

Delivering the Five Giants: Beveridge, Climate Change and the Adaption of the Political

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Climate change looms large over our planetary future; of this fact there can be no reasonable doubt. The two cataclysmic World Wars felled empires that had existed for centuries. Will the catastrophic effects of climate change induce an equally transformative shift of our nation-state system? Is political-economic adaptation at this historical juncture necessary to introduce comprehensive, universal coverage from cradle to grave? Or are such ambitions utopian in the face of seas swallowing cities and states battered by austerity?

In their book *Climate Leviathan*, authors Geoff Mann and Joel Wainwright argue political theory lags behind “atmospheric chemistry and the physics of ocean heat”. The problems posed by addressing this imbalance are legion. However, if discussions of sustainable solutions to the “Five Giants” are to be credible, such speculative theory must be attempted.

Mann and Wainwright propose four potential futures: Climate Leviathan, Climate Behemoth, Climate Mao and Climate X. The plausibility of each will be evaluated through an interdisciplinary lens, with contributions from ecological marxism, international relations and political theory included. Furthermore, the “Five Giants” will provide a framework to judge the potential for justice in each of these futures.

Any conclusions offered, like Mann’s and Wainwright’s, are necessarily partial and tendentious. I view the Climate Behemoth as the most likely outcome, contrary to their belief that a planetary sovereign, a Climate Leviathan, will emerge. This is not to slip into climate determinism, but a sober appraisal of the future in a rapidly heating world beset by reactionary nationalism.