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17th World Congress

Capitalist globalization, imperialisms, geopolitical chaos and their implications

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Chapters

Introduction

I. A new imperialist galaxy

II. Chronic geopolitical instability

III. Globalization and crisis of governability

IV. The new (proto) (sub) imperialisms

V. New far right forces, new fascisms

VI. Authoritarian regimes, demand for democracy and solidarity

VII. Capitalist expansion and climate crisis

VIII A world of permanent wars

IX. The limits of the superpower

X. Internationalism against campism

XI. Humanitarian crisis

XII. A worldwide social war

Introduction

The “theses” that follow do not claim to be exhaustive or to present finished conclusions. Their main purpose is to nourish an international process of collective reflection. They often rely on already shared ideas, but try to push further the discussion of the implications of these analyses. To this end, at the risk of oversimplifying complex realities, they “filter” current developments, which are often incomplete in order to highlight what seems new.

The transformations underway are deep-going; they can present contradictory aspects and have consequences in all fields. We are not watching the well-ordered establishment of a stable new world order. The reign of globalized capital feed instability. The evolution of the balance of forces between the world powers is not determined in advance and immense conflicts whose outcome cannot be predicted will determine the outcome. However it is possible take stock of the change in the period from the 1980s, analyse the dynamics underway today and their political implications.

I. A new imperialist galaxy

First observation, world geopolitics today are quite different from those that prevailed in the early twentieth century or during the decades from the 1950s to the 1980s. A quarter of a century after the implosion of the USSR and the take-off of capitalist globalization, the dynamic of conflicts between powers is unprecedented and has particularly dangerous consequences. In broad strokes:

The current situation is largely structured by the conflict between the main established power, the United States, and a rising capitalist power, China, which demands entrance to the top playing field. This conflict is occurring on all continents and in all areas: economic, financial and monetary, diplomatic, geostrategic (control of resources and communication channels), for leadership in international institutions...

At the military level, the USA / China conflict is crystallizing in East Asia. Beijing was able, from 2013, to secure its grip in the South China Sea. Washington is using the Korean crisis to take back the initiative. In order to reaffirm US hegemony, Donald Trump has not hesitated to brandish the threat of nuclear intervention. For the first time in several decades, the use of nuclear weapons is a real danger and the United States is primarily responsible for this. They also bear responsibility for reviving the arms race. The installation of Thaad missile batteries in South Korea in fact largely counteracts the Chinese nuclear capability, which in turn envisions the deployment of an oceanic fleet of strategic submarines.

This revival of the arms race goes from the construction of new aircraft carriers and submarine fleets to the "modernization" of nuclear weapons by countries like the United States or France that are seeking to make them operational and politically acceptable in localized conflicts.

Russia does not have the base and the economic or financial means of China. On the other hand, it commands the second largest nuclear arsenal in the world (including an oceanic fleet of strategic submarines), an important asset in the general climate of militarization of the planet, placed in a permanent state of war. Although its scope is narrower than that of Beijing, Moscow plays a decisive role in Syria where it has become unavoidable. Its influence is growing, particularly in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, and its relations with the Western bloc are becoming more confrontational.

This new situation reflects profound changes. In addition to the affirmation of the new Chinese or Russian (proto) imperialisms (see Chapter IV), let us note in particular:

• A diversification of the status of the traditional imperialisms: a United States "super power"; failure of the construction of an integrated European imperialism; "reduction" of French and British imperialism; militarily "toothless" imperialisms (Germany especially, but also Spain in relation to Latin America); continuing subordination of Japanese imperialism (which although it has a big army has neither nuclear weapons nor aircraft carriers), crises of social disintegration in some Western countries (Greece) historically belonging to the imperialist sphere...

â€¢ Significant changes in the international division of labour, with the “financialization” of the economy, the de-industrialization of various Western, particularly European countries, refocusing the global production of goods, particularly in Asia – without neglecting the fact that the United States, Germany, Japan remain major industrial powers.

â€¢ An uneven development of each imperialism, strong in some areas, weak in others. The hierarchy of imperialist states is accordingly more complex to establish than it was in the past. The United States obviously remains No. 1; it is the only one that can claim to be powerful in almost all areas, but it nevertheless is registering a relative decline in economic terms and is experiencing limits to its global power. (See Chapter IX)

The characterization of the new powers (China, Russia) is not the only question that is posed to us. We also need to better reassess the changing status of the traditional imperialisms – and of the imperialist order as a whole. Classic notions such as “centre” and “periphery”, “North” and “South” must be readjusted in the light of growing internal diversification of each of these geopolitical groups.

II. Chronic geopolitical instability

Second observation, capitalist globalization has not given birth to a stable international “new order”, quite the contrary.

There is a dominant imperialist bloc that can be called the “Atlantic bloc” – because it is structured around the axis of the North America / European Union -, if we give this term a geo-strategic and not a geographic sense; it includes in fact Australia, New Zealand and Japan. This is a hierarchical block, under US hegemony. NATO is the privileged, permanent armed wing. Its deployment at the European border of the Russian sphere of influence shows that its original function has not lost its relevance, as the border has again become a conflict zone.

NATO wanted to act further east, without great success. The crisis in the Middle East shows that NATO is not an operational framework capable of imposing its rule everywhere. Tensions are high with its regional pillar, Turkey. Alliances of variable geometry have been forged to suit each theatre with regimes opposed to each other such as Saudi Arabia and Iran. The military contribution of its European members remains marginal, a situation that fed Trump's attacks on it at the beginning of his mandate.

Ideologically, the ruling classes are facing a crisis of legitimacy, and often, important institutional malfunctions – they are losing control of the electoral process in key countries like the USA (Trump's victory in the republican primaries and then the presidential election) and the United Kingdom (Brexit).

The current chronic crisis has multiple causes.

â€¢ The imperialist countries still have the role of ensuring favourable conditions for the accumulation of capital, but the global capital operates more independently from them than in the past. This separation has helped to make porous the former “private hunting grounds”, the areas of almost exclusive influence of traditional imperialism in the world (although to a lesser extent in Latin America). The high mobility of capital has had devastating effects on social equilibrium, undermining the possibility of stabilizing action by national governments.

Capitalist globalization, financialization, the increasing internationalization of production lines have also reduced the capacity of governments to implement economic policies in the name of the collective interests of the ruling classes.

Capitalist globalization, imperialisms, geopolitical chaos and their implications

â€¢ The unprecedented level of financialization, the development of fictitious capital, which is inherent in modern capitalism, has taken on considerable proportions in recent years. Without the link being broken, it is leading to a higher degree of dissociation of fictitious capital from productive processes, while the link between initial borrower and initial lender becomes distended. Financialization has sustained capitalist growth, but its overdevelopment accentuates the contradictions of this growth.

â€¢ The debt system now operates in both North and South. It is a key instrument of the dictatorship exercised by corporate capital and plays a directly political role, as the case of Greece confirms, in imposing and deepening the maintenance of the neoliberal order: public debt is used as a pretext to undo social gains and dismantle public services, to impose on national governments to give up their sovereignty Together with the free trade agreements, it blocks a national government implementing alternative policies to get out of the social crisis.

â€¢ The internal indebtedness of the Global South countries is developing strongly, to the benefit of local capital in the hands of a bourgeoisie that retains comprador characteristics. Public debt does not develop only in external form, in the context of relations of domination of the North over the South or of the centre over the periphery. It is also used as a tool of accumulation and domination by the capitalist class of the dominated countries.

â€¢ The 2007-2008 crisis did not have the same devastating effects in many Global South countries as in the North. These countries have been relatively protected by the accumulation of foreign exchange encouraged by the start of the 2003 commodity price boom - and the persistently low interest rates. Since 2008, however, sovereign debt has increased by 50% worldwide, thanks to a credit access system that remains unchanged despite the crisis and, in the North, by the socialization of losses of private banks. In this situation, a new financial crisis of any magnitude will have violent repercussions on the whole planet.

â€¢ Through an aggressive policy of granting credit conditional on access to commodities, China has become one of the main creditors of sovereign debt, alongside traditional imperialisms, international financial institutions and big capital financial. In the event of a crisis, it could use the debtor countries' payment difficulties to grab their wealth in an accelerated manner, thus reinforcing its claim to become a major imperialist power.

â€¢ A real "currency war" is underway; it is an aspect of inter-imperialist conflicts, the use of currency defining areas of control.

â€¢ Geopolitical alliances had been "frozen" by the East-West conflict on the one hand and the Sino-Soviet conflict on the other; they have once again become more fluid and uncertain.

â€¢ The rise of revolutionary processes in the Arab region, and then counter-revolutions provoked by competing poles within them, have helped create an uncontrolled situation in a vast area that goes from the Middle East to the Sahara - and beyond in parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

â€¢ At first, after the implosion of the USSR, the bourgeoisie and the (traditional) imperialist states had a very conquering attitude: penetration of Eastern markets, interventions in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) ... Then they became bogged down militarily and there was the financial crisis, the emergence of new powers, the revolutions in the Arab region ... all leading to a loss of geopolitical initiative and control: Washington today acts more by reacting to emergencies than by planning to impose its order.

â€¢ In this context, the role of regional powers becomes important: Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Egypt, Algeria ... South Africa, Brazil, India, South Korea ... Although in a subordinate position in the global system of domination under US hegemony, they play their own game, in addition to being regional gendarmes (like Brazil in Haiti). (see

Chapter IV)

â€¢ The financial crises of 1997-1997 and 2007-2008 revealed the contradictions inherent in capitalist globalization, it has had major consequences that are both political (delegitimization of the system of domination), social (very brutal in countries directly affected) and structural - including the debt explosion. This is the background to the great democratic movements that emerged a few years later (the occupation of squares), but also openly reactionary and antidemocratic developments nourished by the great fear of the "middle classes" (see for example in Thailand).

Combined with the ecological crisis and the massive displacement of populations, the structural instability of the global order creates new forms of poverty (see e.g. the Philippines), which require progressive organizations to implement appropriate policies.

III. Globalization and crisis of governability

The imperialist bourgeoisies wanted to take advantage of the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the opening up of China to capitalism to create a global market with uniform rules, allowing them to deploy their capital at will. The consequences of capitalist globalization could only be very profound – multiplied moreover by developments that, in their euphoria, these imperialist bourgeoisies had not wanted to foresee.

This project involved in fact:

â€¢ Depriving elected institutions (parliaments, governments ...) of decision-making power on key choices and requiring them to incorporate into their legislation measures decided elsewhere: by the WTO, international free trade treaties, European Union institutions, etc. It thus dealt a blow to classical bourgeois democracy – which is translated on the ideological level by reference to "governance" instead of democracy.

â€¢ Making illegal, in the name of the preeminent right of "competition", the "appropriate methods" of bourgeois rule, flowing from the specific history of countries and regions (historic compromise of the European kind, the Latin American kind of populism, state dirigisme of the Asian kind, many kinds of redistributive clientelism...). In fact, all of these forms create modulated relations with the world market, and thus barriers to the free deployment of imperialist capital.

â€¢ Subordinating common law to the rights of businesses, to whom governments should guarantee the profits expected when investing, against the right of the population to health, a healthy environment, a non-precarious life. This is one of the major challenges of the new generation of free trade treaties that complete the overall system formed by major international institutions like the WTO, IMF, and the World Bank.

â€¢ An endless spiral of destruction of social rights. The traditional imperialist bourgeoisies have taken the measure of the weakening and the crisis of the labour movement in the so-called "centre". In the name of "competitiveness" on the world market, they are taking the opportunity to conduct a systematic ongoing offensive with the goal of destroying the collective rights that have been won, particularly during the period that followed the Second World War. They do not aim to impose a new "social contract" that is more favourable to them, but want to do away with such agreements all together and to get their hands on all the potentially profitable sectors which, because they were public services, escaped them: health, education, pension systems, transport, etc.

â€¢ A massive process of dispossession of the exploited and oppressed, facilitated by the privatization of public

services and the increase of private indebtedness, which plunges them, in a growing number of cases, into a situation reminiscent of the fate of the working classes in nineteenth-century Europe. Following, in particular, the bursting of real estate bubbles in Japan (1990s), the United States (2006-2007), Ireland and Iceland (2008), Spain (2009), tens of millions of working class households were evicted from their homes. In Greece, as part of the third memorandum of 2015, banks have their hands free to evict families unable to pay their mortgage debts.

â€¢ From the United States to Chile, from the United Kingdom to South Africa, the cost of higher education has been increased by neoliberal policies, forcing tens of millions of working-class young people to take on debt in dramatic proportions. This is a major reversal after the hugely expanded access to universities in the previous century. Indebtedness amongst small farmers is also spreading around the world, with consequences that are completely inhumane: more than 300 000 suicides of small farmers have been reported in India since 1995 (a figure which does not take into account the suicides of the landless and women). In general, private debt increases the oppression of the most marginal populations - for example, housing evictions affecting mostly single-parent families that are female heads of household with children.

A new mode of domination

Capitalist globalization also implies:

â€¢ A modification of the role assigned to national states and of the relationship between imperialist capital and territory. With few exceptions, governments are no longer co-drivers of large-scale industrial projects or of the development of social infrastructure (education, health ...). Although they continue to support throughout the world "their" transnational corporations, the latter (given their power and internationalization) do not feel as dependent on their country of origin as they did in the past: the relationship is more "asymmetric" than ever... The role of the state, always essential, is contracting: contributing to establishing the rules universalizing the mobility of capital, opening up the entire public sector to the appetites of capital, contributing to the destruction of social rights and keeping its population in line.

â€¢ So we are dealing with two hierarchical systems that are structuring the relations of world domination. The hierarchy of the imperialist states, already complex, as we have noted (point I) and the hierarchies of the large capital flows that encompass the planet in the form of networks. These two systems no longer overlap, even though the states are at the service of the second.

Capitalist globalisation is a new worldwide form of class rule that is structurally unstable. It actually leads to open crises of legitimacy and ungovernability in a number of countries and entire regions and to a state of permanent crisis. The supposed centres of world regulation (the WTO, the UN Security Council...) are incapable of effectively carrying out their roles. Donald Trump's "America First" policy weakens the institutions which act as frameworks of negotiation for the international bourgeoisie.

A class cannot permanently rule over a society without mediations and social compromises; without sources of legitimacy, whether their origin is historical, democratic, social, revolutionary... The imperialist bourgeoisies are liquidating centuries of "know-how" in this field in the name of the free movement of capital, while the aggressiveness of neoliberal policies is destroying the social fabric in a growing number of countries. The fact that, in a Western country like Greece, much of the population is deprived of access to health care and services, says a great deal about the uncompromising line of the European bourgeoisie.

At the time when there were empires, it was necessary to ensure the stability of colonial possessions – as well as (although to a lesser extent) that of the spheres of influence during the Cold War. Today, because of mobility and

financialization, it depends on the time and the place... Thus, entire regions may enter into chronic crisis under the blows of globalization. The implementation of neoliberal diktats by worn-out dictatorial regimes provoked popular uprisings in the Arab world and vast mobilizations in Africa, open regime crises and violent counter-revolutionary responses, leading to acute instability.

The particularity of globalised capitalism is that it adapts to instability as a permanent state of affairs : it becomes consubstantial with the normal functioning of the new global system of domination. In the previous period, heightened instability was linked to the outbreak of an economic crisis, a particular moment between long periods of "normality", in other words relative stability. Crises obviously still occur but in a different environment.

IV. The new (proto), (sub) imperialisms

The traditional imperialist bourgeoisies thought after 1991 that they would penetrate the market of the former so-called "socialist" countries to the point of subordinating them naturally – even wondering whether NATO still had a function in relation to Russia. This hypothesis was not absurd, as was shown by the situation of China at the beginning of the 2000s and the conditions of accession of the country to the WTO (very favourable to international capital). But things turned out differently – and this does not appear to have been initially or seriously considered by the established powers.

For the first time for a century and a half (Japan) a new capitalist great power is emerging, once again in Asia: China. A major fact, result of a particular history.

In China, a new bourgeoisie has been constituted from within the country and the regime, mainly via the "bourgeoisification" of the bureaucracy, which transformed itself into a property-owning class by mechanisms that are now familiar to us. Therefore it has reconstituted itself on an independent basis (the legacy of the Maoist revolution) and not as a bourgeoisie that was from the start organically subordinated to imperialism. China has thus become a capitalist power, and moreover a permanent member of the UN Security Council with a right of veto (all of which is true also for Russia), even if its social formation, legacy of a very specific history, remains original (the work of analysis of this society resulting from a very particular, unprecedented, history, is far from complete).

Whatever the weaknesses of the regime and its economy, China has become the world's second largest power. Since 2013, under the leadership of Xi Jinping, Beijing has deployed an increasingly ambitious, aggressive, clearly imperialist foreign policy: military deployment (Djibouti base, in particular), consolidation of zones of influence and subordination of governments, the grabbing of land and mineral resources, export of capital and taking control of companies abroad, dispossession and ruin of local populations ... In a great many countries, the working classes are bearing the full brunt of the consequences of these measures. Since 2017, the gigantic programme of expansion towards the west the so-called "new silk roads" (or "One belt, one road" - OBOR) aims to multiply China's economic, financial, political and military presence in the Indian Ocean, the Middle East and Africa, Central Asia and Europe, Latin America

The Chinese case is unique. Russia remains economically dependent on exports of primary goods (of which petroleum products account for two-thirds). Its international role is largely linked to the size of its nuclear arsenal (world balance of forces) and the effectiveness of its regional striking power (Crimea, Syria) It implements imperialist policies without having the capacity to give rise, like China, to a new, richer imperialist power (hence the use of the term "proto" to qualify it).

The BRICS have tried to act together in the arena of the world market, without much success. The countries that

make up this fragile “bloc” do not all play in the same league. Brazil, India and South Africa can probably be described as sub-imperialisms – a notion that dates back to the 1970s – and regional gendarmes, but with a significant difference in relation to the past: they benefit from a much greater freedom to export capital (see the “great game” that has opened up in Africa, with competition between the United States, Canada, Britain, France, India, Brazil, South Africa, China, Qatar, Turkey, Nigeria, Angola...).

The scramble for Africa. When it comes to the plunder and looting of natural resources, dispossession, failed states, erosion of the social fabric, armed conflict and militarisation of politics the rest of the world is struggling to catch up with Africa.

In a context of the multi-dimensional civilizational crisis facing humanity, a new scramble for Africa’s plentiful natural resources is underway. From the colonial period to the present, extraction of Africa’s natural resources has dominated its economies. As Walter Rodney described for an earlier period, the extraction of iron, uranium, diamonds, gold, and rubber, among other precious commodities, fuelled the industrialization and expansion of capitalism in the West at the expense of African economic and social development, as well as corrupting the political process.

In 2013, for example, of the world’s ten biggest oil discoveries, six were in Africa.

Today, as hunger for strategic minerals, oil and other commodities cover the continent, the pursuit of profit and hegemony continues to fuel a rush to mine and extract at whatever cost to livelihoods and the environment. The devastation this has wrought on Africa’s people can be illustrated through numerous examples but possibly the case of commodity rich Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is most compelling. Beneath Congo’s soil lies an estimated (at 2011 prices) \$24 trillion in natural resources, including rich supplies of oil, gold, diamonds, the coltan used in computer chips, the cobalt and nickel used in jet engines and car batteries, the copper for bathroom pipes, the uranium for bombs and power plants, the iron for nearly everything. This wealth is the source of untold suffering, provoking huge displacements of the population.

Building on the architecture of impunity put in place by IMF, World Bank structural adjustment and stabilisation programmes as well as EU and US trade and investment agreements, Africa has again become a key site of inter-imperialist rivalries. New powers seek to play out their imperialist ambitions by participating in the new scramble for Africa. China, which has become the biggest net investor in Africa is joined by Russia, India, Brazil and South Africa not as part of a BRICS programme of action but in spite of belonging to the BRICS club, which says much about the BRICS project itself.

According to a 2016 report China has invested in 293 FDI projects in Africa since 2005, totalling an investment outlay of \$66.4 billion. Most of this is in environmentally destructive mega projects where China is responsible for about a quarter of all investments. This is where the Africa Union’s Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa meets China’s One Belt, One Road Project.

Three provisional conclusions:

1. Competition between capitalist powers is reviving. These are really conflicts between capitalist powers, therefore qualitatively different from those of the previous period. They could lead to real trade wars.

2. Concerning the free movement of capital, the bourgeoisies (even subordinate ones) and transnational corporations of the “South” can use the rules conceived after 1991 by the traditional imperialist bourgeoisies, particularly in terms of investment, making competition in the global market more complex than in the past. As far as the flow of

commodities is concerned, the generalized setting of workers in competition with each other remains largely driven by the enterprises of the traditional imperialist centres, and it is they and not the firms in producer countries who control access to the consumer markets of the developed countries; however this is less true today for China and indeed India or Brazil. The room for manoeuvre of the “regional” powers is not necessarily an accomplished fact as the case of Brazil shows today, here the USA is reaffirming its influence.

3. There is not only a crisis of legitimacy of the ruling classes, but also an ideological crisis. This is shown in the scale of the institutional crisis, when the “wrong” candidates assert themselves against the establishment (Trump in the US), when the election itself loses all credibility in the eyes of a growing portion of the population. Unable to answer, they will increasingly resort to “divide and rule”, using racism, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, xenophobia and stigmatization, whether Koreans in Japan or Afro-descendants in the USA and Brazil, Muslims in India, Shiites, Sunnis or Christians in Muslim countries ... the fight against racism, and xenophobia is more than ever a critical area of resistance at the international level. The same the same for other forms of discrimination (gender, sexual, social ...).

V. New far right forces, new fascisms

One of the first consequences of the phenomenal destabilizing power of capitalist globalization is the equally spectacular rise of new far right forces and new fascisms with a (potential) mass base. Some take relatively traditional forms like the neo-nazis of Golden Dawn in Greece, the German NDP, Jobbik in Hungary. Others are based on new xenophobic currents and those based on a return to national identity. Their growth is particularly pronounced in some European countries, notably the Dutch PVV, the French National Front, the Italian League, the Austrian FPÖ, the “True Finns”, the British UKIP ... They benefit from the triple social, institutional and identity crisis. Their economic programme varies, but they have in common a violently anti-immigrant discourse and islamophobic racism.

In the Netherlands, but also in France and in other countries, the extreme right has succeeded in breaking out of its ideological marginalisation by changing the parameters of political debate as its positions are being taken up by political parties going from the traditional right to the centre-left. Governments are trying to win new support by stoking the flames of nationalism and the external threat: “the invasion” of foreign capital or immigrants. In the United States Donald Trump's election campaign, a political outsider, was organically rooted inside the white supremacy movement.

Other far right currents emerge in the form of religious fundamentalism, and this is the case in all the “great” religions (Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim...), or of “national religious” fundamentalism (the Zionist far right)... Today these currents represent a considerable threat in countries like India, Sri Lanka and Israel.

They have been able to influence governments as important as that of the United States at the time of Bush. In France, the most reactionary Catholic sectors have strongly affected the course of the presidential campaign (supporting Fillon) and they play a central role in several East European countries, including Hungary. Christian radical evangelicalism is wreaking havoc in Latin America and Africa. So the Muslim world has no monopoly in this domain; but there it has taken a particular international dimension, with “cross-border” movements like the Islamic State or the Taliban (see the situation in Pakistan), and networks connecting up more or less formally, from Morocco to Indonesia and in the south of the Philippines.

Extreme right wing forces are also coordinating internationally in the most diverse ways. Thus, the “Euroasian movement” of Alexandre Dugin brings together new right wing groups, the fascists, the “conspiracy theorists”, the

“campists” and various religious fundamentalists, in a network that is open to dangerous “red-brown” alliances.

In general, we have to further analyse the new far right movements, whether they are religious or not: they are not mere replicas of the past, they are expressions of today. This is particularly true for religious fundamentalist currents. It is important to define them politically in order to understand the role they play (remember that not so long ago, a significant part of the international radical left saw in fundamentalist Islam an expression of an “objectively” progressive, although ideologically reactionary, anti-imperialism). This is also necessary to combat “essentialist” interpretations of the “clash of civilizations”.

These movements are far-right and counter-revolutionary currents. They have contributed to bringing to a halt the dynamic of the popular revolutions born of the “Arab Spring”. They do not have a monopoly of extreme violence (see the Assad regime!) nor of “barbarism” (the imperialist order is “barbaric”). But they exercise over society a control and a terror that comes “from below”, which in many cases recalls the fascisms of the inter-war period, before they came to power.

Like all political terms, that of fascism is often overused or interpreted in various ways. However, our own organizations are discussing this question – how fundamentalist and far-right nationalist movements are evolving, which of them can be defined as fascist or not – for example in countries like Pakistan (the Taliban movement) and India (RSS), in addition to Islamic State. “Theofascism” could be a generic term used for this type of current, including all religions.

Whatever the most appropriate adjectives to describe the new extreme right movements, their growing power poses to our generation of activists political problems with which we had not been confronted in the previous period – that of large-scale “antifascist” resistance. We have to work on this and to do so we need to pool national and regional analyses and experiences.

More generally, the renewal of the radical right strengthens a dangerous reactionary thrust that aims to put into question in particular the fundamental rights of women and LGBT+ people, often relying on institutional churches concerning abortion (in Spain, where a reactionary proposed law abolishing the right to abortion was defeated, in Italy., Poland, Nicaragua..), family law (advocating a return to a very conservative view of the role of women...), and even triggering real witch hunts against lesbian and gay people (Iran, African countries where evangelical currents are powerful...) or trans people. So reaction is frontally attacking the right to self-determination of women and of those demanding the recognition of the diverse sexual orientations, rights that were won after long struggles.

These movements target in particular the women who are experience the double oppression of racism and sexism. In a lot of western countries, the success of these movements has developed through Islamophobic propaganda (even if it is not the only specificity of these reactionary parties and movements), especially against Muslim women, particularly those who wear the veil, and aggression against women wearing the veil is increasing.

If some movements attack clearly women and LGBTQI people, we can observe a new phenomenon of homonationalism and femonationalism in the European countries, in United States and in Israel, with the pretext of acting in defence of women and LGBTQI people, they attack some parts of the population like migrants or Muslim people, accusing them of raping women, or claiming that Islam is against homosexuality. These movements have been growing up for a few years, in fact, they are often linked to the far right. As a result, the far right in imperialist countries often experiences tensions between those who want to appeal to the sexism and heterosexism of its base and those who attempt to win women’s and LGBTI rights in the service of Islamophobia and anti-immigrant prejudice.

Although the homonationalism of far right forces in imperialist countries and the anti-LGBT campaigns of the far right

forces in dominated countries seem to contradict each other, in fact they reinforce each other. They converge in seeing homosexuality and LGBTI rights as export from imperialist countries. This falsehood must be combatted by movements like the international queer campaign against Israeli pinkwashing.

In light of the constant and recent religious fundamentalist ideology in our respective states we reaffirm the importance of state secularism alongside the freedom to practice one's religion.

The state must be secular, without secularising communities and using secularism as a tool to target minorities. A secular state does not mean secularisation of communities and people, in a way that impinges on their human rights.

And freedom to practice religion does not equate to the freedom of religious leaders to exercise power and control through state apparatuses. Freedom of religion only means the freedom to practise one's faith, this means for example that freedom of religion in Lebanon should not equate to the ability of religious leaders to exercise their version of the "religious rule of law"

We take special note that both the above practices impose their oppressive power relations onto women, their bodies, and their lives and that religious rules of law heavily depend on the family unit and the segregation of gender roles for men and women. For example, in Lebanon there are no personal status laws covered by the state, only religious laws covered by the sects.

Also in countries where State-Church separation has been a historic achievement, like Italy and México, we would like to point out the constant blurring of this division, as we have witnessed the increase of public ties between high-ranking government and church leaders, especially on topics concerning women and LGBTIQ rights.

These actions, although it is not spelt out, seek to take joint decisions about women's bodies and their rights, like in the case of México about abortion. These are actions that of course endanger our lives.

Neoliberal conservatism that aims to strengthen the patriarchal family rather than women and to obstruct divorce has dramatically increased domestic violence against women. Besides impunity for the perpetrators, cuts in the material support to the victims of domestic violence has created a social environment that encourages male violence.

Theofascist movements use systematic sexual violence against women and minors in the territories they control, mostly in the form of rape and sex slavery. These use this to recruit members and fight against other groups. In Iraq and Syria thousands of Yazidi and Kurdish women were captured and raped by the members of Islamic state.

VI. Authoritarian regimes and demands for democracy and solidarity

This rise of the reactionary right is encouraged by the ideology of national security advocated today by bourgeois governments in the name of the fight against terrorism and "illegal" immigration. In return, these governments use the fears thus generated to strengthen the law-and-order state, to establish regimes where police have more and more power and to get authoritarian measures accepted: entire populations are now treated as "suspicious", subject to surveillance.

In the region of the world impacted by the revolutionary process initiated in Tunisia and Egypt, the new state

apparatuses focused on breaking the popular struggle for emancipation have used the whole panoply of the most ferocious practices, their violence being multiplied by the competition between powers. In Syria, Yemen, Libya, and partially in Iraq, it is through total war that the caricatures of state powers and their allies (Iran and Russia on one side, Gulf monarchies on the other) on the one hand and the jihadists on the other have undertaken the eradication of the movements for freedom and social justice. In Egypt and now in Turkey, the repressive radicalization of these shaken regimes has resulted in an unprecedented crushing of democratic aspirations. The Kurdish people, who refuse to give up their struggle, is an expiatory victim of the Erdogan regime, while the State of Israel under Netanyahu is taking advantage of the prevailing chaos, the complicity of General Sissi and, above all, the American president Trump to further stifle the Palestinian people. The North African countries and Lebanon seem in comparison less affected by this strong counter-revolutionary wind, even if the Moroccan monarchy is tightening its iron glove. In Tunisia, cradle of the process opened at the end of 2010, social movements have not been destroyed even if the lack of perspective affects the situation negatively.

Protest movements continue nevertheless to rise again throughout the region as far as Iran, as oppressive policies pursued in the name of the "fight against terrorism", destructive neoliberalism and endemic corruption of all these powers cannot overcome the educated young generations exasperated by their lack of prospects.

In Latin America governments and parties deemed "progressive" are in crisis. This applies both to the experiences of a social liberal type as much as to the more radical Bolivarian experiences. They are paying the price of their concessions to neo-liberalism and/or the limits of a neo-developmental policy based generally on the export of fossil fuels and raw materials.

The weaknesses of these "progressive" experiences have facilitated the brutal reactionary offensive of the pro-imperialist and anti-democratic right. This anti-people, neo-liberal offensive against the rights of workers, women, indigenous peoples and those of an African origin takes two distinct but complementary forms: electoral victories (Argentina, Chile) and pseudo-constitutional coup d'états (Honduras, Paraguay and Brazil).

A broad popular resistance taking different forms has developed against these attacks, against the coup d'états and the reactionary and anti-popular manoeuvres being employed. Anti-capitalists actively participate in these mobilisations, seeking to reinforce their anti-system dynamic.

Even in countries of old bourgeois democratic tradition, we are witnessing a real change of regime. Laws amounting to civil war are adopted under the guise of counter-terrorism. Mass surveillance systems are being deployed. The army has police powers (France) or police forces are militarized. Exceptional measures are introduced into current law. The executive extends its authority at the expense of the judiciary...

This weakening of the democratic bourgeois state, supposed to express the will of the people, exposes women and other historically weaker sectors of society directly to the "savage" laws of the market, where only the strongest can survive. The giving up of the social contract as we knew it in the second half of the 20th century has opened the door for multinational capital to grab all common goods, which is further extended to the personal and intimate sphere of women's bodies and vital organs (and that of human beings in general).

The progressive generalization of states of emergency contributes to the denial of humanity for whole social groups: minorities, migrants, etc. The systematic use of the "crimes" of blasphemy, lèse-majesté, attacks on national identity or security contributes to this. The insidious return of the policy of dehumanization (which nourished the genocides of yesterday) is not only a sign of reactionary, but counter-revolutionary, tendencies.

Capitalist globalization has provoked the crisis of so-called democratic institutions (where they existed) and of

bourgeois parliamentarism. Faced with this loss of legitimacy, the dominant trend is towards the establishment – sudden or creeping – of authoritarian regimes not subject to popular sovereignty (exceptions confirming the rule, former military dictatorships can still be forced to give up or share part of their power, as in Burma, without a democratic regime in fact being established). The right to choose is simply denied to peoples in the name of treaties and regulations endorsed by their governments.

The democratic imperative – “real democracy now!”- thus acquires a more subversive dimension that is more immediate than was often the case in the past, making it possible to give it an alternative, popular content. Similarly, the universality of neoliberal policies and the accompanying commoditisation of “common goods” make possible the convergence of forms of social resistance, as seen in the global justice movement. The consequences of climate change, which are already being felt, also offer a new field of potentially anti-capitalist convergences.

However, the lasting effects of the defeats of the workers’ movement and of neoliberal ideological hegemony, the loss of credibility of the socialist alternative, counteract these positive trends. It is difficult to situate within a longer-term perspective the – sometimes considerable – success of protest movements. The acuteness of oppression can, in this context, strengthen “closed”, identity-based resistance, where an oppressed community remains indifferent to the fate reserved to other oppressed people (as in the case of “homo-nationalism”). The religious character taken by many conflicts also contributes to the division of the exploited and oppressed.

The neo-liberal order can only be imposed if it succeeds in destroying the old solidarities and stifling the emergence of new solidarities. As necessary as these are, we cannot consider that solidarity will develop “naturally” in response to the crisis, nor internationalism faced with globalized capital. A concerted and systematic effort must be made in this domain.

VII. Capitalist expansion and climate crisis

The 17th World Congress of the Fourth International adopted a resolution on ecology. that the we note briefly reintegration of the Sino-Soviet “bloc” into the world market has led to a huge expansion of the geographical area in which capital dominates, feeds a dramatic acceleration of the global ecological crisis, on many front. The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions must begin without any further delay in the major emitting countries of the South and not just of the North.

In this context, the settlement of “ecological debt” to the South must not be allowed to favour world capitalist development and benefit either the Japanese-Western transnational corporations implanted in the South or the transnational corporations of the South (such as Brazilian agribusiness, etc.), which would only generate ever more social and environmental crises.

There is certainly always the need for “North-South solidarity“, for example in defence of the victims of climate chaos. However, more than ever, it is a common “anti-systemic” struggle that is on the agenda in “North-South” relations from the point of view of the working classes: that is to say a common fight for an anti-capitalist alternative, another conception of development in the “North” as in the “South”.

The starting point is the socio-environmental struggle to “change the system, not the climate”; its base is composed of social movements and not just specific coalitions on the climate. We must therefore work on the articulation between the two. If we do not “ecologize” the social struggle (following the example of what has already happened in peasant and urban struggles), the numerical expansion of “climate” mobilizations will remain on the surface of things.

As a result of the rising global temperature, the ice caps are shrinking, sea levels are rising, water tables dry up, deserts extend, fresh water becomes rarer, agriculture is under threat and extreme weather events are becoming more frequent. The effects of super-typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines surpassed in scale what we had already been warned about. The future that is announced is already part of the present. This has destabilizing consequences that extend far beyond the regions that are directly affected and gives rise to a series of crises (see the tensions between Bangladesh and India on the issue of migrating refugees, or inter-state conflicts for the control of water reserves). The organization of victims of climate chaos, their defence and support for their self-organization are very much part of the very basis of the climate struggle.

Another key issue is food sovereignty that gives people the rights and means to define their own food systems. It would give control to those who produce, distribute and consume food rather than to the corporations and market institutions that dominate the global food system. It would mean an end to land grabs and would require extensive land redistribution to put the land in the hands of those who produce food.

Possibly the biggest single most damaging aspect of the environmental crisis is the impact it is having on biodiversity – what is called ‘the sixth extinction’. Our own future as a species cannot be separated from this crisis of biodiversity.

VIII. A world of permanent wars

We have well and truly entered a world of permanent wars (plural). This situation of permanent war does not only relate to international conflicts. It also characterises the internal situation in some countries in Africa or in Latin America, such as Mexico.

Wars are here to stay, with many faces. We need to look again at how they are conducted, particularly by popular resistance movements, in order to better understand the conditions of a struggle, the reality of a situation, the concrete requirements of solidarity ... To do this every war must be analysed in its specificities. We are confronted with very complex situations, like the Middle East where, in the framework of a single theatre of operations (Iraq-Syria), there are interlocking conflicts with specific characteristics that feed tensions and contradictions between progressive forces.

However, we must keep a compass point in a very complex geopolitical situation: class independence against imperialism, against militarism, against fascism and against the rise of identity movements' that are “anti-solidarity” (racist, Islamophobic and anti-Semitic, xenophobic, casteist, fundamentalist, homophobic, misogynistic, masculinist...).

Whoever says war should say anti-war movement. Since the wars are very different from each other, the building of anti-war movements in synergy is not obvious. Yet, in Asia in particular, there are perennial anti-war movements. Strategically speaking, on the Eurasian continent, overcoming the borders inherited from the Cold War will take place particularly over this question.

We must affirm our solidarity with all populations that are victims of militarism, with all the popular resistance to the wars provoked by the neoliberal order and the ambitions of state powers. New attention must be paid to the fight for universal nuclear disarmament, after the adoption of a treaty for that purpose at the UN and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the organization that was its lynchpin (ICAN- International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons).

IX. The limits of the superpower

The common set of rules of the global capitalist order does not prevent some countries from being more equal than others; the United States takes the liberty of doing things it does not allow to others. It uses the position of the dollar to “export” its “right” to legal proceedings; controls much of the most advanced technologies, and has at its disposal unmatched military power. Its state continues to maintain global sovereign functions that others, in the Western world, no longer have – or no longer have the means of having. The novelty, however, is that during the last decade it has had to face a China whose government is piloting its international expansion, so that the US no longer has the monopoly in this domain.

The United States remains the only superpower in the world – and yet, it has lost all the wars that it has engaged in, from Afghanistan to Somalia. The fault lies perhaps in neoliberal globalization, which prohibits it from consolidating socially (in alliance with local elites) its temporary military gains. This can also be a consequence of the privatization of armies, of firms of mercenaries playing an increasing role, as well as the “unofficial” armed gangs in the service of particular interests (big companies, big land and business-owning families...).

It is also the case that this power, as “super” as it might be, does not have the means to intervene in every direction in conditions of generalized structural instability. It would require secondary imperialisms capable of supporting it. France and Britain have now only very limited capacities. Brexit is a severe blow to the constitution of a unified European imperialism: the United Kingdom commands one of the only two significant armies of the Union.

The election of Donald Trump and his unilateral declarations posed in acute terms an older problem: to what extent is the “strategic umbrella” assured by the United States guaranteed? The answer is clear: to an uncertain extent. The hawks of the Japanese right draw the consequences. What will happen in Western Europe? Imperialist Germany is under pressure. Can it continue to take advantage of its dominant economic position without assuming military responsibilities? The EU crisis, Russian pressure and Washington's stance pose objectively the question of German rearmament - although (like in Japan) hostility to militarism is very deep in the population.

The current Japanese government unashamedly displays its nationalist and militaristic ambitions. However, it must still break the civic resistance to the completion of its rearmament (aircraft carriers, nuclear weapons ...). These resistances are particularly strong in Okinawa Island, where the largest US military bases are located. More generally, the historical memory of the Japanese invasion of Asia, initiating the Second World War in the Far East, is far from being dispelled. The Japanese archipelago is certainly a centrepiece of the United States domination system in the North Pacific. However, Tokyo is still unable to assume direct international geopolitical responsibilities and thus support Washington. In addition, Donald Trump's erratic politics and his lack of opinion of his allies do not make Abe Shinzo's task any easier.

Neither in the west, in Europe, nor in the east, in Asia, can US imperialism rely on reliable and effective allies.

X. Internationalism against campism

There is no longer a “non-” or “anti-” capitalist *great power* (a category to which Cuba does not belong). We must draw all the conclusions from this.

In the past, without ever aligning ourselves with Beijing's diplomacy, we defended the People's Republic of China (and the dynamics of the revolution) against the Japan-US imperialist alliance – we were in this sense in its camp.

We were opposed to NATO, whatever we thought of the Stalinist regime; we were not however “campist” because that did not limit our struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy. We were simply acting in a world where there was an articulation of lines of conflict: revolutions/counter-revolutions, East/West and Sino-Soviet blocs. This is no longer the case today.

“Campist” logic has always led to the abandonment of victims (those who happen to find themselves on the wrong side) in the name of fighting against the “main enemy”. This is even truer today than in the past, because it leads to lining up in the camp of a *capitalist* power (Russia, China) – or on the contrary in the Western camp when Moscow and Beijing are seen as the primary threat. In this way aggressive nationalism is encouraged and the borders inherited from the era of “blocs” are sanctified, whereas they are precisely what we should efface.

Campism can also lead to supporting the murderous Assad regime in Syria and the Russian intervention – or the coalition under US hegemony, including in particular Saudi Arabia. Even faced with the martyring of Aleppo, a section of the international radical left continued to look elsewhere, so as not to break with its campist tradition. Other currents content themselves with condemning the imperialist intervention in Iraq and Syria (which we must certainly do), but without saying what the Islamic State is doing and calling for resistance to it.

This type of position makes it impossible to pose clearly *the whole range* of solidarity tasks. To recall the historic responsibility of imperialism, from the intervention in 2003 to the undeclared objectives of the present Syrian-Iraqi intervention, to denounce one’s own imperialism, is not enough. It is necessary to think about the concrete tasks of solidarity *from the point of view of the needs (humanitarian, political and material) of the populations who are victims and of the movements engaged in struggle*. Which cannot be done without also attacking the Assad regime and the counter-revolutionary fundamentalist movements.

Similarly in the case of conflicts at the border that currently divides eastern Europe, as in the case of Ukraine, our orientation has been to fight in every European country, in or outside the EU, for another Europe based on free association of sovereign peoples against all relations of domination (national, social) – which means for us socialism.

XI. Humanitarian crisis

Neoliberal policies, war, climate chaos, economic convulsions, social breakdowns, exacerbated violence, pogroms, the collapse of social protection systems, devastating epidemics, women reduced to slavery, dying children, forced migration... Triumphant capitalism, unbridled, is giving birth to a world where humanitarian crises multiply.

The disintegration of the social order has impacted the state head-on in countries like Pakistan. In Latin America, especially in Mexico, the decomposition of capitalism has not led to the emergence of a new fascism, but it has transformed the marginal criminal gangs operating underground into power groups associated with the dominant political class and international financial capital. They are extending their networks to the rest of Latin America and the United States. In addition to drug trafficking, these gangs are involved in the kidnapping and trafficking of women. They control large strips of territory and have a social base. The so-called war on drug trafficking, disputes between different criminal gangs and collateral damage have produced more deaths than the Iraq war. Their existence facilitates capitalist accumulation by dispossession through expelling thousands of peasants and indigenous peoples from their lands, to the benefit of transnationals mainly engaged in extractivism. It justifies the militarization and criminalization of social protest. Although they do not have a political profile, these bands underpin the process of capital accumulation and promote a misogynist, sexist, homophobic and xenophobic culture. They offer a breeding ground for the formation of paramilitary groups at the service of the oligarchy.

Under the pressure of the extreme looting and extractivism of Africa's natural resources, land and water grabs, one of the world's greatest refugee and migration crisis has been playing out for several decades. The vast majority of refugees and migrants fleeing their homes are from Africa but contrary to current myths most of these refugees (4.5 million) remain "located" in Africa. In the coming years it is estimated that 10 to 20 million Africans will be driven from their homes as a result of capitalist induced climate change.

Instead of being strengthened faced with this urgency, humanitarian law is trampled by national states. The European Union does not even pretend to respect international law regarding the reception of refugees. The wicked agreement negotiated with Turkey is an illustration. The same applies to the fate of the Rohingya in Southeast Asia.

Unlimited violence often appears openly. Hyper-violence is no longer denied, but staged, as the Islamic state does. Femicide in countries such as Argentina or Mexico takes particularly extreme forms: impaled, burned bodies. Equally horrific is the "traditional" violence of "honour crimes" (in which rebels against the patriarchal order are buried alive ...).

Since George W. Bush and the attacks of September 11, 2001, the very humanity of the enemy is denied by a growing number of governments. In the name of the struggle between Good and Evil, "humanitarian war" has indeed been liberated from humanitarian law and the law of war: the "absolute" enemy no longer has any right – they rot in the "black hole" of Guantanamo and the secret prisons of the CIA located in different countries.

This modern barbarism must be met with a widening of internationalist fields of action. Militant left currents and social movements in particular must ensure the development of solidarity "from people to people" and from "social movement to social movement" with the victims of the humanitarian crisis.

After a period when the very concept of internationalism was often disparaged, the global justice wave, then the multiplication of "occupations" of public squares or districts, have restored it to its full importance. Now it is necessary for this revived internationalism to find more permanent forms of action, on all the terrains of contestation. This will not happen spontaneously, we can see a shrinking of the meaning of solidarity or its practice in too many countries.

XII. A globalized class war

Globalized capitalism leads a globalized class war.

its goals are not conjunctural. It does not seek to impose a historic compromise that is more favourable to it than the bourgeoisie had to accept after the Second World War - it wants to reign without having to compromise with the popular classes. It imposes no a priori limit to its offensive. Thus it imposes a new order.

The brutality of this attack is provoking a fight back, sometimes on a mass scale. Today, the international scope of 8 March 2017 and the repeated mobilizations of women from Argentina to Poland, from India to Iran, from Tunisia to the Spanish State, or from Italy, from Turkey to Mexico, from the United States to Pakistan bear striking witness to this. They suffer head on the combined effects of neoliberalism, social precarity, the rise of reactionary and counterrevolutionary currents, wars, violence and femicide. Beyond the multiplicity of situations and demands, women in struggle often find themselves at the forefront of collective resistance to the new global disorder.

In a balance of forces that remains unfavourable, democratic and social resistance offers stepping-stones for rebuilding the initiative of the popular and anti-capitalist movements (see the resolution adopted on these issues by

the World Congress).

There remain many “open” questions about the dynamics of globalized capitalism, particularly in economic matters, and their strategic implications. To name a few: A new financial crisis threatens, without us knowing what will be the detonator and the consequences. Will computer-related technological innovations finally have a significant effect on labour productivity? Are we entering a period of long stagnation? Can significant sectors of the bourgeoisie choose a new protectionism while free trade agreements are still widening? Do global warming and the overall ecological crisis contribute to imposing absolute limits on capitalist development? Collective analytical work on the questions must continue.

Whatever the answer to these questions, the increasing precarization of employment and the general living conditions, the destruction of the social fabric will continue in most countries. Oppressions will be accentuated if interlocking solidarities do not oppose them with sufficient force. The ravages of the ecological crisis will spread. Geopolitical instability will be further worsened.

The historical alternative “socialism or barbarism” takes on today its full meaning – and gives its full meaning to the internationalist battle to which we are committed.

This resolution was adopted by 109 for, 5 against, 1 abstention, 0 No votes

PS:

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