

The Capitalocene and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract

A debate rages over earth's entry into the geologic epoch referred to as the Anthropocene which acknowledges the negative impact that humans have had on the evolution of the earth, especially its impact on air quality and life on the planet. Responses to the Anthropocene assume a collective global responsibility for the degraded state of planet Earth. Many scholars have suggested predatory capitalism as the driving force behind the emergence of the Anthropocene, electing to rename it the Capitalocene. Within this context, this piece is an opening gesture to a larger examination of the notion of Sovereignty, Indigenization, and Cultural Representation on a comparative global scale. This essay examines an array of historical documents from Papal Encyclicals (1452 to present), explicit UN Sustainable Development Goals (especially SDG 13 – Climate Action), and statements from various global political figures. These are read in tension with the history of colonial development. To conclude, the essay overlays these historical geopolitical developments onto the current Capitalocene cultural moment to discuss how these impact the positivist efforts of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as the world approaches The Paris Agreement target year of 2030.

Keywords: Capitalocene, Racism, Plunder, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

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Introduction

Capitalism proves over and over again that its aim is its own preservation at any price, including the destruction of life on earth. The predatory use of natural and human resources isn't new, what's new is the knowledge that both these resources are limited: women and people of color cannot systematically be abused and exploited, nature cannot provide for an insane rhythm of consumption. It's very simple: we are all having to reconnect with our human nature outside of the semiotics of capitalism. And we don't even have much time left to do so. — Claire Fontaine (Oralkan, 2024)

Capitalocene | Indigenous Loss Perfected

The Doctrine of Discovery achieved perfection in the United States of America in the 1823 U.S. Supreme Court case of *Johnson v. M'Intosh*, when Chief Justice John Marshall used the doctrine to assert that the United States, as the successor of Great Britain, had inherited authority over all lands within their boundaries. This ethno-supremacist decision allowed the U.S. government to ignore or invalidate all indigenous claims to property rights. This legal position was grandly implemented seven years later by the Indian Removal Act of 1830 (Library of Congress). The recent Louisiana Purchase (Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 1803) provided vacant land in Oklahoma to which the dispossessed Indigenous peoples of the American South could be forced to relocate. To this day, courts continue to cite this doctrine of discovery as a legal precedent for courts to decide property rights cases brought by Indigenous/Native Americans against the U.S. and non-Natives.

The racist ethnic cleansing of the 1830 Indian Removal Act provided large tracts of land for the propagation of cotton, which further required continued importation of African slave labour (Library of Congress, 1830). White privilege and imperial arrogance facilitated the kind of ethno-supremacist social engineering that served to maintain power, control, and profit. The emerging predatory corporate tendencies for the growing industrial capitalism required access to and control of inexpensive mineral resources, cheap labor, overt restraint of competitive development, and securing substantial markets for its goods.

Whilst the earlier Christian colonial project had the pretense of religious conversion of indigenous peoples (Pope Paul III, 1537), the new goals of 19th century's capitalism pursued unrestrained profit. The impact of this emphasis was immediate and far-ranging. The West, having agreed that all non-Europeans were less than human, spread out across Africa, Latin America, and Asia to colonize, control, and plunder raw materials to feed new national industrial capitalist engines. Programmed under-development of labor in the colonized lands provided convenient free or low-cost workers. Furthermore, in 1823, the USA asserted its authority over all Central and South America through President James Monroe's declaration of his Monroe Doctrine (Monroe, 1823).

Social Darwinism, with its scientific notions of natural selection and the survival of the fittest, constructed all non-Europeans as inferior and, therefore, free to be exploited (Claeys, 2000). In 1877, industrial capitalist Cecil Rhodes said: "I contend that we are the finest race in the world and that the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race It is our duty to seize every opportunity of acquiring more territory and we should keep this one idea steadily before our eyes that more territory simply means more of the Anglo-Saxon race more of the best the most human, most honorable race the world possesses" (Rhodes, 1877).

Herbert Spencer, a British philosopher and sociologist, not Darwin, gave us the phrase “survival of the fittest,” though Darwin would later also use it in his writing (Spencer, 1864). Now armed with scientific justification, Spencer believed that the strong must flourish as societies evolve, and the weak will eventually die out, become extinct. He felt that the government should not aid the impoverished poor because that would get in the way of this natural evolutionary process. In the late 1800s, Spencer traveled to the U.S. and argued that those in poverty were poor because they were unfit. Moreover, to feed and help people experiencing poverty was wrong because to do so was to oppose the natural order.

Cecil Rhodes continued to exhort the West to act: “We know the size of the world we know the total extent. Africa is still lying ready for us ... it is our duty to take it. It is our duty to seize every opportunity of acquiring more territory” (Rhodes, 1877). Indeed, in 1884-85, this Euro-American racist colonial arrogance was clearly in place as the Berlin Conference convened to determine how the continent of Africa was to be divided and plundered in the service of industrial capitalism. African peoples were not present at this Berlin meeting (Gathara, 2019).

Between Spencer and Rhodes, the racist capitalist intent behind the Berlin Conference becomes clear. The collective West must take and plunder the resources of Africa, enslave, or otherwise maltreat the unfit indigenous peoples to help nature take its course on their way to extinction. Through the trajectory of political, military, labor-related, and economic exploitation, this ethno-supremacist apartheid mindset justified the absolute plunder and cultural domination of the colonized. Following the Berlin conference, African lands were colonized, and natural resources plundered, all to support the genius of western predatory capitalism (Fischer, 2015; Gross, 2023). Indigenous and non-western populations who resisted colonial orders were persecuted, attacked, plundered, murdered, and manipulated into states of perpetual impoverishment and under-development: all on their path to enforced extinction. This fraught imperialist process contributed to the destruction and deaths exceeding hundreds of millions through various genocidal practices (Sullivan & Hickel, 2022). Extreme measures were taken to guarantee the subservience of the colonized. This established a powerful culture of fear in which the oppressed learned to acquiesce and be thankful for what they were allowed to have: do anything to avoid further torture, punishment, sanction, or death. Those survivors that did not suffer these punishments worked doubly hard to avoid them. Belgium King Leopold killed over 10 million Africans in his control of the Congo Free State (1885-1908). “Whippings, torture, rape, and casual murder were also widely documented” (Alyson, 2021). Comprador agents kept the population divided, confused, and disorganized, whilst exquisite mechanisms were implemented to keep Congo as an economically impoverished region forever and its workers stripped of cultural and social identity (Alyson, 2021). Human labour, then, was just another commodity for exploitation to be used and discarded once they were no longer useful. In this manner, Chinese workers imported into the USA were used to construct the transcontinental railroad and discarded. And, some later emerged as objects of derision or curiosity in public displays, especially in World Fairs (Moy, 1993).

Indigenous Sovereignty Denied, Again | Rentier Capitalism

On 30 March 2023, Pope Francis renounced the early 15th and 16th century Papal Bulls: “The Vatican on Thursday responded to Indigenous demands and formally repudiated the “Doctrine of Discovery,” the theories backed by 15th-century “Papal Bulls” that legitimized the colonial-era seizure of Native lands and form the basis of some property laws today. A

Vatican statement said the Papal Bulls, or decrees, “did not adequately reflect the equal dignity and rights of Indigenous peoples” and have never been considered expressions of the Catholic faith” (Winfield, 2023). The Vatican further noted that: “the documents had been “manipulated” for political purposes by colonial powers “to justify immoral acts against Indigenous peoples that were carried out, at times, without opposition from ecclesial authorities” (Winfield, 2023). In 2007, the UN issued the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Unfortunately, these acknowledgements came far too late, the damage was already done. The collective West had already transitioned into its hegemonic rentier economic trajectory with the United States Petro dollar central to the credit-based world. Between the SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications) system and its US Dollar based transactions, the USA became the hegemon banker to the world. Moreover the SWIFT system’s surveillance of all transactions, now gave the USA the ability to weaponize aspects of global finance. Following the collapse of USSR in 1991, America would now deploy economy destroying sanctions against nations who disagreed with the unipolar rule of the collective West (Fukuyama, 1992; Mearsheimer, 2011; Powell, 1992). Further, now many new rapidly developing economies served to accelerate demands on the world’s mineral resources (Ndung’u, 2020; Gross, 2023).

Welcome to the Anthropocene or Capitalocene

In a single lifetime we have grown into a phenomenal global force. We move more sediment and rock annually than all natural processes such as erosion and rivers.... Greenhouse gas levels this high have not been seen for over one million years. Temperatures are increasing. We have made a hole in the ozone layer. We are losing biodiversity. Many of the world’s deltas are sinking due to damming, mining, and other causes. Sea level is rising. Ocean acidification is a real threat. We are altering Earth’s natural cycles. We have entered the Anthropocene (Globaña, 2012)

The Anthropocene acknowledges the grave impact that humans have inflicted on planet Earth, whilst the notion of the Capitalocene asserts that the driving force behind this was the explicit plunder and exploitation of earth’s natural resources in support of the industrial capitalist pursuit of profit without restraint. This, then, is the Capitalocene context that challenges the positivist enterprise of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The initial United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) entered into force on 21 March 1994: “preventing ‘dangerous’ human interference with the climate system is the ultimate aim of the UNFCCC.” The 198 countries that ratified the Convention are called Parties to the Convention. An annual Conference of the Parties (COP) rotates amongst the ratifying countries. On 11 December 1997, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted the Kyoto Protocol, a non-binding understanding, this Kyoto Protocol operationalized the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by committing industrialized countries and economies in transition to limit and reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions in accordance with agreed individual targets. The Convention itself only asked those countries to adopt policies and measures on mitigation and to report periodically. One important element of the Kyoto Protocol was the establishment of flexible market mechanisms, based on the trade of emissions permits. Under the Protocol, countries must meet their targets primarily through national measures. However, the Protocol also offers the parties additional means to comply (United Nations. *Kyoto Protocol*, 1997). In Doha, Qatar, on 8 December 2012, the *Doha Amendment* extended the Kyoto Protocol until 2020 (United Nations. *Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol*, 2012).

Three years later, in 2015, The Kyoto Protocol was superseded by The Paris Agreement, a legally binding international treaty on climate change (United Nations, 2015). It entered into force on 4 November 2016 with a targeted completion date in 2030. Its overarching goal is to limit “the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels” and further pursue efforts “to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.” In recent years, world leaders have stressed the need to limit global warming to 1.5°C by the end of this century. That’s because the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPPC) indicated that crossing the 1.5°C threshold risks unleashing far more severe climate change impacts, including more frequent and severe droughts, heatwaves and rainfall. To limit global warming to 1.5°C, greenhouse gas emissions must peak before 2025 at the latest and decline 43% by 2030 (*Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany*, 2022).

Taken together, the adoption of the Paris Agreement (United Nations. *Paris Agreement*, 2015; United Nations. *Framework ...*, 2015) and the enthusiastically embraced 1 January 2016 launch of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations. *Transforming...*, 2015), 2016 promised much in terms of positive global climate action.

The global climate change challenges created by carbon consuming industrial revolution are central to the 27 Articles of the Paris Agreement (COP21). Focused on “integrated, holistic and balanced non-market approaches” to address global environmental challenges, governments and institutions are to be encouraged to engage innovation, technological development and tech transfers of resources to benefit all (United Nations. *Paris Agreement*, 2015). The seventeen United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) seek to address virtually all aspects of life on planet Earth (United Nations. *The Sustainable Development Goals – THE 17 GOALS*). Beyond this, the UN’s SDGs served to attach experiential human sensibilities to the climate change objectives that often appear as almost abstract statistically articulated targets.

Further, on 24 May 2015, some six months before the launch of the Paris Agreement, Pope Francis issued an encyclical, *Laudato si'* stating: “Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it” (Pope Francis, 2015, 23). Whilst Article 23 of Pope Francis’s Encyclical letter clearly addressed global warming as discussed in the Paris Agreement (COP21), subsequent parts of the letter explicitly focused on the lives of impoverished populations consigned to the margins of society. Clearly, Pope Francis’s encyclical places an ecclesial trajectory to both climate change and the sustainable development goals. Again, published some seven months before the launch of the Paris Agreement and the UN’s SDG, Pope Francis’s encyclical letter, suggests agreement and some likely prior influence on the two 2016 climate change initiatives. Significantly, the last word in Article 27 is the word “poverty” and the first unit in the UN’s list of sustainable development goals addresses the issue of Poverty.

The Paris Agreement and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Because of the IPPC’s compelling assertion that we must limit global warming to less than +1.5°C of pre-industrial levels, greenhouse gas emissions must peak before 2025 at the latest and further decline 43% by 2030, concerted efforts were made to “promote climate and SDG synergy as the linchpin for addressing our current challenges and realizing an equitable future.” The Paris Agreement and SDG 13 - Climate Action, then, have evolved into a focused initiative: “Since 2019, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the United

Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have been leading efforts to promote climate and SDG synergy as the linchpin for addressing our current challenges and realizing an equitable future” (United Nations. “Bridging the Ambition Gap...,” 2024).

USA President Biden Claims Global Leadership

On 27 January 2021, USA president Biden released his self-proclaimed Historic Climate Agenda: “This is a case where conscience and convenience cross paths, where dealing with this existential threat to the planet and increasing our economic growth and prosperity are one and the same. When I think of climate change ... I think of jobs” (The White House, Jan. 27, 2021). Indeed, later that year at the 2021 Glasgow COP 26 meeting of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), USA boasted a “Clean Energy and Climate Investments of US \$555B” and claimed a global leadership role for itself:

President Biden Renews U.S. Leadership on World Stage at U.N. Climate Conference (COP26). The White House: Heading into COP26, President Biden announced – the largest effort to combat climate change in American history The Build Back Better Framework will cut greenhouse gas pollution by well over one gigaton in 2030, reduce clean energy costs for working families, give our kids cleaner air and water, create hundreds of thousands of good-paying, union jobs, and advance environmental justice while investing in a 21st century clean energy economy. President Biden’s bold agenda, along with his robust executive and regulatory actions to date, represents the U.S. intention to capture the economic opportunity that addressing climate change presents. (The White House, 2021)

With the robust endorsement of President Biden of the USA, self-proclaimed leader of his unipolar world, significant forward progress seemed assured. This seemed especially so because China, the second largest economy in the world had already demonstrated significant progress in deploying innovative low-carbon emission protocols and contributing to addressing climate change, SDG 13 (Myllyvirta, 2023).

Within a year of Biden’s claim to global leadership, two documents appeared that suggested a failure in global leadership. An analysis in *The State of Nationally Determined Contributions: 2022* noted “that the Paris Agreement is enhancing global climate ambition—but not at a pace or scale consistent with achieving its goals. The latest NDCs aim to reduce 2030 emissions by an estimated 5.5 gigatons of carbon dioxide equivalent (GtCO₂e) more than the initial NDCs. This represents a 7 percent reduction from 2019 levels. According to the IPCC, however, emissions must decline by at least 43 percent from 2019 levels to keep the 1.5°C goal within reach” (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany, 2022). The United Nations Emissions Gap Report of 2022: *The Closing Window* offered a similarly sobering assessment of progress made (Guterres, 2022; United Nations. *Emissions Gap Report*, 2022):

As growing climate change impacts are experienced across the globe, the message that greenhouse gas emissions must fall is unambiguous. Droughts, floods, storms and wildfires are devastating lives and livelihoods across the globe. Loss and damage from the climate emergency is getting worse by the day. And global and national climate commitments are falling pitifully short. The window to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees is closing fast. Greenhouse gas emissions must be cut

by 45 per cent this decade. Under current policies, the world is headed for 2.8 degrees of global heating by the end of the century. ... In other words, we are headed for a global catastrophe. (Guterres, 2022)

The recent COP28, Dubai (30 November to 13 December 2023), was the “biggest UN Climate Change Conference ever, bringing together 85,000 participants [!] representing nearly 200 countries. Simon Stiell, UN Climate Change Executive Secretary – stated his optimistic belief that “this is clearly the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel era” (United Nations. *COP28 Agreement Signals...*, 2023).

The world acknowledged the need for cooperation between the two great global powers. John Kerry, U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, noted in advance of COP 28: “The U.S. and China agreed to back a new global renewables target and work together on methane and plastic pollution, though differences remain on fossil fuels, among other issues.” ... “We intend to work hard to see if there's further collaboration that could advance the cause for all of us ”.... “Without China and the United States aggressively moving forward to reduce emissions, we don't win this battle” (Cornwell, 2023). Despite the promised cooperation between the great world powers, António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, closed COP28 by noting disappointing reports: “We can't keep kicking the can down the road. We are out of road -- and almost out of time” (Guterres, 2023).

Conclusion – Approaching the Necrocene

Despite Guterres's challenge, it appears that “kicking the can down the road” continues to this day. Significantly, just one day earlier on 12 Dec 2023, NY Times announced that America's “Ford Motor Company Will Cut Planned Electric F-150 [Pickup Truck] Production as Demand Slows”:

Slower-than-expected growth in sales of electric vehicles has forced several automakers to scale back once-ambitious production plans. Ford Motor has become the latest company to join that pullback. At the end of 2021, Ford had accepted reservations for more than 200,000 F-150 Lightnings. ... But strong early interest has not always resulted in booming sales. Cost is a big culprit. The price of batteries remains high, which has made some electric vehicles much more expensive than comparable gasoline-powered models at a time when consumers have been struggling with inflation. (Boudette, 2023)

U.S. automakers' decisions to end the production of electric vehicles flies in the face of President Biden's alleged altruistic national priority to lead the world in efforts to end the fossil fuel era. Ultimately, it appears to have been merely a business decision, US auto makers simply couldn't match the lower price-point of Asia made EVs. Clearly, capitalist US manufacturers remain biased toward maximizing profits instead of dealing with global environmental issues (Furchtgott-Roth, 2024). America's manufacturing failures were compounded by delays in providing infrastructure for EVs: “Biden's \$7.5 billion investment in EV charging has only produced 7 stations in two years” (Osaka, 2024).

A few weeks after the conclusion of COP 28, it was announced that BYD, a China EV auto maker had out-sold industry leader Tesla. And, shortly thereafter BYD announced a new series of EVs that would sell for under US\$ 10K: “With the benefit of economies of scale, industry expertise, control over its supply chain, global production capability, and a wide

range of models catering to more types of consumers, plus unbeatable prices, it seems the road ahead is clear for BYD to race even further ahead.... What is good news from a sustainability perspective is the direction of travel when it comes to EV adoption, and increased competition and lower cost of ownership can only tip more consumers to ditch” (Birch, 2024). Simply put, it appears American auto makers are non-competitive, both in product quality and price (Nicola, 2024).

Not surprisingly, the U.S. government immediately moved to protect America’s non-competitive production. It placed tariffs and sanctions on importation of Chinese Electric Vehicles and other manufactured goods that undercut high-priced American goods, including:

- 100% on electric vehicles, up from 25%
- 50% on solar cells, up from 25%
- 50% on syringes and needles, up from zero
- 25% on lithium-ion batteries for electric vehicles, and battery parts, up from 7.5%
- 25% on certain critical minerals, up from zero
- 25% on steel and aluminum products, up from a range of zero to 7.5%
- 25% on respirators and face masks, up from zero to 7.5%
- 25% on cranes used to unload container ships, up from 0%
- 50% on semiconductors, up from 25%, by 2025
- 25% on other lithium-ion batteries, by 2026
- 25% on natural graphite and permanent magnets, up from zero, by 2026
- 25% on rubber medical and surgical gloves, up from 7.5%, by 2026 (Khalid, 2024)

“In addition to the tariff rises, the USTR also recommends establishing an ‘exclusion process’ for machinery used in domestic manufacturing, targeting in particular solar manufacturing equipment” (The White House, May 14, 2024). Moreover, within days, countries of the collective West were coerced to follow America’s lead. U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen encouraged European partners “to respond to China’s industrial overcapacity in a strategic and united way to keep manufacturers viable on both sides of the Atlantic” (Lawder, 2024; Busch and Lipsky, 2024). Clearly, climate action remains secondary to profitability on both sides of the Atlantic. So much for the collective West’s alleged altruistic contributions to positively impact global Climate Action (SDG13). Sadly, items on President Biden’s tariff list targeted many of the UN’s SDGs. Included on the tariffs list are Chinese products that have proven positive impact on global climate change issues including SDG 3-Health and Well-Being; SDG 7-Affordable and Clean Energy; SDG 8-Decent Work and Economic Growth; SDG 13-Climate Action.

President Biden said “When I think of climate change ... I think of jobs,” but it is clear he was only thinking of American jobs (The White House, Jan. 27, 2021). Further, one cannot help but recall President Joe Biden’s 2016 speech in which he declared: “We are America - second to none, and we own the finish line” (Biden, 2016). Regarding SDG8 - Decent work and Economic Growth (SDG8) only matters for American workers whilst human extinction seems not a consideration. It appears boss of the world President Biden’s Capitalocene brain cannot tolerate products better made than American, and his claims to global leadership on climate action appear to be little more than a green-washing exercise. “Capitalism leaves in its wake the disappearance of species, languages, cultures, and peoples. It seeks the planned obsolescence of all life. Extinction lies at the heart of capitalist accumulation” (McBrien, 2016, p. 116).

As the faux collaborative spirit of the west evaporates, the legacy of industrial capitalism becomes clear, again. Indeed, in hindsight, virtually all of the SDG challenges result from the history of capitalism's pursuit of profit without limit, the predatory industrial practices of the colonial west. Neocolonial oppressors continue to require the suppression of development to keep indigenous peoples under heel, perpetually impoverished. "The UN's Sustainable Development Goals aim to drastically reduce poverty, gender inequality and environmental degradation in the next 10 years – but without challenging capitalism, it's all just a pipe dream" (Walton, 2021). "The core of the SDG program for development and poverty reduction relies precisely on the old model of industrial growth — ever-increasing levels of extraction, production, and consumption" (Sharland, 2023).

Deeply imbedded within the Capitalocene is the problematic history that gave rise to the racist ethno-supremacist devaluation of peoples of colour. In turn, these racist mindsets provided justification for predatory colonization, plunder, genocide, and the programmed unequal development of the world. Winston Churchill said of the Palestinians:

I do not agree that the dog in a manger has the final right to the manger even though he may have lain there for a very long time. I do not admit that right. I do not admit for instance, that a great wrong has been done to the Red Indians of America or the black people of Australia. I do not admit that a wrong has been done to these people by the fact that a stronger race, a higher-grade race, a more worldly wise race to put it that way, has come in and taken their place. (Arundhati Roy, 2002)

Worldly wise, indeed: "The weak crumble, are slaughtered and are erased from history while the strong ... survive. The strong are respected, and alliances are made with the strong, and in the end, peace is made with the strong (Netanyahu, 2018; Brennan, 2018). That same year, during a January 2018 White House discussion of Immigration policy regarding Haiti, El Salvador, and African countries, President Trump asked why America would want immigrants from "all these 'shithole countries' and that the U.S. should have more people coming in from places like Norway" (Kirby, 2018). Such racist statements from these powerful "worldly-wise" western leaders suggest a desire to rehearse the nineteenth century ethno-supremacist apartheid regimes' notion that poverty ridden "unfit" peoples of colour should be hurried on their path to extinction so the west can continue its plunder of their resources. This was certainly the intent behind the US genocide of the indigenous peoples of America, and the current genocide of Palestinians in Gaza. Given such racist biases, it's not clear how countries of the advanced collective West could ever hope to save the world by working equitably with the global majority, with people whom they consider inferior, unfit.

Governments of the collective West and their institutions continue to pursue power and profit over the common good. They remain focused on their singularly hegemonic protectionist issues: economic dominance, foreign overproduction, European jobs, dumping of foreign manufactured goods, national security, defending democracy, etc. It doesn't take much to realize that the SDGs are just a restatement of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948). To even attempt a positive global collaboration, we "must dismantle the underlying heteropatriarchal and white supremacist structures that shape ... current configurations and conversations" (Todd, 2015). Sharan Burrow, General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation reminds: "The world needs to reorient economic priorities towards a new prosperity for all that respects the human rights of all people and the planet's critical natural resource boundaries. This must be the basis for action on sustainable development and setting Sustainable Development Goals" (Burrow, 2012).

António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, observed that “only 17 per cent of the SDG targets are on track. Progress on over one-third has stalled or even regressed.... we need action for peace. From Gaza to Sudan, Ukraine and beyond, it's time to silence the guns, to support the displaced, and to pivot from spending on destruction and war to investing in people and peace..... we need action on finance.... Many developing countries lack the financial resources and the fiscal space to invest in their futures and the future of their people” (United Nations. *Bridging the Ambition Gap*, 2024). A nightmarish anxiety characterizes the view of the future: “Almost 60 percent of the 10,000 young people surveyed across 10 countries said their national governments... were “betraying” them and future generations through their inaction. Fifty-six percent of people surveyed said they agreed with the statement that humanity is doomed, while 75 percent said they believed the future was frightening” (Galer, 2021).

On 18 November 2023, whilst sending thousands of 2,000-pound bombs to Israel in support of that apartheid state’s genocidal bombing campaign in Gaza, US President Biden asserted his deluded view of the US leadership of the world: “The United States is the essential nation. We rally allies and partners to stand up to aggressors and make progress toward a brighter, more peaceful future. The world looks to us to solve the problems of our time. That is the duty of leadership, and America will lead” (Biden, 2023). With over 100,000 Palestinians murdered, it is evident that Biden’s racist notion of leadership requires the provision of 2,000-pound bombs to further the Zionist apartheid enterprise in Palestine and now Lebanon. It remains unclear how this supports any of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Given the highly dysfunctional unipolar leadership of the United States and the collective West, perhaps another trajectory of engagement regarding the Climate Crisis might prove productive. The impending global climate failure certainly suggests the need to interrogate just how the world moved from the pre-industrial era to the current global moment of unipolar failure. Perhaps, it is time to jettison the unipolar notion of world capitalism enforced by the United States in favor of a new inclusive, equitable multipolar community consensus (Barabanov et. al., 2022).

“We all know that it is not possible to sustain the present level of consumption in developed countries and wealthier sectors of society, where the habit of wasting and discarding has reached unprecedented levels. The exploitation of the planet has already exceeded acceptable limits and we still have not solved the problem of poverty (Pope Francis. *Laudato si’*, 2015, 27). And, Sharan Burrow reminds us that “There are “no jobs on a dead planet” (Burrow, 2012).

Still, despite these dire warnings, it is likely that the earth will fail to meet the Net Zero, +1.5 target of COP28. Accordingly, we must begin to determine a way forward, a way to accommodate a lowered order of existence in an increasingly toxic global environment of our own making. Some acknowledge that the quality of life on Earth has been in decline since the beginning of the 21st century. And, that humans should just learn to adapt to the forthcoming total social collapse (Bendell, 2024). “The Anthropocene says ‘humanity’ put the earth under its power, that it could either save or destroy it—yet it also says the unintended consequences of this power only accelerate our powerlessness over earth’s inevitable revenge” (McBrien, 2016, p. 119). It appears inevitable, and in a sense the forthcoming rupture into the extinction of the Necrocene may be merely a sort of transitional action in the natural evolutionary process wrought by the world’s Capitalocene trajectory (Batalla, 2020).

Not the end, no closure, rather just a necessary step in the natural process of planetary evolution by which nature undertakes to eliminate the predatory capitalist-human virus that has infected and so damaged our sweet planet Earth. Alternatively, to deny, thwart this natural process, our Capitalocene leadership could choose to once again assert its absolute authority to continue the plunder, to invoke a final nuclear winter which would dramatically lower global temperatures whilst hastening the extinction of our unfit humanity (Jacobsen, 2024).

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