot be said that they have any real freedom of speech. The only *nonviolent* way which members of a democracy can check or hold responsible a government *which belongs to them* during times of war is to discuss, critique, criticize, and propose alternatives to the government's chosen path of war. Anything less is not democracy.

The Court's precedent set in *Schenck* was maintained in a second case known as *Debs v. United States* (1919). In a speech carefully worded so as not to violate the Espionage Act, five-time Socialist Party presidential candidate Eugene V. Debs (1855–1926) spoke out against World War I by praising men who had resisted the draft. Like Schenck, Debs was convicted for violating the Espionage Act anyway, and his conviction and 10-year prison sentence was upheld by the Court. Debs' sentence was eventually commuted in 1921. However, illustrating the attraction of socialist politics for many people in the early part of the 10th century, Debs ran for president with the Socialist Party during the 1920 election



On the heels of the *Debs* decision, the Court heard arguments in *Gitlow v. New York* (1925) where again, a US citizen was convicted of going too far with his right to free speech. Benjamin Gitlow, a leader of the Communist Party, had published the "Left-Wing Manifesto," urging people to overthrow the government and replace capitalism with socialism. He was



Socialist Party leader Eugene Debs speaking in Canton, OH (1918) (Wikimedia Commons)

arrested and convicted for violating New York's criminal anarchy law, which made advocating the overthrow of the government a punishable offense. The Supreme Court upheld Gitlow's conviction (yet incorporated the First Amendment), reasoning that states may prohibit speech if it has a tendency to result in action dangerous to public security. Known as the "bad tendency test," the Court ruled that speech could be suppressed even if the speech does not create a "clear and present danger." However, again, if one cannot suggest or advocate alternatives to the political, economic, and social order, then it cannot be said that there is any genuine right to free speech.

Nonetheless, the Supreme Court later heard arguments in another case with some similar features to *Gitlow*, known as *Dennis v. United States* (1951). Eugene Dennis was the secretary of the Communist Party USA and was convicted of violating the Smith Act (1940), which prohibited teaching or advocating the overthrow or destruction of the United States government. The Supreme Court upheld Dennis' conviction, arguing that the Smith Act was not in violation of the right to free speech. Notably, however, unlike *Gitlow*, Dennis *had not* said or done anything. Instead, according to the dissent written by Hugo Black (1886–1971), he had only "agreed to assemble and to talk and publish certain ideas at a later date." His conviction set a very dangerous precedent in that not only did the law which he was prosecuted under run in contradiction to the stated language of the First Amendment's Free Speech Clause but he served four years in prison for something he had not even done. Though of not much use to Eugene Dennis, the Smith Act was eventually repealed in 1977.

While not defending the constitutionally protected right to free speech in any of the above instances, the Supreme Court later revealed what it considered to be protected speech. To be sure, after *Dennis*, the Court heard arguments in *Brandenburg v. Ohio* (1969). Clarence Brandenburg was a member of the Ku Klux Klan in rural Ohio and had organized a Klan demonstration. Brandenburg had invited the local media to attend the demonstration, where he and members of the local Ku Klux Klan made speeches denouncing blacks and Jews, and openly marched with weapons. For doing so, Brandenburg was arrested and convicted of violating Ohio's criminal syndicalism law, which made illegal advocating "crime, sabotage, violence, or unlawful methods of terrorism as a means of accomplishing industrial or political reform."

However, Brandenburg appealed his conviction to the Supreme Court, where the Court unanimously *reversed* Brandenburg's conviction, arguing that the law was overly broad, and at the same time established the current criteria used to determine what kind of speech is protected. The criteria are based upon whether or not the speech is likely to result in "imminent lawless action." If so, then the speech *is not* protected. However, the Court's ruling forces government officials to determine beforehand (known as *prior restraint*) what kinds of speech are forbidden—an almost impossible task. Even so, in a final free speech case, the Court protected what they called "symbolic speech." As decided in *Texas v. Johnson* (1984), acts such as flag burning (including that of the American flag) are considered a form of speech and are protected, in the Court's view, under the First Amendment's Free Speech Clause.

In sum, then, the Supreme Court has not interpreted the First Amendment's Free Speech Clause in a literal way, but instead has placed very specific limits on it. Indeed, any political discussion that might lead to violence is prohibited. Yet the two most important issues that are part of any nation's conversation—(1) war and (2) fundamentally addressing the structural problems of society—may both lead to violence. In both instances, the Court's act of placing limits on each type of speech stifle real human impulses which have a constitutional right to be expressed and have often matured under government action (or inaction) abhorrent to its citizens. If unjust wars did not exist or the social order were fundamentally equal, then there would be no reason to speak out against either one in the first place.

First Amendment: Religion (Establishment)

In turning to religious freedom, the First Amendment also specifically forbids the establishment of religion by government. The first clause of the First Amendment reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." In Lemon v. Kurtzman (1971), the Court developed a standard—known as the "Lemon Test"—to determine if a law is in violation of the Establishment Clause. Before that, for the Court, the Establishment Clause was somewhat of an unclear guide. For instance, while incorporating the Establishment Clause in Everson v. Board of Education (1947), the Court also ruled that it was constitutionally permissible for taxpayers to pay for students to be bussed to public and private schools. Using public funds to pay for public schools is why taxes exist. However, is it right for taxpayers to pay for students to be transported to a Christian academy, Muslim school, or Jewish learning center? Probably not. Nonetheless, once Lemon was established, the Court used it as their reference point to decide a number of establishment of religion cases. For example, in applying the "Lemon Test" in Edwards v. Aguillard (1987), the Court concluded, probably correctly, that teaching "creation science" in the public schools in Louisiana was in violation of the Establishment Clause. Yet, even in doing so, the Court evaluated the law in question in Edwards not based on the Constitution but on their own made-up standards in Lemon, making the decision in Edwards one step removed from the Court itself.

Be that as it may, the Court has attempted to separate religion from state institutions and activities in other cases, such as (1) *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), in which the Court ruled that the state of New York could not require students in public schools to recite a nondenominational prayer at the beginning of their school day; (2) *Stone v. Graham* (1980), in which the Supreme Court held that the posting of the Ten Commandments in public classrooms violated the First Amendment's Establishment Clause; (3) *Lee v. Weisman* (1992), in which the Court forbade school-sponsored prayers during high school graduation ceremonies (though some wonder if taking a moment of silence is not a similar thing); and (4) *Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe* (2000), in which the Supreme Court ruled that students cannot lead prayers before school-sponsored activities such as football games. Despite those rulings, the Court has recently moved in a more conservative direction by allowing city councils to open their town meetings with a prayer, as was decided in *Town of Greece v. Galloway* (2014), a decision that is difficult to defend under almost any interpretation of the Constitution.

First Amendment: Religion (Free Exercise)

Finally, with respect to the First Amendment, the Constitution provides for the right to exercise one's beliefs as they see fit. The First Amendment's Free Exercise Clause states "Congress shall make no law...prohibiting the free exercise [of religion]." Yet, the Supreme Court interprets this clause not literally, but instead in a way that is more consistent with the predominant cultural values of the United States. For instance, in *Minersville School District v. Gobitis* (1940), the Supreme Court upheld the expulsion from school of two elementary-aged children who chose not to salute the flag. The children were Jehovah's Witnesses who recognize God's kingdom as the only government that they should serve. Apparently seeing the wrongness in their decision, the Court reversed itself three years later in *West Virginia v. Barnette* (1943), noting that "no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein."

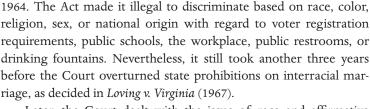
Having incorporated the Free Exercise Clause in *Cantwell v. Connecticut* (1940), the Court ruled in *Employment Division v. Smith* (1990) that the free exercise of one's belief

system is not an absolute right where all cultural practices—for right or wrong—are protected equally. For example, the Supreme Court upheld the denial of unemployment benefits for two members of a Native American church in Oregon who had ingested peyote as part of their religious ceremony. After the ceremony, they were subsequently fired from their jobs as drug counselors. The two members of the church filed for unemployment benefits with the state of Oregon but were denied because it was deemed that they had been fired for worker-related misconduct. However, the most common religion among Native Americans in the United States is the Native American Church (NAC), also known as Peyote Religion, in which people ingest the peyote plant to induce spiritual experiences. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court concluded that a state *can deny* unemployment benefits to someone who has used "illegal drugs;" i.e., peyote, even if for religious purposes. Notably, the Court has made no similar ruling for underage Catholics who drink wine as a part of their sacred or holy communion.

Further Contours of the Court's Understanding of the Constitution

To date, in addition to the First Amendment, the Supreme Court has made rulings on every single Amendment and nearly every single significant Constitutional question that applies to the American people. Beginning with the issue of race, in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the Court ruled that racial segregation was not unconstitutional so long as separate facilities for whites and blacks were equal. Known as the "separate but equal" doctrine, *Plessy* helped to further institutionalize segregation and racism in the United States and remained in place for another 50 years before being overturned by the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).

Brown led to the desegregation of public schools. However, it took another 10 years, as made applicable in the Court's decision in *Heart of Atlanta Motel v. United States* (1964), until businesses were required to desegregate in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of



Later, the Court dealt with the issue of race and affirmative action. Affirmative action is a policy that attempts to correct past wrongs that have been done to a group who share the same political, economic, or social position within a society. In the United States, affirmative action tends to provide a certain number of university seats or government contracts to be "set aside" for members of previously discriminated-against groups such as African Americans, Native Americans, and women. Yet the Supreme Court has not always supported the idea of affirmative action. For example, in one well-known case, *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978), the Court ruled that UC Davis's affirmative action program had gone too far. White petitioner Allan Bakke had test scores and a GPA that were higher than every minority candidate that had applied to UC Davis's

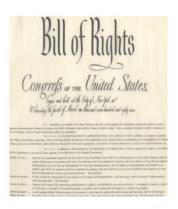
medical school in the two-year time period in which he had applied. However, in the Court's view, because too many seats had been "set aside" for minority applicants, Bakke



Martin Luther King, Jr., during his "I Have a Dream" speech, Washington, DC. (1963) (AP Photo)

had been discriminated against because he was *white* when he was rejected from the school.

Other race-based cases include *Korematsu v. United States* (1944) and *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock* (1903). In *Korematsu*, the Supreme Court *upheld* the constitutionality of FDR's Executive Order 9066, which ordered the detention of US citizens of Japanese ancestry into internment camps during World War II. In *Lone Wolf*, the Court was asked to decide whether Congress had violated the terms of the Medicine Lodge Treaty of 1867 with Native American groups. The treaty dealt with the settlement of Native Americans on reservations and had a provision requiring three-fourths of the adult males in the Kiowa, Apache, and Comanche tribes to agree to any change in terms of the treaty. Congress had opened 2 million acres of the reservations to settlement by US citizens without the tribes' approval. However, not exactly representing the interests of the first settlers of the Americas, the Court ruled that Congress had the power to change the treaty *unilaterally*, without the consent of the tribes. The US government's violation of



The Bill of Rights-Proposed: September 25, 1789; Ratified: December 15, 1791 (U.S. National Archives)

the Medicine Lodge Treaty is just one of no less than 500 treaties that the United States government has broken with Native American tribes.

In making clear its view on the rights of working people, in *Lochner v. New York* (1905), the Court came down decisively on behalf of businesses in ruling that a New York law which prohibited bakers from working more than 60 hours a week or 10 hours a day was *unconstitutional*. As we will see in our discussion of "corporate personhood" below, this occurred right in the middle of the period of federal courts granting more and more power to already influential trusts, corporations, and industries. In fact, "by 1920 ... [they] had struck down roughly three hundred labor laws that had been passed by state legislatures to ease the inhumane conditions endured by working people" as well as "issuing more than 1,800 injunctions against labor strikes" from 1880 to 1931.8

With respect to people's personal lives, the Supreme Court has until recently been fairly conservative. It was not until the beginning of the 21st century that the Court formally ruled state laws banning homosexuality unconstitutional. In fact, it was not until Lawrence v. Texas (2003) that the Court invalidated a sodomy law in Texas (as well as 13 other states), making same-sex sexual activity legal throughout the country. Notably, as recently as Bowers v. Hardwick (1986), the Supreme Court had upheld a Georgia law which criminalized same-sex activity. Moreover, in Boy Scouts of America v. Dale (2000), the Court ruled that the Boy Scouts, as a private organization, could revoke the adult membership to a former Eagle Scout and current Scout Master based upon his open homosexuality. Not until 2015 in Obergefell v. Hodges (2015) did the Supreme Court decide that prohibiting two members of the same gender to marry was a violation of the Fifth Amendment's Due Process Clause and the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause. In dealing directly with a personal and ethical question, the Court ruled in Miller v. California (1971) that obscene materials are not protected by the First Amendment. The Court concluded that "obscene" is defined as appealing to the "prurient interest" (or indecent interest) of a community.9 Exactly how that was to be determined was not made clear by the Court.

With regard to the Second Amendment and in *reversing every previous ruling* of consequence in Supreme Court case law dealing with gun ownership, the Court ruled in *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008) that the Second Amendment protects an individual's right to possess a firearm or weapon *irrespective* of one's membership or service in a militia. The Supreme Court incorporated the Second Amendment, and their understanding of gun rights, two years later in *McDonald v. Chicago* (2010). Admirably, and in the interest of protecting our personal privacy against government intrusion, the Court ruled in *Mapp v. Ohio* (1961) that "all evidence obtained by searches and seizures in violation of the Constitution is, by [the Fourth Amendment], inadmissible in a state court"—and

in so doing, made applicable the Fourth Amendment to the states. ¹⁰ Also respectably, in recognizing our rights as possible defendants, in *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966), the Supreme Court incorporated the Fifth Amendment right against "self-incrimination" by ruling that a defendant in custody has the right to have his or her constitutional rights made aware to him or her, including the "right to remain silent."

With respect to the right to an attorney (i.e., the Sixth Amendment), the Court held in *Powell v. Alabama* (1933) that a defendant has a right to counsel in all capital cases (i.e., death penalty cases). Later, the Court ruled in *Gideon v. Wainwright* (1966)¹¹ that all defendants have a right to an attorney in any felony case. This, of course, gave rise to the creation of the public defender's office in every state in the country. The Court eventually made its position clear about the Eighth Amendment and the death penalty in the 1970s. Initially, the Court ruled that the death penalty in Georgia was unconstitutional as then applied in the state of Georgia in *Furman v. Georgia* (1972) because judges and juries had too much discretion in administering a death sentence. The Court's ruling essentially placed a halt on capital punishment throughout the country. However, four years later, the Supreme Court reversed itself in *Gregg v. Georgia* (1976). Indeed, it argued that the death penalty did not violate the Eighth Amendment's Cruel and Unusual Punishment Clause in all instances and may be an appropriate form of retribution against society's worst offenders as "a punishment is unconstitutionally cruel and unusual only if it violates the evolving levels of decency that define a civilized society."

Importantly, each right discussed above has been incorporated to the states through the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Still, it is worth noting that, without the Supreme Court's decision in Barron v. Baltimore (1833), none of these decisions would have been necessary in the first place. In fact, Barron could have been corrected by simply overturning the decision in that case. But because Barron was not overturned in a follow-up ruling, and because it would have been too outrageous to have the Bill of Rights not apply to 99 percent of all the cases decided in the United States each year, the Supreme Court was forced to reverse one of its earliest rulings irrespective of its original understanding of the framers' intent behind the Bill of Rights.

That said and continuing on, in making use of multiple parts of the Bill of Rights, the Court literally created a new "right" in *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965). Indeed, the Court ruled that "penumbras" (i.e., shadows) or zones exist within or between existing constitutionally enumerated rights. In fact, the Court argued that by combining the First, Third, Fourth, and Ninth Amendments together, a new right was created—the "right to privacy." The right to privacy, significantly for *Griswold*, contained within it the right to "marital privacy," which meant that the provision of contraceptive advice to married couples was constitutionally protected. However, the most serious—and unintended—consequence of this ruling was the Supreme Court's ruling in *Roe v. Wade* (1973). In *Roe*, the justices ruled that the right to privacy, as annunciated in *Griswold*, extended to a woman's right to make a decision about her own reproductive system—in this instance, abortion.

Yet the Court has set some fairly conservative requirements for any woman that wishes to receive an abortion. The most well-known were established in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), in which the Court decided a Pennsylvania law requiring a woman, prior to an abortion: (1) to obtain "informed consent" (e.g., be provided with alternatives to abortion, made aware of public or private assistance, be presented with "medical facts" such as the medically disputed notion of fetal pain, etc. by the health-care provider); (2) wait 24 hours, and; (3) obtain parental consent if a minor was, in fact, *constitutional*.

Finally, in a denial of the most basic right in the United States—the right to vote—the Supreme Court ruled in *Bush v. Gore* (2000) that the Florida Supreme Court's method for recounting ballots in the 2000 Presidential election was *unconstitutional*. Why? For two reasons—(1) because different methods were used to count different ballots in violation

of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, rendering the Florida recount unconstitutional, and (2) supposedly out of fear that a drawn-out decision in the Florida popular vote might prompt Congress to interfere with Florida's appointment of electors, as the state only had so much time to present their Electoral College votes to Congress (see 3 U.S.C., § 5). Thus, for the Supreme Court, no reasonable recount method could be developed in the amount of time remaining;¹² so the Court stopped the recount of Florida popular votes, and in essence, awarded the 2000 presidential election to George W. Bush despite his receiving fewer national popular votes than Al Gore and seemingly without much regard to the genuine concern that Bush had not, in fact, even won the popular vote in the state of Florida.

9.3 A Brief History of Corporate Personhood¹³

From 1787 until today, economic elites have only gained more power over the state, most notably through the very decisions of the state. This should probably not surprise us, as it is *their* state. Through the years, elite power has come from control over powerful economic forces and institutions, and from today's dominant economic entities—multinational corporations. If we look at the legal history of the relatively new phenomena of "corporate personhood" (i.e., the corporation having the same standing as a person in the eyes of the law), we will see not only how we reached this place in time, but can also make some predictions about the future relationship between the United States government and the American people. Among other economic concerns, and with respect to other economic clauses in the United States Constitution, the framers included in the language of Article I, Section 10 a clause known as the Contract Clause. It ensures that no state shall interfere with the "obligation of contracts." Throughout the next 200+ years, the Supreme Court would make clear just what was meant by that seemingly harmless clause.

The first case decided by the Supreme Court which would shed light on how it understood the Contract Clause, and in so doing help establish the framework for viewing corporations as "people," is a case known as *Dartmouth College v. Woodward* (1819). In *Dartmouth College*, for the first time, the Supreme Court recognized a corporation's right to have its charter honored as a contract. The contract was viewed as existing between "private parties" with "the term 'contract' refer[ring] to transactions involving individual property rights." Nowhere in *Dartmouth College* does the Court say that "corporations are people." However, the Court does argue that contracts are between two parties with individual property rights. If corporations have the right to have contracts honored, and if contracts are between two parties with individual property rights, then corporations must have *individual* property rights. Yet the reality is that individual property rights are for individuals, not corporations. All the same, with their decision in *Dartmouth College*, the Supreme Court provided a foundational logic for eventually viewing the corporation as a person with basic civil rights that are constitutionally protected. However, the real question after *Dartmouth College* was "Just how far would the Supreme Court go in its understanding of the corporation as a person?"

An initial answer to that question was given in a second case, known as *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad* (1886), in which the Court "implied" that the Fourteenth Amendment (which was written in 1868 with the stated purpose of granting citizenship rights to newly freed slaves) "applied" to corporations as well as people. ¹⁵ How this was the case was not made clear, but, the idea of it was drawn from a court reporter who noted that Chief Justice Morrison Waite (1816–1888) had stated at the beginning of the hearing that the Court was of the "opinion" that the Fourteenth Amendment does in fact apply to corporations. ¹⁶ While not formally establishing a legal precedent in the case, it does reveal the Court's mindset regarding corporations and the law at the time.

Regardless, whatever doubt remained regarding the Court's thinking on corporate personhood was resolved in its next case.

Undeniably, in *Pembina Consolidated Silver Mining Co. v. Pennsylvania* (1888), the Supreme Court ruled that "under the designation of 'person' there is no doubt that a private corporation is included in the [Fourteenth Amendment.]" Again, forgetting for a moment that the Fourteenth Amendment was passed specifically to provide citizenship rights for African Americans, nowhere in the language of the Amendment does it say anything about a corporation being included in the definition of a "person." Yet, from here on out, we see the notion of "corporate personhood" grow ever stronger from the vantage point of the law; and at last, we come to one of the painful truths about law and justice in the United States: The Constitution does not actually mean what it says, but instead, only means what the *Supreme Court* says it means—even when it defies common sense. Without a doubt, unfortunately, more evidence of this maxim is found in the Court's next significant case regarding corporations being viewed as people by the legal system.

To be certain, with corporations on the rise, fears about increasing amounts of money in the political system in the immediate aftermath of the Watergate Affair were addressed by the Court in *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976). Money had always been in politics; however, with *Buckley*, the Supreme Court opened the door for the funding of candidates to be made a constitutionally protected right. While upholding a federal law which limited private dollars being given to public officials, the Court also held (and thereby established) that spending money on political campaigns is a form of "free expression" protected by the First Amendment's Free Speech Clause. The concern that this would lead to even more money flowing into the political system was realized in its next case, the ironically entitled *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010). While the title sounds as if it might benefit the people of the United States, instead the case was a blow to the American people and a boon to corporate America.

In *Citizens United*, the Supreme Court ruled that any spending limitation imposed on corporations (and unions) for the purpose of political advertising is the same as placing a limitation on one's right to speak freely. Therefore, one cannot limit a corporation's right to spend an *unlimited* amount of money on the political candidate or issue of its choosing without violating that corporation's First Amendment free speech rights. With *Citizens United*, the Court made way for the advent of the Super PAC (political action campaign). Unlike donations to a PAC (which cannot receive more than \$2,900 from any one person during an election cycle), there is no cap on donations that an individual or a corporation can make to a Super PAC. The only restriction is that the money may not be given *directly* to the candidate, but spent, instead, only on his or her *behalf*.

So, let's say that the CEO of Exxon Mobil or JP Morgan Chase wants to spend \$50 million on behalf of a candidate; because of the Court's decision in *Citizens United*, there is no law whatsoever that prevents him from doing so. Presumably, by not allowing corporations to give money *directly* to candidates, the Supreme Court has somehow helped to protect the integrity of the republic.

Either not understanding or not caring about the degree of popular rule being undermined by its decision in *Citizens United*, the Supreme Court concluded that "political speech [in the form of political advertising] is indispensable in a democracy and this is no less true because the speech comes from a corporation." First, corporations cannot speak—not a single word. Second, in *this* democracy, one of the most important things needed to win an election *is* political advertising. Political advertising costs money—a lot of money. Who has it? The great majority of the American people, or the

select few who steer and profit from the most powerful corporations in the world? The answer is obvious.

As the American political system already allows for private citizens (be it the clothes tailor or the Wall Street trader) to give money to a political office-seeker, the United States political system is, by definition, corrupt. What others call "bribery," we call "campaign contributions," "lobbying," or the ever-vague but still clear to the informed citizen "influence." You can give it a different name, but the function is still the same. Nevertheless, as the years have gone by, corporations have grown and have found more and more ways to get billions of dollars into the hands of national candidates (with billions more being spent each year lobbying Congress and the president). As detrimental to our already money-flooded republic as *Citizens United* has been, *McCutcheon v. FEC* (2014) only further removed real political power from the hands of the American people.

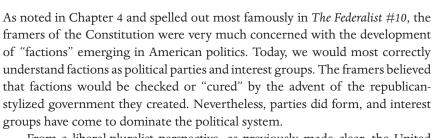
McCutcheon was a fairly simple case which involved an Alabama businessman who wanted to give more money to individual Republican Party members during the 2011-2012 election year cycle than the aggregate (or total) two-year campaign limit of \$117,000. The Court held that the aggregate limits are a violation of the First Amendment's Free Speech Clause and that they do not help to limit corruption, but instead limit participation in the democratic process. For some, the Court's ruling could not be more upside down. Without question, the Court's allowance of more money in the political system is not only viewed as the very definition of corruption but also prevents the great majority of people from attaining any real representation from the political system itself. Indeed, McCutcheon has created a situation in the United States that further threatens to steal the last remnants of public elections, and thus national policy, completely away from the American people. All of this said, a final case, Burwell v. Hobby Lobby (2014), illustrates just how ridiculous the notion of corporate personhood has become. In Burwell, the Court allowed "closely held" corporations (i.e., traded on an irregular basis and owned by a small group of shareholders) to be exempt from any law to which its shareholders or owners religiously object so long as there is another way to further the interest of the law. It is the first time in the history of the United States that the Court has recognized and protected a corporation's claim of religious belief, and at the same time, further expanded the notion of corporate personhood.



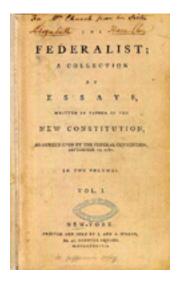
Political Parties and Interest Groups

The Federalist #10: 'By a faction, I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.'

—Publius ('Author' of the Federalist Papers, 1787–1788)



From a liberal-pluralist perspective, as previously made clear, the United States political arena is created in such a way that a range of parties, groups, interest groups, and ideologies can work to be heard and have their interests realized by the government. However, where political parties and interests groups are concerned, the political arena in the United States is not colored with a broad range of ideologies and groups that span the political-philosophy spectrum. Instead, it is controlled by a very specific class and its corresponding ideological viewpoint. Without a doubt, a very small *fraction* of society dominates the two major parties and the most powerful interests groups in the United States.



The Federalist Papers (circa 1788) (Wikimedia Commons)

10.1 On the Difference Between the Two Major Parties

In the United States, there are five parties that regularly show up on the ballot—the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, the Libertarian Party, the Constitution Party, and the Green Party. In addition, there are at least 29 minor parties and a minimum of 31 regional political parties that run candidates to varying degrees. Yet there are only two parties, the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, which control the American

political scene or produce candidates that have any real chance of winning an election. This is known as a duopoly—where two parties dominate a political system. Of the 535 members of the House and Senate, only one person—Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont—is not a member of one of the two major parties.

Liberal scholars and commentators tend to be concerned only with the "party politics" and "decision making" of the two major parties, often focusing on the many hurdles a bill faces in Congress, and continue to argue that there is genuine political choice in the United States. For instance, with respect to party politics, the noted liberal scholar and Yale Professor David R. Mayhew has argued that government can still function effectively even if Democrats control one branch of government while Republicans control the other.² The respected liberal legislative scholar Barbara Sinclair attempted to describe the legislative process in both houses of Congress as it, in her view, "really works," focusing on the multiple steps a bill must take in Congress to become a law.³ And, in contributing to one of the most prominent liberal theoretical approaches, MIT political scientist Charles Stewart argues, in his bid to understand legislative decision-making that lawmakers are primarily guided by rational decision making (i.e., "rational choice theory") about policy,⁴ and that rational choice theory is what best explains why a particular bill becomes a law over other possible reasons.

With respect to political "choice," liberal scholars in general will point out the differences between the two major parties, arguing that the parties are sharply divided along "ideological" or "party" lines. In fact, these scholars will note that, dating back to the founding era, there has been a fear and a *perception* that the United States is divided along party lines or that it might someday be divided along party lines, which would threaten the republic itself. Indeed, consistent with this line of thought, these thinkers could count John Adams as one of their earliest allies, as he argued, "There is nothing which I dread so much as a division of the republic into two great parties. ... This ... is to be dreaded as the greatest political evil under our Constitution." And today, liberal commentators and scholars will note, with some concern but also with some satisfaction, that the Republicans and Democrats cannot agree on a whole range of issues, such as the following:

- » Abortion Democrats are pro-choice, while Republicans are anti-abortion.
- » Minimum Wage Democrats support a modest increase in the minimum wage, while Republicans do not.
- » Gun Rights Democrats want some control over gun-ownership, while Republicans do not.
- » Gay Marriage Democrats support gay marriage, while Republicans are opposed.
- » The Death Penalty Democrats are largely opposed to capital punishment, while the Republicans largely support capital punishment.

By illustrating the differences between the parties, the liberal-pluralist view can satisfy itself that there is genuine "choice" in American politics between the two parties. However, and most importantly, the liberal-pluralist scholarship and commentary fail to identify the policies on which the Democrats and Republicans are united. In understanding the issues that the two major parties agree upon, it becomes clear which class (or faction, or most accurately, which small fraction of US society) the two major parties represent. In so doing, it also becomes clear which class has real power within American society. To be sure, the Democratic Party and the Republican Party are both *opposed* to the following:

- » Universal (Free) Health Care In spite of the majority of the US population being in support of universal health care since at least the year 2000, neither major party supports a publicly funded and nationally interconnected program for all citizens of the United States.
- » Free College and Graduate School Education By reducing the annual military budget of \$1.2 trillion by approximately \$190 billion a year, the United States could afford to pay for every one of its 19 million college and graduate-level students to go to school for free. The Department of Education argues that a mere \$62 billion is needed to fund a free education for all students currently enrolled in college. Whatever the case, the US is one of the very few developed nations that does not have a universal higher education system—and neither major party supports a free college and graduate-level education for all citizens of the United States.
- * Halting Global Warming The scientific community is 95 percent certain that global warming is not only real, but is also man-made. In fact, scientists are so sure that global warming is being caused by the burning of fossil fuels that they are now as sure of it as the fact that cigarettes cause cancer. Yet both parties continue to allow wars to be waged for oil, and support and allow for the development of environmentally and ecologically destructive methods of oil extraction, such as hydraulic fracking and offshore oil drilling. And each party continues to support oil expansion in general, in addition to the collection and transportation of oil through projects such as the Keystone Pipeline. The one *important* exception here is President Biden's hundreds of billions of dollars investment in clean energy for nearly every major sector of the economy in an attempt to reduce greenhouse gases in the United States by 50 percent by 2030. Without question, it is a positive step forward. However, the clean energy component of Biden's Build Back Better Plan has not yet reversed any of the above-mentioned realities from being pursued by each party.
- A Living Wage The federal minimum wage is \$7.25 an hour. That translates into \$58 a day, \$290 a week, \$1,160 a month, or \$13,920 a year before taxes. In other words, both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party support a nationwide wage that is just barely above the poverty line for one individual (i.e., \$11,670 a year) and well below the poverty line for a family of four (i.e., \$23,850 per year). On the other hand, a living wage would pay somewhere around \$20 an hour, which translates into \$160 a day, \$800 a week, \$3,200 a month, or \$38,400 a year—a much more reasonable sum for a person to live on.
- Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan Each party overwhelmingly supported the initiation and continuation of the costly and deadly US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As noted in Chapter 7, wealthy and high-ranking members of each party have also invested in corporations that made billions of dollars from the wars in each country.
- » Early Maternal (or Paternal) Support Most people in the United States and throughout the world will have children at some point during their lives. The first five years of a person's life is the most significant phase in the development of that person into a healthy adult. In fact, there is no trauma that has a deeper impact on a child than not being nurtured during this critical time. Known as "childhood neglect," the resulting consequences can be severe and last a lifetime. Thus, it is within reason that at least the early phase of raising a child would

receive some public funds, such as direct subsidies to parents, to ensure that all children have a good chance at a healthy life. For instance, money could be earmarked for the first five years of a child's life to provide free day care or in-home child care for parents with young children. Neither major party supports public funding for either program.

- » Rent and Mortgage Control Much of what working people earn goes to paying their rent or mortgage. Neither the Democratic Party nor Republican Party supports any measure to reduce the rents or mortgages of working people, but instead allows banks and commercial real estate owners to charge as much as "the market will allow" in making a profit off of a base necessity; i.e., the provision of shelter for oneself and one's family. Both parties overwhelmingly supported the bailouts of the banks during the "Great Recession" while, at the same time, failed to appropriate one cent to working people or the millions of people who lost their homes during the recession.
- » Mass Transportation The United States is one of the only First World countries that does not have a fully developed mass transit system. Most US citizens have no other choice but to spend thousands of dollars annually in fuel, insurance, car repairs, and bridge and toll fares for their personal vehicles. Neither the Democratic nor the Republican Party supports any form of mass transit.
- » The Global War on Terror and the Military Budget Neither party has made any significant attempt since the beginning of the US "War on Terror" to put an end to the costly and lethal global war, but instead both have regularly voted to increase the size of the military budget since 2001. In fact, today, the military budget is the largest in the history of the United States.
- » Reform (or Replacement) of the Capitalist Economic System In spite of the recent (and severe for some) economic downturn of the mid-2000s, neither the Democratic Party nor the Republican Party supports any genuine reform of the capitalist economic system or its replacement with a more worker-oriented system. A more worker-focused economic system would allow working people (the vast majority of the population) to both have a say in what they are producing as well as share equally in the profits of what they have produced. As much as any issue, support of working people and revisions to the capitalist economic system on their behalf are rejected completely by the two major parties.

Accordingly, on the major economic issues, the Republican Party and the Democratic Party are *not* divided but are, in fact, *united* in their support of a socio-economic system that does not support the great majority of people in the United States in any meaningful way. The governing principle of the two major parties seems to be that if a policy runs counter to the class interests of international capital, then it must be rejected, or never even brought up, in fact, for discussion in the political arena. The politico-economic ideologies of the two major parties are so closely aligned that it is most correct to identify the United States party system as ideologically different only on ethical questions and *not the core (and in fact, systemic) economic ones.* The famed Roman poet Ovid (43 BC–AD 17/18) once observed, "Curia pauperibus clausa est,"—"The senate house is closed to the poor." From the brief examination above of some of the major issues facing the US today, it seems clear that this statement could just as easily apply in the United States at the present time as it did more than 2,000 years ago in ancient Rome. Nonetheless, the real question is, "Why is this the case?"

10.2 Interest Groups: The Power of Multinational Corporations

The Democratic Party and the Republican Party are fundamentally the same from an economic viewpoint because each party is dominated by the most powerful industrial and financial sectors within US society. More than any other interest group, transnational corporations dictate the political course in American politics by contributing and lobbying the two major parties. Accordingly, the class concerns of those who control the most powerful multinational corporations (MNCs) in the United States (i.e., the US-based international bourgeoisie) become the central issues debated and decided upon within the American political arena. In a capitalist republic, a party cannot serve two masters. Either the party serves the working class, or it serves international capital. Thus, the most dramatic consequence of the two parties being heavily financed by corporate America is that very little attention is given to working people's major concerns. The top industries lobbying the Democratic and Republican parties, and thus shaping national policy, are indicated in Table 10.1.

Sector	Total
Health	\$623,282,425
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	\$544,600,454
Misc. Business	\$502,821,031
Communications/Electronics	\$442,523,893
Energy/Natural Resource	\$300,428,943
Transportation	\$255,435,524
Other	\$222,853,223
Ideology/Single-Issue	\$142,183,541
Agribusiness	\$140,083,441
Defense	\$103,962,230
Construction	\$60,479,939
Labor	\$49,209,399
Lawyers & Lobbyists	\$15,560,287

From the figures presented in Table 10.1, it is only logical that the two major parties continue to resist popular appeals for universal health care, an end to wars for oil, and measures addressing global warming. Based on the top industries lobbying the two major parties, it should not be at all surprising that powerful MNC banks received bailouts while working people received nothing, nor that corporate America continues to increase its control over the Internet and telecommunications in general. A similar pattern is revealed when we look at the top sectors making campaign contributions to the two major parties from 2019–2020 as indicated in Table 10.2 below:

TABLE 10.2 Campaign Contributions to the Democratic and Republican Parties by Sector (2019–2020)¹⁰

Sector	Total	Democrats	Republicans
Other	\$2,382,877,058	49.0%	50.6%
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	\$1,954,648,468	52.2%	47.5%
Ideology/Single-Issue	\$1,848,904,690	72.8%	26.6%
Misc. Business	\$836,986,537	52.8%	46.7%
Health	\$637,577,534	62.7%	36.7%
Communications/Electronics	\$612,125,924	80.1%	19.2%
Lawyers & Lobbyists	\$374,322,575	77.3%	22.1%
Labor	\$259,371,009	88.1%	11.6%
Energy/Natural Resource	\$222,200,721	29.6%	70.1%
Construction	\$202,353,565	32.3%	67.4%
Agribusiness	\$193,489,129	32.4%	67.3%
Transportation	\$147,045,013	35.3%	64.4%
Defense	\$46,019,740	48.2%	51.6%

Thus, while liberal commentators and scholars would claim that the political arena is a place where a multiplicity of interests can have their concerns heard and realized, the reality is something different. From an RPE perspective, more money equals more political power. Therefore, lightly funded groups and issues such as civil rights; groups calling for a redistribution of wealth; programs for the poor; citizens who support inexpensive education for all; those who wish to bring an end to war (which, in the case of Iraq, is the majority of Americans); and free health care (again, a majority)—all are ignored by the two major parties in Washington. Even if we are to note that organized labor is ranked high in Table 10.2, it is surrounded within the political arena by corporate interests. Equally as problematic for organized labor as a whole, labor unions remain relatively weak in the United States, with membership constituting little more than 11 percent of all workers. 11 However, this isn't labor's only problem when confronting powerful economic interests in the political arena. To be sure, in recent years, a second, yet interrelated concern has created almost as much difficulty for the American working class as their inability to compete in dollars and cents in the political arena with the "captains of industry." That concern is the issue of false consciousness.

10.3 False Consciousness

In the United States the American working class has seen itself become increasingly involved in fighting imperialistic wars abroad, financing a growing military budget, and losing its social safety net at home and at the same time regularly acting politically inconsistent with their own class interests. This national situation has been to the gain of US-based transnational corporations, to the detriment of working people, and has been overwhelmingly supported by both the Democratic and Republican parties. So, we might ask, why do the vast majority of American citizens continue to vote for and identify with the two major parties when neither party is serving their interests? Because most people in the United States neither recognize their class position nor participate politically with

their real class interests in mind. Instead, most people embrace the ideology and class imperatives of the wealthiest members of US society. In short, most people within the United States continue to identify with the Democratic and Republican parties because of false consciousness.

False consciousness, a term derived from the Marxist tradition, identifies a state of mind of an individual or a group of people who neither understand their class interests nor act consistently with those political concerns. Karl Marx himself did not use the term false consciousness. However, many who are intellectually aligned with the Marxist tradition trace the concept's origin back to a theory known as *commodity fetishism*, first developed by Marx.

Commodity fetishism is the notion that people place a value on commodities apart from the ones which they intrinsically possess; e.g., a diamond is not simply a rock, but instead an entity with some type of built-in special properties that make it more valuable than any other kind of rock. False consciousness as a concept was first used by Marx's friend and collaborator, Friedrich Engels (1820–1895).

While Engels coined the term and argued that false consciousness and ideology are intellectual constructs, the first notable person to discuss the idea of false consciousness after its introduction was the leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution, V. I. Lenin. Lenin argued that a false consciousness had been imposed on working people in Russia through the state and bourgeoisie. The state was used by the landowning elite and czar to hold up its political and economic value system as the only legitimate worldview for the Russian people, with their intent being to force the whole of Russian society to embrace capital ownership and class division as natural.

After Lenin, other scholars have further developed the notion of false consciousness. Most prominent among them are Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, Karl Mannheim, the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) and Michael Parenti. Still others have made similar or slightly different contributions to the false consciousness literature as these authors. However, the fine point of each of these authors' scholarship is this—some men and women can and do fail to understand their class position, and in doing so, fail to grasp their correct corresponding political ideology. As such, the way that this plays itself out in the United States is that the great mass of US citizens consistently vote and identify with the two major political parties that do not serve working people's interests, but instead serve the interests of the bourgeoisie and international capital.

The failure to understand one's class position and its corresponding ideology is the essence of false consciousness and can have a dramatic impact on the political, economic, and social lives of working people. Unless working people in the United States realize that the predominantly corporate-controlled state (via the two major political parties) does not and cannot serve their personal and class interests, it is not possible for the majority of American citizens to see any significant improvement in their lives. On the contrary, as long as working people continue to support the two major parties, they can expect to see many more years of corporate dominance of the United States political, economic, and social system, which can and does run in contradiction to their own class interests. The key to overcoming their false consciousness and gaining real power over their class, which will lead to the expression of their class interests in the political arena, is rooted in the *education* of their class. Without the American working class awakening to its class position and corresponding ideology, they can expect many more years of state policy which favors the rich and not them.



The Political Economy of the News Media

'A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce, or a tragedy, or perhaps both.'

—James Madison (4th President of the United States, 1751–1836)

The media plays a central role in American politics and in the life of any nation. In a democracy, the news media is responsible for investigating public officials and political institutions to ensure that each is working on behalf of the people or, more generally, the "public good." Any question or ethical issue that is in front of government decision-makers should also be placed in front of the people, by among others, the news media. To be sure, in a democracy, the news media is supposed to be the watchdog over government, responsible for looking closely at potential and sitting officeholders and providing detailed policy information about legislation that has been considered or enacted. In addition, the investigation of the political arena by the news media is to occur from a variety of independent and unconnected sources which are, if not completely objective which is likely not possible to do, then at least based upon a



The New York Times Building in Times Square, New York City, NY (Wikimedia Commons)

variety of ideological viewpoints. Yet, when we examine the American media, we find that this is not always the case.

11.1 Who Owns the Media?

Central to understanding the news media is recognizing who owns the vast majority of news sources. As recently as 1983, fifty separate corporations owned 90 percent of all the United States' news media—print, TV, and radio. Today, *just six* large global corporations control 90 percent of everything that we read, watch, or listen to. And notably, three of those corporations—Comcast, ViacomCBS, and Fox—are overwhelmingly dominated by just three people. What follows are the top six corporations, which control nine-tenths of the news media market in the United States:

1. **Comcast** Today, Comcast is the largest media corporation in the world with a net worth of some \$210 billion. Comcast's CEO is Brian Roberts, who controls just over 33 percent of the voting shares of Comcast and has a personal net worth

of some \$2 billion. Some of Comcast's holdings include AT&T Broadband, NBC, Telemundo, Universal Pictures, USA Network, Bravo, CNBC, The Weather Channel, MSNBC, the Golf Channel, and E!. Through a separate subsidiary, Comcast is also the owner of an NHL team, the Philadelphia Flyers.²

- 2. **The Walt Disney Corporation** Known for amusement parks and Mickey Mouse, The Walt Disney Corporation is the second largest media company on Earth with a net worth of more than \$200 billion. The CEO of The Walt Disney Corporation is Robert Allen Iger, who has a net worth of \$350 million. Some of Disney's holdings include ABC, ESPN, the Disney Channel, A&E, Lifetime, the History Channel, the Military History Channel, Touchstone, Marvel Entertainment, Lucasfilm, Walt Disney Pictures, Pixar, and 277 radio stations.³
- 3. AT&T A global giant, AT&T was founded as Bell Telephone Company by the famous Alexander Graham Bell. With a net worth of at least \$200 billion, today, it is the third largest media conglomerate in the world. Its CEO is John T. Stankey, who has a net worth of \$75 million. Of its many holdings around the world, AT&T owns HBO, CNN, the Cartoon Network, TNT, TBS, and Warner Brothers studio⁴ as well as Cinemax, DC Entertainment, and New Line Entertainment.
- 4. ViacomCBS The majority shareholder and founder of ViacomCBS was Sumner Redstone who had a personal net worth of some \$6 billion before his death in August of 2020. His daughter is now chairwoman of the company and has an estimated net worth of \$500 million. Operating in 180 countries, some of Viacom's holdings include MTV, Nickelodeon, VH1, BET, Comedy Central, and Paramount Pictures⁵ as well as the CBS Television Network, Columbia Pictures, TriStar Pictures, Showtime, CBS Radio, Inc., and the long-standing book publisher Simon & Schuster.⁶
- 5. Sony This powerful Japanese multi-media company has a net worth of at least \$95 billion and was previously led by Sony CEO Kaz Hirai who has a net worth of \$40 million. Under Hirai, Sony became a dominant media corporation throughout the entertainment industry. With an ownership stake in nearly every media market in the world, some of Sony's many holdings include TriStar Pictures, Sony Pictures (in film and television), Jeopardy Productions (which is the producer of the *Jeopardy!* TV show), Epic Records, RCA Records, Arista Records, and the Sony PlayStation.
- 6. **Fox** One of the most politically influential corporations in the United States, Fox is controlled by the Australian billionaire Rupert Murdoch and his two sons. Murdoch's net worth is more than \$22 billion. Some of Fox's holdings include the Fox Broadcasting Company, Fox News Channel, Fox Business Network, National Geographic, the Movie Channel, and the Fox Sports Networks, in addition to the Wall Street Journal, the New York Post, Barron's, SmartMoney, HarperCollins, 20th Century Fox, and Fox Searchlight Pictures.⁷

We might ask, "Is the news media controlled by a variety of organizations and independents institutions that all have equal access to the public marketplace?" The short answer is, "No." Instead, the media in the United States is owned by a very narrow fraction (in fact, just a handful) of individuals who represent the most powerful class in American political and economic life—the cosmopolitan bourgeoisie. By definition, then, the news media in the United States does not include multiple diverse interests, but is instead an oligopoly—a market that is controlled by a very small group of for-profit companies.

11.2 Does the Media Have a Political and Economic Ideology?

If the media is controlled by very wealthy members within the global elite, it is reasonable to ask whether or not the news media has an identifiable political and economic ideology. Liberal scholars regularly argue that there is no discernible politico-economic ideology of the news media, or that Democratic and Republican issues are given roughly the same attention in the media. However, this argument is undermined by the fact that mainstream news media focuses almost *exclusively* on conservative and liberal concerns. If the news media did not have some identifiable ideological value system, then a whole range of individuals and issues and a whole series of political and economic questions would be discussed in the corporate press. For instance, the corporate media tends not to report on or fails to identify the virtues of:

Public Ownership in Any Form. Very few individuals have any real power over the productive forces in US society. In fact, any fully developed notion of equality or democracy would include a valuing of economic equality as well as political parity. Yet, instead of identifying the advantages which might come from the majority of the American people controlling the US economy (e.g., ethical control over production, increased wages, improved working conditions, etc.), public ownership is *almost always* dismissed as "inefficient," "communist," "idealistic," "a nice idea that won't work," or simply not entertained by the corporate press at all.

Unions and Labor. In a capitalist society, one of the very few protections that people have in the economic system (and consequently, the political system) is their ability to form and join a union. When firmly established, unions can work to increase compensation packages for workers (e.g., hourly pay, health benefits, pensions, increased vaca-

tion, etc.) and generally improve the overall conditions of the workplace. However, instead of recognizing the significant role that unions and collective bargaining can play for the great majority of people in a capitalist economy, the corporate press tends to regard unions in a negative light as placing unreasonable requests upon their employers. This was demonstrated in the San Francisco Bay Area so-called "BART Strike" of 2013. The Bay Area Rapid Transit system (BART) is the only commuter system in the greater San Francisco area. With BART workers voicing their concerns over safety and asking for an increase in pay and management arguing to keep wages flat, BART workers decided to do the only legal thing that working people can do to improve their working conditions—go on strike.

Yet, before, during, and after the strike, the press was almost unanimous in its newspaper editorials in negatively portraying the strike. For instance, the headline of the *San Jose Mercury News* considered BART employees asking for more pay as simply being ridiculous. Indeed, during



Coal miners at the Kopperston Mines in Kopperston, Wyoming County, WV (1946) (Wikimedia Commons)

the strike, one of the newspaper's most revealing headlines' read, "BART union demands are outrageous." At the conclusion of the strike, the *Oakland Tribune* clearly identified itself as no friend to working people by entitling its editorial, "BART needs a strike ban." The *SF Gate* agreed with the *Oakland Tribune*, stating that strikes for transit workers "shouldn't be legal." Even one of the supposedly most "liberal" state legislators in California at the time, Mark DeSaulnier, proposed the idea of banning BART employees from future strikes. Chat kind of rhetoric, of course, helped get him elected to Congress shortly thereafter.) In the end, two replacement workers were killed on the BART tracks, which ultimately forced

the two sides to the negotiating table. The result—BART workers received a slight increase in pay, but also were required to pay more for their benefits package.

Not only does the mainstream media tend to portray labor or unions in a negative light, but supposedly progressive broadcasters such as PBS also fail to adequately cover working people's concerns. Indeed, according to a study by City University of New York, "Programming about workers represented less than one half of 1 percent of total PBS programming hours," and that "the time allotted to US workers, including drama, documentary and talk shows, averaged only 20 minutes per month." On the other hand, "PBS devoted nearly twice as many programming hours to the business and social elite as to all other social strata *combined*" [italics added].¹³

Third-Party Candidates and Ideas. As much as anything, the corporate press regularly ignores third-party candidates in the United States. Anyone outside of the mainstream is deemed unworthy for extensive coverage. In fact, often times, third-party candidates are not given any coverage at all because they are considered to be on the "fringe," "too radical," "unconvincing," "extreme," or appealing only to a select few. Yet today a full 44 percent of the electorate identifies itself with neither the Democratic nor the Republican Party,¹⁴ and as many as 40 percent of those eligible to vote in US presidential general elections choose not to vote at all.

What's more, the two major parties control who takes part in the presidential debates and can be very influential over ballot access through their grip on state legislatures. Through their ownership of the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD), the two major parties decide who will debate in any given televised presidential debate. As a consequence, all third-party candidates are excluded not only from debating Democratic and Republican candidates, but also from accessing valuable primetime coverage of how they might address the nation's domestic and international concerns.

With respect to ballot access, to get your party on the ballot in states like California, it is necessary to gather 1 percent of the signatures from the previous governor's race. In other words, if an individual wanted to place the fictionalized "People's Party" on the California ballot, he or she would have to get 360,000 people in California to sign a petition over the course of a short period of time (not more than a couple of months) which states that they identify with the People's Party. A difficult task, indeed. Furthermore, and unbelievably, in June 2010 in California, Proposition 14 was passed, which allows only the top two vote-getters for Congress and state-wide elections in the June primary to advance to the November general election. Because third-party candidates regularly receive such a small percentage of the vote, they are almost guaranteed to be excluded from the November ballot. In other words, voters in California are now in a situation where their choice on Super Tuesday might be between two Democrats or two Republicans because of the new "top two" system. This has already been the case in multiple instances; most recently, and most notably, when California voters were presented with the "choice" of two Democratic Senate candidates during the 2016 election.

Yet does the corporate press note the lack of democratic integrity in excluding third-party candidates from debates and the ballot? No. Instead, the corporate press largely goes along with the Democratic and Republican parties' charade of providing political choice to the American people. In so doing, the corporate press helps to create and perpetuate the widely held notion that third-party candidates don't have any real chance of winning elections because "nobody knows who they are" and that they are "too far outside of the mainstream" to have a chance of winning. However, the reality is that the press is helping to place third-party candidates and ideas outside the view of the American people. This is done, of course, by not giving third-party candidates and the parties themselves equal coverage, as well as not questioning the two major parties' attempts to undermine basic democratic principles, such as ballot access.

Exploitation of Third-World Countries by International Capital. Many countries throughout the world suffer from severe poverty as well as the problems associated with it, including disease, malnourishment, pollution, and unhealthy and unsafe living and working conditions. Instead of exploring the idea that poverty is the inevitable consequence of the rich exploiting the poor, the corporate press largely ignores any suggestion that corporations play anything other than a positive role in the Third World. Indeed, it tends to view corporate involvement in the Third World (when it is discussed at all) as not a question of exploitation, but rather as "investment;" not as degradation, but "development;" and not as paying poverty wages to billions of people, but instead as "providing jobs" to "unskilled workers" in "emerging economies."

This is not to say that issues such as "conflict minerals" (i.e., the ones used for cell phones, laptops, iPods, etc.) or "conflict diamonds" do not find their way into the mainstream press. The fact is that they do. Yet, at the same time it *should also* be made clear, in great detail, that the driving force behind developing commodities such as these is part of an economic system that is predicated not on necessity, but instead on one of the basest human impulses—greed. However, on the whole, the corporate press largely ignores questions of ethics and corporate profits, such as the previously noted examples of Disney's exploitation of garment factory workers in Haiti or Nike's payment of poverty wages in Indonesia. However, this should not be that shocking, as Disney is one of the six media giants which dominate the US media market and is unlikely to show its own corporate doings in a negative light.

The Nature of the US Military and Military Spending in General. The massive size of the military, the military budget, and the reasons for military intervention around the world are rarely questioned or investigated in any genuine way by the corporate press. Instead, the mainstream media often relies on "official accounts" or "official sources" from the White House, Congress, the Pentagon, and the Secretary of State to put together stories dealing with the military. And for that matter, at no time whatsoever is the military budget placed into any meaningful context or even put into question. Other than noting that some think that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are "about oil" (e.g., progressive scholars, commentators, and even Alan Greenspan), the corporate press rarely ever identifies the hundreds of US corporations and industries located in any of the more than 150 countries where there are US military forces. No connection between capital extraction and the need for a military presence is presented, explored, or considered in the media or framed as a part of the larger economic system—global capitalism and capital accumulation. Instead, questions about the US military in the world tend to be viewed through the prism of the "War on Terror," similarly to how military questions were once viewed through the viewpoint of "anti-Communism" or the Cold War. 15 This says nothing about the fact that Congress has become little more than a "debating society" when it comes to questions of war. Without question, Congress has not "declared war" since 1945; instead, it has rubber-stamped more than one hundred US "interventions" since that time, allowing the president to send young American men and women off to kill and be killed.

In short, it is not correct to say that the corporate press is unbiased or does not hold any political or economic ideology. In general, liberal scholars' conclusion that the mainstream media pays equal or almost equal attention to liberal and conservative concerns is likely correct. However, that misses the point. What is most alarmingly true is that the media ignores, downplays, or places a negative connotation on virtually any issue, person, or idea that is in contradiction to the class interests of those that own the corporate media and the capitalist economic system itself. Clearly, the corporate press tends to see political, economic, and social reality in the United States—and around the world—through the eyes of the class that owns it.

We should not be taken aback by this. After all, the central purpose of the media, like any corporation, is to make money. In reality, the news media is not so much interested in presenting a detailed analysis of why some political, economic, or social phenomena exist in the world, but rather in *generating advertising revenues*. To be sure, the corporate press does not make its money through in-depth coverage of the war in Iraq or a detailed conversation about the latest discoveries in stem-cell research. Instead, they make money by selling airtime (or commercial space) to Ford, Bank of America, Honda, Levi Strauss, Prozac, *The Economist*, and the US military. While not political news, this idea is most clearly put on display with the record profits generated by the selling of advertisement space during the Super Bowl each year.

Without a doubt, the products that the media and networks sell to other corporations are *viewers and potential viewers*. So, if CNN, Fox, MSNBC, or any other news outlet believes that it can get more viewers by covering the latest celebrity indictment for drug or weapons charges instead of a discussion about the real reasons for US sanctions against Iran or Syria, then that is what the news outlet will broadcast. ¹⁶ The United States exists in an age where the lives of prisoners and the problems of the poor are considered appropriate for televised *entertainment* because it makes money for those who broadcast the shows. Accordingly, that which is considered news by the news media is not so much a question of genuine national interest as it is a question of corporate profit.

11.3 The News Media-Government Relationship

As might be expected, the news media and the telecommunications industry in general have a fairly close relationship with the federal government. Like any industry, they lobby the federal government in an attempt to receive laws that are favorable to their interests. Spending almost \$400 million in lobbying the federal government annually, the top industries within the communications and electronics sector are listed in Table 11.1.

TABLE 11.1 Top Industries Lobbying the Federal Government from the Communications & Electronics Sector (2013)¹⁷

Industry	Total
1) Electronics Manufacturing & Equipment	\$160,713,769
2) Telecom Services	\$105,429,377
3) Internet	\$80,734,317
4) TV/Movies/Music	\$49,641,804
5) Telephone Utilities	\$28,131,328
6) Printing & Publishing	\$13,526,298
7) Misc. Communications/Electronics	\$4,347,000

A similar story is told by looking at some of the top campaign contributors from the telecommunications industry. Indeed, the top campaign contributors from the communications and electronics sector for 2019–2020 are located in Table 11.2 below:

TABLE 11.2 Top Campaign Contributors from the Communications and Electronics Sector by Industry (2019–2020)¹⁸

Contributor	Amount
1) Asana	\$50,703,396
2) Alphabet Inc.	\$25,927,043
3) Microsoft Corporation	\$20,574,306
4) Walt Disney Company	\$19,565,771
5) Newsweb Corporation	\$19,458,557
6) Oracle Corporation	\$11,937,460
7) AT&T Inc.	\$11,491,866
8) Amazon.com	\$11,403,838
9) Netflix Inc.	\$10,878,655
10) Comcast Corporation	\$8,700,859
11) Apple Inc	\$8,653,815
12) Facebook Inc.	\$7,623,946
13) DreamWorks SKG	\$6,451,204
14) Duchossois Group	\$6,442,815
15) IBM Corporation	\$5,349,046
16) National Amusements Inc	\$5,029,768
17) Verizon Communications	\$4,481,204
18) Sandhills Global	\$4,291,764
19) Twilio Inc.	\$4,268,583
20) Intel Corporation	\$4,019,187

Accordingly, that the federal government has allowed a national media market that is almost entirely privatized to develop in the United States should come as no surprise to anyone. Nor should the fact that the market is consolidated into the hands of a select few at a high cost to the American people.

Deregulation: Equal Time and the Fairness Doctrine

The radio and television airwaves are considered to be public property (i.e., they belong to the American people). The Communications Act of 1934 established the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which oversees the regulation of TV, radio, newspapers, and the Internet. First established in the Radio Act of 1927 (and superseded by the Communications Act of 1934), the bylaws of the FCC made it so radio stations are supposed to provide equal coverage (or equal time) to all political candidates. Eventually,

this concept came to be known as the "equal-time rule." In essence, this requirement means that if a station gives 30 minutes of free television airtime to one political candidate, then it has to give 30 minutes of free television airtime to all other opposing political candidates.

However, there are four exceptions to the equal-time rule—(1) documentaries, (2) news interviews, (3) scheduled newscast, and (4) on-the-spot news events. This rule was also "reformed" in such a way that presidential debates are now considered "news events," which means that third-party candidates can legally be excluded from participating in debates without violating the equal-time rule so long as the broadcaster is not officially hosting the event. This has been made simple for broadcasters and the two major parties alike because the presidential debates, as we have seen, are already owned and hosted by the Democratic and Republican parties. Political talk shows such as the *News Hour with Jim Lehrer, Washington Week*, the *Today Show*, and other news programs can request and receive an exemption from the equal-time requirement from the FCC as well. What does all this mean? That third-party candidates and non-mainstream ideas will receive very little airtime, if any, at all.

In 1949, the FCC developed a complementary rule to the equal-time rule, known as the Fairness Doctrine. The Fairness Doctrine required broadcasters to present controversial issues or concerns of public importance in an "honest, equitable and balanced" manner. Broadcasters were allowed to do so through a variety of news segments including editorials, public affairs shows, and news stories. Yet, within the political and economic context of the Reagan administration's push for deregulation of the economy as a whole in the 1980s (i.e., neoliberalism), the FCC eliminated the Fairness Doctrine in 1987 and formally removed, during the summer of 2011, the language that had established the Doctrine in 1949. All of this gave rise to TV "news stations" such as Fox News and MSNBC—two "news stations" that have less to do with real news and more to do with party propaganda than anything else.

Net Neutrality

The newest area of deregulation and the media (or government intervention, depending on how it is viewed) is the government's involvement with the Internet. The most pressing Internet issue today is the question of net neutrality, the idea that telecommunications providers of Internet service (i.e., AT&T, Comcast, Time Warner, Verizon, etc.) should not be allowed to regulate or charge higher fees for different network protocols or improved access speeds to specific websites. Of course, the reason that the telecommunications industry tries to eliminate net neutrality is for private profit. And in June of 2018, the huge media conglomerates which already dominate the media landscape, gained even more industry-wide power as the FCC, under the Trump administration, repealed the net neutrality rules that were firmly established under President Obama. In so doing, those that control the mass media in the United States now have the opportunity to be further enriched at the expense of the American people. For sure, today those with the most money to *pay* Internet providers for sped-up service (including, commercial or political advertising) or to block-out competition from small businesses or dissenting political voices, will not be hindered from doing so by the federal government.

Government as a Source of News Making

Finally, not only does the media report on the news from a very specific and identifiable vantage point, sometimes the news is also created by institutions within the government itself. As is becoming more widely known, the United States government sometimes develops its own self-serving news reports and then releases those reports directly to the media. The media, in turn, uncritically releases the story to the American people as legitimate news. Among the most involved governmental institutions in "creating news" is the CIA. Carl Bernstein, the co-winner of the Pulitzer Prize and journalist for the *Washington Post*, made this clear in his investigation, "The CIA and the Media." Consider the following information that Bernstein uncovered:

- » From the early 1950s until the late 1970s, "more than 400 American journalists ... secretly carried out assignments for the Central Intelligence Agency, according to documents on file at CIA headquarters."
- "Agency files show, officials at the highest levels of the CIA (usually director or deputy director) dealt personally with a single designated individual in the top management of the cooperating news organization." Among the executives who cooperated or worked with the CIA were William Paley of CBS, Henry Luce of Time Inc., and Arthur Hays Sulzberger of the New York Times. Other broadcasters which worked with or cooperated with the CIA in one fashion or another included ABC, NBC, the Associated Press, United Press International, Reuters, Hearst Newspapers, Newsweek magazine, the Miami Herald, the old Saturday Evening Post, and the New York Herald-Tribune.
- "Some of the journalists were Pulitzer Prize winners, distinguished reporters. ... Most were less exalted: foreign correspondents who found that their association with the Agency helped their work; stringers and freelancers who were as interested in the derring-do of the spy business as in filing articles; [and] the smallest category," Bernstein notes, are the "full-time CIA employees masquerading as journalists abroad." 19

Something is clearly wrong with the news media when the CIA has so fully penetrated what people believe to be legitimate news that it has touched even Pulitzer Prize winners and the much-respected *New York Times*.

All of this is to say nothing of the tens of thousands of lies that were coming directly from the President himself, Donald Trump, from 20216-2020. Daily, he used the TV news, newspapers, and social media to create and perpetuate his own alternate view of not only all things political but, at times, reality itself. His frequent dishonest statements could be checked by a willing TV news outlet or newspaper. However, when he made any of his many false statements on social media (or even compliant TV news programs) it became more problematic. Namely, because during his presidency, social media outlets overwhelmingly did not check user's comments for accuracy. In other words, neither Facebook nor Twitter, two of the ex-President's preferred social media providers did not segregate between "free speech" and what was is in fact, "false speech." After four years of dishonest pronouncements where lies were too often treated as being on equal-footing with facts, that differed only on one's viewpoint, Trump's rhetoric eventually turned violent and deadly with the January 6th attack on the heart of American democracy—the US Capitol. Yet, why was Trump never held to account by any of these media giants until the last days of his presidency pushed the whole of the United States toward a social and political abyss? In a word—profit. Profit for those that control the commanding heights of the media industry.

Thus, from our examination of the news media, we can conclude that the mainstream media in the United States is neither a diverse group of interests, nor driven to ensure the integrity of the republic through investigative journalism. Instead, the news media in the United States is corporate dominated (and sometimes government influenced), driven by profits, and with an ideological standpoint that very much favors not the interests of working people, but instead those who own the means and major means of production in the United States.



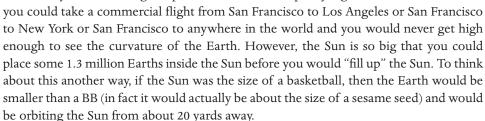
Environmental Considerations

'Do not let selfish men or greedy interests skin your country of its beauty, its riches or its romance.' 1

—Theodore Roosevelt (26th President of the United States, 1901–1909)

The universe is 14 billion years old with two trillion galaxies and is 93 billion light-years across. On average, in each one of those galaxies there may be somewhere between 100—400 billion stars and the same number of planets. One of those galaxies is our galaxy, the Milky Way Galaxy. It is an average-sized galaxy that is somewhat flat and appears as a swirl or a "spiral" when it is looked at from above or below the galaxy itself. As an average-sized galaxy, it too has somewhere between 100—400 billion stars and approximately the same number of planets. These so-called "spiral galaxies" (of which the Milky Way is just one) comprise between 65 percent and 70 percent of all galaxies, making them the most common type of galaxy in the universe. The other types of galaxies are dwarf galaxies, which are smaller than our own, and supergiant galaxies which are much bigger than our own with the largest supergiant galaxy containing some one-hundred trillion stars.

Nevertheless, one of the stars in the Milky Way is our star, what we call the Sun. Around the Sun orbits the eight planets that make up our solar system including our planet, Earth. Earth is pretty big. In fact,



In addition to the Earth, there are approximately nine billion (8.8 billion to be exact) planets in the Milky Way Galaxy that are in what is called the "Goldie Locks Zone" (or the habitable zone). Meaning, these planets are neither too far away nor too close to the star that they are orbiting to prevent life from developing. In fact, of the planets that we have been able to observe, the majority of them are older than us. This has led to at least one line of thought which is if intelligent life did develop on any of these planets,



Earth from space (NASA, 2011)

then they may well be more advanced than us. That is to say if they have not already died off from disease or were not made extinct by a natural disaster similar to what killed off the dinosaurs 65 million years ago when a giant asteroid slammed into the side of the Earth, turning day into night, and ending their unprecedented 165-million-year rule within a matter of a few weeks. Or, that these "advanced civilizations" didn't simply develop the technological capacity to destroy themselves (e.g., something similar to nuclear weapons) and then they did.

Whatever the case may be, if we are going to travel to any of these distant planets in our galaxy to see if life exists then we are going to have to get creative because they are pretty far away from Earth. In fact, the nearest planet in the Milky Way that is in the habitable zone is approximately 22 light-years away from us.² What does that mean in practical terms? Well, if you hitched a ride on the fastest thing ever created by human beings which is the Voyager I satellite which was launched in 1977 and is currently moving through space at 38,000 mph which is 3,800 times faster than most of us have ever steered a vehicle (most of us have driven a car 100 mph or more at some point) then you can get an idea of just how fast and how far you would need to travel to reach the closest planet to us in the Goldie Locks Zone. Indeed, traveling at that rate of speed, if you left at the dawn of mankind (some 200,000 years ago) and you traveled right on up to the age of Christ (about 2,000 years ago); kept on going to the time of Columbus (about 500 years ago); and then kept on moving up until Hitler's suicide in his bunker (about 75 years ago); and kept on going until Obama's election in 2008 and then right up until today, you would still have another 186,000 years to go before you got to the first planet in the Goldie Locks Zone in the Milky Way Galaxy that might have life on it. In other words, the nearest Earth-like planet from us in our galaxy that is in the habitable zone—Planet GJ667Cc—is approximately 386,000 years away from us or almost twice as far away as the amount of time that human beings have been on the planet. All of this is to say nothing of the nine billion other planets in the habitable zone in the Milky Way that are spread across the rest of the galaxy which measures from one side to the other some 150,000–200,000 light-years across or approximately 3.5 billion years.

Nor is this to say anything about the two trillion other galaxies that we know exist where there may be trillions upon trillions and maybe even hundreds of trillions of planets in the habitable zone that may have life on them. In fact, if what is true about the Milky Way Galaxy holds true for the rest of the known galaxies in the known universe then there would be some 18 sextillion planets that may well be in the habitable zone. Nor is this to say anything about the possibility that the universe might be infinite or "without edge" as the great cosmologist Stephen Hawking has speculated. If the universe is infinite, then there would be an infinite number of possibilities including the fact that there would be an infinite number of planets that are exactly like ours, with people doing exactly what we are doing, that look exactly like us, and are even saying or thinking the exact same things that we are. And there would be a near infinite number of permutations of our planet where once you had one permutation, that permutation would then repeat forever. That is to say, that all things, once established, would truly be infinite or without end.

12.1 Some of the Problems

Whatever the case may be, the discovery of Planet GJ667Cc in 2011 led Steven Vogt, a professor of astronomy and astrophysics at the University of California at Santa Cruz, to conclude that in locating this new planet, in addition to other ones recently found within the Milky Way, "implies that our galaxy must be...[filled] with billions of potentially

habitable rocky planets." True or not, this planet—Earth—is all that we have. And, with the limitations of today's technology, any planet that human beings might "migrate" to, as has been discussed in recent years, that might allow for sustainable life as we know it is simply out of reach. In light of that knowledge, and simply because we all live here, it should be a basic human truth that people, corporations, and governments of all nations should do whatever is possible to ensure that the Earth is not polluted, damaged, stripped of resources, or have the integrity of its biosphere damaged. It is our only home. And it is vital to all of us that it is cared for and if at all possible, not negatively impacted by human civilization. Yet, when we examine how governments and multinational corporations operate around the world, we find that this is not always the case.

Nuclear Energy

Conservative policy makers and commentators (even "liberal" ones) often argue that nuclear energy (or nuclear power) needs to be developed as an alternative form of energy to generate heat and electricity for our homes, businesses, and buildings. In fact, nuclear energy is often described as a "clean" energy source. Notably, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), there are some 435 nuclear reactors operating in 31 separate countries, including the United States,⁴ with another 45 nations "actively considering embarking upon nuclear power programs." In addition, there are an estimated 140 naval ships and submarines using nuclear propulsion being powered by 180 separate nuclear reactors.⁶

However, the risks associated with nuclear energy may not be worth the benefits. The most serious threat to human beings and the physical environment regarding nuclear energy (other than an all-out nuclear war) is a nuclear meltdown; an accident which occurs when the reactor core (or fuel rods) overheat and literally begin to melt the interior of the power plant. The nuclear waste produced by a meltdown remains active and hazardous to human beings for thousands of years. Meltdowns have occurred on more than a hundred separate occasions, in multiple countries, since the 1950s. Some of the most well-known nuclear disasters have occurred at Three Mile Island, Pennsylvania; Chernobyl, Ukraine; and most recently in Fukushima, Japan.

The Three Mile Island accident, near Middletown, Pennsylvania, was only a partial meltdown. However, it is still the most serious commercial nuclear power plant accident in US history. Occurring on March 28, 1979, the meltdown was labeled a "severe core meltdown," the most extreme type of nuclear energy accident. Almost immediately after the accident, a number of US government agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Health and Human Services (HHS), evaluated the impact of the Three Mile Accident on the general population and environment. From their research, it was concluded that 2 million people in the surrounding area received a dose of radiation that was equal to about one-sixth of the average chest X-ray—mild, in their estimation. Nevertheless, the cleanup at Three Mile Island started in August 1979 and was considered to be officially concluded in December 1993 with a total price-tag of some \$1 billion. However, in the late 1990s, 20 years after the meltdown, the most respected medical journal in the world, *The Lancet* (published by Johns Hopkins University), issued a paper "linking" cancers in the surrounding area—the most serious being lung cancer and leukemia—to the Three Mile Island accident. 8

As concerning as the Three Mile Island accident may be for the people living in the surrounding area, the nuclear disaster at the Chernobyl power plant in the mid-1980s was even worse. Known as the Chernobyl Disaster, it is the most horrifying nuclear power plant accident in history. Occurring on April 26, 1986, it began after an explosion and fire at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant. The explosion blew the roof off the plant,



The abandoned city of Pripyat, Ukraine, with the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in the background (Wikimedia Commons)

resulting in the reactor rods completely melting down and releasing radiation that was "200 times greater than that released by both atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki."9 The explosion and fire caused large amounts of radioactive material to be released into the air, spreading over much of the western part of the Soviet Union and Europe, and affecting hundreds of millions of people. Attempts to control the contamination included hundreds of thousands of workers, with costs reaching into the billions of dollars. In fact, the disaster resulted in whole villages and towns being completely deserted due to nuclear contamination and fallout. Most notably, the city of Pripyat, Ukraine, where some 50,000 people had lived before the disaster, was totally abandoned because of the radioactive fallout that blanketed the city and remains uninhabitable to this day. With the remnants of the nuclear power plant in the backdrop,

Pripyat looks very much like some future dystopia where human beings have finally wiped themselves out with their "technological advances."

In the area known as the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, no one is permitted to live within 20 miles of the nuclear power plant. The plant is encased in cement—known as the "sarcophagus"—which itself is enclosed by a massive "New Shelter" that looks like an airport hangar to "confine" the solid radioactive waste left behind from the explosion. More concerning for the people in the area, the molten fuel rods remain inside the plant, with no sure way to remove them. Most significantly, the Chernobyl Disaster continues to generate terrible health conditions for the people in the surrounding regions and nations. Children are born with birth defects and other ailments such as mental retardation, limbs failing to fully develop, and internal organ disorders, including some 6,000 Ukrainian children who are born each year with genetic heart defects. While impossible to know for sure, possibly as many as 200,000 people have died or will die from the disaster as a direct result of radiation-related conditions such as breast cancer, leukemia, thyroid cancer, and other health problems.

Most recently, the world has watched as the Japanese tried to contain their own nuclear meltdown in Fukushima. Known as the "Fukushima Nuclear Disaster," the incident was brought about on March 11, 2011, by a 9.0 earthquake in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Japan, triggering a tsunami. The tsunami then struck the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant, sending three of its six reactors into meltdown. It is the second-largest nuclear disaster in history (after Chernobyl), and like Chernobyl, measured a seven (the highest rating) on the International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale (INES), created by the IAEA in 1990 to measure such events. The most prominent evidence of the range of the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster's impact to date is the spread of the radiation across the Pacific Ocean to the West Coast of the United States. Indeed, contained within the ocean plants and animal life along the shores of California, Oregon, and Washington are low levels of radioactive waste that originated in Fukushima, Japan.

Union Carbide: The Bhopal Disaster

Yet the problems associated with nuclear energy are not the only environmental and ecological issues with which the people in the United States or around the world need to concern themselves. A number of other problems continue to be a threat to all people

on the planet, with some of the most serious concerns being associated with chemical and toxic pollutants. One of the most devastating examples of this kind of hazard occurred in Bhopal, India in 1984. Drawn by the prospect of cheap labor and minimal industrial regulations, the US-owned multinational corporation Union Carbide opened a pesticide plant in Bhopal, India, in 1969. In December of 1984, after earlier leaks within the plant and at least one warning by the Indian government, the plant leaked methyl isocyanate gas over a densely populated area of the city, causing the worst industrial accident in history. In what is known as the Bhopal Disaster, a chemical cloud formed and moved close to the ground, working its way through the city of Bhopal and killing 8,000 people in the first few days from heart and respiratory failure. The initial leak also blinded, at least temporarily, thousands of other people, with some Bhopal residents never recovering their sight.

Today, more than 20,000 people have died as a result of the accident at the Union Carbide plant. After the initial deaths, people have continued to die from a variety of related illnesses—including lung cancer, liver disease, and kidney failure. In fact, the Bhopal Disaster has affected the health of more than 500,000 people in the Bhopal region, where an estimated 120,000–150,000 are suffering from "nerve damage,"



The "Bhopal Memorial Statue" in Bhopal, India (Wikimedia Commons/Luca Frediani)

growth problems, gynecological disorders, respiratory issues, [gruesome] birth defects, and elevated rates of cancer and tuberculosis." ¹²

Shortly after the disaster, Union Carbide officials, including the former CEO of the company, Warren Anderson, were charged with homicide and other offenses. Since the mid 1980s, the Indian courts have issued arrest warrants for Anderson, declared him a "fugitive from justice," and attempted to extradite him from the United States to face charges in Indian courts. However, Anderson has refused to return to India, and the US government has not complied with extradition orders from India—even though the United States government has an extradition treaty with the Indian government. Today groundwater and soil in the Bhopal region are still so contaminated that it is not safe for human contact. The American corporation Dow Chemical (which merged with Union Carbide after the disaster) has rejected calls to finish cleaning up the area and considers the Bhopal case to be closed. Dow Chemical made that decision in 1987—just three years after the disaster.

Additional Environmental Concerns

The following is a list of other environmental and ecological problems posing serious risks to the well-being of the American people and people around the world:

» Forest Depletion Forests are stripped for their lumber to produce furniture, houses, buildings, and other structures, or for generating grazing land for cattle. This, in turn, has resulted in less oxygen being produced by the Earth's forests for human consumption and fewer trees to cleanse the air of carbon dioxide (i.e., CO₂)—the major contributor to global warming. This problem is compounded by global warming itself which further heats up the planet and makes it so the world's forests are more susceptible to longer and more intense fire seasons. Today, the stripping and burning of the powerful Amazon rainforest for commercial use is one of the most dangerous examples of forest depletion from "human activity." Indeed, "when healthy, it absorbs billions of tons of carbon dioxide a year through photosynthesis—the process plants use to convert

 CO_2 , energy and water into food. By removing CO_2 from the atmosphere, the Amazon helps to keep temperatures down and regulate [the] climate." But if the Amazon is stripped of its trees for lumber and razed to the ground for cattle-grazing, the remaining part of the rainforest may reach "the point where it can no longer function properly." Without a doubt, "as the trees die, particularly the larger and older ones, they release CO_2 into the atmosphere; and the fewer trees there are, the less CO_2 the Amazon region would be able to absorb." This, of course, would then lead to further heating up the planet as there is more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and fewer ways to soak it up. \(^{13}\) (In fact, this inverse relationship between two global warming or climate change phenomena is known as a "positive feedback loop" and is discussed in more detail below).

- Ozone Layer Depletion The ozone layer is a part of the Earth's stratosphere. It is the Earth's natural sun screen and absorbs some 97–99 percent of the sun's medium frequency ultraviolet light which would otherwise be potentially harmful to all life on the planet. In the later part of the 20th century, it was discovered that a man-made hole in the ozone layer had been created by the use of ozone-depleting substances (ODS) found in items such as industrial solvents, dry-cleaning agents, hospital sterilizing agents, some aerosols, fire extinguishers, and coolants in refrigerators, freezers, and air conditioners manufactured before 1995. Through the Montreal Protocol—an international treaty agreed upon to protect the ozone layer—this significant part of the Earth's (and, accordingly, humanity's) overall well-being is slowly recovering.
- Water Pollution Rivers, streams, lakes, and parts of the world's oceans have been overfished or are suffering the effects of commercial pollution (i.e., oil spills, dumping toxic waste or garbage into rivers, etc.). In fact, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that more than 45 percent of US lakes and streams are considered to be polluted.
- » Mining Surface mining (whether it be strip mining, mountaintop removal, or open pit mining) and underground mining for precious minerals and other resources cause a variety of problems and almost always degrade the natural beauty of mined areas. Mining can produce floods, threaten already endangered species, and wipe out whole ecosystems. This is to say nothing of the thousands of miners around the world who die each year from mine collapses, cave-ins, floods, and explosions. Strikingly, more than 5,000 miners in China alone die each year as a result of mining disasters.
- » **Air Pollution** Industrial pollution has become so extreme that smog and "coal clouds" can be seen *from space* over Los Angeles, California, and Beijing, China.
- "The "Modern World" & Fertility From 1973—2011, male sperm count declined on average by 1.4 percent a year or some 52 percent in total during that time period. If this trend continues then by the year 2045 the average male sperm count will be zero. Though not definitive and still being researched, the use of chemicals in pots, pans, carpets, clothing, shampoo bottles, diapers, toothpaste containers, deodorant holders, stains, flooring, makeup containers, and toys in addition to unhealthy lifestyles (e.g., excessive drinking, smoking, lack of activity, obesity, etc.) are responsible for the drastic drop in male fertility. In short, "industrialization" and the way in which the "modern world" has produced a "better life" has created a situation where the human race may lose the ability to reproduce itself in less than 25 years. 14

While seeming to be separate issues, each one is actually part of an economic system that must constantly produce goods and services, which in turn, must constantly be sold and consumed. If not, we all face the risk of the general collapse of the wider economic system. Nonetheless, the most serious environmental (and ecological) problem facing people throughout the world today is global warming.

12.2 Global Warming: Why Nothing Is Done

The chief cause of global warming is the burning of fossil fuels (i.e., coal, petroleum, and natural gas). In the spring of 2014, the United Nations produced one of its most recent report on global warming. The study was conducted by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and was based on 12,000 peer-reviewed studies.¹⁵ In the report, the IPCC concluded that "warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and since the 1950s, many of the observed changes are unprecedented over decades to millennia [i.e., thousands of years]. The atmosphere and ocean have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished, sea level has risen, and the concentrations of greenhouse gases have increased."16 In fact, the IPCC found that "the atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide have increased to levels unprecedented in at least the last eight hundred thousand years" with "carbon dioxide concentrations [increasing] by 40 percent since pre-industrial times, primarily from fossil fuel."¹⁷ Just a few short years after the IPCC's report was released, the Yale School of the Environment in 2019 concluded that in the burning of fossil fuels, human beings have fashioned a state of affairs where the Earth now has more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere than at any time in the previous three million years. In 2021, the IPCC produced its most recent findings on climate change and global warming. Most notably, the report found that it is now indisputable that human activity is responsible for global warming and that "climate change is now affecting every continent, region and ocean on Earth, and every facet of the weather." ¹⁸ And, maybe most concerning of all is that "many changes such as sealevel rise and glacier melt are now virtually irreversible." ¹⁹ In fact, what we now know is that the polar ice caps are melting so quickly that the Arctic region could be ice free during summertime by 2040. And that without massive government and corporate intervention to reduce the amount of carbon in the atmosphere there could be almost half a billion people subject to coastal flooding throughout the world by 2100.

The increase in global temperatures can lead to a range of problems—including more severe storms (and as noted above, flooding), droughts, which include permanent "Dust Bowl conditions" that, of course, can generate problems with food production or shortages that may well reach more than 30 percent in some regions; more fires (from drought-stricken areas such as California where residents of that state experienced the worst fire season in its recorded history in 2020. Without a doubt, in 2020, the state of California saw some 500 separate fires burn during the year and endured the largest fire ever recorded in its history. Indeed, the so-called "August Complex Fire" burned from August to November in that state, torching more than 1 million acres of land and forests—an area which is equal to more than 1 million football fields); statelessness in small, ocean-level countries from sea-levels rising (e.g., in Maldives and Tuvalu); and increased immigration and migration. Yet, according to the globally celebrated physicist and cosmologist Stephen Hawking, the most disturbing aspect of global warming is that it may become a self-perpetuating phenomenon, moving in an ever-increasing and intense cycle. Indeed, Hawking argues that:

"The danger is that global warming may become self-sustaining, if it has not done so already. The melting of the Arctic and Antarctic ice caps reduces the fraction of solar energy reflected back into space, and so increases the temperature further. Climate change may kill off the Amazon and other rain forests, and so eliminate once one of the main ways in which carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere. The rise in sea temperature may trigger the release of large quantities of carbon dioxide, trapped as hydrides on the ocean floor. Both these phenomena would increase the greenhouse effect [and further heat the temperature of the Earth]." ²⁰

Hawking's system-wide assessment of global warming and climate change is founded on the notion of positive feedback loops. A positive feedback loop occurs when global warming "triggers" a situation within the planetary system that furthers global warming such as Hawking's "killing off the Amazon...[which] eliminates...one of the main ways in which carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere" which in turn makes it so there is more ${\rm CO_2}$ in the atmosphere which further heats up the planet and drives additional climate changes such as more intense fire seasons, more powerful storms, more droughts. Nonetheless, the chief cause of global warming—the burning of fossil fuels—continues. Why is this the case?

The primary reason that the United States continues to use fossil fuels to power cars, homes and factories is the power of the energy sector (oil, gas, coal, natural gas, etc.) in Washington, DC. The energy sector was ranked as the fifth most powerful sector lobbying the federal government in 2020, spending some \$300 million—more than twice



The Tesoro Oil Refinery, Anacortes, WA (Wikimedia Commons/Walter Siegmund)

as much as the Defense and Agribusiness sectors combined.²¹ In terms of campaign contributions, the energy sector spent an additional \$222 million, primarily on Republican candidates, to "protect" and further their interests: fossil fuels.²²

However, it is not simply the energy sector that has a stake in continuing the use of fossil fuels. So, too, do all industries that rely on them to manufacture their products. For example, more than 100 products are made, at least in part, from oil—including toothpaste, sunglasses, tires, footballs, hair-dyes, makeup, pesticides, perfume, TVs, telephones, ballpoint pens, cleats, upholstery, boats, nail polish, tool boxes, shoe polish, tape, CD players, CDs and DVDs, antiseptics, motorcycle helmets, baseballs, soap, shoes, purses, vitamin capsules, antihistamines, deodorants, refrigerants, rubbing alcohol, skis, paint, life jackets, cortisone, mops, slacks, insect repellent, crayons, umbrellas, oil filters, toilet seats, linoleum,

antifreeze, ice cube trays, speakers, roller skates, tennis rackets, trash bags, candles, surf boards, shampoo, eyeglasses, clothes, aspirin, combs, heart valves, pillows, hair curlers, shaving cream, golf balls, contact lenses, drinking cups, bandages, dice, dentures, and cold creams. Without a doubt, oil is quite literally the life-blood of the global economy as the world runs on some 100 million barrels of oil *a day*.

This is not even to mention the influence of the transportation industry (i.e., airlines, the auto industry, railroads, sea transport, trucking, etc.), which is very much dependent on fossil fuels for its existence. The transportation industry's political concerns include not only maintaining the deregulation of the industry but also ensuring that carbon emissions restrictions do not become more severe. In fact, the worst-case

scenario for the transportation industry would be the outlawing of all fossil fuel-based energy. A prohibition on the use of fossil fuels would force a large-scale and costly reengineering of the transportation industry—if it were to continue to survive at all—without government assistance.

Whatever the case may be, in 2020, the transportation industry spent more than \$255 million lobbying the federal government²³ and almost \$150 million in campaign contributions protecting its "interests." Today, in spite of President Biden's attempt to begin moving the United States away from fossil fuels and toward clean energy (as a part of the Build Back Better Act of 2021), fossil fuels have so penetrated American political, economic, and social life that it is unlikely that the US will move completely away from them any time soon. Yet, this continued use of a limited source of energy (some think that there is no more than 50 years' worth of oil remaining) is, at the same time, creating serious global consequences. Even if all these factors that warm the planet were stopped right now, human beings would still have to deal with the consequences of global warming for hundreds of years to come, including the continued warming of the planet. However, nothing is done to put an end to the global use of fossil fuels because doing so would go against the class interests of those who are so richly rewarded from their continuation. That global warming even remains a problem when it runs counter to the interests of every single person on the planet reveals the remarkable class power that the energy and transportation segments of the US-based international bourgeoisie have over the American political system.

In the end, the United Nations has concluded that all countries must make "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society" to avoid increasing the Earth's temperature by 1.5 degrees Celsius (or 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels by as earlier as 2030.²⁴ If not, then the world risks more extreme weather impacting billions of people across the globe. With that call to action in the background, the United Nation's Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) later explained that climate change and "the relentless pursuit of economic growth"25 has created a situation where one million species (or one in eight species known to exist on Earth) are now faced with extinction. In fact, if global warming is not quickly and deeply addressed soon then as many as 50 percent of all species now in existence will be confronted with extinction by 2100. With the planet already moving into the sixth mass extinction period (or what is known as the "Holocene extinction"), many of these species will begin to disappear within the coming decades if nothing is done to slow the increase in the level of CO, in the atmosphere.²⁶ Yet, how did the whole planet get into this situation in the first place? To hear even the United Nations tell it, through the non-stop pursuit of capital by capital, irrespective of its impact on the physical environment or the Earth's people.



The Bureaucratic State

'The equal rights of man, and the happiness of every individual, are now acknowledged to be the only legitimate objects of government.'

—Thomas Jefferson (3rd President of the United States, 1743–1826)

Any modern state must have some way in which to implement and oversee the laws and programs it creates to govern society. In the United States, this apparatus is known as the bureaucracy. Max Weber, one of the fathers of sociology and the most respected scholar to develop a theory of bureaucracy, argued that it consists of (1) "fixed and official jurisdictional areas;" (2) a managed office "based upon written documents" where rules are "more or less stable" and "exhaustive," and both the office and the bureaucracy are governed in a hierarchical manner; and (3) the "official activity" of the bureaucracy requires "the full working capacity of the official [or bureaucrat]." A bureaucracy can be public or private; i.e., it can be contained within the government or within a corporation. However, for our purposes, *bureaucracy* here refers only to those people who are employed by the government, with the exception of elected officials—with those who work for a bureaucracy referred to as civil servants or "bureaucrats."



The Seal of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (U.S. Department of the Interior)

13.1 The Contours of the Federal Bureaucracy

With regard to bureaucracy, a common strand of liberal thought in the United States is that the framers of the Constitution never intended to have a large federal government. Instead, so the argument goes, the framers specifically limited the powers, and therefore, presumably, the size of the national government through the writing of the Constitution. According to this line of thinking, the powers and responsibilities of government are not only spelled out in each Article but, by doing so, the Constitution itself limits how big the federal government may become. For instance, some scholars point to Article I, Section 8 (the enumerated powers clause) as the *only* activities which the framers intended Congress to have a say over, such as the creation of a postal system, the development of a national currency, the regulation of commerce and immigration, creating a court system, and declaring war.³ In other

words, there was no intention by the framers for the government to regulate the environment (e.g., the EPA), create a welfare state, develop a nationwide school system, fund space exploration (i.e., National Aeronautics and Space Administration, or NASA), or to allocate money for the continued pursuit of knowledge (e.g., the National Science Foundation, or NSF). And accordingly, there was no constitutional authority then for Congress to create any of these bureaucracies to oversee the activities that they were tasked with.

Whatever the framers intended, today the United States federal bureaucracy is the largest part of the federal government. In fact, the federal government, which is almost entirely made up of unelected civil servants, is the largest employer in the United States—just ahead of Walmart and McDonald's. It employs more than 9 million people (about half of which are contract workers) which includes some 1.4 million troops, with another 800,000 on reserve. After the United States military, with more than 800,000 employees, the Post Office is the second-largest federal bureaucracy in the country. In total, some 24 million people⁴ are employed by local, state, and national government in the United States—about one-seventh of the 157 million people who comprise the entire labor force (i.e., all those who are able to work) in the United States.⁵ At the federal level, the bureaucracy consists of an estimated 2,000 departments, government corporations, commissions, foundations, and independent and regulatory agencies. Their activities range from advising the Department of Education (ED or DoED) about Native American education (National Advisory Council on Indian Education, or NACIE), to regulating and enforcing securities laws concerning the stock market (Securities and Exchange Commission, or SEC), to espionage and covert warfare (the CIA).

Any citizen of the United States can choose to work for the federal government, whether it be in the Secret Service, serving as a national park ranger, or working within the Department of Justice (DOJ). In the United States, placement within the federal bureaucracy is based upon the "merit system," i.e., education, experience, and skill level. Once appointed, hired, or commissioned, civil servants carry out policy, administer programs, and develop regulations for the bureaucracy in which they are employed. Whether it is deciding if a person is allowed to leave a package unattended at the airport (e.g., TSA), determining guidelines for the housing of federal prisoners (i.e., Federal Bureau of Prisons), managing the nation's water supply (i.e., the United States Bureau of Reclamation, or USBR), or making decisions about daily dollar allowances for food for the poor (i.e., SNAP), the United States federal bureaucracy impacts nearly every aspect of American civic life.

13.2 Why Bureaucracies Matter

Government bureaucracies are often underfunded (the food stamp program provides less than \$2 per meal), understaffed (the Department of Education has a mere 5,000 employees compared to the Department of Defense, which has more than 3.2 million people on its payroll) and backlogged (the EPA does not evaluate more than 10 percent of its toxic chemical cases per year). Yet each department and agency is supposed to do its best to serve the public good—and often, they do. For instance, Amtrak is the United States' mass transportation system. In 2012, Amtrak received just \$1.4 billion in federal subsidies—not very much compared to the \$1.2 trillion military budget. However, Amtrak transported some 30 million passengers in 2012, generating revenues in excess of \$3 billion, yet still ran in the red because of its small federal subsidy—which works out to be a mere \$5 a year for every tax-paying citizen.

Nevertheless, it is easily the nation's safest way to travel, recording zero passenger deaths in 2012. The auto industry, on the other hand, is extremely *unsafe*, and has a vested interest in seeing mass transit fail (in fact, GM was convicted for conspiring to prevent mass transit from succeeding in Los Angeles over a three-decade period from the 1930s–1950s). Strikingly, auto accidents are the leading cause of death amongst 18- to 34-year-olds in the United States today. Almost unbelievably, approximately 42,000 people are killed in car accidents each year, totaling more than 3 million deaths since the end of World War II. That is more than twice the amount of deaths suffered by the United States in every war throughout history *combined*—a number which does not exceed more than 1.5 million people.⁶ In light of those numbers, it would only make sense to spend *more money* on public transit, not less, as Congress and the president have regularly attempted to do with each new budget.

However, at other times, lobbyists manipulate federal bureaucracies to serve the ends of some narrow corporate interest. For instance, we might look at a recent case involving the EPA. The EPA is responsible for protecting the environment, not so much for the environment's sake, but for the public health of the nation. Yet, according to a recent study by the Center for Public Integrity, it was found that at least one lobbyist representing two separate pesticide corporations, the Drexel Corporation and Luxembourg-Pamol, had so influenced at least one member of Congress that he effectively stopped any further investigation into one of his client's central toxins. Indeed, Congressman Mike Simpson (R-ID) included "a single paragraph" into a Congressional report which "ordered the EPA to halt its evaluation of arsenic"—a poison used by pesticide companies. Arsenic turns up in small amounts in the foods that we eat and the water that we drink. Even at legally acceptable levels, it can cause cancer. Decreasing its prevalence is one of the goals of the EPA. Yet, as a result of the Congressman's actions, "a weed killer the EPA was going to ban at the end of 2013 remains on the market" to this day.8 Troubling, the individual who lobbied Simpson was a man by the name of Charlie Grizzle who had previously worked for the EPA under Bush Sr. As a member of that bureaucracy, he was supposed to protect the American people from this kind of thing. However, once he got into the private sector, he had no problem allowing a dangerous pesticide to continue to harm the American people because there was money to be made by him and his client.

Other times, we see that bureaucracies serve the economic interests of *whole industries* that they have been assigned to regulate, coordinate with, or have absolutely nothing to do with at all (for example, see the Federal Reserve below). Consider the following:

- » The Federal Election Commission (FEC) is responsible for regulating campaign finance laws in the United States, which today are essentially nonexistent.
- » With a giant budget, the Pentagon provides hundreds of billions of dollars to armaments makers, private military contractors, and the reconstruction industry to assist in rebuilding countries damaged by war, as was the case in Iraq.
- » The Federal Reserve not only provided trillions of dollars in bailouts to the banking industry during the "Great Recession" but also, according to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), provided trillions more to "corporations and banks internationally during and after the 2008 fiscal crisis [italics added]." 10
- » The FCC, which is responsible for regulating the public airwaves, has instead sold them to private companies that now dominate nearly the entire TV, radio, and Internet media market.
- » The Department of the Interior is responsible for the management and conservation of federal lands and natural resources. Yet, it has sold off public

property to the forest industry, ranching interests, and other corporate players. The Department was also sued for leasing Native American lands to oil, timber, and mineral companies—while not properly accounting for what it owes to Native American tribes for doing so. The lawsuit was eventually settled for nearly \$500 million to some 17 different tribes. The Trump administration continued this trend of trying to *sell* off portions of Indian reservations to the "titans of the energy industry" so they could get at the vast amounts of oil, gas, and coal reserves located on Native people's lands—in an attempt to make these modernday robber barons richer still.

» In 2014, Washington, DC, loosened restrictions on *lobbyists* from all industries by allowing them to *serve on* more than 1,000 federal advisory boards that provide advice and recommendations to more than 50 federal agencies—including the Departments of Education, Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, HHS, HUD, Justice, and Homeland Security, to name just a few. This is a sure conflict of interest if ever there was such a thing.

Still other bureaucracies in the United States behave in ways that are difficult to justify under almost any understanding of the Constitution. While the affairs of the CIA have already been noted, the extra-legal behavior of an unelected part of the government has not been reserved simply for that agency. For example, under the guise of "national security," the FBI initiated the program COINTELPRO (an acronym for the Counter Intelligence Program) in 1956, which lasted until 1971. The program was a secret and often illegal attempt to infiltrate, discredit, disrupt, and spy on political organizations and individuals within the United States. Through COINTELPRO, the FBI recorded the personal communications of, among others, two senators—Franck Church and Howard Baker—and civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. COINTELPRO so thoroughly disrupted the Black Panther Party in the 1960s and the 1970s that it ultimately played a central role in that very progressive organization's downfall—which was the FBI's intent all along. However, the COINTELPRO program pales in comparison with what the United States government is doing today in the name of "national security."

The Case of the National Security Administration (NSA)

Indeed, most recently, the people of the United States have witnessed the misdeeds of another intelligence agency—the NSA—all presumably committed in the name of "national security." The chief responsibility of the NSA is to collect and analyze, "including through clandestine means ... signals intelligence information and data for foreign intelligence and counterintelligence" in support of "national and departmental missions." In other words, the NSA is responsible for recording, cataloging, and monitoring electronic communications of phone conversations, text messages, Internet, and social media discussions—including those that originate within the United States—and is presumably allowed to do so in secret.

The Fourth Amendment to the Constitution states that "the right of the people to be secure in their



The National Security Agency, Fort Meade, MD (Wikimedia Commons)

persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized." In other words, no arm of the state—be it the FBI, CIA, NSA, or the local police—can search your home or personal belongings without a good reason and a valid search warrant that specifies what is going to be searched and what items are going to be seized.

However, in January 2013 alone, the NSA recorded or spied on 125 billion phone calls around the world—at least 3 billion of which originated in the United States. ¹³ In addition, the NSA recorded "almost 3 billion pieces of intelligence from US computer networks" over a 30-day period during March 2013. ¹⁴ Said another way, in just 2 months during 2013, unelected government officials recorded and listened to almost 6 billion phone calls and Internet conversations of US citizens for the alleged purpose of "national security," which in this case, meant "fighting terrorism."

In fact, some of the most powerful telecommunications and Internet companies in the world have worked with the United States government by providing access to their servers and members' information and profiles, including Microsoft, Yahoo!, Google, Facebook, YouTube, AOL, and Apple. Notably, one NSA device, a massive surveillance program known as PRISM, "extracts content stored in user accounts at Yahoo, Microsoft, Facebook, Google, and five other top Internet companies." Another program, known inside the NSA as Upstream, "intercepts data on the move as it crosses the US junctions of global voice and data networks [i.e., phones and the Internet]." In fact, the NSA is currently recording some 600 billion phone calls, text messages, Facebook exchanges, Skype interactions, browsing histories, search terms, emails, and multiple other forms of telecommunications around the world each calendar year, 17 primarily through its PRISM program. The true size of this number comes into focus when one realizes that there are only 8 billion people on the planet.

How did this happen? Beginning in 2007, the NSA asked the Federal Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC or FISA Court) to require Verizon to deliver metadata from millions of US citizens' phone calls to the FBI and the NSA. The FISA Court is a United States federal court established by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 to manage requests for warrants for surveillance by federal law enforcement agencies against suspected foreign intelligence agents inside the United States. Thus, every phone call, instant message, or computerized face-to-face interaction that is or might be recorded by the NSA originating outside of the US between two or more foreign nationals who are themselves each located outside of the country is, in reality, beyond the legal parameters and stated responsibilities of the FISA Court. Accordingly, doing so is an extra-legal activity being performed by the NSA and has no basis in law (secret or otherwise) whatsoever. So, the only legal activity remaining for the NSA to be engaged with using a FISA warrant is to monitor "foreign intelligent agents" operating inside of the United States.

Yet, under almost any interpretation of the FISA Court's mandate (let alone the Fourth Amendment), it is hard to justify the amount and kind of data seized by the NSA. If we are to extrapolate some of the numbers above about the NSA's recording and spying on the American people (i.e., 3 billion recorded phone calls per month and 3 billion intercepted Internet communications per month), then we can get some idea of how widespread the NSA's surveillance of the American people has been. To be sure, if the NSA records and listens to some 6 billion Internet and phone calls per month, then that means that this unelected agency is cataloging some 72 billion tele-electronic communications between people living in the United States a year. There are only 318 million people in the United States. So, in other words, the NSA records enough Internet and

phone conversations on a daily basis that it could have spied on, listened to, monitored or recorded every single person in the United States more than 225 times in just one year.

It is simply not possible that every person living in the United States is a suspected foreign intelligence agent. Yet, even if 100 thousand people are foreign intelligent agents and are being monitored by the NSA—a pretty high number, and equal to the amount of intelligence agents that former DNI director John Negroponte claims the United States has deployed throughout the whole world—then we will get some idea of the immense size of the government's domestic spying program. ¹⁹ That is to say, if 100,000 agents were operating in the United States, and 72 billion recordings are made a year by the NSA, then this would mean that some 720,000 tele-electronic communications from each one of these 100,000 individuals per year has been recorded by that agency. Thus, the NSA would be recording 1,972 phone calls, instant messages, emails, audio chats, FaceTime communications, and text messages of this 100,000 fictional suspected foreign agents per day. Is this even possible? Probably not, so we are left with the alternative—the NSA is conducting a massive extra-legal and unconstitutional drag-net type of surveillance program that consists of recording, spying, and cataloging more than 100 million phone and Internet communications between citizens of the United States on a daily basis—with absolutely no legal or constitutional authority whatsoever to do so.

In fact, according to a four-month study conducted by *The Washington Post* (which was larger than any study done to date by Congress, who is actually responsible for oversight of the NSA), some 90 percent of the Internet communications "intercepted by the NSA" were not from foreign intelligent agents but were, instead, between "ordinary Internet users," ²⁰ almost half of whom were citizens or residents of the United States. ²¹ Moreover, the study revealed that "much of the information has ... a startlingly intimate, even voyeuristic quality," involving, "love and heartbreak, illicit sexual liaisons, mental health crises, political and religious conversions, financial anxieties, and disappointed hopes." ²²

Other times, information that was collected was more mundane but still of a personal nature, such as medical records, résumés, academic transcripts of kids, and lots of pictures of babies and young children "in bathtubs, on swings, sprawled on their backs and kissed by their mothers. In some photos, men show off their physiques. In others, women model lingerie, leaning suggestively into a webcam or striking risqué poses in shorts and bikini tops." And, most surprisingly of all, much of the personal information recorded by the NSA has been "retained" by these unelected bureaucrats who have no business *at all* collecting the personal information of the American people. Of course, one must ask, "What does any of this have to do with "national security?" The short answer is, of course, nothing. So, why is it done? One can only speculate, but likely, because powerful individuals within the federal government want to make sure that they can expose anyone at any time for almost anything. Why else? It is either that, or the NSA has simply gotten away from those who are supposed to be in charge of it.



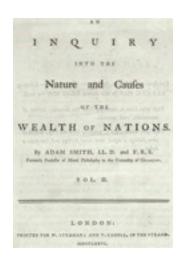
Wealth and Poverty in the United States

'The ... truth is that the rich are the great cause of poverty.'1

-Michael Parenti (American political scientist, historian, and media analyst, 1933-present)

By almost any measure, the United States is a wealthy nation. According to the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and the UN, the United States had the highest GDP in the world in 2021, standing at more than \$21 trillion. China was second with a GDP just over \$14 trillion. In fact, the US has the fourth highest average wage in the world at some \$65,000 per year.

However, contrary to Adam Smith's most famous assertion about prosperity and self-interest in the marketplace, the "invisible hand" in the United States has not resulted in riches for all, but instead, great wealth for some, economic inequality for many, and unrelenting poverty for the rest. As we shall see below, the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few has had very specific political, economic, and social consequences for nearly every single person living in the United States, and at times, for billions of people around the world.



The Wealth of Nations, Adam Smith (1776) (Wikimedia Commons)

14.1 Income and Wealth Inequality

For some time, income and wealth in the United States have increasingly become concentrated into the hands of fewer and fewer people and powerful corporations. In addition to the continued neoliberalization of US society, this has created a situation where day-to-day living has become more expensive. However, the median American wage has been stagnant for the American people for more than four decades.² Today, this has resulted in a state of affairs in which economic inequality is greater than at almost any other period in US history.

The Richest 1 Percent vs. Everyone Else

In fact, income inequality has been on the rise in the United States since at least the early 1970s, after consistent economic growth year after year for working people from 1947–1973.³ The 1970s saw the beginnings of neoliberalism in the United States, which

was firmly put into place with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. Since that time, the US working class has experienced more and more austerity, with the scaling back of social welfare programs, decreased union membership, decreased wages, increased working hours (or conversely, an inability to get full-time work)—and an increase in the price of goods. Without question, since the 1970s, the greatest gains have come for the very wealthiest individuals in US society. For instance, the Nobel Prize—winning economist Paul Krugman has extrapolated, based on Congressional Budget Office numbers, that in the United States from 1977–1989, "70 percent of the rise in average family income went to the top 1 percent." Moving closer to today and further illustrating the upward trend of capital accumulation, the richest 10 percent of the US population "captured a record 48.2 percent of total earnings" in 2012, 5 while the richest 1 percent of the US population saw their incomes rise "nearly 20 percent compared with [just] a 1 percent increase for the remaining 99 percent" of the American population during that same year.

According to the Economic Policy Institute and based on income figures of the United States from 1979-2010, the largest money-making year for the richest 1 percent of the US population was the same year that the "Great Recession" began, in 2007. Indeed, the richest 1 percent of the US population earned 58.7 percent of the nation's income, while the top 90-99 percent earned 24.3 percent of the nation's income, and the bottom 90 percent shared the remaining 17 percent of the national income. ⁷ In other words, in 2007, the richest 1 percent of US income earners "earned" 58.7 percent of the nation's income, while the bottom 99 percent earned just 41.3 percent of the nation's income combined. By comparison, in 1979, wealth was more equally distributed, with the top 1 percent earning 36.2 percent of the nation's income, the middle 90-99 percent segment of the population earning 33.5 percent, and the bottom 90 percent earning 30.3 percent of the country's pay.8 Still unequal, though not as dramatic as in recent years. In summing up this change in income distribution, the Congressional Budget Office found that between 1979 and 2007, income in the United States grew by 275 percent for the top 1 percent of households and just 58 percent for the bottom 80 percent of households combined.9 In fact, income inequality has become so extreme in the United States, that from 2016 to 2021, the wealthiest 1 percent of the population saw their income increase 56 times more than the bottom 80 percent of the American people. 10 And in 2021 alone, the richest 1 percent had an "earned" income that was 26 times greater than the bottom 99 percent of the US population combined. 11

Why is any of the above the case? At least one reason (although not the only one) is that the US has the worst average CEO-to-worker pay ratio in the entire First World. While the US has the most billionaires in the world (638)—including the world's richest person, Elon Musk (with a net worth of some \$320 billion)—average CEO-to-worker pay stands at some 354:1.12 In other words, the average CEO in the United States earns more than \$12 million a year, while the average employee earns less than \$35,000 a year.¹³ In fact, from 1978 to 2020, CEO pay grew by some 1,322 percent while the "compensation of the typical worker grew by just 18 percent" during that same time period. 14 One of the most extreme examples of income disparity between CEOs and workers is that of former JCPenney's CEO, Ron Johnson, whose income was almost 1,800 times greater than that of the average person working for JCPenneys¹⁵ Johnson is hardly alone, as extreme income inequality is quite common across the United States. Indeed, Larry Ellison of Oracle "earns" \$78 million a year, or some 2,700 times more than Oracle's average employee. 16 However, neither Johnson nor Ellison is the highest-paid CEO in the United States; that spot belongs to Elon Musk of Tesla. As head of the car company, Musk was paid some \$2.2 billion, more than 40,600 times than that of the average Tesla worker. 17 All three CEOs' "compensation" would be much greater still if it was measured, not by average CEO-to-worker, but by average CEO-to-lowest-paid-worker.

Notably, average CEO-to-worker pay in the United States has increased 1,000 percent since 1950. In fact, the disparity between those who earn the most and the average company employee has increased from 20:1 in 1950, to 42:1 in 1980, to 120:1 in 2000, 19 to where it stands today. Any of this could have been prevented with the passage of one simple law making this type of income exploitation illegal. However, the United States Congress has passed no such law—and no law is likely to be passed, as the neoliberal grip and the proponents of its advantages grab more firmly onto government policy, the economic system, and society in general.

Nonetheless, the strongest bulwark against wage inequality in the United States has traditionally been union membership. However, union membership has dropped dramatically since the 1970s, with many people viewing unions with suspicion. As noted in Chapter 10, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, just 11.3 percent of "wage and salary workers" belonged to a union in 2013—the lowest rate since the Great Depression, when unions first began to take shape in the United States.²⁰ In fact, during the summer of 2009, "disapproval" of unions was measured at an all-time high, with some 45 percent of the American people *not* viewing unions in a favorable light.²¹ During that same time period, no more than 8 percent of the population had a "great deal" of confidence in organized labor, with that number never moving beyond 11 percent by 2014.²² By 2021, overall union membership (i.e., both public and private sector employees) was unchanged, standing at 11 percent, with just 6 percent of all private sector workers belonging to a union.²³

Unlike income, wealth is determined not by salary, but is instead based upon an individual's assets; i.e., homes, cars, personal valuables such as jewelry and art, businesses, savings, and investments. Measured by this criteria, as of 2014, the bottom 80 percent of the US population controlled just 7 percent of the wealth in the United States *combined*. As noted, the gap between the wealthiest 1 percent of the United States and the other 99 percent is greater than at any time since 1928, the year before the Great Depression began. And now, the top *quarter* of this 1 percent of the population has more wealth than the bottom 99 percent combined. As of 2014, according to former Secretary of Labor and political economist Robert Reich, 95 percent of the gains that have been made since the



The richest 1 percent of the 1920s: Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, President Warren G. Harding, and Harvey Firestone (1921) (Wikimedia Commons)

beginning of the "recovery" from the "Great Recession" in 2009 have gone to the top 1 percent of the population,²⁵ so that "just six Walmart heirs have more wealth than the bottom 42 percent of Americans combined (up from 30 percent in 2007)."26 In fact, as pointed out in Chapter 1, the 3 wealthiest Americans have more wealth than the bottom half of the US population combined. Not least of the reasons why the wealthiest 1 percent are so rich comes from this class's control over the stock market. No doubt about it, today, the wealthiest 1 percent of the US population controls 50 percent of stock market wealth, while the richest 10 percent (including the top 1 percent) control a full 93 percent of the riches generated by Wall Street. Thus, the bottom 90 percent of the American people that speculate in the buying and selling of stocks and bonds control just 7 percent of its entire treasure.

14.2 The Concentration of Corporate Power in the US Marketplace

A second reason for economic inequality in the United States is rooted in the concentration of corporate power within any given sector of the US economy. Undeniably, the great majority of commodities and services within any one industry are produced by just a handful of multinational corporations. The MNCs within that industry then set the price of that commodity or service *and* determine the wage of the workers, as well as many of the conditions of the workplace. In doing so, it is often corporate power and not some Smithian "invisible hand" that determines the amount of income that the US working class will be provided in order to live. After all, it is the owners of the means of production who hire and fire members of the working class, rather than the other way around. Detailed below are two separate industries—the consumer goods industry and the banking industry—which are used to illustrate the degree of concentrated corporate power in any one industry within the United States.

The Corporations that Control the Consumer Goods Industry

Much in the same way that the news media is controlled by six giant corporations, so too is the consumer goods industry dominated by ten powerful conglomerates in the United States. A complete listing of the thousands of products sold by these companies in the United States would only make sense in an appendix and would be much longer still if that appendix enumerated the extensive list of products sold by these companies, not just in the United States, but around the world. However, a listing of *some* of the products sold *within* the United States can be instructive. What follows is a listing of the top 10 consumer goods corporations that produce the vast majority of what is consumed by the American people:

- (1) Johnson & Johnson's is a US-owned transnational corporation with assets of more than \$170 billion. Employing over 134,000 people, some of Johnson & Johnson's major holdings include Actifed, Acuvue, Band-Aid, Benadryl, Bengay, Carefree, Clean & Clear, Cortaid, Desitin, Efferdent, First-Aid, Imodium, Johnson's Baby Shampoo, Johnson & Johnson Red Cross, Lactaid, Listerine, Listermint, Lubriderm, Motrin, Mylanta, Neosporin, Neutrogena, NicoDerm, Nicorette, Pepcid AC, Provin, Purell, REACH, Rembrandt toothpaste, Rogaine, Rolaids, Splenda, Stayfree, Sudafed, Tucks Pads, Tylenol, Visine, and Zyrtec.²⁷
- (2) Nestle is a Swiss multinational corporation with assets of more than \$137 billion. Employing in excess of 352,000 people, some of Nestle's major assets include Coffeemate, Taster's Choice, Nestle, Skinny Cow, Nescafé, Sweet Leaf Tea, Arrowhead Water, Perrier, San Pellegrino, Drumstick, Haagen-Dazs, Edy's, Carnation, Nesquik, Ovaltine, Baby Ruth, 100 Grand, Bottle Caps, Chunky, Goobers, Fun Dip, Oh Henry!, Pixy Stix, Raisinets, SweeTARTS, Nerds, Butterfinger, Kit Kat, Nestlé Crunch, Rolo, Dreyer's, Drumstick ice cream, Cheerios, Trix, Gerber, DiGiorno, Hot Pockets, Lean Cuisine, Stouffer's, Tombstone, Nestlé Purina PetCare, Purina Dog Chow, and Friskies Purina ONE.²⁸

- (3) Procter & Gamble Co. is an American conglomerate with assets of more than \$120 billion. Employing more than 100,000 people, some of Procter & Gamble Co.'s major assets include Bounty, Braun, Charmin, Crest, Dawn, Dash, Duracell, Febreze, Fusion, Gain, Gillette, Pepto-Bismol, Head & Shoulders, Olay, Oral-B, Pampers, Pantene, Scope, Tide, Vicks, Bold, Bounce, Camay, Cascade, Comet, Cheer, Clairol, CoverGirl, Gucci, Fixodent, Fab, Gleem toothpaste, Herbal Essences, Old Spice, Ivory, Safeguard, Vidal Sassoon, Joy, Max Factor, Venus, Metamucil, Mr. Clean, Nice 'n Easy, Safeguard, Secret, Tampax, Pringles, Jif, and Folgers.²⁹
- (4) Kraft Heinz is an American-owned transnational corporation with assets of \$100 billion. Employing over 38,000 people, some of Kraft's major assets include A.1. Steak Sauce, Back to Nature, Boca Burger, Bulls-Eye Barbecue Sauce, Capri Sun, Kraft Vegemite Cheesybite, Cheez Whiz, Claussen pickles, Club Social, Cool Whip, Corn Nuts, Country Time, Cracker Barrel Cheese, Crystal Light, General Foods International, Handi-Snacks, Harvest Crisps, Honey Maid, Jell-O, Knudsen, Kool-Aid, Kraft BBQ Sauce, Kraft Caramels, Kraft Macaroni and Cheese, Kraft Mayo, Kraft Singles, Kraft Sandwich Spread, Lunchables, Maxwell House, Miracle Whip, Orchard Crisps, Oscar Mayer, Grated Parmesan cheese, Philadelphia Cream Cheese, Planter's, Premium, Pretzels, Pure Kraft Salad Dressings, Seven Seas, Shake 'n Bake, South Beach Living, Stove Top stuffing, Taco Bell (grocery store items), and Nabisco (including Velveeta, Cadbury, Cheese Nips, Chiclets Chips Ahoy!, Fig Newton, Nilla [wafers], Oreo, Ritz Crackers, SnackWell's, Swiss Cheese Crackers, Sugar Wafers, Teddy Grahams, Triscuit, Vegemite, and Wheat Thins).³⁰
- (5) The Coca-Cola Company is an American transnational megacorporation with more than \$90 billion in assets. Employing more than 60,000 people, some of the Coca-Cola Company's major assets include Coca-Cola, Sprite, Fanta, Diet Coke, Dasani, Minute Maid, Powerade, Vitamin Water, Odwalla, Mello Yello, Bacardi Mixers, Barq's root beer, Black Cherry Vanilla Coca-Cola, Tab, Fresca, Squirt, Mr. Pibb, Schweppes, Seagram's, Rockstar, and Nestea.³¹
- (6) PepsiCo is a giant American conglomerate with assets of some \$78 billion. Employing over 267,000 people, some of PepsiCo's major holdings include Frito-Lay, Gatorade, Quaker Oats, Tropicana, Lipton, 7Up, Quaker Chewy Granola Bars, Starbucks Doubleshot, Starbucks Frappuccino, Starbucks Iced Coffee, Rockstar Energy, SoBe, Cap'n Crunch Cereal, Quaker Life Cereal, Quaker Grits, Quaker Instant Oatmeal, Quaker Old Fashioned Oats, Aunt Jemima Mixes & Syrups, Quaker Large Rice Cakes, Rice-A-Roni Side Dishes, Cheetos Snacks, DORITOS Tortilla Chips, LAY'S Potato Chips, Ruffles Potato Chips, Tostitos Tortilla Chips, Cracker Jack Candy Coated Popcorn, Funyuns Onion Flavored Rings, Mountain Dew, Sierra Mist, Pepsi, Diet Pepsi, Pepsi Wild Cherry, Aquafina, and Propel Zero.³² PepsiCo also originally owned Taco Bell, KFC, Pizza Hut, Long John Silver's, and A&W Restaurants before creating Yum! Brands in 1997 to "spin out" each of those companies under the Yum! Brands name.
- (7) Unilever is an Anglo-Dutch multinational corporation with assets of more than \$67 billion. Employing in excess of 155,000 people, some of Unilever's major assets include Dove, Lipton, Mrs. Filbert's, Popsicle, Fudgsicle, Ben & Jerry's, Hellmann's mayonnaise, I Can't Believe It's Not Butter, Imperial margarine, Breyers, Klondike, Lipton, Lipton Ice Tea, Country Crock, Klondike, Slim Fast,

- Sure, Lifebuoy, Brylcreem, Vaseline, Noxzema, Close-Up, Comfort, Degree, Pepsodent, VO5, and Pond's.³³
- (8) Mars Incorporated is the third-largest privately owned corporation in the United States with annual revenue in excess of \$37 billion. In fact, Mars Inc. is owned by the Mars Family which has a net worth of some \$90 billion. Employing more than 130,000 people, some of Mars Incorporated's major assets include Altoids, Big Red, Bounty, Doublemint, Dove, Eclipse, Extra, Freedent, PB Max, Hubba Bubba, Juicy Fruit, Life Savers, M&M's, Mars Bar, Milky Way, Orbit, Pedigree, Skittles, Snickers, Starburst, Spearmint, Twix, Uncle Ben's Rice, Whiskas, and Winterfresh.³⁴
- (9) General Mills is an American-owned conglomerate with assets of \$31 billion. Employing more than 35,000 people, some of General Mills' major assets include Cheerios, Chex, Golden Grahams, Honey Nut Clusters, Kix, Lucky Charms, Oatmeal Peanut Butter Toast Crunch, Raisin Nut Bran, Boo-Berry, Chex, Cinnamon Toast Crunch, Cocoa Puffs, Count Chocula, Fiber One, Franken-Berry, Reese's Puffs, Total, Trix, Wheaties, Betty Crocker, Bisquick, Pillsbury, Fruit Roll-Ups, Hamburger Helper, Green Giant, Progresso, Columbo, Good Earth, Nature Valley, Wheaties, Yoplait, and Haagen-Dazs.³⁵
- (10) Kellogg's is an American-owned multinational corporation with assets of more than \$17 billion. Employing over 34,000 people, some of Kellogg's major assets include Froot Loops, Corn Flakes, Frosted Flakes, Rice Krispies, Special K, Cocoa Krispies, Keebler, Pringles, Pop-Tarts, Pringles, Mother's Cookies, Cheez-It, Eggo Waffles, Nutri-Grain, Morningstar Farms, All-Bran, Apple Jacks, Cinnabon, Coco Pops, Cracklin' Oat Bran, Corn Flakes, Raisin Bran, Crispix, Fiber-Plus Bars, and Frosted Mini-Wheats. 36

This list of corporations, numbers 1–10, illustrates the extreme concentration of foodstuffs and hygiene products that have come under the control of a small coterie of the very rich. However, the point here is not that basic necessities are being controlled by a handful of companies—it would be difficult to argue that potato chips, sweetened drinks, or sugar cereals are essential food items. Instead, the fine point is that it is difficult to live in the United States and remain untouched by one of these mega-corporations, which helps to shape far more than just their niche within the American marketplace. Most people in the United States consume one or more of the above products on a regular basis. While seeming to be separate products, the great majority of these products are, in reality, owned and sold by just a handful of powerful corporations (e.g., Nestle controls 8,000 separate brands all by itself). In turn, and most importantly, these 10 corporations are then able to: (1) determine the wages and working conditions of over 12 million people in the US and around the world, (2) set the price for each commodity for the planet's almost 8 billion people, and (3) generate extraordinary profits for just a handful of people.

Viewed through the prism of class, the international proletariat gets a factory job and a candy bar while a very small fraction of the cosmopolitan bourgeoisie, such as the Mars family, gets \$30 billion to divide among themselves. This is the essence of capitalism and class power: the turning of sugar, molasses, and cocoa into a commodity that is produced by working people for a low wage at an unfulfilling workplace, which is then sold to the very people who produced it at a higher cost than what the commodity is actually worth, so the owning class can extract an exorbitant profit all for themselves.

The Banking Industry

Not only are the news media industry, consumer goods industry, and many other industries within the US economy controlled by just a handful of corporations, but so too is the banking industry. In 2011, the nation's 10 largest financial institutions held 54 percent of the US population's total financial assets as compared to just 20 percent in 1990.³⁷ From 1990–2011, the number of banks in the US *decreased* from 12,500 to about 8,000 as a result (at least in part) of banks buying one another.³⁸ In looking at some of the most powerful banks in the US, we see an upward cycle of banks and capital concentrated into the hands of fewer and fewer individuals from 1990–2011. Consider the following:

- » Citigroup was formed through the merging of Travelers Group, Citicorp, European American Bank, and Banamex.
- » JPMorgan Chase was formed through the merging of Washington Mutual, Great Western Financial, H. F. Ahmanson, Dime Bancorp, First Chicago, Banc One, First Commerce, J.P. Morgan, Chase Manhattan, Chemical Banking, and Bear Stearns.
- » Bank of America acquired U.S. Trust, MBNA, Continental Bank, BankAmerica Corp., Security Pacific Bancorp, NationsBank, Fleet Financial Group, BancBoston, BayBanks, Summit Bancorp, UJB Financial, Countrywide Financial, Merrill Lynch, and FleetBoston Financial.
- » Wells Fargo acquired First Interstate Bancorp, Norwest Holding Company, SouthTrust, Wachovia, Central Fidelity National Bank, CoreStates Financial, First Union, and The Money Store.

Today, the size of the banks is even bigger than during the "Great Recession." In fact, between 2008 and 2013, some 485 banks failed; and another 915 merged with larger banks, further consolidating the banking industry.³⁹ In fact, the 10 largest banks in the United States as of 2013 were: (1) JPMorgan Chase (\$2.39 trillion in assets); (2) Bank of America (\$2.17 trillion in assets); (3) Citigroup (\$1.88 trillion in assets); (4) Wells Fargo (\$1.44 trillion in assets); (5) Bank of New York Mellon (\$356 billion in assets); (6) US Bancorp (\$355



The First Bank of the United States, Philadelphia, PA (1791) (Wikimedia Commons)

billion in assets); (7) HSBC North America Holdings (\$305 billion in assets); (8) PNC Financial Services Group (\$301 billion in assets); (9) Capital One Financial Corporation (\$300 billion in assets and \$212 in deposits); and (10) TD Bank US Holding (\$223 billion in assets). 40 Strikingly, these 10 banks had combined assets that were roughly equal to the *total* GDP of the entire country of China during that year. For sure, the total assets of just JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America (\$4.56 trillion) were \$1.79 trillion more than the *total* federal tax dollars (\$2.77 trillion) of the United States government in 2013. Today, with a few a minor changes, the story largely remains the same

Equally as revealing is the enormous power the top six banks have over the US economy. As of 2013, JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, Citigroup, Wells Fargo, Bank of New York Mellon, and US Bancorp con-

trol "67 percent of all the assets in the US financial system," which is an increase of 37 percent between 2008 and 2013.⁴¹ In fact, one-third of all business loans granted in the United States in 2013 were made by Bank of America; almost one-fourth of all home loans

were provided by Wells Fargo; and some 12 percent of the "collective cash, including the payrolls of many thousands of companies," is held by JPMorgan Chase. ⁴² Not surprisingly, each bank has spent millions of dollars influencing federal policy through lobbying dollars and campaign contributions. For instance, Wells Fargo, Citigroup, JPMorgan Chase, and Bank of America all spent between \$3–\$6 million lobbying the federal government ⁴³ and gave another \$1 million in campaign contributions to federal office-seekers from both major parties in 2013. ⁴⁴ The dollar amounts today reveal a similar tale. The political dollars spent by the banking industry help to create a highly unregulated (or deregulated) market for the banks and never make up more than a tiny fraction of their total net worth. Thus, relative to the banking industry's immense wealth, money spent on political campaigns and lobbying is often the best money that most of them will ever spend.

The Most Powerful Members of the US-Based International Bourgeoisie

Perhaps no more than 10,000 people—many of whom are US citizens—control the vast majority of the commanding heights of the global economy. Without a doubt, today, the richest 1 percent of the global population controls 50 percent of the world's wealth. In fact, one fairly recent study of transnational corporate ownership discovered just how concentrated economic power has become within the global capitalist system. The Swiss Federal Institute of Technology⁴⁵ examined all 43,060 multinational corporations in existence in 2011 and discovered that *just 147* of them "own interlocking" shares "of one another" and "together ... control 40% of the wealth" of all the MNCs on Earth. ⁴⁶ Equally as striking, "a total of 737 [corporations] control 80%" of all global corporate wealth. ⁴⁷ At times, the major shareholders and board of directors of these 737 corporations serve on the board of directors or hold major shares in one or more of the remaining 736 companies. Table 14.1 lists the wealthiest members of the US-based cosmopolitan bourgeoisie who had stakes in many of these corporations as of 2014.

TABLE 14.1 Wealthiest People in the United States (2014)

Name	US Rank	World Rank	Net Worth (Est.)
Bill Gates	#1	#1	\$80 billion
Warren Buffet	#2	#3	\$58 billion
Larry Ellison	#3	#5	\$52 billion
Charles Koch	#5	#6	\$41 billion
David Koch	#5	#6	\$40 billion
Sheldon Adelson	#6	#8	\$37 billion
Christy Walton	#7	#9	\$37 billion
Jim Walton	#8	#10	\$34 billion
Samuel Walton	#9	#11	\$33 billion
Alice Walton	#10	#13	\$33 billion

While each of these individuals were already extremely wealthy, just seven years later, this billionaire class saw their wealth explode to dizzying heights not seen since the robber barons of Carnegie and Rockefeller. For certain, Table 14.2 lists the wealthiest members of the US-based international bourgeoisie as of 2021.

TABLE 14.2 Wealthiest People in the United States (2021)

Name	US Rank	World Rank	Net Worth (Est.)
Elon Musk	#1	#1	\$320 billion
Jeff Bezos	#2	#2	\$205 billion
Bill Gates	#3	#4	\$130 billion
Mark Zuckerberg	#5	#5	\$127 billion
Larry Page	#5	#6	\$117 billion
Larry Ellison	#6	#7	\$115 billion
Sergey Brin	#7	#8	\$112 billion
Warren Buffet	#8	#9	\$103 billion
Steven Balmer	#9	#11	\$87 billion
Jim Walton	#10	#15	\$70 billion

In addition to these billionaires that are now approaching a historic scale, we also find that more often than not, the corporations that these individuals control help shape the political, economic, and social reality for much of the world's almost 8 billion people. Without question, in looking more closely at some of these individuals, it becomes clear how much power this small group of people has over significant parts of the global economy and the United States government. Consider the following:

Elon Musk is the founder and CEO of Tesla, SpaceX, and the Boring Company. His ownership stake in each company has helped make him the wealthiest person on the planet by a fairly wide margin. While indisputably an historic class engineer, Musk has also shown himself to be, at times, both dishonest and deeply uninformed. For instance, he falsely stated that he had secured funding to privatize Tesla Corporation—which may have been a bid to drive up the price of the company's shares—that prompted an SEC investigation. Upon lying in public about the private financing, he was forced to step down as chairman of Tesla, have his social media remarks reviewed by an attorney before they were released, and he and Tesla were required to pay fines of \$20 million each. Aside, from his corporate interests, Musk is also a large donor to both the Democratic and Republican parties and is a regular commentator on social media on a variety of topics including COVID-19. Indeed, showing himself to lack a basic understanding about nearly the whole of the reality of the coronavirus, Musk recklessly encouraged the use of chloroquine; said children were basically "immune" from the virus; dangerously opened his Fremont, California Tesla factory during a statewide shutdown which placed his workers lives in jeopardy; argued that the number of deaths caused by COVID-19 that are being tracked by some of the finest universities in the United States are inaccurate; and with the peak of the pandemic in the United States (i.e., February 2021) still almost a full year away, where the US would see more than 5,000 Americans lose their lives to the virus per day, Musk claimed in March of 2020 that by the end of April 2020 there would "probably" be no new cases in the United States at all.

- » Jeff Bezos is the world's second richest man. He is the founder and chairman of Amazon. Throughout his tenure as head of the global e-commerce giant, Bezos worked against his employees attempts to unionize. He resisted (and continues to resist) calls to pay the 1-million-person Amazon US-workforce a living wage despite the size of his nearly unmatched personal fortune and Amazon not paying a dime in federal income taxes in 2018. In fact, while nearly the whole of the American working class financially struggled during the COVID-19 global pandemic, "Amazon thrived" with the corporation seeing its revenues grow by some \$380 billion.⁴⁸
- Bill Gates is the founder and former chairman of Microsoft, which controls more than 90 percent of the net market share of operating systems for computers. ⁴⁹ In fact, some 1 billion people use Microsoft's most popular software, Microsoft Office, with another 1.5 billion people using the Windows operating system on a daily basis. ⁵⁰ Microsoft has more than 20 separate trademarks (e.g., MSN, Xbox, Windows, Word, etc.); has acquired hundreds of separate corporations (e.g., Skype, Nokia, Visio, Hotmail, etc.); and has had stakes in hundreds more (e.g., Comcast, Apple Computer, Facebook, Barnes & Noble, AT&T, BET, DreamWorks, NBC, RadioShack, Ticketmaster, etc.). Yet at the same time, Bill Gates and Microsoft have been accused and found guilty of anticompetitive and monopolistic practices on multiple occasions.

For example, in *Microsoft v. United States* (1998), Microsoft was found guilty of violating the Sherman Antitrust Act, which was passed by Congress in 1890 to prevent monopolistic practices. Gates testified in that case, which was so transparently false that even the trial judge, US District Court Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson, openly laughed during Gates' sworn testimony.⁵¹ Later, the European Union found Microsoft guilty of violating its antitrust laws in a case known as *European Union v. Microsoft* (2004) and ordered Microsoft to pay almost \$800 million in fines—the largest fine levied in EU history.⁵² Microsoft refused to do so, and by 2006 the European Union fined Microsoft another \$350 million for defiance.⁵³ By 2014, Microsoft fines by the European Union totaled almost \$2.4 billion for antitrust and monopolistic practices—more than any other company in the world.⁵⁴

However at the same time, Bill Gates probably has more influence over public education in US society than any other person in the country. To be sure, the strongest supporter of the national K–12 curriculum standards—Common Core—was the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Foundation spent some \$200 million funding institutes, interest groups, and politically connected individuals to advance their vision of education for the United States. However, the issue here is not whether or not the Common Core standards are good or bad, but instead whether or not one very wealthy man, who does not even send his own children to public school and who has been found guilty in a court of law on more than one continent, should have *any say whatsoever* over the public education of millions of American students. However that question is answered, Bill Gates has spent more than \$3.4 billion on a wide variety of activities in trying to shape K–12 public education in the United States during his lifetime. So

» Mark Zuckerberg is the founder of Facebook which also owns WhatsApp and Instagram. With almost 3 billion users around the world, the company is a global behemoth that can have both a connecting and detrimental impact on the people of the United States and throughout the world for nearly all things social, economic, and political. No doubt about it, aside from creating a social media

"platform" for people to post pictures of their family and friends, Zuckerberg has been involved with sharing and "selling" user's personal data with other corporations for his own benefit. This was done most famously in the case of Cambridge Analytica during the 2016 election. Zuckerberg and Facebook were found to be in violation of data protection law by failing to protect users' information and instead allowing Cambridge to use personal information taken from Facebook user's profiles (and their friend's lists) without their consent to target swing voters for Donald Trump and Ted Cruz. Moreover, and possibly most problematic of all for the republic itself, Zuckerberg, until recently, has refused to segregate between free speech and false speech on Facebook. In fact, he was unwillingly to do so until it became clear to many that social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter can have not just an effect on the realm of ideas but so too on the actions of individuals, as witnessed by the whole world during the attack on the United States Capitol by Trump supporters on January 6, 2021.

Warren Buffett is the chairman, president, and CEO of the holding company Berkshire Hathaway, which has assets in excess of \$450 billion. Some of the major holdings of Berkshire Hathaway include GEICO (100 percent); Dairy Queen (99 percent); Mars Incorporated (undisclosed); See's Candies (100 percent); Heinz (50 percent); Fruit of the Loom (99 percent); Acme Brick (100 percent); The Buffalo News (100 percent); Business Wire (100 percent); Omaha World-Herald (100 percent); Helzberg Diamonds (100 percent); and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corp Railroad (100 percent).

Some of Berkshire Hathaway's common stock holdings (i.e., stock holdings whose owners can vote on company policy) include American Express (14 percent); Anheuser-Busch (10 percent); The Coca-Cola Company (9 percent); Procter & Gamble (2 percent); IBM (6 percent); ConocoPhillips (2 percent); Costco (1 percent); General Electric (greater than 1 percent); Kraft Foods (2 percent); Home Depot; Johnson & Johnson (greater than 1 percent); Lowe's; Moody's (11 percent); Nestle, Nike; Outback Steakhouse; WellPoint; UnitedHealth Group Inc.; UPS; Walmart (2 percent); Wells Fargo (9 percent); and Goldman Sachs (3 percent).

In perhaps a clear indication that the politico-economic system is designed by and for the benefit of the very wealthy—and that on financial matters there is little difference between the two major parties—Warren Buffett was a financial supporter of President Obama, a Democrat, and was the finance advisor to Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican, during his 2013 gubernatorial campaign in California.

» Larry Ellison is the founder, CEO, and board member of Oracle, is the second most profitable software manufacturer in the world, behind only Bill Gates' Microsoft Corporation. Over the years, Oracle has acquired at least 100 separate corporations, consolidating a broad range of software and jobs—the most well-known being PeopleSoft and Sun Microsystems—under the umbrella of one corporation.⁵⁷

Oracle has also been involved in gaining government contracts under less-than-ethical conditions (e.g., hiring former Attorney General John Ashcroft's lobbying firm to gain a government contract who had originally turned Ellison down as Attorney General), bribing foreign officials, and has been sued on multiple instances for monopolistic practices and fraud by both the United States government and the European Commission. In addition, Oracle has been very

active in campaign contributions⁵⁸ and lobbying dollars⁵⁹ (even if what Ellison has spent is only a very small portion of his total net worth), donating an almost equal amount to Democratic and Republican members of Congress in 2014 as well as in 2020, including hosting a campaign fundraiser for Donald Trump. In turn, Ellison has used his wealth to purchase vast holdings, including artwork, cars, personal yachts, at least one golf course, and homes around the world, including one-third of the 70 multimillion dollar mansions in Malibu, CA, and he actually owns outright 98 percent of the Hawaiian island Lanai.⁶⁰

Charles Koch and Julia Koch (wife of David Koch) each own 42 percent of Koch Industries. Koch Industries is a powerful, privately held conglomerate involved in multiple industries, including asphalt, chemicals, commodity and financial trading, energy such as natural gas and oil, fibers, fertilizers, minerals, plastics, paper, and ranching. ⁶¹ However, as much as anything, the Koch brothers (before David's death in 2019) were known for their attempts to advance their libertarian views by trying to influence *the whole* of the American political system (i.e., local, state and federal) through extensive campaign contributions and lobbying dollars.

In fact, the Koch brothers have spent hundreds of millions of dollars on "Tea Party" candidates, Republican office-holders and seekers, conservative think tanks, and right-wing issues, as well as conservative ballot measures and initiatives. Indeed, the brothers head a conservative network which raised some \$400 million in "dark money" to help finance the elections of overwhelmingly conservative candidates during the 2012 election. ⁶² They also intended to spend some \$900 million in the 2016 Presidential election which failed to materialize as the brothers shifted their focus away from electoral politics and onto the promotion of libertarian policy and education. ⁶³

In addition, the Koch brothers have spent millions of dollars funding scientists and institutes in trying to prove that global warming is not real. Probably the more radical of the two brothers, David Koch, labeled President Obama a "hard-core socialist" ⁶⁴ and in 1980 ran for vice president with the Libertarian Party, with the intention of eliminating welfare, Social Security, minimum wage, and corporate taxes altogether.

- » Sheldon Adelson was the CEO of the Las Vegas Sands Corporation until his death in 2021. The Sands Corporation owns more than a dozen casinos and hotels in the US, China, and Singapore. The Sands' subsidiaries have been involved in at least one lawsuit for money laundering (i.e., the Venetian Macao hotel was ordered to pay \$46 million to the Department of Justice in 2013) and one crackdown for prostitution (i.e., more than 100 prostitutes were arrested for working in the Venetian Macao in 2010). Yet neither run-in with the law has kept Adelson from being deeply involved in American politics and giving money largely to conservative political candidates seeking office. To be certain, Adelson spent some \$100 million in the 2012 election trying to influence policy made by government. In 2020, Adelson and his wife donated some \$170 million to the Republican Party and a staggering \$75 million to Donald Trump.
- » Jim Walton & the Walton Family are the majority owners of Walmart, which is the largest publicly traded company in the world. A massive transnational corporation, Walmart has 11,000 stores in 27 different countries and employs more than 2 million people. The six Walton children make up a powerful sector within the international bourgeoisie. Without a doubt, those six people own

more wealth than the bottom 79 percent of all African American families living in the United States combined. 66

Walmart, as a "corporate citizen," is something less than respectable. For instance, the company has been involved in anti-union activities and pays its "associates" (i.e., workers) such low wages that, according to a recent study by Americans for Tax Fairness, Walmart workers actually qualify for Medicaid, food stamps, and subsidized housing—all of which costs US tax payers some \$6.2 billion dollars a year in public assistance. When combined with tax breaks and other government subsidies, Walmart *takes* some \$7.8 billion a year from the public treasury in the form of government assistance.

The company has also been involved in bribing public officials in Mexico (which Walmart officials have admitted) and lawsuits alleging racial, gender, and sexual discrimination. In fact, Walmart's suppliers have contracted with companies that used slave labor and that have been responsible for the outright deaths of their own employees—all to make larger profits.⁶⁹

All of this is to say nothing of Walmart's spending of millions of dollars in trying to shape US elections. This has included Walmart encouraging their employees to contribute to candidates that support the Walton family's political agenda (one that is very much in contradiction with *every single* Walmart employee). This is done by a Walmart employee giving money to some Walmart-favored political candidate. In return, Walmart promises to donate twice that amount to a Walmart-controlled charity that might somehow help the poorest employees that work for the company. The establishment of the charity creates a huge tax break for Walmart and is a means for the company to *buy* a campaign donation from its employees. In other words, the Walton family has so much money that they will pay double the cost of a donation (made by one of their employees) so they can skirt established campaign contribution limits to advance their own family's financial prosperity.

In sum, with their grip on key sectors of the global economy, these powerful members of the US-based international bourgeoisie are able to shape, determine, and have the final say over the working conditions, wages, commodities, and services for billions of people around the world. Their control over an immense number of powerful corporations generates extreme amounts of surplus capital. As mentioned in Chapter 2 in more theoretical terms, but restated here with a concrete example to support that theory, the basic truth about capital accumulation and ownership is that control over the means of production generates huge amounts of surplus capital, which is then used by the international bourgeoisie to (1) fuel personal lives of extreme luxury, (2) extend their grip over more of the productive forces of the economy, and (3) further develop a politico-economic and social order which is consistent with their own class interests.

14.3 Poverty in the United States

According to the United States Census Bureau, some 46.5 million people (or one-seventh of the US population) live at or below the poverty line—the highest number since the Bureau began publishing numbers on poverty. The poverty line, according to the US Department of Health and Human Services, is a family of four with an annual income of \$26,500 or less, as of the 2020 Census. The state of California has the most people in the nation living below the poverty line, with some 23 percent of its citizens

living at society's bottom.⁷⁰ Poverty disproportionately affects children, with some 20 percent—or one in every five children in the United States—living below the poverty line. In fact, kids are 24 percent of the total US population, but make up a full 36 percent of those living in poverty.⁷¹ Poverty also disproportionately impacts minority groups compared to their white counterparts. For example, the 2010 Census reveals that more than 27 percent of blacks and 26 percent of Hispanics were poor, as compared to just 10 percent of whites.⁷² Of course, the poorest people in the United States are families that are led by single women—particularly black and Hispanic women—reaching some 30 percent for these groups living in poverty.⁷³ The 2020 Census reveals a similar pattern from 2015–2019.

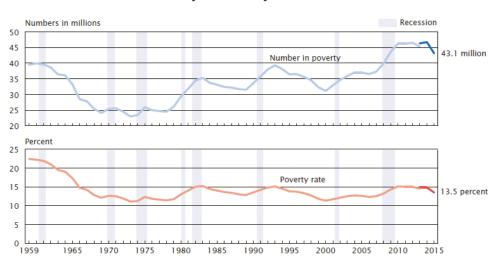


FIGURE 14.1 Number in Poverty and Poverty Rate 1959 to 2015 United States

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1960 to 2016 Annual Social and Economic Supplements

Note: The data for 2013 and beyond reflect the implementation of the redesigned income questions. The data points are placed at the midpoints of the respective years. For information on recessions, see Appendix A. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, and definitions. see www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/cpsmar16.pdf.

In 2012, more than 1.5 million households in the United States were considered to be living in extreme poverty, a total that has *more than doubled* since 1996.⁷⁴ Extreme poverty is defined as a household that lives on \$2 or less a day (or just \$730 per year for the whole family). A household in the United States is roughly equivalent to 2.5 people. In other words, almost 4 million people, including 2.8 million children, live at the very rock bottom of American society. This essentially remained unchanged during the 2020 Census as well.

If we are to look at not only poverty but also include people who are "low income;" i.e., a family of four with an annual income of \$45,000 a year or less, then we find that a full half of the people in the United States, or almost 160 million people, are either poor or low income. In fact, as noted in Chapter 1, the richest 3 people in the United States have more wealth than this bottom 160 million people combined. As wealth continues to be absorbed into the hands of fewer and fewer individuals, the list of the 3 wealthiest Americans is sure to shrink, while the ranks of the poorest Americans is sure to grow, adding further weight to the long-held radical political economy view of capitalism and capital accumulation that poverty is created by wealth, and wealth by poverty.

Without a doubt, today we are witnessing global capitalism moving toward its logical conclusion: to gather all of the world's wealth into the hands of just one person. This

could never happen in practice, as the system would collapse before such a thing occurred. Yet the numbers of the poor continue to rise while at the same time the ranks of the rich continue to grow smaller. Nonetheless, as Nelson Mandela famously remarked, "Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made, and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings."⁷⁵

14.4 Consequences of Poverty

People who live in poverty (i.e., the poorest members of the proletariat and the whole of the lumpen proletariat) are more likely than others to endure homelessness, hunger, incarceration, and poor health. In addition, poor children and their parents are more likely to attend inferior schools, live in unsafe or violent neighborhoods, and on the whole possess fewer "life opportunities" as compared to the rest of US society.

Health

The US Government Accountability Office (GAO) notes that for the poor, health problems have a variety of causes, including (1) limited access to health care (because privatized health care is unaffordable to the poor); (2) limited amounts of healthy foods since the high cost of fresh fruits, vegetables, and fiber-rich food results in the poor eating less of these than the rest of the US population; (3) a sedentary lifestyle (which can be a consequence of unemployment); and (4) exposure to environmental hazards and high levels of air pollution from living in city centers and in close proximity to highways and freeways.

Poor people endure high rates of chronic and debilitating illnesses and disease, and generally tend to die younger than more affluent members of society. Notably, one study reported on by the GAO determined that people who are poor have life expectancies that are 25 percent shorter than those who are not poor. The poor also have high rates of high blood pressure, hypertension, and elevated levels of bad cholesterol. In fact, the poor are more likely to be overweight than those who are not poor, with another study concluding that women who were very poor were 50 percent more likely to be obese than those who were not very poor. Possibly as a consequence of idle time, low rates of education, or as a brief escape from poverty, the poor are also more likely to use drugs and alcohol than the rest of society. In addition, the government study concluded that there is a correlation among poverty, emotional and psychological stress, and health problems such as "compromised immune systems." And, finally, the poor are less likely to have leisure time or engage in some kind of physical activity, which further complicates chronic health conditions and decreases overall quality of life. "6"

Education

Poverty impacts education.⁷⁷ Without a quality education, any individual in the United States will have a difficult time attaining a well-paying job (to say nothing of meaningful work) to generate a steady and reasonable income for themselves and their family. A lack of education not only decreases future employment possibilities, but further adds to the likelihood that an individual and his or her family will remain poor. In 2004, high school dropout rates in the United States were four times higher for the poor than they were for those individuals and families who were not poor. An individual without a high school diploma is three times more likely to be unemployed than someone with a college degree. Adding to

the cycle of poverty, lack of education, and unemployment, someone with a college degree will earn almost 40 percent more in salary than someone without a high school diploma.⁷⁸ Of course, this is significant because, whereas 49 percent of those who are poor are likely to attend college, almost 80 percent of those who come from more well-off back grounds are likely to pursue a college degree and, in turn, be provided with increased life opportunities.

Prison

There is also a strong correlation between poverty and incarceration. After more than 25 years of steady increases, the United States began to see a slight decrease in the size of its prison population in 2008. However, the number of people incarcerated in the United States is still dramatic. According to the Department of Justice, nearly 7 million people are behind bars, on probation, or on parole. Said another way, in 2011, one in every 34 US citizens was subject to some form of correctional supervision. Notably, according to the International Centre for Prison Studies at King's College in London, more people are behind bars in the United States—some 2.2 million people—than any other country in the world. China has four times the population of the United States, but is ranked second behind the United States, with 1.7 million people in jail.

In terms of proportion of the population that is incarcerated, the US is second only to the African island nation of Seychelles, which has a total national population of just 90 thousand people. Fig. 12 In fact, the United States has 5 percent of the global population, but incarcerates 25 percent of the world's prisoners. According to the Pew Center, it costs almost \$30,000 a year to imprison someone in the United States, which is *more than twice* the cost of room, board, and tuition for a year of college at a public university (approximately \$14,300). Remarkably, with state funds on the rise to build new prisons, 11 states—Michigan, Oregon, Arizona, Vermont, Colorado, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Delaware, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Connecticut—spent more on prison than on higher education in 2013. Moreover, some states, such as Georgia, have as many as one of every thirteen adults either behind bars or under "community supervision." In fact, as of 2014, "an estimated 100,000 children and teens are locked up in juvenile facilities across the country, and thousands more are incarcerated in adult prisons."

Race and incarceration in the United States is particularly problematic. According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), 1 in every 106 white males, 1 in every 36 Hispanic males, and 1 in every 15 African American males are behind bars in the United States. African Americans (i.e., black men and women) make up 40 percent of the prison population, even though they compose just 12.6 percent of the total US population. In fact, if incarceration rates continue at their current rates, then one in every three black males in the United States today can expect to serve time in prison during their lifetime. To be certain, today, there are more black men in prison, on probation, or parole than were enslaved in 1850—just over 10 years prior to the Civil War.

On the whole, according to the ACLU, "since 1970 [the] prison population has risen 700 percent." When viewed in combination with the "War on Drugs" (1980s), increased levels of poverty, and stagnant wages since the 1970s, the high level of US citizens incarcerated today should come as no surprise to anyone. More than 2,400 years ago, Plato wrote in *The Republic* that when a nation devolves into a plutocracy, there would be a high level of criminality. There is a high rate of criminality in the United States for a variety of reasons. If we are to believe Plato, and if the United States has a high rate of criminality, then we might ask, "Has it also devolved into a plutocracy?" We hope that the answer to this question has become apparent.

Alienation

The basis for wealth and poverty in a capitalist society is grounded in the control over the means of production. Indeed, whomever controls the commanding heights of the economy has power over much of society. We have already noted how the owning class sets the tone for the whole of society politically and economically. However, ownership by a small group of individuals over the means of production creates one more problem for working people: alienation—which is comprised by a sense of loss, disconnection, estrangement, or feelings of being exploited, disregarded, disrespected, or used. Alienation can occur from oneself, the work process (i.e., the act of working), other workers, or society itself. Alienation manifests itself in a variety of ways in US society and, in fact, all capitalist countries. The most basic cause of alienation is that the vast majority of people in a capitalist economy do not control the workplace or the work process. They are told what to do and how to do it. Workers can be disrespected, underpaid, treated as a number, written up for minor transgressions (such as being late), asked to work through their lunch hour or even overtime without pay, electronically monitored, drug tested, prevented from taking days off for rest, and laid off or fired at any time. And, significantly for understanding alienation in capitalist society, the work that they do is largely meaningless.

Instead, of performing personally fulfilling tasks (or even life-sustaining ones such as hunting, fishing, constructing a family shelter, etc.), working people often spend their time doing low-paid and mind-numbing jobs such as working as a: waitress, construction worker, landscaper, truck driver, factory worker, shoe shiner, miner, baker, coffee seller, janitor, porter, plumber, fence builder, business secretary, track walker, grocery store worker, dishwasher, clothes maker, sales-floor worker, forklift operator, hairdresser, bartender, bookkeeper, dry cleaner, fast-food worker, brick layer, receptionist, operator, street cleaner, security guard, cabinet maker, taxi driver, window cleaner, carpet layer, garbage worker, maid, doorman, bus driver, furniture mover, butcher, painter, concrete pourer, welder, gas station attendant, tree trimmer, locksmith, sewer inspector, road maintenance worker, car washer, and farmworker, to name just a few. Often, the natural rebellious impulses of working people and the poor which have been further stoked by their working conditions are diverted into other meaningless activities such as pop music, movies, video games, and other such things instead of confronting the conditions of the workplace or the political and economic system itself.

The inability to fully express themselves through their work and having their working conditions dictated to them leads to all types of frustrations and problems for working people and the poor. Drug and alcohol abuse, a lack of emotional health or a limited sense of well-being, overeating, extensive TV watching (particularly of the "zoningout" variety), gambling, some types of interpersonal (and intrapersonal) violence, and obsessive involvement in following sports, to name a few issues, can all be viewed as a consequence of people who are unhappy because of their meaningless, unfulfilling, underpaid and often, degrading work. Why? Because the economic system which creates alienation—capitalism—is not interested in developing people for the purpose of their personal happiness, but instead views them as a means to generate super profits for those who own the commanding heights of that economic system. In fact, in a capitalist economy, there is no place for most people to do work that is personally fulfilling, let alone consistent with their very being. Instead, too often, in seeking some kind of release or happiness, working people do so in ultimately destructive outlets that simply further alienate them from themselves and society. In other words, alienation, once set into place, can create individuals who further alienate themselves in an attempt to escape their own alienation.

A Final Comment on Wealth and Poverty in the United States

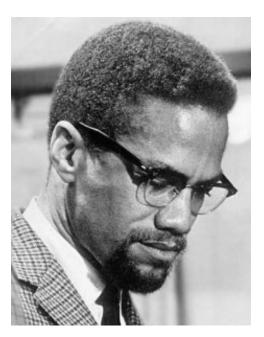
Edward Gibbon concluded in *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* that one of the marks of the decaying culture of ancient Rome was the "widening disparity between very rich and very poor." As we have seen above, the disparity between the rich and poor in the United States is as great now as it has ever been since the "Roaring Twenties." The ever-increasing concentration of wealth during that time period into the hands of the few ultimately gave way to the Wall Street Crash of 1929, which was followed by a long-lasting worldwide Depression. The hardships that came with it were *over-whelmingly* experienced by working people and the poor in the US and around the world. In fact, and maybe most concerning for all, the Great Depression did not relent until the global economy was *reignited* by World War II.



Conclusion

'We declare our right on this Earth to be a human being, to be respected as a human being, to be given the rights of a human being in this society, on this Earth, in this day, which we intend to bring into existence...'

-Malcolm X (African American Civil Rights Leader, 1925–1965)



Malcolm X (circa 1965) (Fair Use)

Malcolm X, the great civil rights leader of the 20th century, spoke these words shortly before his own death. However, for all the wonder, virtues, and possibilities that the United States offers to its people to create better lives for themselves, those prospects are being undermined by powerful economic forces and an economic system that is moving toward its logical conclusion. The economic system and commercial interests have so misshaped the United States government and social order that the very notion of the people of the United States saying they have a "right on this Earth to be a human being" sounds like a revolutionary statement. Yet the truth is that, in a democracy, the people do have the right to "bring into existence" the type of political, economic, and societal arrangement that they so choose. In doing so, they may threaten powerful corporate interests, but after all, it is their right.

15.1 Improving the Lives of the People of the United States

So, what are the problems, and how might they be addressed? In general, the United States would best be served by a serious reform, if not an overturning, of many of its political institutions and its economic

system itself. For instance, the US has one of the most poorly funded government programs for working people and the poor (i.e., the "welfare state") amongst all First World nations. However, even modest reforms would greatly enhance the lives of hundreds of millions of people. For example, the highest virtue of any society should be the education of its citizens. As John F. Kennedy said in his speech at American University, "there are few earthly things more beautiful than a university." Yet, the United States does not educate its college and graduate-level students for free, as does nearly every single First World nation in the world. Notably, "public education" is becoming so expensive in some states that it is beginning to look a lot like "private education." However, with even a

relatively small reduction of \$190 billion from the military budget, the United States could provide \$10,000 a year to each of its 19 million college and graduate-level students—essentially making higher education free. In fact, a reduction of \$190,000 billion would still provide more than \$1 trillion for the defense budget, allowing the United States to continue to outspend second-place China (\$200 billion) by a margin of almost five to one. Yet this is not done because it would cut into the profits of those who benefit from a massive, publicly funded military budget.

In fact, reducing the size of the military budget by, say, 85 percent (which would still allow the United States to outspend second-place China) would improve the lives of not only the people of the United States, but also billions of people around the world. In fact, decommissioning all US nuclear weapons, closing the



The "highest virtue of any society"—education. The University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA (Wikimedia Commons)

US network of bases, and defunding the CIA and NSA would amount to more than just extending an olive branch to people around the world. Indeed, with respect to nuclear weapons, it is literally a question of saving the whole world from the ongoing threat of a nuclear accident, disaster, or war. Closing the 750–1,000 US military bases (and many of the 555,000 military facilities located on more than 5,000 sites around the world) would decrease hostilities toward the United States and possibly even bring about an end to the "War on Terror." Without a doubt, the worldwide military presence of the United States and its exploitative transnational corporations all over the globe is likely fueling terrorism directed at the United States. Finally, defunding the CIA and NSA would result in less violence and more privacy to people all over the world. Bringing into existence a smaller military is not that radical of a step. Many countries have very small militaries, including the First World nation of Iceland, which maintains no standing army at all.

Would defunding the military require a large-scale nationwide conversion of "swords into plowshares?" Of course it would. But that is what would be so great about it. The American people could redesign and redirect funding for their society into all kinds of constructive, healthy, and peaceful programs—such as education, health care, parks, water, infrastructure renewal, free or inexpensive child care, personal development activities, alternative energy, the arts, space exploration, science, reducing or eliminating poverty, increasing wages and pensions for government employees, and providing more recreational time for everyone, to name just a few.

Moreover, the United States is the only First World country that does not have free universal health care but at the same time spends more money on health care than any other country in the world. As stated in Chapter 5, nearly all the money needed for free health care is already in the nation's local, state, and federal budgets. Free health care would dramatically improve the lives of all people in the United States, yet passing a bill to do so has been nearly impossible politically because of the immense power of the health care industry.

So how could universal health care and any of the above issues be brought into existence? One way is by reforming the political system itself. For all voices to truly be heard and the liberal-pluralist conception of political reality to ring true, the United States would need to do two basic things: (1) create a proportional representation voting system, and (2) reform campaign finance laws. The US has a winner-takes-all voting system in which whomever gains 51 percent of the vote wins the election. Proportional representation, on the other hand, provides a percentage of government seats equal to the percentage

of votes that each party receives in a given election, provided that party meets a minimum threshold of votes, such as 1 percent of the total popular vote. For example, if the Libertarian Party or Green Party received 3 percent of the vote in a given Congressional election, then they would receive 3 percent of the seats in Congress—it's simple and more representative than the winner-takes-all voting system.

Campaign finance reform, on the other hand, deals with how elections are funded. The United States allows for private financing of elections. The consequence of that approach today is that the United States has deteriorated into a plutocracy—"rule by the rich." That is to say, whoever has the most money has the most say over government policy. Accordingly, in the United States, government policy reflects the class interests of the wealthiest class—the international bourgeoisie. For all of the American people's voices to be heard, the United States needs to implement public financing of political campaigns. In other words, all candidates would receive the same amount of public money for television commercials, campaign signs, travel, online advertising, and associated expenses, provided that they have won their party's nomination for office. In turn, private money from individuals, corporations, and interest groups would be considered illegal and seen for what it is—bribery. However, this will be difficult, as those that make campaign finance laws—Congress—and determine their constitutionality—the Supreme Court—either benefit from private financing or consider it to be protected "speech." It's a difficult task, but not impossible. In fact, in doing so, the United States could start eliminating all types of problems, as those which have made so much money from their continued existence would no longer have any power over the political arena in which to carry out their personal and "class interests."

What follows is a short list of significant problems that the American people could resolve but are prevented from doing so because the commercial interests that benefit from their continued existence have so much power over the state. For example, the American people could first address the causes of global warming. They are currently prevented from doing so because of the power of the oil and transportation industry. Next, they could bring into existence public health care, which is being stopped by the privatized health-care industry. They could then address the causes of war, which serves transnational corporations of all types. Finally, they could end poverty, which is a natural and logical creation of the economic system itself. Each issue could be left in the hands of the people, rather than the rich, to determine the outcome. In addition, the people could decide if they want to (1) bail out the banks or break them up (Iceland placed its criminal bankers in jail); (2) have a national media owned by just a handful of people or allow all people access to the public airwaves; (3) transition to mass transportation or continue with the existing automobile industry; (4) provide free higher education or allow its costs to increase; and (5) decide whether or not to continue the massive subsidy programs for already immense multinational corporations.

15.2 Bringing an End to 'Rule by the Rich' in the United States

Whatever the case may be, to bring an end to "rule by the rich" in the United States, the American people will need to go one step further and address the root cause of the problems that exist in their political and economic system. The problem is, in a word, capitalism itself. As we have attempted to illustrate throughout the whole of this textbook, the economic system of the United States is structured to benefit a very specific class—the owning class. Today, increasing amounts of wealth are being gathered for those that

own the productive forces of society at the expense of everyone else, *exactly as the system is designed to do*. As wealth has become more concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer people in the US, life has become more difficult for hundreds of millions in the United States and billions more around the globe. Like a game of *Monopoly*, those that already control the commanding heights of the global economy are in a position to buy up more of it—and thereby continue to determine the political, economic, and social character of the whole world. We have identified this prevailing global political and economic philosophy which serves the richest amongst us by taking so much from the people of the world as neoliberalism.

With the already inextricable link between wealth and poverty, the application of neoliberalism has exacerbated the disparity between global wealth and poverty. For instance, almost half of the world's population today lives on just \$2.50 a day.¹ At least 80 percent

of the world's people (or more than 6 billion individuals) live on \$10 a day—or just \$3,650 per year.² In fact, as of 2017, richest eight people in the world have more wealth than the bottom half of humanity *combined*—some 3.9 billion people.³

According to a study by Oxfam, and mirroring the economic reality of the United States itself, approximately one-half of the world's wealth is owned by "just one percent of the population" today,4 with the bottom 50 percent of the world's population owning less than 1 percent of the entire wealth of the entire world.5 Notably, "seven out of ten people live in countries where economic inequality has *increased* in the last 30 years" [italics added],6 contrary to the common notion that the whole world is becoming better off as globalization spreads to more parts of the globe—as argued most prominently by one of the richest people on the planet, Bill Gates.⁷ Furthermore, according to Oxfam's study, "the richest one percent increased their share of income



Pavão-Pavãozinho, a slum in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil (2008) (Wikimedia Commons)

in 24 out of 26 countries," which they studied between 1980 (the most recognized starting point of neo-liberalism) and 2012. Today, the wealth of the richest members of the international owning class have grown to heights almost unrivaled in modern world history. If the richest 1 percent are getting richer, then someone else is getting poorer. In both the United States and throughout the world, that would be everyone else.

In fact, considering the system in terms of consumption, the US has 5 percent of the world's population, but consumes 39 percent of its resources. In other words, if just one other country had 5 percent of the world's population and was consuming 39 percent of the Earth's resources, then that would mean 10 percent of the world's population would be consuming almost 80 percent of the world's resources. This would leave just 20 percent of the world's resources for the remaining 90 percent of the world's population. This is the fine point of it. While capitalism in the United States is working reasonably well for the middle class and well-to-do, it is *absolutely not possible* for the whole world to live like the United States. In fact, it is not even possible for a full *one-half* of the population of the United States to live as well as the middle class or the well-off in the US. So, what must be done?

The answer lies in increased public ownership of the means of production; or, in a word, socialism. Socialism is simply a political and economic theory of social organization which holds that the productive forces of society should be owned and regulated by the whole of the community, through the state, for the benefit of the entire society. That

socialism has become a "bad word" in the United States reveals which class has real power in the country. A publicly owned economy (or socialism) is simply matching political democracy with economic democracy. Economic socialism—deeply rooted in the whole notion of equality—is the last remaining ideal of the Enlightenment, which is in need of mass recognition. Political equality was a meaningful step in the advancement of all human beings, yet before the Enlightenment can be brought into its fullest expression, all human beings of all nations must take this last step toward economic equality.

We shouldn't think of public ownership of the means of production as something that is totally new or foreign to the United States. The local police department, the fire department, K-12 education, and the largest employer in the world—the United States military—are all publicly owned (socialist) institutions. That is to say, the people of the United States own them for their benefit. Indeed, Albert Einstein explained why he believed some form of public ownership was necessary in his famous article "Why Socialism?" With an argument as relevant today as when it was first penned in 1949, Einstein pointed out that "private capital tends to become concentrated in few hands... the result of [which] is an oligarchy of private capital the enormous power of which cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organized political society." Instead, he argued, that some type of economic democracy is needed to ensure the existence of political democracy for the advancement and betterment of society. To be sure, Einstein explained that "the real purpose of socialism is precisely to overcome and advance beyond the predatory phase of human development" which is the trademark of capitalist society. Importantly, Einstein concluded that socialism, unlike capitalism, "is directed towards a social-ethical end," which is necessary if human society is to develop in a sociopolitical and economically constructive fashion. In other words, a socialist economic system is designed to benefit the whole of society, not just those who control the commanding heights of the economy. Capitalism's historical inability to provide for society in a "social-ethical" manner is why it creates so many problems for so many people throughout the world.

Nonetheless, in the US today, the economic system is arranged along hierarchical, authoritarian lines for the benefit of those who own the economy. An economic system owned by the people would benefit the whole of the nation's population. Would an economic system organized along those lines result in the rich losing their wealth? Yes, but who really cares, particularly when the source of their wealth is the people of the United States and, in fact, nearly all of the world's people? We might think that an economic system based on justice, fairness, equality, and democracy is simply a "fantasy," a "nice idea," or "too difficult to create." However, there are over a hundred separate examples in the United States in which people have organized their workplaces along socialist lines. For instance, in noting a few examples just within the San Francisco Bay Area in California, workers collaborate on what to produce and share equally in the profits at:

- » The Berkeley Free Clinic: Located in Berkeley, California, the clinic is a workerrun collective with over 100 volunteers and has provided free medical and dental care since 1969.
- » Rainbow Grocery Cooperative: The grocery store is a worker-owned and worker-managed food collective located in San Francisco, California that was established in 1971.
- » The Cheese Board Collective: Located in Berkeley, California, the bakery is an egalitarian, worker-owned collective that was founded in 1971. The company distributes shares in the business equally and equalizes the wages of all new worker-owners.

- » AK Press: The publishing house is primarily an online company with one traditional office located in Oakland, CA. It is a worker-owned and operated publisher and book distributor, and was established in 1987. AK Press has published the works of Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn (1922–2010), and Arundhati Roy (1961–present), among others.
- » Arizmendi Bakeries: The bakery was formed in 1997 and has locations in San Francisco, Berkeley, Emeryville, San Rafael, and Oakland, California. They are a worker-owned collective and were voted the "best bakery" by the East Bay Express in 2011.

Each of the above worker-owned businesses are members of The Network of Bay Area Worker Cooperatives (also known as the NoBAWC, or "No Boss" network), which was established in 1994. The network is a collection of worker cooperatives dedicated to building workplace democracy in the San Francisco Bay Area. Other members include BioFuel Oasis, Bound Together Bookstore, Box Dog Bikes, City Art Gallery, Cricket Courier Cooperative, the Cupid Courier Collective, the Design Action Collective, Electric Embers, Heartwood Cooperative Woodshop, Inkworks Press, Juice Bar Collective, Liberation Ink, Lusty Lady, Mandela Foods Cooperative, Market Street Cooperative, Missing Link Bicycle Cooperative, Modern Times Bookstore, Nabolom Bakery, the 924 Gilman Street Project, Other Avenues Food Store, Pedal Express, Points of Distribution, Rainbow Grocery Cooperative, Red Vic Movie House, Rock Paper Scissors Collective, San Francisco Community Colocation Project, Suigetsukan Martial Arts School, and the TechCollective.

Outside the United States, we have witnessed *whole nations* making attempts to address the needs of their people by moving the whole of their political and economic system toward socialism. For instance, to one degree or another, public ownership of the means of production and political equality has been sought in Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Chile (as well as other South American countries in recent years), Laos, and Vietnam. At other times, while not creating an outright socialist system, other nations have instead created extensive social welfare programs and have nationalized key industrial centers, making them work for the benefit of the people in, for example, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Canada, Sweden, Norway, Ireland, New Zealand, and Belgium. Thus, instead of just being a "nice idea," socialism—the public control of the productive forces and equality in the political arena—is actively being pursued by hundreds of millions of people around the word.

How will any of this be done in the United States? It will be done as it always has been accomplished throughout history—by the people. The people have always played the key role in moving society forward, whether it was the slave Spartacus (109 BC-71 BC) leading a slave rebellion against the Roman Republic; Haitian slaves rising up against their colonial masters during the Haitian Revolution; the working class of France overturning the aristocracy during the French Revolution; workers in Russia overthrowing and executing the fabulously wealthy and autocratic tsar of Russia, Nicholas II (1868-1918), during the Russian Revolution; the movement for Irish statehood organized and led by Michael Collins (1890-1922) and Eamon de Valera (1882-1975), which included their war for independence against the British (1919-1921); the Cuban people pushing the corrupt US-backed military dictator Bautista from power during the Cuban Revolution; or attempts by the American people to create a more just, equal, and democratic political, economic, and social order throughout their history. Yet, as has also been demonstrated throughout history, when popular movements and leaders confront powerful forces, those



Michael Collins, Founder of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and leader of the Irish Independence Movement (Wikimedia Commons)

forces have almost the whole power of the state, national economy, and established social structure with which to respond. Without a doubt, too often those that have opposed the rule of the rich and powerful throughout history have paid a heavy price for their willingness to do so. Still, they have opposed the class rule of the privileged few not out of greed but instead out of a want of ending the inequalities and injustices that come with it. Dr. Salvador Allende and the nation of Chile are a case in point.

As mentioned in Chapter 6, in 1970 Allende became the first socialist leader to be democratically elected to his nation's highest office in the history of the world. During the first three years of his rule, this forward-thinking president and his government attempted to move nearly the whole of the Chilean political and economic system into the hands of Chile's working class. After much success, by early September of 1973 the Chilean oligarchs and key members of the American ruling class had had enough. Daring



President Salvador Allende making his "last stand" as the Chilean Air Force bombs the presidential palace, La Moneda, on September 11, 1973 (Luis Orlando Lagos)

to call themselves patriots, and with the full support of the United States government and many of Chile's rich, a clique of Chilean generals and admirals overthrew the Allende government. The events that followed made up one of the most tragic chapter's written in the history of democracy during the twentieth century. Indeed, the future military junta which formed in close alliance with the United States government ordered the Chilean Air Force to bomb La Moneda—Chile's White House—with Allende and members of his government still inside. In his final hours and with no way out, Allende ultimately paid for the defense of his new conception of government and society with his life. Faced with being bombed to death or captured and possibly murdered by what would become the Pinochet regime, Allende chose neither to be killed nor to fall into the hands of Pinochet and his treasonous-minded generals. In his final radio address. Allende made the class dimensions of his nation

clear. And he offered hope for the new formulation of Chilean society that he and Chile's working class were trying to bring into existence. Indeed, in his closing remarks to the people of Chile and just moments before his own death Allende exclaimed, "Other men will overcome this dark and bitter moment when treason seeks to prevail...[and] much sooner than later, the great avenues will again be opened through which will pass free men to construct a better society. Long live Chile! Long live the people! Long live the workers!"

After the coup and Allende's death, and fully reinforced by the United States government, the military junta allowed Chile's rich and the American owning class to regain control of industries and factories that had been nationalized by Chilean workers and the state just a few years before. The reorganizing of Chile's economy along neoliberal lines was done while the Pinochet government tortured, imprisoned, drove into exile, murdered, and "disappeared," hundreds of thousands of Chileans in a brutal wave of state terror that lasted nearly two decades. In destroying this once promising socialist-democracy and violating all the basic tenets of democratic government itself, the US and Chilean owning class made it clear that when their class power was threatened, they would use violence and unconstitutional measures to restore their class privilege atop the socio-political and economic order. While Pinochet's time in power eventually came to an end and he was later indicted for hundreds of human rights violations (though he was likely guilty of thousands more), his dark legacy remains of introducing "the gun" into Chilean politics to resolve the class conflicts that are so elementary to the system of capitalism and capital accumulation on behalf of the rich and powerful.

While Allende's government was collapsing in Chile, the Black Panthers were trying to make things better for black people in the United States by providing free breakfasts, free health care, improved education, and a variety of other social programs to the black urban poor. The government (i.e., the FBI and the local police departments) responded by infiltrating the organization and creating dissent within the group. They firebombed and raided the Black Panthers' national headquarters and regional offices, and even outright murdered some of its leaders. Most famously, the Chicago police shot the young Black Panther leader Fred Hampton (1948–1969) multiple times while he slept, with the last two shots being fired at point-blank range—execution style—into his head.¹⁰

At other times in US history, economically powerful individuals have pursued plans to overthrow the United States government when it was viewed as not properly serving corporate power. For example, in the so-called "Business Plot," in 1934 Major General Smedley Butler, one of the two most decorated Marines in American history, gave testimony before the United States Congress indicating this. Indeed, he testified that a small coterie of businessmen were trying to put together a scheme to overthrow FDR and put in his place a fascist dictatorship friendlier to commercial interests, 11 and that they had tried to recruit him into their plot. The United States Congress recognized his testimony as credible, but no one was ever brought to trial for treason.

In the end, the great majority of the people of the United States are left with just two choices. They can remain upon the current political and economic path, which will end only in a highly militarized and bankrupt republic which is thoroughly dominated by "the rich" and powerful transnational corporations. Or they can take the first step down the road toward a more just and democratic political, economic, and societal arrangement of their country. Ultimately, bringing an end to "rule by the rich" and confronting the system that makes it possible—global capitalism—does not have to be done all at once. In fact, there is likely no bigger step that can be taken by any one person than simply rejecting any further compromise of their own personal dignity. Without question, collectively, the most important step toward overturning a system predicated on human callousness and greed requires only that the people commit themselves to this basic principle. Otherwise, and in referencing Plato one final time, there is nothing stopping the American republic, which has already devolved into a plutocracy and is recognized as such by even some mainstream scholars, from disintegrating further. Indeed, Plato argued that after first sparking a democratic revolt but later descending into a chaotic political order, a republic will eventually degenerate into a dictatorship—or "rule by the criminal"—in which society would be guided by those exhibiting only the basest of human emotions. 12

Whatever the final outcome, as today turns into tomorrow and future generations begin to write the history of our time, they may look at the natural world that has been ravaged by unrestrained global capitalism and point to Native American culture with its respect for the Earth and ask why it wasn't paid attention to more closely. Or upon considering the horrible conditions created by poverty, they may ask why we did not better follow the example left by Martin Luther King Jr. Or in thinking about the terrible destruction of war that has obliterated the lives of millions of people, they might wonder why we didn't take John F. Kennedy's words about it more seriously when he said, "Mankind must put an end to war or war will put an end to mankind." Or to our horror they may have a more sympathetic view toward people like Ted Kaczynski (1942-present) and his critique of the "techno-industrial system" than the one that we currently possess. In fact, in due time, as global capitalism and an ever-increasing technological-neoliberalism continues its stampede across the globe, creating great wealth but generating planetary-sized concerns, Kaczynski may well someday be viewed more as a modern-day prophet than a historical pariah.¹³ Whatever the case may be, capitalism marches on, with the rich and powerful continuing to provide every reason under the sun why the system that so richly benefits their class is the only one possible and is, irrespective of the evidence to the contrary, beneficial to all.

At last, in opposing the powerful forces that are driving the United States and the world down this suicidal path, the American people will best be served by connecting their struggle with all peoples of the world. After all, the economic system which rips oil from the deserts of Iraq is the same system that strips coal from the mines in West Virginia, wrecking the physical beauty and biosphere of the Earth—all the while paying poverty wages to the many, merely to enrich an already wealthy few. In linking their struggle with all the people of the world, the American people will become aware of not only the mass of humanity standing beside them, but the immense power of their own class. Indeed, they will see that they belong to the biggest and most powerful class in the history of the world: the international working class, a political and economic force that, once awakened, cannot be stopped.

Endnotes

Chapter 1: Introduction

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- 8. Ibid.
- 9. Albert Einstein, "Why Socialism?," *Monthly Review*, May 2009, Volume 01, Issue 01, http://monthlyreview.org/2009/05/01/why-socialism/.
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- 11. See for example: Jules Archer, The Plot to Seize the White House (New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing, 1973).
- 12. See Plato's chapter in Republic entitled "Warped Minds, Warped Societies."
- 13. While Kaczynski's crimes are difficult to excuse under almost any decent line of thought, his logic justifying his actions are very difficult to refute. His writings analyzing global society, whether agreed with or not, are illustrative of a truly sharp mind at work. For examples of his thought and his most complete critique of the whole techno-industrial system, see: Theodore J. Kaczynski, *Technological Slavery: The Collected Writings of Theodore J. Kaczynski* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2010) and Theodore John Kaczynski, *Anti-Tech Revolution: Why and How* (Scottsdale, AZ: Fitch & Madison Publishers, 2015).



Declaration of Independence

IN CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.—Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our Brittish brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

[Column 1]

Georgia:
Button Gwinnett
Lyman Hall
George Walton

[Column 2]
North Carolina:
William Hooper
Joseph Hewes
John Penn

South Carolina: Edward Rutledge Thomas Heyward, Jr. Thomas Lynch, Jr.

Arthur Middleton

[Column 3]
Massachusetts:
John Hancock
Maryland:

Samuel Chase William Paca Thomas Stone

Charles Carroll of Carrollton

Virginia:
George Wythe
Richard Henry Lee
Thomas Jefferson
Benjamin Harrison
Thomas Nelson, Jr.
Francis Lightfoot Lee

[Column 4]
Pennsylvania:
Robert Morris
Benjamin Rush
Benjamin Franklin
John Morton
George Clymer

Carter Braxton

George Clymer
James Smith
George Taylor
James Wilson
George Ross
Delaware:

Caesar Rodney George Read Thomas McKean William Floyd
Philip Livingston
Francis Lewis
Lewis Morris
New Jersey:
Richard Stockton
John Witherspoon
Francis Hopkinson
John Hart
Abraham Clark

[Column 5]

New York:

[Column 6]
New Hampshire:
Josiah Bartlett
William Whipple
Massachusetts:
Samuel Adams
John Adams
Robert Treat Pain

Robert Treat Paine Elbridge Gerry Rhode Island: Stephen Hopkins William Ellery Connecticut:

Roger Sherman
Samuel Huntington
William Williams
Oliver Wolcott
New Hampshire:
Matthew Thornton



Constitution for the United States of America

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

ARTICLE. I.

Section. 1.

All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

Section. 2.

The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.

No Person shall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the Age of twenty five Years, and been seven Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.

Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons [Modified by Amendment XIV]. The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct. The Number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty Thousand, but each State shall have at Least one Representative; and until such enumeration shall be made, the State of New Hampshire shall be entitled to chuse three, Massachusetts eight, Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations one, Connecticut five, New-York six, New Jersey four, Pennsylvania eight, Delaware one, Maryland six, Virginia ten, North Carolina five, South Carolina five, and Georgia three.

When vacancies happen in the Representation from any State, the Executive Authority thereof shall issue Writs of Election to fill such Vacancies.

The House of Representatives shall chuse their Speaker and other Officers; and shall have the sole Power of Impeachment.

Section. 3.

The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof [Modified by Amendment XVII], for six Years; and each Senator shall have one Vote.

Immediately after they shall be assembled in Consequence of the first Election, they shall be divided as equally as may be into three Classes. The Seats of the Senators of the first Class shall be vacated at the Expiration of the second Year, of the second Class at the Expiration of the fourth Year, and of the third Class at the Expiration of the sixth Year, so that one third may be chosen every second Year; and if Vacancies happen by Resignation, or otherwise, during the Recess of the Legislature of any State, the Executive thereof may make temporary Appointments until the next Meeting of the Legislature, which shall then fill such Vacancies [Modified by Amendment XVII].

No Person shall be a Senator who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty Years, and been nine Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State for which he shall be chosen.

The Vice President of the United States shall be President of the Senate, but shall have no Vote, unless they be equally divided.

The Senate shall chuse their other Officers, and also a President pro tempore, in the Absence of the Vice President, or when he shall exercise the Office of President of the United States.

The Senate shall have the sole Power to try all Impeachments. When sitting for that Purpose, they shall be on Oath or Affirmation. When the President of the United States is tried, the Chief Justice shall preside: And no Person shall be convicted without the Concurrence of two thirds of the Members present.

Judgment in Cases of Impeachment shall not extend further than to removal from Office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any Office of honor, Trust or Profit under the United States: but the Party convicted shall nevertheless be liable and subject to Indictment, Trial, Judgment and Punishment, according to Law.

Section. 4.

The Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, except as to the Places of chusing Senators.

The Congress shall assemble at least once in every Year, and such Meeting shall be on the first Monday in December [Modified by Amendment XX], unless they shall by Law appoint a different Day.

Section. 5.

Each House shall be the Judge of the Elections, Returns and Qualifications of its own Members, and a Majority of each shall constitute a Quorum to do Business; but a smaller Number may adjourn from day to day, and may be authorized to compel the Attendance of absent Members, in such Manner, and under such Penalties as each House may provide.

Each House may determine the Rules of its Proceedings, punish its Members for disorderly Behaviour, and, with the Concurrence of two thirds, expel a Member.

Each House shall keep a Journal of its Proceedings, and from time to time publish the same, excepting such Parts as may in their Judgment require Secrecy; and the Yeas and Nays of the Members of either House on any question shall, at the Desire of one fifth of those Present, be entered on the Journal.

Neither House, during the Session of Congress, shall, without the Consent of the other, adjourn for more than three days, nor to any other Place than that in which the two Houses shall be sitting.

Section. 6.

The Senators and Representatives shall receive a Compensation for their Services, to be ascertained by Law, and paid out of the Treasury of the United States. They shall in all Cases, except Treason, Felony and Breach of the Peace, be privileged from Arrest during their Attendance at the Session of their respective Houses, and in going to and returning from the same; and for any Speech or Debate in either House, they shall not be questioned in any other Place.

No Senator or Representative shall, during the Time for which he was elected, be appointed to any civil Office under the Authority of the United States, which shall have been created, or the Emoluments whereof shall have been encreased during such time; and no Person holding any Office under the United States, shall be a Member of either House during his Continuance in Office.

Section. 7.

All Bills for raising Revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives; but the Senate may propose or concur with Amendments as on other Bills.

Every Bill which shall have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate, shall, before it become a Law, be presented to the President of the United States; If he approve he shall sign it, but if not he shall return it, with his Objections to that House in which it shall have originated, who shall enter the Objections at large on their Journal, and proceed to reconsider it. If after such Reconsideration two thirds of that House shall agree to pass the Bill, it shall be sent, together with the Objections, to the other House, by which it shall likewise be reconsidered, and if approved by two thirds of that House, it shall become a Law. But in all such Cases the Votes of both Houses shall be determined by yeas and Nays, and the Names of the Persons voting for and against the Bill shall be entered on the Journal of each House respectively. If any Bill shall not be returned by the President within ten Days (Sundays excepted) after it shall have been presented to him, the Same shall be a Law, in like Manner as if he had signed it, unless the Congress by their Adjournment prevent its Return, in which Case it shall not be a Law.

Every Order, Resolution, or Vote to which the Concurrence of the Senate and House of Representatives may be necessary (except on a question of Adjournment) shall be presented to the President of the United States; and before the Same shall take Effect, shall be approved by him, or being disapproved by him, shall be repassed by two thirds of the Senate and House of Representatives, according to the Rules and Limitations prescribed in the Case of a Bill.

Section. 8.

The Congress shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States; but all Duties, Imposts and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States;

To borrow Money on the credit of the United States;

To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes;

To establish an uniform Rule of Naturalization, and uniform Laws on the subject of Bankruptcies throughout the United States;

To coin Money, regulate the Value thereof, and of foreign Coin, and fix the Standard of Weights and Measures;

To provide for the Punishment of counterfeiting the Securities and current Coin of the United States:

To establish Post Offices and post Roads;

To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries;

To constitute Tribunals inferior to the Supreme Court;

To define and punish Piracies and Felonies committed on the high Seas, and Offences against the Law of Nations;

To declare War, grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal, and make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water;

To raise and support Armies, but no Appropriation of Money to that Use shall be for a longer Term than two Years;

To provide and maintain a Navy;

To make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces;

To provide for calling forth the Militia to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections and repel Invasions;

To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining, the Militia, and for governing such Part of them as may be employed in the Service of the United States, reserving to the States respectively, the Appointment of the Officers, and the Authority of training the Militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress;

To exercise exclusive Legislation in all Cases whatsoever, over such District (not exceeding ten Miles square) as may, by Cession of particular States, and the Acceptance of Congress, become the Seat of the Government of the United States, and to exercise like Authority over all Places purchased by the Consent of the Legislature of the State in which the Same shall be, for the Erection of Forts, Magazines, Arsenals, dock-Yards, and other needful Buildings; —And

To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.

Section. 9.

The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a Tax or duty may be imposed on such Importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person.

The Privilege of the Writ of Habeas Corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in Cases of Rebellion or Invasion the public Safety may require it.

No Bill of Attainder or ex post facto Law shall be passed.

No Capitation, or other direct, Tax shall be laid, unless in Proportion to the Census or Enumeration herein before directed to be taken [Modified by Amendment XVI].

No Tax or Duty shall be laid on Articles exported from any State.

No Preference shall be given by any Regulation of Commerce or Revenue to the Ports of one State over those of another; nor shall Vessels bound to, or from, one State, be obliged to enter, clear, or pay Duties in another.

No Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law; and a regular Statement and Account of the Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be published from time to time.

No Title of Nobility shall be granted by the United States: And no Person holding any Office of Profit or Trust under them, shall, without the Consent of the Congress, accept of any present, Emolument, Office, or Title, of any kind whatever, from any King, Prince, or foreign State.

Section. 10.

No State shall enter into any Treaty, Alliance, or Confederation; grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal; coin Money; emit Bills of Credit; make any Thing but gold and silver Coin a Tender in Payment of Debts; pass any Bill of Attainder, ex post facto Law, or Law impairing the Obligation of Contracts, or grant any Title of Nobility.

No State shall, without the Consent of the Congress, lay any Imposts or Duties on Imports or Exports, except what may be absolutely necessary for executing it's inspection Laws; and the net Produce of all Duties and Imposts, laid by any State on Imports or Exports, shall be for the Use of the Treasury of the United States; and all such Laws shall be subject to the Revision and Controul of the Congress.

No State shall, without the Consent of Congress, lay any Duty of Tonnage, keep Troops, or Ships of War in time of Peace, enter into any Agreement or Compact with another State, or with a foreign Power, or engage in War, unless actually invaded, or in such imminent Danger as will not admit of delay.

ARTICLE. II.

Section. 1.

The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America. He shall hold his Office during the Term of four Years, and, together with the Vice President, chosen for the same Term, be elected, as follows:

Each State shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors, equal to the whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled in the Congress: but no Senator or Representative, or Person holding an Office of Trust or Profit under the United States, shall be appointed an Elector.

The Electors shall meet in their respective States, and vote by Ballot for two Persons, of whom one at least shall not be an Inhabitant of the same State with themselves. And they shall make a List of all the Persons voted for, and of the Number of Votes for each; which List they shall sign and certify, and transmit sealed to the Seat of the Government of the United States, directed to the President of the Senate. The President of the Senate shall, in the Presence of the Senate and House of Representatives, open all the Certificates, and the Votes shall then be counted. The Person having the greatest Number of Votes shall be the President, if such Number be a Majority of the whole Number of Electors appointed; and if there be more than one who have such Majority, and have an equal Number of

Votes, then the House of Representatives shall immediately chuse by Ballot one of them for President; and if no Person have a Majority, then from the five highest on the List the said House shall in like Manner chuse the President. But in chusing the President, the Votes shall be taken by States, the Representation from each State having one Vote; a quorum for this Purpose shall consist of a Member or Members from two thirds of the States, and a Majority of all the States shall be necessary to a Choice. In every Case, after the Choice of the President, the Person having the greatest Number of Votes of the Electors shall be the Vice President. But if there should remain two or more who have equal Votes, the Senate shall chuse from them by Ballot the Vice President [Modified by Amendment XII].

The Congress may determine the Time of chusing the Electors, and the Day on which they shall give their Votes; which Day shall be the same throughout the United States.

No Person except a natural born Citizen, or a Citizen of the United States, at the time of the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the Office of President; neither shall any Person be eligible to that Office who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty five Years, and been fourteen Years a Resident within the United States.

In Case of the Removal of the President from Office, or of his Death, Resignation, or Inability to discharge the Powers and Duties of the said Office, the Same shall devolve on the Vice President, and the Congress may by Law provide for the Case of Removal, Death, Resignation or Inability, both of the President and Vice President, declaring what Officer shall then act as President, and such Officer shall act accordingly, until the Disability be removed, or a President shall be elected [Modified by Amendment XXV].

The President shall, at stated Times, receive for his Services, a Compensation, which shall neither be increased nor diminished during the Period for which he shall have been elected, and he shall not receive within that Period any other Emolument from the United States, or any of them.

Before he enter on the Execution of his Office, he shall take the following Oath or Affirmation:—"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

Section. 2.

The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States, when called into the actual Service of the United States; he may require the Opinion, in writing, of the principal Officer in each of the executive Departments, upon any Subject relating to the Duties of their respective Offices, and he shall have Power to grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offences against the United States, except in Cases of Impeachment.

He shall have Power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties, provided two thirds of the Senators present concur; and he shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the supreme Court, and all other Officers of the United States, whose Appointments are not herein otherwise provided for, and which shall be established by Law: but the Congress may by Law vest the Appointment of such inferior Officers, as they think proper, in the President alone, in the Courts of Law, or in the Heads of Departments.

The President shall have Power to fill up all Vacancies that may happen during the Recess of the Senate, by granting Commissions which shall expire at the End of their next Session.

Section. 3.

He shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient; he may, on extraordinary Occasions, convene both Houses, or either of them, and in Case of Disagreement between them, with Respect to the Time of Adjournment, he may adjourn them to such Time as he shall think proper; he shall receive Ambassadors and other public Ministers; he shall take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed, and shall Commission all the Officers of the United States.

Section, 4.

The President, Vice President and all civil Officers of the United States, shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors.

ARTICLE. III.

Section. 1.

The judicial Power of the United States shall be vested in one supreme Court, and in such inferior Courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish. The Judges, both of the supreme and inferior Courts, shall hold their Offices during good Behaviour, and shall, at stated Times, receive for their Services a Compensation, which shall not be diminished during their Continuance in Office.

Section. 2.

The judicial Power shall extend to all Cases, in Law and Equity, arising under this Constitution, the Laws of the United States, and Treaties made, or which shall be made, under their Authority;—to all Cases affecting Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls;—to all Cases of admiralty and maritime Jurisdiction;—to Controversies to which the United States shall be a Party;—to Controversies between two or more States;—between a State and Citizens of another State [Modified by Amendment XI],—between Citizens of different States,—between Citizens of the same State claiming Lands under Grants of different States, and between a State, or the Citizens thereof, and foreign States, Citizens or Subjects.

In all Cases affecting Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, and those in which a State shall be Party, the supreme Court shall have original Jurisdiction. In all the other Cases before mentioned, the supreme Court shall have appellate Jurisdiction, both as to Law and Fact, with such Exceptions, and under such Regulations as the Congress shall make.

The Trial of all Crimes, except in Cases of Impeachment, shall be by Jury; and such Trial shall be held in the State where the said Crimes shall have been committed; but when not committed within any State, the Trial shall be at such Place or Places as the Congress may by Law have directed.

Section. 3.

Treason against the United States shall consist only in levying War against them, or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort. No Person shall be convicted of Treason unless on the Testimony of two Witnesses to the same overt Act, or on Confession in open Court.

The Congress shall have Power to declare the Punishment of Treason, but no Attainder of Treason shall work Corruption of Blood, or Forfeiture except during the Life of the Person attainted.

ARTICLE. IV.

Section. 1.

Full Faith and Credit shall be given in each State to the public Acts, Records, and judicial Proceedings of every other State. And the Congress may by general Laws prescribe the Manner in which such Acts, Records and Proceedings shall be proved, and the Effect thereof.

Section. 2.

The Citizens of each State shall be entitled to all Privileges and Immunities of Citizens in the several States.

A Person charged in any State with Treason, Felony, or other Crime, who shall flee from Justice, and be found in another State, shall on Demand of the executive Authority of the State from which he fled, be delivered up, to be removed to the State having Jurisdiction of the Crime.

No Person held to Service or Labour in one State, under the Laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in Consequence of any Law or Regulation therein, be discharged from such Service or Labour, but shall be delivered up on Claim of the Party to whom such Service or Labour may be due [Modified by Amendment XIII].

Section. 3.

New States may be admitted by the Congress into this Union; but no new State shall be formed or erected within the Jurisdiction of any other State; nor any State be formed by the Junction of two or more States, or Parts of States, without the Consent of the Legislatures of the States concerned as well as of the Congress.

The Congress shall have Power to dispose of and make all needful Rules and Regulations respecting the Territory or other Property belonging to the United States; and nothing in this Constitution shall be so construed as to Prejudice any Claims of the United States, or of any particular State.

Section. 4.

The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government, and shall protect each of them against Invasion; and on Application of the Legislature, or of the Executive (when the Legislature cannot be convened), against domestic Violence.

ARTICLE. V.

The Congress, whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments to this Constitution, or, on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments, which, in either Case, shall be valid to all Intents and Purposes, as Part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by Conventions in three fourths thereof, as the one or the other Mode of Ratification may be proposed by the Congress; Provided that no Amendment which may be made prior to the Year One thousand eight hundred and eight shall in any Manner affect the first and fourth Clauses in the Ninth Section of the first Article; and that no State, without its Consent, shall be deprived of its equal Suffrage in the Senate [Possibly abrogated by Amendment XVII].

ARTICLE. VI.

All Debts contracted and Engagements entered into, before the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be as valid against the United States under this Constitution, as under the Confederation.

This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding.

The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.

ARTICLE. VII.

The Ratification of the Conventions of nine States, shall be sufficient for the Establishment of this Constitution between the States so ratifying the Same.

The Word, "the," being interlined between the seventh and eighth Lines of the first Page, The Word "Thirty" being partly written on an Erazure in the fifteenth Line of the first Page, The Words "is tried" being interlined between the thirty second and thirty third Lines of the first Page and the Word "the" being interlined between the forty third and forty fourth Lines of the second Page.

Attest William Jackson Secretary

done in Convention by the Unanimous Consent of the States present the Seventeenth Day of September in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and Eighty seven and of the Independence of the United States of America the Twelfth In witness whereof We have hereunto subscribed our Names,

Go. Washington
Presidt and deputy from Virginia

Delaware

Geo: Read Gunning Bedford Jun John Dickinson Richard Bassett

Jaco: Broom

Maryland
James Mchenry

Dan of St Thos. Jenifer

Danl. Carroll

Virginia John Blair

James Madison Jr.

North Carolina Wm. Blount

Richd. Dobbs Spaight Hu Williamson

South Carolina

J. Rutledge

Charles Cotesworth Pinckney

Charles Pinckney Pierce Butler

Georgia

William Few Abr Baldwin

New Hampshire

John Langdon Nicholas Gilman

Massachusetts

Nathaniel Gorham

Rufus King

Connecticut

Wm. Saml. Johnson Roger Sherman **New York** Alexander Hamilton

New Jersey
Wil: Livingston
David Brearley.
Wm. Paterson.
Jona: Dayton

Pennsylvania
B Franklin
Thomas Mifflin
Robt Morris
Geo. Clymer
Thos. Fitz Simons
Jared Ingersoll
James Wilson
Gouv Morris

In Convention Monday, September 17th, 1787.

Present

The States of

New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, MR. Hamilton from New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.

Resolved,

That the preceeding Constitution be laid before the United States in Congress assembled, and that it is the Opinion of this Convention, that it should afterwards be submitted to a Convention of Delegates, chosen in each State by the People thereof, under the Recommendation of its Legislature, for their Assent and Ratification; and that each Convention assenting to, and ratifying the Same, should give Notice thereof to the United States in Congress assembled. Resolved, That it is the Opinion of this Convention, that as soon as the Conventions of nine States shall have ratified this Constitution, the United States in Congress assembled should fix a Day on which Electors should be appointed by the States which have ratified the same, and a Day on which the Electors should assemble to vote for the President, and the Time and Place for commencing Proceedings under this Constitution. That after such Publication the Electors should be appointed, and the Senators and Representatives elected: That the Electors should meet on the Day fixed for the Election of the President, and should transmit their Votes certified, signed, sealed and directed, as the Constitution requires, to the Secretary of the United States in Congress assembled, that the Senators and Representatives should convene at the Time and Place assigned; that the Senators should appoint a President of the Senate, for the sole purpose of receiving, opening and counting the Votes for President; and, that after he shall be chosen, the Congress, together with the President, should, without Delay, proceed to execute this Constitution.

By the Unanimous Order of the Convention

Go. Washington — Presidt. W. Jackson Secretary.



The Bill of Rights

Congress of the United States begun and held at the City of New-York, on Wednesday the fourth of March, one thousand seven hundred and eighty nine.

THE Conventions of a number of the States, having at the time of their adopting the Constitution, expressed a desire, in order to prevent misconstruction or abuse of its powers, that further declaratory and restrictive clauses should be added: And as extending the ground of public confidence in the Government, will best ensure the beneficent ends of its institution.

RESOLVED by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, two thirds of both Houses concurring, that the following Articles be proposed to the Legislatures of the several States, as amendments to the Constitution of the United States, all, or any of which Articles, when ratified by three fourths of the said Legislatures, to be valid to all intents and purposes, as part of the said Constitution; viz.

ARTICLES in addition to, and Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America, proposed by Congress, and ratified by the Legislatures of the several States, pursuant to the fifth Article of the original Constitution.

AMENDMENT I

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

AMENDMENT II

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

AMENDMENT III

No Soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

AMENDMENT IV

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

AMENDMENT V

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

AMENDMENT VI

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defence.

AMENDMENT VII

In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise reexamined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

AMENDMENT VIII

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

AMENDMENT IX

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

AMENDMENT X

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.



Amendments XI-XXVII

AMENDMENT XI—Passed by Congress March 4, 1794. Ratified February 7, 1795.

The Judicial power of the United States shall not be construed to extend to any suit in law or equity, commenced or prosecuted against one of the United States by Citizens of another State, or by Citizens or Subjects of any Foreign State.

AMENDMENT XII—Passed by Congress December 9, 1803. Ratified June 15, 1804.

The Electors shall meet in their respective states and vote by ballot for President and Vice-President, one of whom, at least, shall not be an inhabitant of the same state with themselves; they shall name in their ballots the person voted for as President, and in distinct ballots the person voted for as Vice-President, and they shall make distinct lists of all persons voted for as President, and of all persons voted for as Vice-President, and of the number of votes for each, which lists they shall sign and certify, and transmit sealed to the seat of the government of the United States, directed to the President of the Senate; -- the President of the Senate shall, in the presence of the Senate and House of Representatives, open all the certificates and the votes shall then be counted; -- The person having the greatest number of votes for President, shall be the President, if such number be a majority of the whole number of Electors appointed; and if no person have such majority, then from the persons having the highest numbers not exceeding three on the list of those voted for as President, the House of Representatives shall choose immediately, by ballot, the President. But in choosing the President, the votes shall be taken by states, the representation from each state having one vote; a quorum for this purpose shall consist of a member or members from two-thirds of the states, and a majority of all the states shall be necessary to a choice. [And if the House of Representatives shall not choose a President whenever the right of choice shall devolve upon them, before the fourth day of March next following, then the Vice-President shall act as President, as in case of the death or other constitutional disability of the President. --]* The person having the greatest number of votes as Vice-President, shall be the Vice-President, if such number be a majority of the whole number of Electors appointed, and if no person have a majority, then from the two highest numbers on the list, the Senate shall choose the Vice-President; a quorum for the purpose shall consist of two-thirds of the whole number of Senators, and a majority of the whole number shall be necessary to a choice. But no person constitutionally ineligible to the office of President shall be eligible to that of Vice-President of the United States.

AMENDMENT XIII—Passed by Congress January 31, 1865. Ratified December 6, 1865.

Section 1.

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Section 2.

Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

AMENDMENT XIV—Passed by Congress June 13, 1866. Ratified July 9, 1868.

Section 1.

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Section 2.

Representatives shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State, excluding Indians not taxed. But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice-President of the United States, Representatives in Congress, the Executive and Judicial officers of a State, or the members of the Legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State, being twenty-one years of age,* and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion, or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such State.

Section 3.

No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President and Vice-President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States, or as a member of any State legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any State, to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof. But Congress may by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability.

Section 4.

The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law, including debts incurred for payment of pensions and bounties for services in suppressing insurrection or rebellion, shall not be questioned. But neither the United States nor any State shall assume or pay any debt or obligation incurred in aid of insurrection or rebellion against the United States, or any claim for the loss or emancipation of any slave; but all such debts, obligations and claims shall be held illegal and void.

Section 5.

The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

AMENDMENT XV—Passed by Congress February 26, 1869. Ratified February 3, 1870.

Section 1.

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude—

Section 2.

The Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

AMENDMENT XVI—Passed by Congress July 2, 1909. Ratified February 3, 1913.

The Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes on incomes, from whatever source derived, without apportionment among the several States, and without regard to any census or enumeration.

AMENDMENT XVII—Passed by Congress May 13, 1912. Ratified April 8, 1913.

The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, elected by the people thereof, for six years; and each Senator shall have one vote. The electors in each State shall have the qualifications requisite for electors of the most numerous branch of the State legislatures.

When vacancies happen in the representation of any State in the Senate, the executive authority of such State shall issue writs of election to fill such vacancies: Provided, That the legislature of any State may empower the executive thereof to make temporary appointments until the people fill the vacancies by election as the legislature may direct.

This amendment shall not be so construed as to affect the election or term of any Senator chosen before it becomes valid as part of the Constitution.

AMENDMENT XVIII—Passed by Congress December 18, 1917. Ratified January 16, 1919. Repealed by amendment 21.

Section 1.

After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.

Section 2.

The Congress and the several States shall have concurrent power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Section 3.

This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislatures of the several States, as provided in the Constitution, within seven years from the date of the submission hereof to the States by the Congress.

AMENDMENT XIX—Passed by Congress June 4, 1919. Ratified August 18, 1920.

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

AMENDMENT XX—Passed by Congress March 2, 1932. Ratified January 23, 1933.

Section 1.

The terms of the President and the Vice President shall end at noon on the 20th day of January, and the terms of Senators and Representatives at noon on the 3d day of January, of the years in which such terms would have ended if this article had not been ratified; and the terms of their successors shall then begin.

Section 2.

The Congress shall assemble at least once in every year, and such meeting shall begin at noon on the 3d day of January, unless they shall by law appoint a different day.

Section 3.

If, at the time fixed for the beginning of the term of the President, the President elect shall have died, the Vice President elect shall become President. If a President shall not have been chosen before the time fixed for the beginning of his term, or if the President elect shall have failed to qualify, then the Vice President elect shall act as President until a President shall have qualified; and the Congress may by law provide for the case wherein neither a President elect nor a Vice President shall have qualified, declaring who shall then act as President, or the manner in which one who is to act shall be selected, and such person shall act accordingly until a President or Vice President shall have qualified.

Section 4.

The Congress may by law provide for the case of the death of any of the persons from whom the House of Representatives may choose a President whenever the right of choice shall have devolved upon them, and for the case of the death of any of the persons from whom the Senate may choose a Vice President whenever the right of choice shall have devolved upon them.

Section 5.

Sections 1 and 2 shall take effect on the 15th day of October following the ratification of this article.

Section 6.

This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several States within seven years from the date of its submission.

AMENDMENT XXI—Passed by Congress February 20, 1933. Ratified December 5, 1933.

Section 1.

The eighteenth article of amendment to the Constitution of the United States is hereby repealed.

Section 2.

The transportation or importation into any State, Territory, or Possession of the United States for delivery or use therein of intoxicating liquors, in violation of the laws thereof, is hereby prohibited.

Section 3.

This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by conventions in the several States, as provided in the Constitution, within seven years from the date of the submission hereof to the States by the Congress.

AMENDMENT XXII—Passed by Congress March 21, 1947. Ratified February 27, 1951.

Section 1.

No person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice, and no person who has held the office of President, or acted as President, for more than two years of a term to which some other person was elected President shall be elected to the office of President more than once. But this Article shall not apply to any person holding the office of President when this Article was proposed by Congress, and shall not prevent any person who may be holding the office of President, or acting as President, during the term within which this Article becomes operative from holding the office of President or acting as President during the remainder of such term.

Section 2.

This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several States within seven years from the date of its submission to the States by the Congress.

AMENDMENT XXIII—Passed by Congress June 16, 1960. Ratified March 29, 1961.

Section 1.

The District constituting the seat of Government of the United States shall appoint in such manner as Congress may direct:

A number of electors of President and Vice President equal to the whole number of Senators and Representatives in Congress to which the District would be entitled if it were a State, but in no event more than the least populous State; they shall be in addition to those appointed by the States, but they shall be considered, for the purposes of the election of President and Vice President, to be electors appointed by a State; and they shall meet in the District and perform such duties as provided by the twelfth article of amendment.

Section 2.

The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

AMENDMENT XXIV—Passed by Congress August 27, 1962. Ratified January 23, 1964.

Section 1.

The right of citizens of the United States to vote in any primary or other election for President or Vice President, for electors for President or Vice President, or for Senator or Representative in Congress, shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State by reason of failure to pay poll tax or other tax.

Section 2.

The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

AMENDMENT XXV—Passed by Congress July 6, 1965. Ratified February 10, 1967.

Section 1.

In case of the removal of the President from office or of his death or resignation, the Vice President shall become President.

Section 2.

Whenever there is a vacancy in the office of the Vice President, the President shall nominate a Vice President who shall take office upon confirmation by a majority vote of both Houses of Congress.

Section 3.

Whenever the President transmits to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives his written declaration that he is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, and until he transmits to them a written declaration to the contrary, such powers and duties shall be discharged by the Vice President as Acting President.

Section 4.

Whenever the Vice President and a majority of either the principal officers of the executive departments or of such other body as Congress may by law provide, transmit to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives their written declaration that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Vice President shall immediately assume the powers and duties of the office as Acting President.

Thereafter, when the President transmits to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives his written declaration that no inability exists, he shall resume the powers and duties of his office unless the Vice President and a majority of either the principal officers of the executive department or of such other body as Congress may by law provide, transmit within four days to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives their written declaration that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office. Thereupon Congress shall decide the issue, assembling within forty-eight hours for that purpose if not in session. If the Congress, within twenty-one days after receipt of the latter written declaration, or, if Congress is not in session, within twenty-one days after Congress is required to assemble, determines by two-thirds vote of both Houses that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Vice President shall continue to discharge the same as Acting President; otherwise, the President shall resume the powers and duties of his office.

AMENDMENT XXVI—Passed by Congress March 23, 1971. Ratified July 1, 1971.

Section 1.

The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age.

Section 2.

The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

AMENDMENT XXVII—Originally proposed Sept. 25, 1789. Ratified May 7, 1992.

No law, varying the compensation for the services of the Senators and Representatives, shall take effect, until an election of representatives shall have intervened.

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