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Fascism

Neofascism, Imperialism, War, and Revolution in the Middle East

- Features -

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This interview was conducted online on March 30, 2025, by Rodrigo Utrera, a student of sociology at the University of Chile. (Email: rodrigo.utrera@ug.uchile.cl) He is a member of the Editorial Committee of *Actuel Marx Intervenciones* in Chile. The interview was first published in Spanish in that journal (no. 35, August 2025), in an issue dedicated to examining war and its mutations in the twenty-first century.

Introduction The New Cold War and Its Dangers

Rodrigo Utrera: First, Gilbert, we thank you for the time you gave us for these conversations about the mutation of war in the twenty-first century, especially about your knowledge of the Middle East and North Africa, as part of your work on international relations. In the first place, we have some short questions to introduce the conversation.

Gilbert Achcar: You're most welcome.

RU: If we introduce some global view of the problem, it is important to understand imperialist strategy in this context. The war between Russia and Ukraine and the trade competition between China and the United States generate in a lot of people in the world many ideas about a terminal crisis in United States imperialism. Some more optimistic people have supported the BRICS initiative, which has already expanded to include new countries. And others, like Michael Roberts [1] for example, have some criticism about the return of campism on the left. So, the question is how you define the confrontation between powerful countries at this moment. Do you think it's like an inter-imperialist confrontation? Is it a new cold war? That's our question to begin with.

GA: First of all, it is important to emphasize that it does not make much sense to speak of a terminal crisis of U.S. imperialism. U.S. imperialism is unfortunately far from dead. And what is happening is a mutation of U.S. imperialism. What is ending is what I call the Atlanticist liberal order that has built up since the Second World War. And its government institutions like NATO, like the treaties between Washington and Japan, and Washington and South Korea. This international liberal order was supposedly built on rules, but that was always a big lie, because Western powers never really abided by any rules, except their own, especially the United States. So, what we have seen is the beginning of the collapse of this liberal international order, this Atlanticist liberalism. And this does not begin with Donald Trump, contrary to what many people believe. Biden and the war in Gaza were a key moment in that, especially due to the huge contrast between the attitude of the United States toward Ukraine and its attitude toward Gaza. This showed in the crudest possible way the hypocrisy and inconsistency of the so-called Atlantic liberalism. They could say that the United States was defending a relatively liberal government in Ukraine against a Russian regime that could arguably be described as neofascist. But then, the same United States fully endorsed a genocidal war waged by a coalition of neofascist and neo-Nazis in Israel. That's the true character of the Israeli government. It is a coalition of neofascists, Likud, and neo-Nazis, such as Itamar Ben-Gvir, Bezalel Smotrich, and other people. And so this huge contradiction was the final nail in the coffin of Atlanticist liberalism, the whole so-called international liberal order. What Trump is doing is taking this process to the extreme, to the ultimate logical conclusion, getting rid of any pretense of liberalism. Trump has zero pretense of being liberal, pro-human rights, or whatever. The "free world" ideology of the Cold War, that's very far from Donald Trump. He doesn't care about free or not free. Actually, his administration openly supports the international far right, from Milei, to Bolsonaro, to Narendra Modi, to of course all the European neofascists.

This is a huge historical mutation, absolutely huge. In my view, it is even more important than the end of the Cold War. Because you had the end of the Cold War and then it was followed by a new Cold War for twenty-five years. But now we are getting into a complete reconfiguration of international relations. We entered into what I called the age of neofascism. As you had the age of fascism in the 1930s, we are now in an age of neofascism, which is worse because today the most important imperialist power is leading the neofascist coalition. In the 1930s, the United States was the bulwark against the rise of fascism. It was defending liberalism, if you want, with the British. Now this is dead. This is completely dead as a role of the United States, and this is something of tremendous consequence in every field: political, ideological, and ecological, because these people are very much climate denier pro fossil fuel. So that's the situation in which we are now.

RU: Well, about something you mentioned. We have some questions because you exchanged some opinions about the crisis with another British Marxist, Alex Callinicos. He talks about a new age of catastrophe. [2] In that view, we know that revolutionary Marxism has some difficulty in characterizing the stage we are living in in the twenty-first century. So, the question is what do you think about the concept of a new age that Callinicos describes, and do you think this new era comes after the Covid-19 pandemic or was its origin a long time ago? And also, do you think this age has some similar points with the age of war and revolutions that Lenin pronounced in 1914?

GA: First of all, the age of catastrophe is a rhetorical formula. It does not characterize politically what's happening. Of course, we are facing a lot of catastrophes, right? Climate, pandemics, etc. There are a lot of very big problems facing the planet today. But calling it the "new age of catastrophe" is a literary choice of the author. When I speak of the age of neofascism, I mean something that really starts with the second Trump presidency, as a culmination of a process that developed over twenty years. The key point here is this rise of far right forces, far right governments, far right regimes and their convergence, the convergence between them. As we can see, even between Trump in the United States and Putin in Russia. Because Trump and his administration have more ideological affinities with Vladimir Putin than they have with Zelensky or with the European liberal governments of France, Germany, Britain, and such countries. So this is the key point we have to understand. And as for war and revolution, to be frank, we are unfortunately not in an age of war and revolution. We are in an age of war without revolution. There's no revolution on the horizon now. We have to be clear.

RU: Maybe it's more similar to the situation of the 1930s?

GA: No, because in the 1930s or in 1914, as you mentioned, with the famous analysis on war and revolution, you had a huge workers' movement that was still socialist. You had social democrats, you had people who later called themselves communist, but they had in common that they were anti-capitalist working class forces, and they were very big forces. And when you had the war, you had the rise of these forces, and especially you had the Russian revolution, the German revolution, the Hungarian revolution, and other uprisings. In the 1930s, you had the rise of fascism, but in the face of fascism, you had the communist movement, led by the Soviet Union, and you had a clash between the two. Of course, you had a brief period of truce between them, between 1939 and 1941, but basically they were in fierce opposition. And the communist movement, worldwide, managed to grow tremendously during the Second World War, which led to taking power in China, Vietnam, and Korea, while in many European countries, you had communist parties becoming huge and playing a key role in the politics. So there's no way to compare the situation of today unfortunately to that. The workers' movement is weaker than at any point, the organized workers' movement. This translates even into very low unionization rates in most countries. There are no powerful working class parties. Most of the left has gone completely into a neoliberal mutation and that applies to social democracy. Others were not able to do an aggiornamento, to adapt to the new age, to the new century, to the new conditions. They have not really drawn the lessons from the collapse of Stalinism and all that.

There is a welcome rise of youth movements on ecology, on gender, on identity policy, on anti-racism, but look at the difference between this and 1968 when you had huge student movements everywhere led by Marxists. Today the youth movement is not Marxist. We have to face the truth. So, from that point of view, I wrote explaining that in some

way, this present age of neofascism is even more dangerous than the previous one. Because the balance of forces is worse than it was even in the 1930s. I wrote that in my article on the age of neofascism. [3]

It may be unlikely that there will be a new world war, but the impact of neofascism on the global climate crisis, which is a major threat to humanity, is huge. Not to mention every other regression that is happening. Just look at what the United States is doing in terms of cutting aid, pushing millions of people into poverty. So, we are in a very dangerous epoch, and we have to be very much aware of that.

Of course, the hope is that the new generation, young people, will be able to build mass movements, new anti-capitalist movements, that can take up all these struggles in an intersectional way. Take the issues of race, gender, and climate and combine them with the class perspective, the anti-capitalist perspective. But the truth is that the balance of forces today is quite weak. There are some encouraging signs like the mass resistance in Turkey to the neofascist turn of Erdogan. We'll have to see who wins: the mass movement or this neofascist regime? These are encouraging signs, but we are still far from the emergence of the kind of movement that is needed to fight back, defeat neofascism, and push forward the fight against capitalism.

Clash of Barbarisms and Arab Revolts in the Twenty-first Century Understanding Imperialism and Counter-revolution in the Middle East

RU: Now that we have a global point of view, we want to move to the question about imperialism and counter-revolution in the Middle East. Especially about a concept that you use in your works, because it's very interesting to us. This describes the confrontation between two forces: first, imperialism, and second, fundamentalist forces that, in many cases, have their origins in imperialism itself. We are talking about the concept of the clash of barbarisms. Can you explain this concept to us? Also, an important aspect: when you define the element of Islamic fundamentalism, are you considering only the Sunni jihadist movements or are you also talking about Khomeinist movements supported by Iran?

GA: Well, I wrote my book *The Clash of Barbarisms* in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. It was in a way a counter-thesis to that of Huntington about the clash of civilizations. [4] What I explained in the book is that these were not civilizations clashing, but the barbarism that each civilization produces. Each civilization produces some type of barbarism which in time of crisis can take over. And this is how I interpreted what was happening at the time between the barbarism of the United States (and their hubris after the collapse of the Soviet Union) and the countereffect of that barbarism in the Islamic radicalization of forces that are politically and ideologically deeply reactionary. Of course in the case of jihadist forces like Al Qaeda or the Islamic State (ISIS), I think that should be obvious, but the issue is more general. All religious fundamentalist forces are reactionary and Islam is no exception. We immediately understand that Christian fundamentalist forces are reactionary. I really always wonder why some Western leftists can't understand that the same applies to Islamic fundamentalism. All fundamentalism: Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Hindu, whatever. By definition, fundamentalism is a reactionary ideology. Socially, culturally, ideologically, politically. And that's what we have.

Now, ten years after 2001, you had in 2011 the beginning of what was called the Arab Spring. That was the result of a deep structural social economic crisis in the Middle East and North Africa in Arabic-speaking countries. In my analysis, this deep crisis from the start produced what I called a long-term revolutionary process. The region entered into a long-term process of decades. Now, in this process, you had a peculiarity. It was not the usual revolution versus counter-revolution. It was something specific: a triangle of revolution and two counter revolutions. One counter revolution represented by the old regime, the existing regimes, and another counter-revolution represented by

opposition forces of a reactionary character. And that complicated the whole picture. In this part of the world, the left has been atrophied historically. It's quite weak. It played some disproportionate role in 2011. Then you had the second wave of the Arab Spring in 2019 and again you had some disproportionate role of the left, but that was not enough to change. And that's why there has been a historical failure until now. But this does not mean that the revolutionary process is dead, because as long as you have the structural crisis, the crisis of the mode of production, the specific capitalism that exists in this part of the world, as long as we have this crisis, it will produce new uprisings. It will produce a new crisis. The big question is whether the new generations will be able to build a strong movement that is capable of leading social, economic, and political change. That's a very big challenge to be frank. There is no reason to be optimistic because the regimes in the region are ferocious and they are backed by both U.S. imperialism and Russia. This makes the situation very difficult. But we still see nevertheless then and now some rise of mass movements. The future is a big question mark. But the crisis will not be solved unless you have radical change.

RU: Now that we have this concept, the clash of barbarisms, we want to delve into a characteristic of wars in the Arab context. The Western press sometimes uses the concept of proxy war. We could say it's fashionable among mainstream journalism. We can define it, vulgarly, as a confrontation in which a state uses a third parastatal force against its enemies. A force that the first state has trained and financed. According to the mainstream press in the West, this technique, this method of confrontation, has been especially prevalent in the Arab world in recent decades. The question is: how do you interpret this concept, from the perspective of the clash of barbarisms?

GA: About the proxy wars, I think the concept is reductionist because it denies the agency of local actors. So it represents local actors as puppets, used by foreign actors. Now, if we mean by proxy war the fact that when you have war in some countries, soon afterwards you have foreign states intervening in support of one or another faction, this definitely exists in the region. For example, the war in Libya. You have on one side Turkey and Qatar supporting the forces based in Tripoli—in the west of Libya—and you have Russia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt supporting the forces in the east, in Benghazi, led by Khalifa Haftar. If you take the war in Yemen, you had direct intervention from the Saudi Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates in the war, and Iran was backing the other side, the Houthis. So you could also say it's a proxy war, but again this is reductionist.

These wars are used as a proxy war by these foreign states, but there is also a local agency of the actors that are clashing. The Sudan war is the same. You can find on one side the United Arab Emirates and Russia. On the other side you have Egypt and the Saudis. And you had some changes recently in the positions of these states, especially Russia. So it's normal that wherever you have a civil war, you will have people intervening in support of one of the two camps. After all if you think of the Spanish Civil War, you had the Axis Powers, Italy and Germany, supporting Franco. And you had the United States, France, and Britain supporting the Republican camp as well as the Soviet Union of course. So that's not something new.

The thesis of a proxy war was mostly invoked about Ukraine. Again, this was a denial of agency. If you say this is just a proxy war between the United States and NATO and on the other hand Russia, you are denying the agency of the Ukrainians because that's their country. Their country has been invaded. They are fighting an invasion. And in some sense the Russian vision of Ukraine is a colonial one. It denies even the right of Ukraine to exist as a state. So it's true that in part this war has been a war between Russia and the Western bloc, but there is also the fight of the Ukrainians and here I make a distinction. I think that it's absolutely fair and right that they defend themselves and defend their population against Russian aggression. But at the same time, of course, I support anything that could lead to a peaceful settlement and I am not at all in the logic of nationalist maximalism. I think you can find this kind of maximalism in Ukrainian nationalism and it is supported by some European countries like Britain. It translates in the support for the Ukrainians' right to fight on until they liberate all the territories invaded since 2014. That doesn't make sense. That would mean a very, very long war, a very costly war. So you have to find a balance in the position in what is a complex issue and not settle it with simplistic formulas.

RU: You mention some interesting points, because we can think that proxy war is a reductionist concept because the Western press forgets that a long time ago, during the Cold War, the imperialist states used mercenary forces in many countries, for example to fight against the Cuban revolution. We have the case of Chile where the United States financed a lot of conservative press, conspiratorial and fascist groups, etc. So I say, it is not something new.

GA: Yes, absolutely. And the example of Chile that you're raising is very good. I mean, of course the United States supported Pinochet. That's well known. But does this mean that Pinochet was just a puppet of the United States and he would not have acted without a green light from the United States? No, I don't think so. I think that he and the part of the army that were deeply reactionary and opposed to the government would have acted anyway, and were betting on support from the United States if needed. So again, this idea of proxy war can be very reductionist and simplistic, whereas we have to understand the complexity of local politics. The local actors have their own interests and their own aspirations, and the same goes for the foreign actors that intervene in this situation in support of one camp or another.

RU: Exactly. We want to ask you about one important actor in the Middle East because it's very interesting and some new generations of left militants don't know the origin of the regime of that country. We are talking about the Islamic Republic of Iran. So, what is the origin of the Iranian Revolution of 1979? Why did that event have a lot of influence on the future of the country? How can we explain that revolution passed to history as an Islamic Revolution, although it had an important participation of a workers' movement and also some workers' councils, known as Shoras?

GA: Well, that's another good illustration of what we have discussed. Iran had accumulated under the Shah a lot of social and economic problems. And the country reached an explosive condition. There, in Iran, two competing forces participated in the revolution. One was revolutionary, the workers' movement and the left. The other was a counter-revolutionary force, the reactionary clergy, led by Ruhollah Khomeini. And that was a big party because you had something like one mullah for every 320 people in Iran. It was a huge party. So what happened? In 1981, I wrote a piece drawing a parallel between the Russian revolution and the Iranian revolution. In both cases, you had an in part spontaneous, not fully, but in part spontaneous mass movement of protest against a regime that had become hated by the great mass of the people. And then what happens in the Russian case is that one force, which is the most radical, the Bolsheviks, managed to lead the process, to take the leadership of the process and turn it into an anti-capitalist revolution. In Iran you had a mass uprising, a revolutionary situation, but the force that managed to lead the process was the reactionary clergy that took it into a reactionary direction, into establishing a theocracy. The Iranian regime has long been the only theocratic regime, aside from the Vatican. There are today the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Houthis in Yemen, theocratic regimes where constitutional power is in the hands of the religious, of the clergy. And this is again extremely reactionary and only what I call Orientalists in reverse, that is people who invert western orientalism. Where western orientalism put minus signs on Islam, you have some people, including people on the left, who reverse that and put plus signs on everything Islamic.

Now this theocratic regime emerged as very much anti-American because the United States was the main backer of the Shah, the previous regime. The Khomeinist regime was a very ideological and sectarian regime on the basis of Shiism, which is the majority branch of Islam in Iran. They were first attacked by Iraq, leading to eight years of war that actually allowed the clergy to centralize its power more firmly in Tehran. And later, when the United States invaded Iraq, Iran took full advantage of this to spread its influence into Iraq where the majority is Shia, the same branch of Islam. They managed therefore to become more influential in Iraq than the United States: the U.S. invasion of Iraq was a total failure from that point of view.

And then, in 2012 you had the Syrian Civil War. Iran intervened, contradicting its ideological logic, because Syria saw a clash between a regime that called itself socialist and secular and forces that were Sunni Islamic fundamentalist. But Iran supported the so-called socialist secular regime on the basis of sectarianism because the leading group in

the Syrian regime belonged to a branch of Shiism. They acted according to a sectarian logic, not a general Islamic ideological logic. They engaged in building a corridor of a sectarian character from Iran to the Mediterranean Sea, including Shia militants in Iraq, the Assad regime in Syria, and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

RU: The forces you mentioned are some type of defense alliance that Iran names the Axis of Resistance.

GA: Yes, that's what they call it, but if you look at it, it's primarily a sectarian axis. It is based on sectarianism above all, even though, of course, Iran played the card of opposition to Israel in its ideological battle against the Arab States of the Gulf and especially the Saudi Kingdom. At some point the Obama administration wanted to appease them, and went into a negotiation with them on the nuclear issue to prevent their developing a nuclear weapon. This led to an agreement between the Obama administration and other European states and the Iranian government. That agreement was revoked by Donald Trump during his first term in 2018. The Iranian regime reacted by developing its nuclear capabilities and enriching its uranium. And also expanding its Axis of Resistance, as they call it: from Iran into Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen, plus Hamas, which they supported as well as Islamic Jihad in Palestine.

RU: So maybe one element important in clarifying the character of Iran and its Axis is to understand not only its geopolitical actions but also to understand the class character of the regime, because it can clarify for comrades on the left the position and role that Iran plays in the Middle East.

GA: Well, the Iranian regime is a capitalist state with peculiarities, with the existence of large institutions controlled by the clergy and the existence of the Revolutionary Guards who are a parallel military organization controlling an economic empire. This is not exceptional in the region. In Egypt, for instance, the army controls an economic empire. So you have the same in some way with the Revolutionary Guards in Iran. But it is a capitalist and even neoliberal regime, with such peculiarities related to its ideological character and the fact that it is a theocracy. This is very specific. It's not an ordinary capitalist state, of course. Now, Iran in its confrontation with the United States and with Israel has a just cause, because opposing U.S. imperialism and opposing Zionism are just. In that sense one can support Iran against Washington or Israel. We shouldn't be neutral on this. But this does not mean that Iran or Hezbollah are progressive forces. They are not. They mix opposition to Israel and to America with a reactionary social and economic program.

RU: And it is interesting to note that there isn't a 100 percent ideological or political harmony within this Axis, because we have some cases, like the recent fall of the Assad regime, in which Hamas celebrated Assad's fall. This can be confusing to some people.

GA: Well, that was an opportunist position. Hamas has been very opportunist in the case of Syria. At the beginning of the Syrian Civil War, they supported the opposition because of the role of the Muslim Brotherhood as the key force in the opposition. Hamas itself is a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. Then later on because of their need for Iranian support, they shifted their position and reconciled with the Assad regime. Now, after the Assad regime collapsed last autumn you had a rise of Islamic Sunni forces in Syria. And the Muslim Brotherhood is part of what you have today in Syria. So Hamas shifted their position in support of the new regime. In summary, Iran supports, first, the forces that are organically linked to Iran, to Shi'ism, Shia forces. And secondly, it supports Sunni fundamentalist forces that are anti-U.S. and anti-Israel. It supported the Muslim Brotherhood for many years before the Syrian Civil War and then the relations between Tehran and the Muslim Brotherhood deteriorated. They supported Hamas for a while, then the relationship at some point deteriorated but was resumed later on. They support another group in Gaza that is closer to them, Islamic Jihad.

RU: Gilbert, now that we have more clarity on the issue of Iran and the Axis of Resistance, we want to ask about the Arab Spring before going straight to October 7. Sometimes, people on the left talk about the uprisings of 2011 in the Arab World as "Color Revolutions." This is a controversial concept. Some use it to

refer to nonviolent tactics of popular mobilization, while others use it to describe the role played by imperialism through the CIA, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), or the Open Society. It is hard to deny that this strategy of cultural and media insertion played an important role in post-Soviet Eastern Europe. However, is it possible to speak of the Arab Spring uprisings as “color revolutions”? Did the United States use these methods?

GA: The only people who described what happened in the Arab World in 2011 as color revolutions were campist people, supporters of the Assad regime, supporters of Iran, supporters of all this. And it does not make any sense because the first uprising was in Tunisia against a very pro-western regime. The second uprising was in Egypt, against a very pro-western U.S.-linked regime. Then you had an uprising in Libya and some people on the left believed that Libya was anti-imperialist, but since 2003 Kadhafi had shifted and established close relations with the imperialist powers of the United States, Britain, Italy, and the rest. And then you had Yemen where the regime again was closely linked to the United States. You had an uprising in Bahrain, which is an oil monarchy, of course linked to U.S. imperialism. So to call these uprisings against regimes, most of which were pro-Western or friends of Western imperialism, to call them color revolutions, meaning that there was some kind of invisible hand of Washington behind them, was absurd, completely absurd. This view of things developed because of the U.S. and NATO intervention in Libya in 2011 and mostly because of the civil war in Syria, where the regime of Assad was backed by Iran and later by Russia and the opposition was backed by various Arab oil monarchies. This led to a neo-campist perspective, as I call it.

The old campism consisted in blind support for the Soviet Union. With neo-campism, there is no single state that neo-campists relate to, but neo-campism consists in the automatic support of any forces that the United States opposes. The logic is “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.” Thus any force that is the enemy of Washington is my friend. And this leads to extremely bad positions such as support for Assad, which was a terribly murderous dictatorship with an absolutely barbaric prison system in which tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of people were caught, many of them dying there. A regime that has been a reactionary capitalist regime. But the fact that Washington opposed this regime and some of the Gulf monarchies also were opposed to it, led some people to support it. The whole depiction of what happened in the Arab region as a color revolution is just completely out of touch with reality. You could say that in Eastern Europe, in some of the events that happened there, there was some interference of U.S. organizations. Even then, you cannot deny the agency of the local people. This is a very conspiratorial vision of the history of the world that is the exact replica of that of the reactionary regimes. Whenever there is a popular movement rising up, the reactionary regimes say that it is led by foreign powers. And likewise some people on the left, when there is a popular movement rising up against a regime that they believe is anti-imperialist, they say that it is manipulated by foreign powers.

Toward Regional War? From October 7th to the Imperialist Attack against the Entire Middle East

RU: Gilbert, with all that is happening now, it is possible to venture the hypothesis of a de facto regional war. Perhaps, we could review some of the most significant events since October 7 in order to understand this situation.

GA: Well, when October 7, 2023, happened, Iran faced a dilemma because Hamas didn't consult them about this operation. And yet Hamas asked them openly to join it in the war. So, either they entered the war more fully and took huge risks of the United States attacking them, or they didn't do anything and lost face, appearing as cowards. What they chose was a middle way. Limited war through Hezbollah in Lebanon, a limited exchange in a limited territory on each side of the border between Lebanon and Israel, an exchange of fire that continued for almost one year within

limits. Israel didn't want to escalate because it was fully engaged in Gaza. Then after one year, the Israelis basically had occupied all of Gaza. They were continuing the genocide, but the major part of the war was behind them. So, they turned toward Lebanon. And they ran an attack that came as a full surprise to Hezbollah. They managed to decapitate Hezbollah basically in a few days.

RU: Yes, they used this massive electronic technique, blowing up the pagers and walkie-talkies of Hezbollah militants.

GA: Yes, but most importantly Israel directly killed Nasrallah and others very soon after. In a few days, they decapitated Hezbollah. And Hezbollah had to agree to withdraw from the border and go north, and even to agree on a settlement that calls for its own disarmament. So Hezbollah has been weakened a lot. And when this happened, you had the offensive of Islamic fundamentalist forces in Syria against the Syrian regime, seizing the opportunity of Hezbollah being so weakened that they could no longer support Assad as they did in the past. And Russia being involved in Ukraine had removed most of its planes from Syria. The Assad regime was standing on two legs, Iran and Russia. These two legs collapsed and so the whole regime collapsed very quickly. This further weakened, and very much so, Hezbollah and the whole Iran Axis; the corridor got closed. Iran doesn't have the means to send arms to Hezbollah as they did after 2006, the previous war of Israel on Hezbollah, which was very destructive already. However, very quickly after that war, Hezbollah rebuilt its military force and even became much stronger than before 2006. This time this will not be possible because of the fall of Assad in Syria, which was the main bridge over which Hezbollah was getting weapons. Syria is now on the opposite side if you want. So, Iran has been very much weakened and then you had this exchange of attacks between Iran and Israel. Now, Netanyahu is waiting for an opportunity to convince the Trump administration to join him in an attack on the nuclear facilities of Iran. That's what Netanyahu wants. Trump has tried to offer the Iranian leadership a negotiated settlement, but he did it in such a way that it looked actually like asking them to capitulate. Iran rejected what might look like capitulation under threat, and therefore the likelihood of war and attack of Israel and the United States on the nuclear facilities of Iran is quite high.

RU: And also Trump attacked the Houthis in Yemen, one of the key allies of Iran.

GA: Yes, although it is a different story. Trump and his administration are very much anti-Iran, that's very obvious, much more than the Biden administration, and they say that the Biden government did not react forcefully enough against the Houthis when they started throwing missiles at U.S. ships in the Red Sea. Trump wants to demonstrate that he is much stronger in imposing U.S. imperialist will. That's why he is attacking Yemen and you can expect more of that, along with the possibility, as I said, of a direct attack from the U.S. and Israel against Iran.

RU: Yes. I think it is interesting because Hezbollah in this moment is weakened, Syria's regime has fallen, and Trump attacked the Houthis before Netanyahu went back on the offensive against Gaza, aggressively breaking the ceasefire. I'm referring to an elaborate strategy to wear down all of Iran's regional allies while continuing the genocidal offensive that has been deployed since October 2023.

GA: Well, the Houthis have continued to attack U.S. ships in the Red Sea. And of course, U.S. imperialism cannot tolerate seeing its ships attacked in international waters. The Red Sea is an international waterway. And that's why Trump is reacting in this way. Now, the Houthis are no big threat. Militarily, they are certainly not a big force. They are not like Iran. So the Trump administration will carry on attacking the Houthis until they capitulate and stop their missile launches and it is very much contemplating the possibility of attacking Iran.

RU: Finally, Gilbert, one last question. As I said previously, I think that Israel, from October 2023 until now, has practiced a de facto regional war. Because within different intensities at different moments, they have advanced aggressively, then retreated to attack another position. So can we talk about this regional war? It is important to conclude by highlighting the objective of this battle and how, on the revolutionary left, we

need to correctly interpret this offensive to be able to fight against the main objective of the Zionist state in the long term.

GA: Well, the Israeli state is waging two simultaneous wars. One war, which is in part a genocidal war in Gaza, and more generally a war aiming at ethnic cleansing, that is expulsion of the Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank. These wars are being waged by the Israeli state that has seized the opportunity of October 7, 2023, in the same way that the George W. Bush administration seized the opportunity of September 11, 2001. They exploited this opportunity to wage wars that went far beyond reaction to the event. The goal of Israel is expelling the Palestinians, and if this proves impossible because of international conditions, then at the very least, squeeze the Palestinians into very limited territories, open-air prisons under Israeli surveillance. That major war is the essence of Zionism. Since 1948, the Israeli state has been built on ethnic cleansing of the part of Palestine that it conquered, 78 percent of the land between the river and the sea. From that land, they expelled 80 percent of the population. So it was a major act of ethnic cleansing. And now that is what the Israeli far-right would very much want to repeat and the only impediment to that is the international situation, the Arab states and the United States.

And then you have a second war, which is the war against Iran. Israel regards Iran as an existential threat and the possibility that Iran acquires nuclear weapons as being intolerable. So they are waging their war against Iran. They dealt Hezbollah a very heavy blow and inflicted a lot of losses on it. They took advantage of the collapse of the Syrian regime to destroy the Syrian military potential and occupy further territories in the Golan. Their real concern now, as I said earlier, is to attack Iran. They want to convince the Trump administration to launch a major attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. That is where they are at.

RU: Well, with all these questions, we have a very interesting and powerful interview. So, we can say that we finished the conversation today. So, on behalf of **Actuel Marx**, we want to thank you for the conversation and for the generosity in doing this interview.

GA: Muchas gracias, un gran abrazo a ambos.

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Source: [New Politics](#).

PS:

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[1] Michael Roberts, 20 October 2024 ["IMF and BRICS: no return to Bretton Woods"](#).

[2] Alex Callinicos, ["Into a New Era of War and Revolution,"](#) Socialist Worker, Nov. 7, 2023.

[3] Gilbert Achcar, ["The Age of Neofascism and Its Distinctive Features,"](#) Feb. 4, 2025.

[4] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996).