CAPITALISM IS GUILTY OF TWO HISTORICAL CRIMES. THE ARMS RACE AND THE HARMS RACE, THE FIRST IMPERILING SOCIETY THE OTHER OUR PLANET.

This article is about the present and the future, about harm and redemption. About a capitalist class obsessed and blindsided by profit, presenting an ever-growing threat to humanity.

Watching the behaviour of the capitalist class in the face of the climate emergency is like watching a group of squabbling men and women standing in front of a burning building, some denying the flames, others contesting who owns the water rights needed to fight the fire with a minority discussing whether the hosepipes can be made from more sustainable materials while everyone simultaneously scrambles to offload responsibility and costs because the building on fire was uninsurable. And as the fire rages on reflecting off their entitled faces, the neighbours look on in horror.

Set the following reports side by side, and the peril becomes clear. On the one side let us set down the Copernicus Global Climate and the Berkley Earth Reports, and, on the other side the SIPRI 2025 Yearbook detailing global military spending. It's like setting two hands on the throat of humanity squeezing the life out of it, threatening thousands of years of civilization, jeopardising the potential for humanity to finally emancipate itself.

As the reports show, average air temperatures over 2023-5 breached the 1.5°C limit, and with January 2026 being the hottest January on record, the omens are bleak. On the other side, SIPRI shows $2.718 trillion Dollars were spent on the military in 2024, a rise of 9.4% compared to 2023. A similar rise in 2025 will bring it up to close to $3 trillion. In contrast, in 2024, total global investment in the so-called green transition amounted to $2.003 trillion or over 25% less, more if we factor in the hidden costs of militarisation which do not appear in the official military budgets.

Here's the thing, if we were to add the military budget to the green budget it would approach the level needed to have a meaningful impact on capping climate change. Estimates vary but to be zero carbon by 2050, would require an average spend of around $5 trillion currently. This compares to the annual income of the global top 1% amounting to over $11 trillion p.a. in 2024 or the $7 trillion spent supporting industries which harm nature.

In other words, were we to abolish military spending and redirect it, were we to curb the largesse given to the fossil fuel industry and were we to slap a miserly 10% consumption tax on the top 1% of income earners, we would have enough cash to reverse global warming. And this will still leave ample funds to provide potable water to "*the approximately 1.1 billion people who lack access to clean water, while a further 2.7 billion face water scarcity for at least one month each year. Considering the current rate of water consumption, this situation is likely to worsen in the coming years. After 2030, nearly two-thirds of the global population could face water shortages*."

By potable water we mean desalination. Like Pumped Hydropower Storage or PHS which can store electricity, desalinated water relies on a proven technology, osmosis using membranes. 70% of desalination uses reverse osmosis. Each year, like solar panels, desalination is becoming cheaper. Yes, it is energy intensive, but that energy can be provided by wind and solar. Yes, the brine output can disrupt sea life through salinity but not when it is dispersed over a wide area. Yes, there are alternatives to membrane-based desalination, but reverse osmosis is still the most cost and energy effective form of desalination which is getting better especially through the use of Graphene infused membranes.

The result is that over time, the cost of desalination will fall towards the cost of water delivered to households via traditional methods. Already Israel, for all its cruelties and with an eye of its own security vulnerabilities, has proven the cost effectiveness of this technology, producing water that is cheap enough for widespread agricultural use, much of whose output is exported. *

Furthermore, there are several effective ways to reduce CO2 and methane levels in the atmosphere and in the oceans. The most effective way is to reverse the process by which CO2 has entered the atmosphere in the first place. Over the course of hundreds of millions of years, vegetation and algae progressively removed CO^2 from the atmosphere and liberated O^2 through photosynthesis. That harvested CO2 was then stored underground in the form of coal, oil, and gasses like methane. When society burns those fuels, it releases stored CO2 back into the atmosphere.

It follows that to reverse the process we need to capture the CO^2 and return it back underground. The most natural way is to grow vegetation primarily 3D vegetation that rises furthest into the air thereby maximising surface area – trees. Thus, the process would be grow then chop down, bury, grow more, chop down, bury and so on. In particular, to choose the fastest growing species and to harvest them before their mature phase, as the full vigour phase is when they are capturing the most CO^2 through their growth. Secondly, to choose the fastest growing varieties like the Eucalyptus tree.

Even better is fast growing bamboo which captures up to five times more CO^2 than most trees per hectare and they are easier to grow. One hectare of bamboo can sequestrate 60 tons of CO^2 or 6,000 tons per square Kilometre. The total area planted globally with bamboo totals 23.7 million square kilometres. This means they hold over 11 gigatons of carbon. That compares to 38 gigatons of CO^2 emissions exhausted each year. As bamboo takes around 4 years to mature, and assuming the total area planted is doubled, that means around 10% of global emissions could be captured this way with the repeated harvesting and burying of bamboo each year. The only downside is that bamboo in its vigorous phase requires more water to grow than trees and rots quicker though this can be prevented.

And there is yet another organism which harvests CO^2 even more efficiently - Algae. Algae capture 50 times more CO^2 than vegetation. And it can be grown in saline or brackish water avoiding the need for desalination. Algae can be sun-dried, compressed into blocks and buried as well.

Of course, these carbon capture proposals sit alongside reducing carbon emissions in the first place. One area of mitigation which has turned into a farce is Electric Vehicles. I have written at length how capitalist corporations have ensured that their introduction would be botched. From the outset governments should have enforced the rule that batteries had to be exchangeable, not fixed into vehicles, doing away with fears of running out of charge on extended journeys. That way cars could be driven up to battery stations, and like the filling stations before them, exchange discharged batteries for charged ones. Quick and efficient instead of digging up roads to set up individual changing stations everywhere. Also, like Nio in China, EVs could be sold without a battery thereby reducing their upfront costs well below traditional cars encouraging their uptake and making a huge dent in the emissions produced by cars amounting to 15% of total global emissions.

The other area which has turned into a fiasco is the use of base stations, that is traditional power stations using gas, oil and coal to supplement intermittent wind and solar power compensating for their variability. This is avoidable because electricity can be stored either gravitationally, chemically or kinetically. The most proven and efficient way is through Pumped Storage Hydropower (PSH).

"*The amount of INSTALLED pumped storage was 189 GW IN 2024. The Global Energy Storage and Grids Pledge, signed by 58 countries at COP29, further reinforced PSH's critical role. With pumped storage already accounting for more than 90% of the world's energy storage, the pledge to deploy 1,500GW of storage by 2030 highlights the urgency, and opportunity, for further hydropower growth*." *"Pumped storage hydropower (PSH) is on the rise globally, and rightly so. As the most proven and scalable form of long-duration energy storage, it is essential to deliver the flexibility and reliability that modern electricity systems require. As variable renewables grow, pumped storage will become increasingly critical to balancing supply and demand. The private sector stands ready to deliver – but it cannot do so alone. Governments must ensure that market frameworks and policy support are fit for purpose. Clear investment signals are needed to expand the project pipeline and accelerate construction timelines." "In September (2025), IHA hosted the most significant international pumped storage event yet - the International Forum on Pumped Storage, held in Paris. With more than 500 participants from across the world, the Forum lifted the profile of pumped storage as the backbone for energy security and grid flexibility."*

There are several emerging technologies which could supersede PSH and which could turn out to be cheaper and more sustainable, but in the meantime, there is a proven technology and no shortage of mountains. This report provided by the Royal Society summarises electricity storage alternatives.

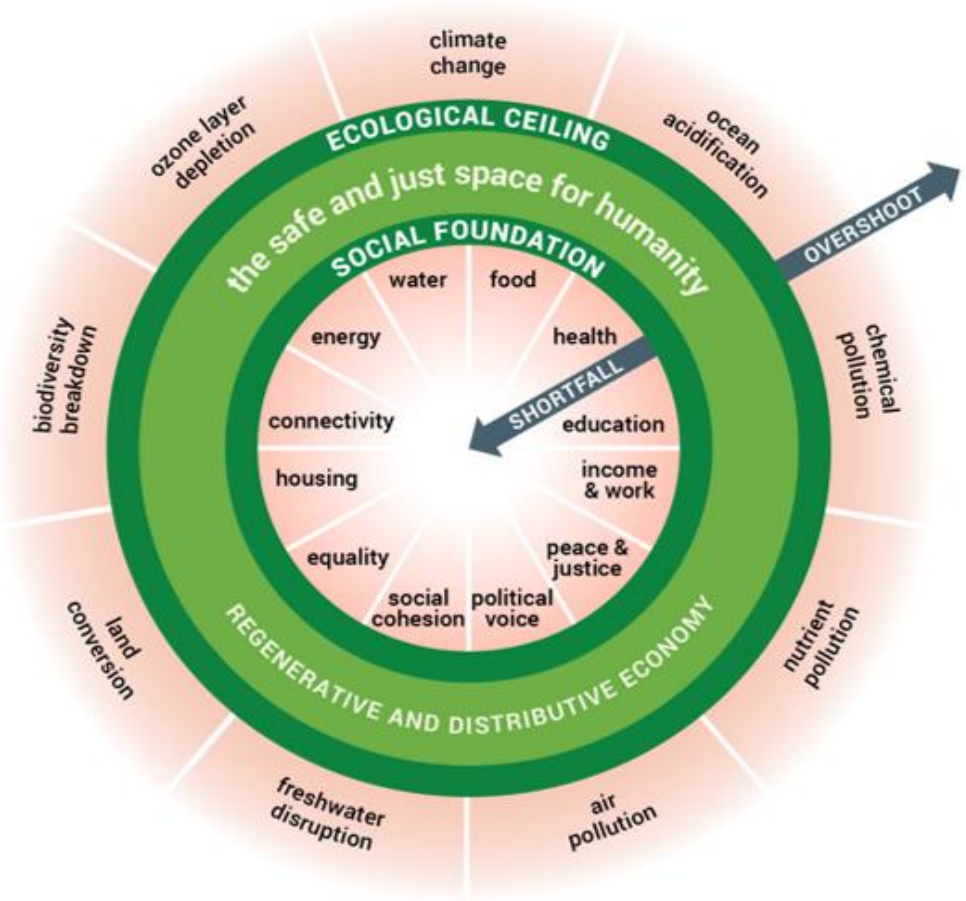
But it is not only a question of priorities, but the fragmentation of capitalist consciousness itself. Capitalist consciousness is ruined by competition, distorted by sectionalism and inhibited by nationalism. They do not have the capacity to think globally or to act collectively. Only emancipated workers have that capacity, the capacity to think globally and act collectively.

The technical solutions are there to compliment Hydro Storage. High voltage DC transmission is economic up to 4000 km in each direction because the losses are only 2-3% per 1000 KM and DC is well suited to wind, solar and wave farms. Thus, a central hub in Asia could connect Dublin in Ireland to Vladivostok in Russia. This would cover 10 time zones, doubling the duration when the sun is shining on voltaic cells generating electricity, or up to 20 hours per day on average. The mountain ranges along this route provide ample opportunities for pumped hydropower storage which already supplies 90% of stored electricity. By way of comparison, the US has 5 time zones excluding Hawaii, Africa has 7 time zones, and Latin America 4.

In sum, imagine a world with is connected through continental grids with large desalination plants opening up dormant coastal regions filled with bamboo forests and algae ponds. Imagine a new form of army, young people drawn from every corner of the world, an army that restores rather than destroys, a joyous green army rehabilitating our planet, uniting in friendship. Imagine cities free of vehicle pollution and with clean water. Is this not worth fighting for?

Which brings us to the various proposals set out on the left. We will begin with the Doughnut Theory of Economics which was first published in 2012 in an Oxfam report by Kate Raworth and which has gained international traction. The doughnut concept captures the dialectical tension between shortfall and overshoot and can be viewed on the next page. It correctly assumes there is a path between providing a secure and comfortable existence for the inhabitants of our planet without irrevocably destroying the planet itself. The argument is only over what is meant by comfortable and by how much newly developed and appropriate technology can mitigate damage to the planet.

Let's look at the numbers. The world population in 2025 was 8.24 billion while global GDP amounted to $117 trillion. This works out at $14,200 per head of population. By most estimates this is half the amount needed to enjoy a comfortable lifestyle. But the matter is complicated by several issues - monetising domestic labour, rents, the financialisation of housing and healthcare, taxes wasted on the military, repression and bureaucracy - and so on. Factoring for all these confounding issues, were there to be more equality, less waste and duplication, and were the burden of private ownership of the means of production and the land to be shed, it is likely that a figure of $20,000 per head will suffice. This means we are not that far off a balance between the two. However, the real problem is not boosting production, it is inequality, it is a society divided by class, with one class monopolising the resources of the planet for their own benefit. Thus over 70% of the world live on under $700 dollars p.a. today.



The Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries.

There are other theories which are anti-working class because they fail to comprehend the potential of technology and unleashing of human ingenuity. Foremost is the theory of degrowth which acts as the riposte to any green growth agenda. *"an equitable downscaling of production and consumption that increases human wellbeing and enhances ecological conditions at the local and global level, in the short and long term. Broadly speaking, degrowth proponents start from the proposition that the scale of world economic activity already exceeds the planet's capacity to sustain it and calls for a managed contraction of economic life."* Here is another article which deals with this issue. This view is in part

informed by capitalism's insatiable drive to accumulate, a feature Marx first pointed out, and which is now widely accepted. Yes, production for the sake of producing more profits is convulsive, irrational and damaging. According to the protagonists behind degrowth, production and its consequences has already exceeded earth's capacity limits. This theory is western centred, a comfortable armchair theory which avoids the plight of billions of people trapped in inner city ghettoes, the slums of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

With this observations behind us let us turn to why capitalism, history's first brutish industrial system, is so destructive. Why, as it becomes more productive, its potential to be more destructive increases.

The capitalist monetary relation to nature.

In Das Kapital Marx analyses exploitation in two different ways. Firstly, the relation between the individual producer and society which takes the form of value, necessary value and surplus value. And secondly, the relation between the individual producer and their employer in the form of paid costs of production and actual costs of production. We will focus on the cost structure of production as it is more relevant to the task in hand.

The only costs the capitalist investor or employer recognises is the ones they have to pay cash for. If they do not pay for it, they do not recognise it as a cost whether or not it is a cost to society. The actual cost of production is the cost to the workers for the labour they expend. It follows that if the paid costs of production equalled the actual costs of production workers would be paid for all their labour. But this is not the case. Workers are only paid for part of their labour; the rest is unpaid. Thus, the paid part forms the wage of the worker, and the unpaid part forms the profits of the capitalist employer or investor.

The same applies to nature. The only costs the capitalists recognise are the ones they are forced to pay for either in the form of legislation or court action. That is why there is continuous guerilla warfare between corporations and the state to reduce the burden of compliance. Corporations call it unnecessary red tape. Furthermore, many costs are not recognised because they are passed on to the state to bear or simply ignored. "*Closely connected are the economic and health costs of air pollution from burning fossil fuels, which totalled an estimated US$2.9 trillion in 2018, when 7 million deaths, work absences, years of life lost and premature deaths are considered together. This cost represents a minimum of 3.3% of global GDP, or about US$8 billion per day.*"

In summation, capitalist behaviour is driven by the need to reduce their cost prices. The more they can exploit labour and dump on nature, the lower their cost prices, and the lower their cost prices, the greater their profits. Thus, the capitalist mode of production can never respect labour nor accept responsibility for nature. Everything else is just talk.

Things stand differently in a communist society. Here there is no longer the aberration between paid costs and actual costs because exploitation no longer exists, all costs are fully formed and recognised, there are only actual costs of production. This refers to labour as much as much as to nature. Thus, the price of any product now represents the labour expended on its production and the remedial labour needed to balance production with nature. In other words, all production will be carbon and pollution free, and investment will be led by the most environmentally friendly forms of production.

There is a second element to this. Marx introduced the concept of the common fund, or as I call it the social fund. This fund will be financed by democratically agreed contributions by every worker and used to pay for the common need such as administration, childcare, pensions, healthcare, education and of course additional investment. Part of that additional investment will and must include restoring nature, abolishing over time, the deficit inherited from capitalism. This common fund will be international because communism does not recognise the nation state, just as before it, capitalism did not recognise feudal or manorial boundaries. It is this fund, comprehensive in nature, collaborationist in practise which can and will unite the human race through the collective effort and focussed attention needed to save and honour our planet.

Conclusion.

The arms race is hotting up and so is the planet. These two races are the bookends holding in place the volumes which speak so loudly of greed and shortsightedness. These two interconnected races demonstrate unequivocally that the capitalist class is not only an obstacle but a redundant obstacle. Of one thing we can be certain, history does not tolerate redundancy, or what is the same thing, that which has outgrown its purpose.

Capitalism is the cause of global warming, it is the cause of the tension between nations, it can never be a solution, it can only exist as peril. Only the international working class, with its planetary outlook, and its collective nature can deal with the crises facing society. And they must do so soon, because the alternatives are socialism or planetary loss.

Let us organise around the following slogan:

ALL CAPITALISM OFFERS
IS NUCLEAR WINTERS
OR SCORCHING SUMMERS.

* For more useful information on water statistics, usages and shortages follow this link and this one.

Brian Green, 18th February 2026.