

Contribution:

Struggle Against Climate Change Requires National Independence

Juha Kieksi

Secretary General, European Regional Society for the Study of the Juche Idea

It is an indisputable fact that climate change poses a serious threat to the existence of mankind. The increase in extreme weather events caused by climate change is a reality of the Korean peninsula. The causes of the warming brought about by climate change have been known for decades, but only cosmetic changes have been made to address them.

The problems caused by climate change have also received strong attention in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). At the enlarged meeting of the Political Bureau of the WPK Central Committee held on September 2, 2021, Respected Comrade Kim Jong Un said that "the viewpoint and attitude on the land management is directly linked with the attitude of defending the Party and the revolution and the attitude of loving the state and the people under the situation where the disastrous weather is getting ever more pronounced worldwide and our country is also lying vulnerable to its danger."

The DPRK must adapt to the consequences of climate change regardless of who caused it. This injustice is itself a manifestation of ecological imperialism.

Environmental protection is, above all, a social question, and it is bound up with political will and the social order. Under capitalism, no such political will can arise, because it would contradict the logic of capital accumulation.

Capitalism Threatens Humanity's Future

We live in an era known in the scientific community as the Anthropocene – the age of humankind. This name is not merely a scientific designation; it is a warning of where capitalism leads. Human activity has become a geological force on our planet, and this

threatens the conditions for human existence.

Climate change, the sixth mass extinction, the depletion of water resources, and soil degradation are no longer distant scenarios. They are already present in everyday life around the world. The struggle for clean water and arable land has begun.

As recently as 11,000 years ago, the climate was relatively stable. The warm, even climate of the Holocene made agriculture possible, and with it the rise of cities, states, and cultures. In many places, humanity lived in relative balance with nature. But the Industrial Revolution, and in particular the capitalist mode of production, broke this balance.

Whereas geological epochs have previously changed over millions of years, changes of equal magnitude are now occurring within decades. And the decisive force behind these changes is the capitalist economic system.

The Rise of Fossil Capitalism

Fossil energy plays a central role here. For 800,000 years, the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide remained between 180 and 300 ppm. Today it exceeds 400 ppm and is rising faster than at any point in human history. This is the result of burning fossil fuels — energy that, once stored, was harmless to the planet, but whose release has broken natural cycles that took millions of years to form.

Capitalism was built on fossil energy. The factories, railways, and steamships of the nineteenth century ran on coal. An economic system based on profit maximization and endless growth became dependent on coal, oil, and gas. Ever since, fossil energy has been the heart of capitalism, and capitalism has neither been able nor willing to give it up.

The Crisis-Ridden Nature of Capitalism

Capitalism is an economic system of permanent crisis. It recognizes no limits to its growth, but strives for the constant accumulation of capital. It exploits both labor and nature, externalizes its costs, and shifts the consequences of environmental destruction onto the Global South. This is ecological imperialism.

Capitalism's second contradiction is that the material foundation of production —

nature itself — is destroyed by the logic of capital accumulation. Fossil fuels fit this logic perfectly: they are energy-dense, easily transportable, storable, and entirely subordinate to the command of production.

They allow capitalism to compete without mutual coordination, to relocate production to wherever labour is cheap and regulation is weak, to free production from the constraints of time and season, and to place the productive forces entirely under the command of capital.

This is why the energy transition is not merely a technical question, but a question of social power.

Ecological Imperialism

The Anthropocene is also an era of ecological imperialism. The oceans and the atmosphere, which are the common heritage of humanity, have been subjected to private plunder. Fish stocks, seabed minerals, and Arctic resources end up in the hands of those who possess capital and military power. The United States and its allies also use fossil fuels as instruments of geopolitical power.

The Global South suffers doubly. Global corporations have plundered its natural resources, and now climate change threatens its living conditions. According to an analysis published in *Nature* (vol. 525), by the end of the century the incomes of the poorest countries could be 75% lower than they would have been without climate change, while the richest countries may even benefit as climate change and biodiversity loss intensify. This further deepens global inequality.

The Inseparable Bond Between Capitalism and Fossil Energy

Fossil fuels cannot be replaced by renewable energy sources without simultaneously transforming the entire logic of capitalist production. Fossil energy already has a massive infrastructure — mines, oil fields, pipelines, transport fleets, ports, and power plants — that locks the economy into it for decades.

History has never seen a genuine energy transition in which an old energy source was completely replaced by a new one. New energy sources have only ever been added on top

of the old ones. Even as the use of renewable energy has continuously increased, the use of fossil fuels has continued to increase as well. As long as capitalism prevails, this pattern will continue and climate change will worsen. The technical solutions needed to combat climate change are not given sufficient resources.

The Solution Is Strengthening Independence

It is clear that the use of fossil fuels is bound up with capitalism, and that capitalists cannot, in practice, abandon fossil fuels because of the laws of motion of capitalism itself. It is equally indisputable that climate change threatens the independence of nations. In the DPRK, for example, preparations can be made for the threats posed by climate change, but the decision of whether global warming can be halted still lies in the hands of the capitalists.

Fossil fuels are also used as a tool of economic sanctions. Imperialist states attempt to block trade in fossil fuels with those countries that seek to build an independent society that does not operate on the imperialists' terms.

As we know, the Juche idea is based on the philosophical principle that man is the master of everything and decides everything. According to the Juche idea, independence is a fundamental attribute of man. Accordingly, man himself should determine how nature and natural resources are utilized. The Anthropocene demonstrates that under capitalism, things proceed irresponsibly, contrary to what human independence would require.

In Western Europe, for example, it is often argued that market forces should be allowed to determine the course of economic development. This means that ordinary people cannot take part in decisions concerning the capitalist economy. Decisions concerning the economy are placed beyond the reach of democratic decision-making. The fundamental principle of human existence — the striving for independence — is not realized under capitalism. In fact, its realization is theoretically impossible because of the laws of motion of capitalism itself.

Strengthening the independence — that is, the capacity to decide for oneself, through political guidance, how natural resources are used — is the solution to this vicious circle. Secretary General Kim Jong Il wrote in “On the Juche Idea”:

“Man is the most powerful being in the world, and man alone is capable of

transforming the world. It is man and none other that requires its transformation and performs this work. Man acts upon and transforms the world as he desires, drawing on the objective laws. The world is changed for the benefit of man only by his energetic activity. For this reason, it is an absolutely correct viewpoint and attitude to the world to approach its change and development from the standpoint of man's positive activity to transform nature and society purposefully and consciously to meet his own desire."

This does not mean that man may act short-sightedly, without regard for the consequences of his actions for the environment. When man acts on the basis of objective laws, the long-term consequences must of course be taken into account. We cannot act so short-sightedly that our actions would endanger the existence of the human species or of other species. Such an interpretation would be entirely contrary to the basic principles of the Juche idea.

The Use of Fossil Energy Sources for Building an Independent National Economy

Many measures have been taken in the DPRK to combat climate change; these include large-scale afforestation campaigns and renewable energy solutions. Building an independent national economy requires making use of all domestic solutions.

The use of fossil energy sources in the DPRK proceeds from premises entirely different from those in capitalist countries. Under capitalism, the aim is to produce goods, and in such quantities, that the capitalists are left with the maximum possible profit. The result is the mass production of unnecessary, low-quality goods that quickly become waste. A socialist planned economy starts from the opposite premise. A socialist planned economy produces the goods that people genuinely need, and it ensures their high quality. Respected Comrade Kim Jong Un most recently drew attention to product quality in his report to the 9th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea. This, in turn, concentrates production on what is essential and rationalizes the use of natural resources.

The DPRK is subjected to extensive sanctions, which threaten the building of an independent national economy. For this reason, it is of the utmost importance to make full use of, for example, coal and other domestic natural resources. Access to energy is a matter of life and death for society, and there is no alternative for preserving independence.

Self-sufficiency in fuel is a significant weapon against imperialism. The DPRK's use of coal is a concrete example of how one nation subjected to sanctions defends its right to exist against the imperialists' energy warfare. Only once imperialism and sanctions have been broken on a global scale can a socialist planned economy fully carry out the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

Conclusion — Socialism Is the Only Solution

The alliance between capitalism and fossil fuels is destroying the conditions for life on the Earth. The Anthropocene is the era of fossil capitalism, and ending it is essential if we are to survive.

No solution that is not anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist will stop this crisis. What must be built is a movement that advances the independence of nations by uniting ecological sustainability, material equality, and international solidarity — in other words, a socialist movement built on the principles of the Juche idea. There can be no ecological revolution without independence and socialism.