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## ***The Green New Deal, Capitalism and the State***

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was created by Richard Nixon in 1970 as the official response to the nascent environmental movement. As laid out in the recently released Poison Papers, it was structured to be dependent on research from private firms that were paid by the chemical producers it regulates. Given the limited market for this research, these firms either produced research conducive to the interests of their customers or they went out of business.

The EPA quickly became one of the first of the revolving door agencies in which regulators served time before moving on to the big paychecks in the private sector. This served two purposes. (1) it provided political cover for capitalist enterprise through the appearance of environmental regulation and (2) it created ‘the rules’ by which said regulation could be gamed. My town’s water supply was poisoned in full compliance with EPA regulations.

Unbeknownst to most Americans, the nation’s forests were clear-cut from coast to coast in the mid-late nineteenth century. Photographs from the era show denuded landscapes—no trees, no animals, and streams still poisoned from the runoff in the present, for as far as the eye can see. The scars from nineteenth and twentieth century strip mining in Pennsylvania draw direct geographical and historical lines to the mountaintop removal that is taking place in West Virginia today.

	<b><u>% of S&amp;P 500</u></b>
<b><i>Information Technology</i></b>	16.70%
<b><i>Financials</i></b>	16.20%
<b><i>Healthcare</i></b>	12.35%
<b><i>Consumer Discretionary</i></b>	10.68%
<b><i>Communication Services</i></b>	10.40%
<b><i>Industrials</i></b>	8.94%
<b><i>Energy</i></b>	7.90%
<b><i>Consumer Staples</i></b>	6.94%
<b><i>Materials</i></b>	4.16%
<b><i>Utilities</i></b>	2.99%
<b><i>Real Estate</i></b>	2.75%

Chart: This is what America does. Information Technology has been weaponized to be a tool of official power. Finance has been weaponized to be a tool of official power. Healthcare has been weaponized to be a tool of official power. Domination and control are what American capitalism does. Source: S&P.

These natural resources produced the bounty of American capitalism every bit as much as the manufacturing prowess of the Second Industrial Revolution. In turn, this combination of low-cost resources, manufacturing prowess and natural borders (the oceans) produced the military might that defines America in the present. The logic of weapons and weaponry pervades American capitalism. Death and destruction, domination and control, are what America does.

The thought that these resources were ever ‘free’ illustrates the power of ideology. With a body count of at least one-hundred million human beings— including genocide against the indigenous population, murdered slaves, coal miners in Appalachia who died from black lung disease, mill workers in Massachusetts and North and South Carolina who died from inhaling cotton fibers, and those killed in American wars for resources, the human toll of American capitalism is staggering.

Of relevance is that it isn’t possible to dissociate this logic of exploitation from its consequences. Historical memory persists through the insistence that that which produced untenable outcomes is now their only conceivable solution. The intersection of corporate

and state power exists in the present because of an incapacity to escape the logic that produced it. American wars for resources never ended. ‘The economy’ is a tool of war. The U.S. Army explains this logic [here](#).

In the present, the introduction of a Green New Deal as a nonbinding resolution, rather than the creation of a select congressional committee, clarifies the political form of official resistance to environmental resolution. The public pronouncement itself is a call to arms, implying both that the need for environmental resolution is urgent and that it won’t be led from above. Its authors were right to take their case to the people, from whom something akin to a revolutionary movement is required.

Complaints over its limited scope miss that until there is such a movement, little progress toward environmental resolution will be made. Current [bipartisan](#) American machinations toward Venezuela illustrate the conundrum. Venezuela has the largest proven oil reserves in the world (chart below). The U.S. is using state power to ‘liberate’ this oil for the benefit of nominally private multinational oil corporations. The American plan is to [burn the oil](#). All of it.

Of relevance is that (1) the U.S. has virtually unlimited resources when it comes to serving ‘private’ interests, (2) capitalism is as much an extension of state power as state power is an extension of capitalism and (3) the ‘multinational’ corporate form is intended to place corporations outside of state control when doing so serves private interests. Multinational corporations can choose amongst nation-state domiciles if they don’t like certain legislation.

### **The World's Largest Oil Reserves By Country**

1. Venezuela - 300,878 million barrels.
2. Saudi Arabia - 266,455 million barrels. ...
3. Canada - 169,709 million barrels. ...
4. Iran - 158,400 million barrels. ...
5. Iraq - 142,503 million barrels. ...
6. Kuwait - 101,500 million barrels. ...
7. United Arab Emirates - 97,800 million barrels. ...
8. Russia - 80,000 million barrels. ...

**Targeted by U.S.:**



Chart: Countries with the largest oil reserves top the list of American geopolitical machinations. Venezuela is a target for regime change because multinational oil companies want its oil. A relatively straight line can be drawn from Russian oil resources to the U.S. engineered coup in Ukraine and on to the national Democrats' decades long program to demonize Russia. Source: <https://www.worldatlas.com>

The relevance for a Green New Deal is that confronting extractive and polluting industries is to confront both 'private' interests and the American state. Representatives of the state perceive these industries to be extensions of state power. Again, the U.S. Army explains the relationship [here](#). Placing restrictions on multinational corporations and Wall Street is to reduce state power, goes the logic. And the belief is that the relationship is symbiotic— what benefits one, benefits the other.

There is a long history here. General Smedley Butler described his role leading U.S. military incursions abroad as a '[gangster for capitalism](#).' [Economic Hitman](#) John Perkins brought this corporate-state relation into the twenty-first century as coup-engineer for corporate interests. The 2003 film [The Corporation](#) visited a confab where U.S. corporations met with representatives of the CIA to plot corporate espionage abroad. U.S. Vice-President [Dick Cheney](#) met with oil industry executives before the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 to agree on the [division of the spoils](#).

### U.S. coal exports by destination country (2007-12) million short tons

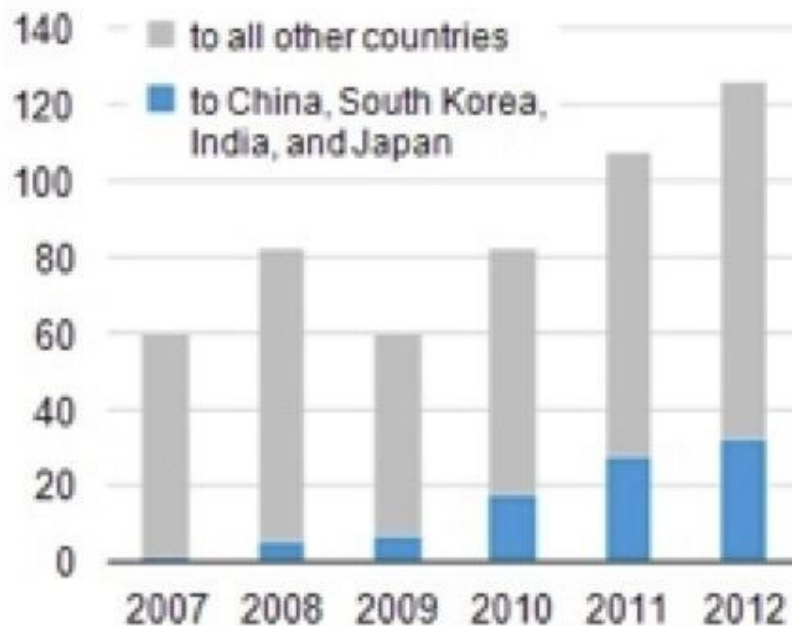


Chart: The portrayal of environmental destruction as a partisan issue in the U.S. is [misdirection](#). After attaching his name to an EPA program to end U.S. utilities' burning of coal, Democrat Barack Obama set about selling the 'excess' coal to China. Coal exports under Mr. Obama doubled. In fairness, some of the coal was sold to Japan after the nuclear meltdown at Fukushima. But nuclear energy is clean, right? Source: <https://www.realclearenergy.org>

This isn't to suggest that the barriers to environmental resolution are insurmountable. The political forces aligning on the side of doing so are as capable as any seen in a generation or more. But the conceptual line between politics and economics that constrains American political reasoning must be gotten past. Actions that are seemingly inexplicable, like Barack Obama's continued support for the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) 'trade' deal even after Democrats lost the 2016 election, make sense when the advancement of a unified corporate-state agenda is understood to be the overriding goal of establishment politics.

Here the prism of partisan politics exists to assure that more plausible methods of political resolution are neutered. What impact do electoral outcomes have when real

political power lies at the nexus of state and corporate power? Political scientist Thomas Ferguson has long and successfully argued that money, in the form of campaign contributions, determines legislative outcomes. But what is the true source of this money when the Pentagon keeps hundreds of nominally private corporations in business with cost-plus contracts?

The circular process at work here— public money builds private fortunes that are then used through campaign contributions to garner more public money to build larger private fortunes, creates a chicken-or-egg problem for political resolution. The idea that one or the other, state or corporate power, but not both, could be coopted to serve the public interest proceeds from the premise that they are separable. Little evidence exists to suggest that this is the case.

Implicit in changes to the language of the Green New Deal is that dis-empowering established interests is a necessary step toward environmental resolution. The original language calling for an end to fossil fuel consumption was replaced with a call for ending greenhouse gas emissions. But how plausible is the latter without the prior? Disempowering the powerful is the step that establishment politicians will not take, no matter how necessary doing so is to solving the problems at hand.

Needed is political motion that creates the backdrop necessary for environmental resolution. This was the power of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's initial document on the Green New Deal. In theory, the Federal purse could be used to increase the power of the poor and working class without taxing the rich. Economist Stephanie Kelton explains the mechanism for doing so here. But these are two sides of the same coin. Empowering the working class necessarily reduces the power of the rich over it.

This integration of corporate and state power means that it isn't enough to use state resources to rebalance political and economic power downward, as was done with the New Deal. Existing institutions and relationships must be confronted. These initial conditions explain the 'natural' state tendency toward the policies of the radical right. The dedication of state power toward 'private' interests means toward the owners of capital. Labor in this frame is atomized capital, 'human capital' in the parlance. The corporation is the consolidated form.

One might assume that recent reports on the urgency of reversing climate change and mass extinction would have led to reassessments of this corporate-state alliance in official circles. The perpetual foil of what is politically possible has for four decades now stood

against the increasing likelihood of the end of all political possibility through annihilation. Democrats claim that the dividing line for environmental resolution is between belief in climate change and unbelief. But the actual result is (1) they believe and (2) they perpetuate the problem.

As believers, they could bribe the rich to get out of the way so that environmental problems could be rectified. AOC's initial document gave them cover from the Left to do so. But they didn't take it. As analog, it is the U.S. that has kept the world at the edge of nuclear annihilation for seven decades now. Americans invented nuclear weapons and have led their proliferation every step of the way. The nihilistic violence inherent in this 'American view' has a religious quality to it, and not in a good way.

Preventing the continued degradation of the environment, and with it life on the planet, is a moral imperative as well as a political obligation. The forces urging caution and half-measures have been wrong for as long as the environment has been a concern. The most radical current visions of how to rework this relationship with the world will more likely than not prove to have been too conservative within a few years. This has been our collective experience over the last four decades.

When confronted with evidence that environmental degradation is tilting humanity toward annihilation, inaction in the service of existing power is radically reactionary. Either much of the political and economic architecture of modern capitalism will be gotten out of the way or it will destroy us. Ironically, capitalists have spent the last seventy-five years lauding 'creative destruction' as social progress. When it suddenly means their own demise, why does it suddenly seem a bad idea?