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## Movements Show the Way Contribution to GTI Forum [Which Future Are We Living In?](#)

Victoria Brittain

The scenarios in the [Great Transition essay](#) were mapped out in that other world of twenty years ago, when Conventional Worlds of [Policy Reform](#) and [Market Forces](#) had not so dramatically failed. There is so much to say about how the world has evolved, but I have gone for brevity and, I hope, clarity.

[Barbarization](#) is an accurate word for the realities we live today. Here are some examples: state torture, kidnapping, assassinations, bombing of civilians, occupations of countries for decades, gross and growing economic inequality within countries and between countries. All this is now normalized in the practices of the most powerful country on the planet and is copied on every continent.

Also, for the first time, we are living in a world where, according to UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 100 million people have been forcibly displaced by the linked issues of climate change and war, for which the key responsibilities lie with Western governments' policy choices.<sup>1</sup> The International Organization for Migration has predicted that 1.5 billion people will be forced from their homes by 2050. An international academic team of scientists has forecasted that by 2070 three billion people will be living in deadly high-heat-stress areas.<sup>2</sup> We are witnessing a first phase of climate suffering in the Global South, and the rest of the world will not escape in the coming escalation.

[Fortress World](#) is also normalized by Western governments ignoring international law: the Mediterranean Sea is a graveyard as Europe repels refugees with boats, walls, armies, and payments to Libya, Niger, and Turkey to keep them away. Australia imprisons them on remote islands, the UK government fights its own judiciary to fly them to Central Africa, and the US uses

a panoply of inhuman cruelty on the Mexican border.

How do we catalyze change? A reinvigorated peace movement is part of the answer. The arms manufacturers and their political allies are essential targets for action against their distortion of ethical values and policies. The failure of the 2003 worldwide mass movement actions against the West's war on Iraq brought disillusionment and cynicism as the US-led military coalition ignored it and went ahead to destroy an ancient civilization and an organized, educated, modern country—like others before and since. But there are still more vibrant peace movements in action across the world (especially against nuclear weapons).

Across the Global South, there are strong grassroots movements for justice, ecological, and sustainability issues massively embraced by the youth, in particular, on every continent. From Gaza to Latin America, collectives of artists are the lifeblood of these movements. Against all odds, these artists and activists keep hope alive of the different future many of us believe is possible.

The collapse of the “rules-based international order” which followed the shock of World War II's scenes of barbarism became our reality long before we saw Donald Trump in power. (Think President George W. Bush and Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba, devised to be outside US and international law and where the invention of a category of prisoner called “enemy combatant” for President Bush by his lawyers evaded the 1949 Geneva Conventions on the rights of prisoners, and doomed almost 1,000 men seized by the US in Pakistan and Afghanistan.) Guantanamo Bay and other secret US prisons from Asia to Europe symbolize how complete lack of accountability in the US War on Terror twenty years ago became the order under which we still live now. The torturers, the lawyers, and the politicians who gave the orders flourish today, but their war crimes will not be forgotten by history.

A significant multiplier of resistance to Barbarism lies in the call for a **New Enlightenment** in which education and transformed media would be infused with the key topics and questions surrounding a Great Transition. The ambitious educational goal would require a worldwide mobilization of linked but autonomous groups ready to animate these ideas which could produce a society informed enough to transform our limping democracies into a planetary civilization and change the world. The seeds of this lie in multiple strands of citizen journalism across the world already challenging the misinformation power of much mainstream media.

Finally, I very much appreciate Paul Raskin's [words](#) of "action based on militant hope" and believe there is much in this discussion which equips us with hope to face the dramatic realities of this last twenty years and its trajectory into Barbarization. The "stuff of dreams," as Richard Falk [put](#) his hopes, is to work for.

## **Endnotes**

1. "More Than 100 Million Now Forcibly Displaced: UNHCR Report," *UN News*, June 16, 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/06/1120542>.
2. Xu, Chi et al., "Future of the Human Climate Niche," *PNAS* 117 (2020): 11350–11355.

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## About the Author



Victoria Brittain served as a journalist in Saigon, Algiers, Nairobi, Washington, and London, working for The Guardian and other media outlets in the UK, US, and France. She has worked extensively in Africa and the Middle East and has written, co-written, and edited a dozen books and plays dealing with the Cold War, the so-called war on terror, and structural violence in Palestine and Lebanon, frequently through the lens of women's experience. Her latest books are *Love and Resistance in the Films of Mai Masri* and *Writing Palestine*, edited with Haifa Zangana.

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## About the Publication

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