

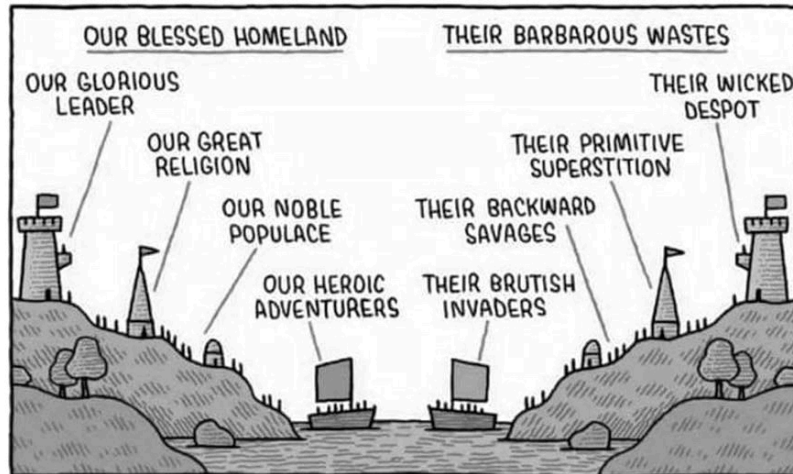
\$717 BILLION

FOR ENDLESS WAR AND EMPIRE

With little debate or public attention, the Senate just followed the House in approving \$717 billion for the nation's military. The passage is no surprise. The National Defense Authorization Act is one of the few pieces of federal budget legislation that sails through every year, without fail, on a bipartisan basis. In too many instances, old-fashioned pork and provincial interests are the real motivations. Among the 10 "no" votes in the Senate were four of the five most-often mentioned Democratic presidential mentions: Senator Elizabeth Warren (Mass), Senator Bernie Sanders (Vt.), Senator Kamala Harris (Calif.), and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (N.Y.). Senator Cory Booker (D-N.J.), who is often mentioned as a possible presidential contender, voted yes.

So, what is the military buying, and why? And just as important, what isn't the federal government buying as it hoards cash for the military? One answer is that the bill represents a big win for weapons contractors, providing funds for 77 new F-35 jet fighters—the Lockheed Martin show horse that has been in development for nearly 20 years and is billions of dollars over budget. Even military spending champion Sen. John McCain, for whom the bill is named, has called the jet fighter "a scandal and a tragedy" for its schedule and budget problems.

The bill also includes funds for 13 new ships, three more than the Navy asked for. The justification for two of the three additional ships was openly economic: The bill provides funding for three new ships of the same kind as a Navy ship that caused a minor scandal when it was stranded in ice off the coast of Montreal this winter. A congressional staffer involved with the defense bill negotiations commented that authorizing just one ship would be "damaging to the two construction yards" in Wisconsin and Alabama, where the ships are built. Like the F-35, the ship is also made by Lockheed Martin,



the biggest federal contractor with more than \$44 billion in military contracts in 2017.

Among new initiatives, the bill provides \$65 million for a new nuclear weapons program that would repurpose existing weapons into "low-yield" weapons, compared to most of the nuclear warheads the United States has today. But, these "low-yield" weapons would be comparable in power to the weapon the United States dropped on Hiroshima, and equal to roughly 1,000 of the conventional MOABs, or "Mother of All Bombs" that Trump authorized for its first-ever combat use in Afghanistan in 2017. The new weapons are likely to be adapted from Trident missiles, made of course by none other than Lockheed Martin.

\$69 billion goes for the Overseas Contingency Operations, an unaccountable war-making slush fund to enable the Pentagon to evade sequestration-related budget caps and secure greater funding for unaccountable war efforts—which, again, the NDAA compels no vote on. The NDAA, in other words, remains an endorsement of endless war.

What if the war on terror were to really end, and the military budget returned to its post-Cold War, pre-9/11 days, averaging about \$415 billion a year? That would save roughly \$300 billion a year—a sum that could finance Senator Sanders' plan for free college and help address the country's backlog of unfunded infrastructure needs—including water systems, roads, bridges, electricity and schools. After Cold War spending was ratcheted down from its Reagan-era peak, military spending

was \$386 billion after adjusting for inflation. By the height of spending during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, it had more than doubled to \$799 billion. Yet today, despite massive troop drawdowns and multiple declarations of victory from the war on terror, military spending in 2019 will remain **\$268 billion more** than it was before the start of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. In other words, U.S. war spending remains severely bloated, as spending on vital public goods—like education and water systems—falters.

Lindsay Koshgarian, program director of the National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies. [Inthesetimes.com](https://www.inthesetimes.com)
Thanks also Jonathon Cohn, [Medium.com](https://www.medium.com)

RACIST CLASSIST CLIMATE GENOCIDE

For U.S. climate justice activists like me, the Poor People's Campaign (PPC) is really the only game in town. That is to say, it's the *only* U.S. political movement that, by effective coalition building and massive direct action, has the remotest hope of radically overhauling our obscenely corrupt U.S. political system—the one now obstructing virtually *all* effective climate action.

And, by adding "ecological devastation" to Martin Luther King's original triple evils of poverty, racism, and militarism, the PPC has—though not yet explicitly enough—made itself a *de facto* climate justice movement. As with King's activist campaigns, the PPC's association with *churches* gives it credibility and respectability mainstream media easily denied to a movement like Occupy. With black and female leaders in William Barber and Liz Theoharis, it's likewise bulletproof to the "racist" and "sexist" smears Clinton's identity Democrats used against the Sanders campaign.

At the same time, the PPC incorporates important *radical* elements. Of course, there's its dedication to practicing peaceful civil disobedience—an *essential* tactic in today's unresponsive, anti-democratic U.S. political system. Just as importantly radical are the movement's black origins and leadership, assuring blacks and other people of color that their particular concerns *will* be represented. This corrects a *major* failing of climate and other justice movements overly associated with middle-class whites: how can such movements succeed when white skin is perceived (too often correctly) as the only "skin" in the game?

Beyond the urgency of "saving human civilization itself" humanity faces a climate *emergency*—one guaranteed, like most lesser human catastrophes, to take its first and worst toll on the dark-skinned and poor. Obviously, the longer effective climate action is delayed, the more devastating the death and suffering toll on the dark-skinned poor will be—well beyond the minimal level to justify the term planned genocide. In adding "ecological degradation" to the original PPC's "triple evils," I'm sure the new PPC's leaders realized the urgency of humanity's climate emergency. *Especially* as people committed to abolishing racism and poverty.

I must admit I owe a considerable debt of gratitude (as leftists often do) to Noam Chomsky. With eminently

rational calm, Chomsky has repeatedly—and quite logically, for anyone who grasps climate science—dubbed today's Republican Party "**the most dangerous organization in human history.**" To which he immediately adds, "But is it true?"

So, ask yourself whether Trump's climate policy is a planned genocide—above all, of the dark-skinned poor—is *true*. Following logically (just as Chomsky's assertion does) from the facts of climate science and the proper definitions of words, my assertion of "planned climate genocide" is equally outrageous—and equally *true*. But I'll now go *far* beyond merely claiming that blurring out the truth about planned genocide is the best strategy for preventing such genocide. Instead, I'll now argue that openly calling for Trump's impeachment on grounds of his planned climate genocide is the PPC's best—and perhaps *only*—hope for advancing its *whole* justice agenda.

The crucial question for the PPC at this point is how to spend some of its respectability capital and make itself so breathtakingly disruptive as to force universal media coverage. My suggestion is that it collectively tell an outrageous "**inconvenient truth**": that Donald Trump must be impeached for conspiracy to commit climate genocide. And racist, classist climate genocide to boot. Neither Republicans nor Democrats will be pleased in the least—the smart money says they'll be *horrified*—and by collectively hammering that outrageous demand, the PPC will make itself an overnight, unavoidable news *sensation*.

A sensation, moreover, that could gain *billionaire* support. That any billionaire would think of backing the Poor People's Campaign—*except* to coopt it—is perhaps the ultimate case of strange bedfellows. But there's clearly one case where the PPC's new, "outrageous" demand could enlist fervent billionaire passion. Democrat billionaire Tom Steyer, founder of NextGen Climate, has long been "hot" on the subject of a dangerously warming climate. Lately, he's become equally fevered on the subject of impeaching Donald Trump.

So fevered, in fact, that he's willing to make himself profoundly inconvenient to Democratic Party bigwigs, who not only show no special passion for impeaching Trump, but would be *horrified* that he be impeached on climate-related grounds. That might, for example, compel Democrats to end their own climate foot-dragging. It might even force them to give up their widespread, silent support for fracked natural gas—a dirty energy Secretary of State Hillary Clinton worked tirelessly to make global.

Tom Steyer is *already* making mainstream news by his relentless calls for Trump's impeachment—and he obviously plans to invest his vast resources in making more. Steyer is of course motivated by climate in his demand to impeach Trump, but I don't think he's dared make it the *grounds* for his impeachment call. And he's

certainly *not* talking about "planned climate genocide against the dark-skinned poor." By collectively proclaiming *that* outrageous truth, and making it the *grounds* for impeaching Trump, the PPC could stake out its independence from Steyer in a *newsworthy* way while supporting a cause extremely dear to his heart. Steyer might find himself forced to support the PPC (which could keep him from taking over by constantly "guilting" him about his hoarded billions). Testing the moral mettle of a self-styled billionaire philanthropist while proclaiming an "outrageous" moral truth Americans desperately need to hear seems a splendid way for the PPC to grab *major* headlines.

Deep Climate versus Shallow "Russiagate" Grounds for Impeachment would necessitate specifically, denouncing Democrats' Russia-gate narrative as a giant middle finger to climate justice. With Noam Chomsky, I feel that whatever comparatively insignificant interference Russia may or may not have plotted against our election, the last thing PPC supporters need is such a shallow, war-promoting narrative serving as the chief ground for impeaching Trump. Especially when *vastly* better grounds are available—like conspiracy to commit (climate) genocide. But in one respect, impeaching Trump for climate genocide is *infinitely* superior to Russia-gate as basis for impeachment: it will deter Pence—or any future president—from the same genocidal climate policy.

But as a movement of *moral* witness, the PPC should be concerned with the best *moral* ground for impeaching Trump: **his commitment to climate genocide** which pales in comparison with the nuclear war risk and wasteful spending of a New Cold War. *Especially* when unprecedented government and private—and equally unprecedented international good will—are essential to addressing humanity's climate emergency. Not only should PPC supporters resent Russia-gate for those reasons, but we should also consider how the military spending of a new Cold War robs the domestic anti-poverty and racial justice programs the PPC cherishes.

Patrick Walker in his completeness can be reached at: pjwalkerzorro@yahoo.com.

