



iV535 - August 2019

Hope Is in the Streets

31 August 2019, by **Against the Current Editors**

This isn't the place to produce a comprehensive list or detailed analysis, but rather we'll hit some of the leading examples "and discuss some features they have in common as well as their diverse qualities. (Note: We're not taking up the case of Palestine, which is discussed in depth in Bill V. Mullen's presentation in this issue.)

As this editorial is being drafted, the explosive eruption of popular anger and determination in Hong Kong is challenging the Chinese regime's intensifying assault on the rights of Hong Kong's population, which were supposed to be enshrined for 50 years following the 1997 transfer of the former British "crown colony" to Chinese sovereignty.

That Hong Kong is historically Chinese doesn't in any way negate the legitimacy of its people's commitment to defending the rights they were promised under the slippery formula of "one country, two systems." It's entirely predictable that the Chinese regime, fighting as it is for supremacy as a global capitalist power under Communist party dictatorship, would attribute Hong Kong's upheaval to United States manipulation "much as U.S. white supremacists called the American Civil Rights movement a product of Communist infiltration. But there's nothing about this crisis that's so hard to understand.

Contrary to the promise that Hong Kong voters would have expanded rights to elect their legislators and Chief Executive, candidates in the elections are tightly vetted by Beijing loyalist institutions, with elected representatives who refuse to recite the imposed loyalty oath to the Chinese state stripped of their office or imprisoned.

Everyone knows that the present crisis blew up when the unusually tone-deaf Chief Executive Carrie Lam, whether on Beijing's prompting or her own miscalculation, introduced a bill to allow extradition from Hong Kong to China's courts. In a context where some Hong Kong citizens have been notoriously "disappeared" to the mainland, and where the whole world knows that two or three million Chinese Uighurs are interned in "re-education" (slave-labor concentration) camps, this signaled to Hong Kong's people that here was the final choice "to revolt or roll over.

Less publicized is the fact that the pro-Beijing elites who control Hong Kong politics have also made housing and the cost of living unaffordable for much of the younger and working-class population, adding an economic dimension to the democratic political revolt.

Mass protests began as entirely peaceful and mainly middle-class mobilizations of tens, then hundreds of

thousands of people. When the government made clear that it would simply ignore the popular will, angry young people began combating the police, ultimately occupying and trashing the legislative building, and attacking other symbols of power and Beijing's authority.

Militant tactics supposedly alienated part of the broader movement, but one needs to understand that for today's Hong Kong teenage youth or early twenty-somethings, the prospect is that as adults in 2047 they'll be under unmediated Chinese state rule "unless there's a mass democratic transformation in China by then "the equivalent of death. Beijing's tactics now include demanding that companies doing business with the mainland fire employees for protest activity.

The uprising appears leaderless. We don't know much about the politics or whatever organized forces might be engaged, but their combative spirit and tactical creativity in desperate circumstances can only be admired. (For more detailed analysis see "Localism's Contradictions in Hong Kong" by Promise Li at <https://solidarity-us.org>.)

The Arab Uprising

Revives

The insurgency called the “Arab Spring” has been widely dismissed for dead in the catastrophic Syrian civil war and the murderously repressive al-Sisi presidentialist dictatorship that hijacked Egypt’s popular revolution. But in the past few months, when Algeria’s sclerotic FLN (National Liberation Front) regime put forward the half-dead president Abdelaziz Bouteflika for a fifth(!) term, the population took to the streets and said enough was enough.

In what’s called Algeria’s “Smile” or “Hirak” revolution, between February and July 2019, a popular uprising that spread from the countryside, forced the army to back down and set the stage for a still uncertain political transition.

Then in Sudan, against all apparent odds, a general strike in Khartoum and major cities and ports forced out the 30-year dictator Omar el-Bashir. In a too familiar pattern, a self-appointed Transitional Military Council assumed power, promising “reforms” somewhere in the future. Meanwhile, the TMC set the militia (the “Rapid Support Forces” — formerly called the “Janjaweed” in the regime’s genocidal Darfur massacres) on the civilian population with hundreds of fatalities.

The clear intent was to terrorize people into submission to whatever new order the TMC — supported by the Egyptian dictatorship and Saudi monarchy — would design. Incredibly, the population would have none of it. With trade unions and women’s organizations playing leading roles, the struggle remained mobilized until the military was forced to accept a three-year “transitional government” that’s supposed to result in democratic civilian rule. It’s a controversial arrangement that’s sharply divided the popular movement, particularly because women have been almost completely sidetracked. The Sudanese people need to remain on guard against the military’s continued power. The risks are enormous.

As in the first Middle East and North

African (MENA) uprisings of Tunisia, Egypt and Syria, there were multiple underlying causes. The long, brutal suppression of democratic aspirations and unbearable kleptocratic regime corruption are obviously central. But there’s also a burgeoning revolt against the degradation of popular classes’ economic lives caused by privatization of services, slashes of subsidies in the prices of basic necessities, and governments’ adaptations to the neoliberal demands of global markets and financial institutions.

These “reforms” don’t reduce, but in fact exacerbate, the crony capitalism and clientelism plaguing these societies. They were particularly crucial, for example, in the years leading up to the attempted revolution in Syria. They have been important in the current Algerian and Sudanese upheavals, which also remind us — as expert left analysts such as Gilbert Achcar and Joseph Daher stress — that the transformation of the region is a protracted revolutionary process and not a linear march of triumphant events.

A Wider View of Revolt

Taking a wider lens to the global picture, the outstanding example of popular revolt against neoliberal economic strangulation has to be the Yellow Vest eruption in France. As Patrick Le Trehondat points out in the Summer 2019 issue of *New Politics*, it is made up of the people who’ve been priced out of the gentrified city centers and are now living in smaller towns and rural areas where a car is a necessity to get to work and reach basic public services.

It’s not hard to see parallels with the grievances, and people’s sense of abandonment by the system’s elites and their institutions, that in the United States fueled the political rise both of Bernie Sanders on the progressive left and of Donald Trump on the reactionary right. Predictably, the Yellow Vests have been put under a microscope for every real or alleged expression of backwardness (e.g. anti-Semitism), and tarred as “anti-

environmentalist” by privileged sectors who don’t feel the pain.

In fact, the attempts by Marine le Pen’s “Rally” (formerly National Front) party to exploit the movement appear to have largely fizzled. Whether the Yellow Vest phenomenon proves to be episodic — or as Le Trehondat argues, “Now the entire system has been called into question. A new social consciousness and political collectivity is appearing” — remains an open question. The point here is that it’s an important example that will not be isolated in the framework of a crisis-ridden capitalist system in the “core” and “periphery.”

If as seems likely, a global economic slowdown or recession is on the way with the inevitable ruling-class responses of austerity, such mass interventions can be expected to become more frequent and intense. Further Examples

We note a few other examples where mass popular action has made a difference in the recent past, or is doing so right now.

• In Turkey, Erdogan’s presidentialist regime was defeated in the politically crucial Istanbul municipal election — not just once but a second time, and by a larger margin, after the regime’s puppet electoral council forced a re-vote. More than just a mayoral election, this was a popular mobilization in the face of Erdogan’s increasingly autocratic rule.

• In Poland in 2017, angry pushback forced the withdrawal of extreme anti-abortion legislation pushed by the rightwing nationalist ruling party. And in Ireland, abortion and the right to divorce was legalized in May 2018 — as in Poland, in defiance of the dictates of the Catholic hierarchy. This is the climax of a transformation that has virtually hurtled the Irish Republic from the late 19th right into the 21st century.

• In Russia, where economic stagnation and social disintegration have alarmingly accelerated, people are in the streets defying the government’s suppression of the right of opposition candidates to run in

Moscow municipal elections. The persistence of these actions is especially remarkable in view of the circumstances where no short-term victory seems possible.

¶ In Armenia, a vastly underreported nonviolent political revolution – “the first insurrection in a post-Soviet state that legitimately boiled up from the streets, free of influence from outside forces” (Marc Cooper, *The Nation*, December 7, 2018) led to the resignation of president Serzh Sargsyan and brought to office a reform government headed by veteran activist Nikol Pashinyan. Because it didn’t particularly fit any power’s geopolitical agenda, it was barely noticed.

¶ In the face of immediate climate catastrophe, young people’s strikes called by Greta Thunberg demanding emergency action on climate change are gaining momentum in Europe and North America, with global actions called for September 20-27.

¶ The Puerto Rican people have forced out the corrupt governor Ricardo Rosselló and are pushing back

against the “emergency financial oversight” board imposed by U.S. colonial diktat.

¶ Here in the United States, although on a smaller scale, revulsion against the white-nationalist right, for women’s rights that are under sweeping attack, and in defense of terrorized immigrant communities has persisted throughout the vicious and cynical politics of Donald Trump and the bottomless corrupt cesspool of his administration.

What’s Coming?

Reporters interview participants in these countries who insist it is their obligation to come out and protest against repression and to demand their democratic rights. It is the same message articulated by Palestinians marching in the Gaza Strip, by Hong Kongers rallying in the rain and by the Sudanese and Algerian women raising their demands for freedom and equality.

The courage of people to continue in

the face of brutal repression is inspiring, but frightening as well. Labeled as “terrorists,” beaten by police, military or paramilitaries, and threatened with severe prison sentences, they continue.

Whether Beijing will deploy the Peoples Liberation Army to crush the uprising as they did in Tiananmen Square 30 years ago, or whether Carrie Lam can force a sufficient crackdown, experts suspect the potential economic and political fallout would be too great. But India’s takeover of Kashmir has not unleashed a storm of protest! Nor has Bangladesh’s attempted repatriation of the nearly one million Rohingya Muslims, who fled from Myanmar for their lives just two years ago, unleashed massive protest.

The outcome of these struggles remains open. What’s clear is that new social actors are rising up and socialists need to stand with them – our solidarity lies with those in the streets, squares and roundabouts.

Source September-October 2019, [ATC 202](#).

Addressing crisis and building counter power through new African ecofeminist movement

30 August 2019, by **Samantha Hargreaves**

However, women are at the epicentre of resistance to disposessions of their land, water, forests and way of life. It is in defence of these that women are proposing the development alternatives that are needed to stave off the worst of the coming catastrophe and adapt to a world radically transformed by a changed climate.

Mining, accumulation and

the social and ecological crisis

Mining and the extractives economy in Africa (and elsewhere in the developing world) are a clear example of imperialist exploitation of the periphery for the benefit of the centre – the triad of North America, Europe and Japan. Capital in the BRICS block has, in the past two decades, begun to play a similar role in the extractives economy in Africa. But BRICS countries are located differently in the global order and some of the

“benefits” of accumulation are therefore distributed back to the centre.

The scale of looting is well captured in the results of the *High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa*. This panel, chaired by Thabo Mbeki, reported in February 2015 (following 3 years of research and analysis) that Africa was losing more than \$50 billion every year to illicit financial flows (IFFS). This is money which is earned, transferred or utilised through illegal means. It originates from (a) corporate tax evasion, trade misinvoicing and unlawful transfer

pricing, (b) criminal activities, and (c) corruption of government officials. The corruption is estimated by Open Society Initiative of West Africa (OSIWA) at only 3% of total outflows.

The case of Nigeria is powerful. The oil and gas sector is responsible for 92.9 per cent of IFFS from Nigeria. Over \$217.7 billion is said to have flowed out of the country between 1970 and 2008. The extractives sector dominates wealth outflows to the centre - in the Nigerian case mainly to the US, Spain, France and Germany.

We can look at African states whose economies turn substantially around the extractives sector (South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Zambia, Botswana, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo for example). They have attempted neo-extractivist reforms which seek to retain a greater proportion of the profits nationally. But these have been thwarted by powerful Western governments and the G7 Lobby Group.

They manipulate, threaten and undermine higher royalty taxes, windfall taxes, demands for local benefit, indigenisation/ black economic empowerment quotas and so on.

Accumulation by transnational mining corporations is made possible, and not surprisingly so, by a number of factors:

• Weak law and policy safeguarding land, water and other natural resource rights for traditional, indigenous and customary communities;

• Inadequate or zero provisions for Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)

• Criminalisation of activities in dissenting communities;

• A compromised, corrupted national elite; and

• A global financial architecture constructed to support these illicit financial flows.

Militarisation and securitisation of extractive sites and war are well known strategies employed by the centre to guarantee exclusive access

to these scarce natural resources. And as scarcity increases - in the context of a growing ecological crisis, climate change, and an ever-increasing world population - controls that are increasingly violent will become more commonplace.

Crises arise from mining and other extractives activities in three main ways:

Firstly, through the **exploitation of cheap labour** in territories subject to the logic of extractivism. There is a high level of automation occurring in the mining sector in some parts of the developed world. But mining is driven by cheap labour throughout the global South. Workers are paid low wages, work in extremely dangerous conditions and have a high risk of falling ill after years or decades of exposure to dust and chemicals. Migrancy undermines how labour is organised for subsistence food production in rural sending areas. And ill health amongst mineworkers drains the family coffers and makes new demands on the unpaid labour of women and girl children.

Secondly, through **dispossession of the peasantry and the working classes** of land, water, forests, fisheries and minerals, with zero or minimal compensation. This dispossession always entails violence, lies, corruption and co-optation of local elites like traditional leaders. Dispossession also occurs through the polluting effects of mining activities, such as a polluted water body or river. This dispossesses communities of their ability to use this water for household consumption or food production. This is a central contributor to the crisis of social reproduction.

Capitalists expropriate "so many of the fruits" of women's labours that the reproduction of labour power at household level is undertaken with increasing difficulty and challenge. Silvia Federici the Italian-American scholar and activist, talks about world regions marked for "near-zero-reproduction" because they are believed to be redundant or inappropriate to the requirements of capital.

Thirdly, through the **externalised**

social and ecological costs of an extractivist mode of production. These costs are borne:

• at the site of extraction, through the pollution of water, air and soil

• along the transportation chain, through pollution and the high carbon emissions of pipelines, the trucking industry, and the freight sector

• through processing and beneficiation which consume large quantities of energy and water

Ecosocialists speak of capitalism as an "economy of unpaid costs". Nature is treated as a free or cheap input or "sink" for costs of production and unpaid labour as the absorber of costs and the rehabilitation of damaged nature.

Social reproduction

US sociologists Barbara Laslett and Johanna Brenner describe social reproduction as: "Processes involved in maintaining and reproducing people, specifically the labouring population, and their labour power, on a daily and generational basis. It involves the provision of food, clothing, shelter, basic safety and health care, along with the development and transmission of knowledge, social values and cultural practices necessary to maintain existing life and to reproduce the next generation."

African women at the frontline

Across Africa, women and their communities are engaged in brave defence of their lands and their way of living.

They are protecting ecosystems and the commons, the very basis of life for the majority of the world's people now, and the interests of future generations. In Senegal, women fishers are defending their lands, their air and their fishing rights against the encroachments of a polluting coal power station. In the Mui Basin of Kenya, women are saying NO to the mining of coal. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, women activists organised under SOFLECO (women defending the Congo River) and their communities are resisting stage 3 of the Grand Inga hydropower dam. This will result in large scale dispossession of lands and forests, and the destruction of their livelihoods which are bound up with the great Congo River. and proposes development alternatives from below. Their analysis, their clear political

positioning, and their radical demands stand contrary to the dominantly middle class, largely urban African women's movement.

WoMin and its allies are crafting, in alliance and in solidarity, a concept and practice of Ecofeminism which is rooted in the African context. Ecofeminist theory has been a source of understanding for WoMin's work, but, most importantly, it is women activists on the ground who have been the lodestar guiding WoMin's thinking and political strategies. We have co-created ideas through feminist political education schools, through feminist participatory action research, through learning and solidarity exchanges, and through regional platforms with key allies that converge struggles from across the continent.

WoMin holds the analysis that as women, the reproductive workers, lead blockades of large-scale destructive development projects, they are defending a living alternative and proposing a different future. The resistance is based on their own concept and practice of development, centred upon protection of the commons of land, water, forest, and air; on a way of producing which is in harmony with nature upon which life rests; on a collective solidarity and sharing between peoples; and on a genuine deep custodianship of the earth for other species and future generations. And so, the alternatives, which capitalist patriarchy asserts do not exist, are alive and well in many communities around the world, to be built on further and supported.

[Amandla](#)

Only Labour can stop Johnson's coup

29 August 2019, by [Andy Stowe](#)

This is a serious challenge to the the entire British labour movement and takes the situation to a new level. It is an almost insurrectionary measure by a government which wants no opposition to get in its way. Trump and Putin must admire the boldness of it.

Labour is key to stopping this move and preventing a no-deal Brexit on October 31st. Fortunately, whilst the Corbyn leadership has equivocated on taking a clear pro-remain position for a long time this changed yesterday when Corbyn took the leadership of the anti-Brexit campaign by calling a meeting of the leaders of the opposition parties to discuss the Parliamentary tactics for the coming weeks.

Whether this was a factor in Johnson's decision today we will never know. But it does put Labour in a strong

position to lead the struggle at all levels against a hard right project that is out to destroy jobs and hand chunks of the NHS to US corporations. Whilst Labour might feel that it has to make some nod to petitioning Elizabeth Windsor, this is class struggle and it must be opposed by class struggle methods - i.e. inside and outside Parliament and on the streets and in the workplaces. If Johnson win this we will be in deep trouble.

On one side stand Farage, Rees-Mogg and Johnson heading an alliance of the heirs of Enoch Powell, devotees of Ayn Rand, English nationalists and the DUP. On the other, as we saw at all the anti-Brexit demonstrations, migrant workers, progressives and internationalists. These are the supporters of free movement for half a billion and the opponents of climate change.

The biggest demonstrations of recent years have been those opposing Brexit. Virtually everyone with any grasp of British politics knows it is the big fault line and that stopping Brexit is the slogan which will get hundreds of thousands on the streets in England, Scotland and Wales. It now falls to Labour to get its hundreds of thousands of members to organise huge protests and demonstrations.

Johnson's coup is an opportunity for Labour. The resistance to the Tory Brexit is also an inextricable part of the election campaign which has now started. A radical programme for government and stopping Brexit with mass action is how we stop the coup.

Join the nationwide wave of protests on Saturday 31 August [\[1\]](#)

[Socialist Resistance](#)

BDS condemns antisemitic, fascist forces in Germany and worldwidearticle

28 August 2019, by Palestinian BDS National Committee

The BDS movement for Palestinian rights condemns in the strongest terms the rising racist and fascist groups in Germany and across Europe. Our nonviolent movement opposes all forms of racism and racial discrimination, including antisemitism and Islamophobia, as a matter of principle.

The Israeli government's popularity is sharply decreasing as a result of its overt alliances with the global far-right, including xenophobic and antisemitic groups in the United States and Europe. In a desperate attempt to counter this trend, Israel and its lobby groups are desperately promoting a fraudulent definition of antisemitism that undermines the peaceful struggle for Palestinian rights, including BDS.

Dozens of progressive Jewish groups worldwide have condemned this relentless Israeli government-led effort to redefine anti-Jewish racism because it intentionally equates "legitimate criticisms of Israel and advocacy for Palestinian rights with antisemitism, as a means to suppress the former." Their statement says:

This conflation undermines both the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice and equality and the global struggle against antisemitism. It also serves to shield Israel from being held accountable to universal standards of human rights and international law.

The BDS movement rejects alleged "support" from antisemites and racists

of all shades. Their bigotry and hate are incompatible with our progressive values, and are the antithesis of our movement's vision for freedom, justice and equality for all.

Our movement is inspired by the global struggles for justice, particularly the South African anti-apartheid struggle and the US Civil Rights movement. Like activists in those movements, we know that our freedom is incomplete while others are not free.

The BDS movement works hand in hand with anti-racist movements around the world in our struggle for the UN-stipulated rights of the Palestinian people – an end to the occupation and apartheid, and the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes of origin.

The BDS movement's statement of anti-racist principles says:

Adhering to the UN definition of racial discrimination, the BDS movement does not tolerate any act or discourse which adopts or promotes, among others, anti-Black racism, anti-Arab racism, Islamophobia, antisemitism, sexism, xenophobia, or homophobia.

We strongly condemn apartheid, genocide, slavery, colonial exploitation and ethnic cleansing, which are crimes against humanity that are founded on racism and racial supremacy, and we call for the right of their victims, including descendants,

to full reparation. We equally condemn and stand in solidarity with the victims of other human rights violations including human trafficking, workers' exploitation, and sexual exploitation.

The struggle for Palestinian rights, including through BDS, is intersectional. We follow in the footsteps of Palestinian feminists who have insisted that the struggle for social and women's rights and emancipation is integral to the Palestinian liberation struggle.

Palestinians have been subjected to colonization and apartheid for 71 years. We know well that our struggle is inseparable from that of refugees, migrants, Blacks, Muslims, indigenous nations and the LGBTQI communities around the world. The movement for climate justice is integral to all our struggles. We know this first hand as Israel's system of apartheid, occupation and settler-colonialism has devastated Palestinian natural resources and prevented our access to them, especially water resources.

As Angela Davis says, justice is indivisible.

The BDS movement will continue to oppose all forms of racism and discrimination alongside movements for racial, economic and environmental justice around the globe.

August 14, 2019

[BDS movement](#)

There is a new wave of Feminism! Organising for our future and the planet!

27 August 2019, by **Susan Pashkoff**

A political ideology, fascism, that we hoped to have eliminated has revived internationally (and its political organisation is being coordinated internationally), there are widespread attacks on women (e.g., reproductive rights, violence against women, attempts to redefine rape) and increased racism which has come on the back of increased refugees fleeing war zones, climate change, and poverty. Rising attacks on the LGBT community are, of course, part and parcel of this attack. The attempted normalisation of misogyny, racism, and homophobia is frightening; rarely does a day go by without a reminder of the times we are living in; the economic rights that the working class had fought for so hard and for so long are being eroded, our trade union movement weak and unable to act to overcome these attacks. It's been a couple of years of anger, frustration, exhaustion and worry; emotions that wear you down and make you feel as though you are shovelling shite against the tide constantly.

Yet we see some positive signs of fightback against this misogyny (everyday sexism would almost be a relief compared to what many of us are living through), racism, intolerance, destruction of the planet and violence at so many levels that manages to bolster you allowing you to see that people are fighting back at all levels creating a movement that not only includes the young, but is often led by it. They are fighting for their future and the future of the planet.

Last weekend, I attended a women's seminar in Amsterdam in which participants came from 23 countries, was made up of women of various ages many of whom were women of colour. At the seminar we were attempting to determine whether we

are witnessing (and participating) in a new wave of feminist organising and how do we concretely fit into it while advancing a working class dimension where the voices of women of colour are heard as an essential part of the wave. Moreover, we discussed what the ideological components (i.e., social reproduction theory (for example: social reproduction) and ecofeminism (see also Maria Mies) which we viewed as essential to understand women's oppression and developing from that to identify ways of mobilising women to fight together in solidarity along issues that are more relevant to working class and women of colour to address the oppression we live with daily and to advance the struggle so that it will continue when the wave passes. [2]

These women's seminars represent a place of renewal for me in many senses; hearing what women are struggling against and fighting for in countries around the world revives me and reminds me that while we are still fighting against the oppression of women that there is a fight and it is growing. Once again women are at the spearhead of a not only a struggle against their own oppression, but leading the struggle against economic exploitation and protecting our planet. In many countries while the term feminism is not used, it is women that organise against our oppression, exploitation and destruction of the planet - so whether it is around the struggles of women against oppression, organising to protect working people and the planet, this is a fight-back that is happening at many levels from the grass-roots, to our workplaces, in struggles against austerity, fighting for our futures nationally and internationally.

What is meant by "a wave"?

It is generally agreed that there have been two waves of feminism so far. Waves can be defined as struggles that are international in scope and have themes around which organisation and struggle emerge.

The first wave of feminism began in the late 19th century and was organised around women's (and universal) suffrage as a cross-class movement and issues of property rights; but it also had a strong working class dimension which organised working class women both politically (elimination of property qualifications) and economically (for example, participation in political movements fighting racism (e.g., Jim Crow and anti-lynching movements), sexism and our civil rights, into trade unions and into socialist organisations) along class lines. [3] The creation of International Working Women's Day as the 8th of March came out of this struggle. This period of struggle took place over decades; recognition of the reality of the lives of working class women, their economic exploitation, their struggles around caring for their families outside of the capitalist economic sphere led to a massive shift in political consciousness and involved women in the political and economic movements of the time. While the term feminist was primarily used by the upper class women's movement tied to the struggle over suffrage and was derided by socialist women for the most part; this wave cut across class lines and addressed economic and political issues and began a wave of struggle transforming the place of women in capitalist societies of the time.

The second wave of feminism followed on (and learned from) the struggle for civil rights by Blacks in the US and anti-colonialist struggles. [4] It began in the 1960s and lasted through the 1970s after which it came under sustained attack and disappeared into the universities from the streets. While this movement began as an individualist movement and the development of women's consciousness, it shifted towards a notion of women's liberation addressing issues of women's sexuality, reproductive rights, violence against women and women's economic exploitation (e.g., equal pay for equal work and equal pay for comparative work due to women being trapped in "traditional women's labour") and tried to locate the basis of women's oppression and address solutions to the problem; e.g., the Equal Rights Amendment in the US, feminist collectives, fighting for socialism.

A broader movement than the first wave; it also contained different currents such as liberal feminism, radical feminism and socialist (Marxist) feminism; the differences between the forms of feminism relate to whether they think that women's oppression can be eliminated through reforms in the system, whether a radical transformation of society is required and/or whether a systemic change itself is needed (the latter two do recognise that reforms are important but think that they are necessary but insufficient to eliminate women's oppression). Is our oppression due to our sex (more biologically defined) or gender (social oppression) or a combination of both is raised in this wave and still remains a point of debate in the women's movement. [5] The creation of women's movements of colour due to the failures of liberal feminism to address differences in history, experiences of racism, differing economic exploitation and access to wealth and hence the differing needs of women of colour is heightened during this period; struggles for reproductive rights due to the issues of racism, class and gender create different needs for women and these differences are highlighted in the struggles of the time.

Whether or not there was a 3rd wave

in the 1990s-2000s is still a point of debate. There is no doubt that there are explorations in feminist thought and the incorporation of the needs of women of colour, issues of violence against women, and reproductive rights and justice happened; the issue of whether there is a wave depends on the international basis and the struggles in political movements occur or whether this is confined more to universities and institutions to which feminism retreated after the end of the second wave that divides opinion. To classify as a wave, the movement needs to be on the streets, (e.g., in demonstrations and women's organisations), across countries and strong enough to impact women and get them to self-organise to fight together. While this period certainly has some of these aspects, it is still debated whether it actually formed a wave. However, certainly discussions of intersectionality and development of ideas to organise around do exist in this period, e.g., violence against women, femicide, and reproductive rights are issues that are analysed in this period and which have influenced the new wave of feminism. [6]

On the other hand, the current period certainly has the aspects of a new wave and that is due to its international dimensions, the issues around which it is organising and mobilisations occurring on the streets and the creation of women's organisations where the struggle is advanced. Like all waves, the development is not equal across countries, but there are new forms of women's organisation that not only address what are traditional women's issues but also general organisation on economic and political struggles in which women lead and participate.

Again there are various currents in this new movement, there are points of debate between these currents and there is the revival of interest and leadership by younger women to develop and hopefully continue the movement itself. Even in countries which lack a national women's movement (e.g., Great Britain) women do come out in solidarity with other women's struggles internationally; over 750,000 women came out on the day of Trump's inauguration in solidarity with the misogynistic and

sexist attacks on women in the US.

When Polish women went out on strike to fight in 2016 due to an abortion ban being put in place by a reactionary government; other women came out in solidarity internationally. [7]

In Argentina (which has had a continual national women's movement since the mid-1980s) issued a call for a strike over violence against women following a brutal murder of Lucia Perez leading to the creation of the *Ni Una Menos* movement in which women went out on strike in Mexico, Chile, El Salvador and Brazil with the development of the *Ni Una Menos* movement internationally. [8]

The struggle over women's reproductive rights led to protests in Argentina and many other countries where both protests (and in some cases a women's strike) were organised. In 2017, women in Ireland went on strike to overturn the 8th Amendment to the Constitution prohibiting abortion and forced (and won) a country-wide plebiscite against the ban. In the US, a women's strike movement around a feminism for the 99% occurred in 2018. In the Spanish state, millions of women participated in a strike on the 8th of March throughout the country.

Recently in Switzerland, women declared a women's strike over equal pay and working conditions and violence against women.

This movement is broad, international and already contains a strong international component of solidarity among women.

The issues of violence against women (including the me too movement started by Tarana Burke to raise the violence against women of colour in the US broadened to highlight sexual harassment and violence against women at work. [9] However, the reality is that I have never met a woman who has not experienced sexual harassment and violence in many forms during our lives), femicide, and domestic violence), women's economic rights (e.g., the waves of strikes by teachers in the US is a brilliant example over the struggle around wages, the conditions of work

and the quality of education offered to students), and the struggle over reproductive justice which can be seen throughout the world not only addresses some women's access to abortion, but that of access to safe, free and legal abortions, access to contraceptives and is centered around women's right to bodily autonomy. [10] This new wave is led by younger women and women of colour; like other waves, there are points of division between lean-in feminism (glass ceiling feminism), radical feminist currents and socialist feminists.

Relationships between the LGBT+ movement and the feminist movement already exist in many countries and recognition of the need for solidarity among movements and fighting against the oppression of racism, sexism and misogyny, homophobia and the recognition of the right of gender preference exists. This doesn't mean that there are not differences in the movement; there are differences still on whether oppression is based on sex or gender (or both) and the inclusion of trans women in the women's movement; a bitter struggle exists on the importance of inclusion of trans women has arisen in many countries (especially in the US and Britain), addressing sex work/prostitution and the agency of women working in this sector of work and fighting for their rights to organise economically into unions. Recognition of the difference between trafficking of women (and children) to force them to work in this sector (opposed by all of the women's movement) and the reality that some women choose this area for their work (as opposed to being forced into the sector due to poverty) has created divisions and a need for a change in analysis of the currents in the movement. The fact that this movement exists in the context of the rise of a mass struggle over climate change and saving the planet and the strong participation (and often a leading role) of women in that movement means a wider dimension to the struggle than what are traditionally women's issues.

Organising a socialist (class based) feminist movement

There already exists a current of class based feminism which addresses the intersectionality of racism, sexism (and misogyny) and class and its impact on the lives of women. The issue is how we can ensure that this inclusive current grows and survives the end of the wave. Waves can last over decades; but they do end (at least that has been the case historically).

So, how can we not only build the current wave with a strong class and ecofeminist based current and try to make sure that the struggles move the movement forwards towards to fight for a better future in which all women's voices are heard and actually listened to? What tactics and methods of struggle would be the most useful means of achieving this?

There are many arenas of struggle, e.g., in our workplaces, our trade unions, in women's organisations directly, raising women's issues in the general mass movements, fighting for women's voices in the struggle to protect our planet.

While many women do think that all we need is a few adjustments or reform under the current capitalist system; the reality for the majority of women is that certainly some reforms are important but our oppression will not be eliminated by these reforms. There is always the danger that these reforms will assist a minority of women not recognising that oppression affects women of different classes differently, that our histories and experiences of racism and homophobia create a far more complicated form of oppression. A bitter pill of the second wave of feminism in the US ensured that abortion was decriminalised but access to abortion was not seen as a positive right for all but a negative right which didn't ensure funding and access for all; different experiences of sterilisation where women of colour, disabled women and poor women

faced eugenics and coercive (forced) sterilisation contrasted with the treatment of wealthier white women who were forced to get their husband's permission for a voluntary sterilisation. The struggle over reproductive rights and for reproductive justice must recognise our historically different oppression and give voice to all women. Concentrating on overcoming the glass ceiling does little for women trapped in traditional women's work, where we are underpaid, undervalued and trapped in part-time work to ensure that we can not only provide for our families (in a period where wages have been stagnated) but also continue our roles as primary providers of social reproduction as the capitalist system has demonstrated that while certain forms of social reproduction can be socialised (e.g., education, healthcare, caring), there are vast portions of social reproduction that are done at home in private in the family without pay.

So, the issue becomes how do we develop not only a feminist struggle, but an anti-capitalist feminist struggle which recognises not only the oppression of women under capitalism but fights for the inclusion of women's issues in building a socialist future? Oppression of women will not disappear after socialism, the struggle for women's liberation will continue and not only as a small residual of capitalist oppression.

The women's strike is an important and useful tactic (although I would not argue it is a strategy) and it has been in use since the first wave of feminism; it was a strike by women textile workers in St Petersburg, Russia (1917) which brought down the Tsar. [11]

Organising women garment workers in NY city (Chicago, Lawrence MA) to fight against their exploitation at work and to improve conditions, wages and health and safety was an extremely powerful form of mobilisation which enabled women being brought into trade unions and many of their demands for reform were achieved during the first wave of feminism.

A book recently written by Cinzia Arruza, Tithi Bhattacharya and Nancy

Fraser called Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto has laid out the basis of a socialist feminism which discusses the importance of building a Feminist movement for the majority and the use of the women's strike as a tool of organising and a reinvention of the women's strike for a new period of organising. [12]

But the type of mobilisations we can organise will depend on the level of struggle in the various countries in the world and the forms of organisations

that exist or can be created. So we need to be building a movement rooted in the struggles that women themselves organise at all levels (grassroots, regional, national and international) where they live, in their communities, where they work, and in solidarity with the struggles of other women around the inclusive principles that address the needs and interests of the majority of women and how to build a feminism that also creates the basis for fighting for the future where women's liberation is a central and important part of not only the current

movement but one in which we create an ecosocialist future for the majority where women are an important and equal part of the future and our needs and lives are not an afterthought; where our contributions are as important and valued as that of men. We have many voices, we have ideas, we demand our voice in the future and we want to build it.

July 21 2019

[Anticapitalist meetup](#)

The defence of the Amazon is a fight for the future of the earth

25 August 2019

The defence of the Amazon is a fight for the future of the earth

Although the destruction of the Amazon rainforest was already an alarming issue for decades, with the acceleration of this process due to the negligence of the government of the extreme rightist Jair Bolsonaro, but above all to its direct complicity with agribusiness, livestock and mining companies, it becomes even more urgent is that our species takes decisive measures to stop the catastrophe. In turn, this highlights the organic link between environmental devastation and the prevailing political and economic relations: the fate of our planet and our civilization should not be left to a system that promotes private gain at the expense of the common good.

It is imperative to understand that, although the deforestation of the Amazon most directly affects the peoples of the nine countries that host it, especially the indigenous peoples who form part of the forest, its degradation and destruction has regional and global impacts. It contains about 20% of the planet's fresh water, is one of the most bio-diverse ecoregions and constitutes one

of the most important carbon stores in the world, so the loss of this ecosystem not only deprives humanity of multiple material and intangible contributions to its well-being, but also alters the planetary living conditions under which both our species and those on which we depend have evolved.

Of particular concern is the immediate impact that the release of tons of greenhouse gases, produced by the combustion of the forest biomass, will have on global warming, especially when, according to the estimates of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, we are in the limitation period to carry out the necessary civilizational transformations to strengthen some possibility that planetary change does not impede our life as we know it. Bolsonaro, in the manner of a disastrous Brazilian Donald Trump, denies scientific evidence and, along with his racist, misogynist, anti-secular, anti-worker and anti-sexual diversity policies, erodes environmental regulations for the benefit of extractive companies, which is why articulating a broad political opposition to his regime and its international supporters is key to

the future of the Amazon rainforest and humanity.

We who subscribe to this statement, call for internationalist solidarity with the indigenous communities of the Amazon, especially with the thousands of women who marched in Brasilia to defend it; with the agroecological movements, with the scientific community that resists reactionary obscurantism, with the workers of the countryside and the city who oppose the resurgence of neoliberalism, with the students who take to the streets and, in general, with all sectors inside and outside Brazil that fight for the jungle and for humanity. It is important that, at the same time, we put pressure on governments and the United Nations Organization itself to take actions to stop and mitigate fires, while identifying and ceasing the promotion of companies and sectors directly benefiting from the destruction of the Amazon jungle.

As for Mexico, which, like Brazil, is part of the group of mega-diverse countries, threats to biocultural wealth through government policy are also a challenge. As part of a global contest for the future, it is up to us to question, challenge and oppose in an

organized manner the Tren Maya, Corredor Ferroviario TransÁstmico, “Sembrando Vida” and the Proyecto Integral Morelos which, together with the Special Economic Zones and agricultural projects, roads, tourism, energy, port and mining still in progress, maintain the neo-liberal and extractivist orientation that benefits a minority at the expense of the welfare of ecosystems, communities and the working population. In Mexico, we also fight for the Earth contesting the present and seeking to have a dignified future, without exploitation, misery or extermination: Our struggle is for life!

Signatory organisations :

Ciencia para el Pueblo

Carnaval del Maíz

Haciendo Milpa A.C.

Red Universitaria Anticapitalista (RUA)

Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (SME)

Nueva Central de Trabajadores (NCT)

Colectivo de Jóvenes de la Nueva Central de Trabajadores

Organización Política del Pueblo y los Trabajadores (OPT)

Partido Revolucionario de las y los Trabajadores (PRT)

Agrupación de Lucha Socialista (ALS)

Red Humedales de Colima

La Otra Ciencia

Pro Pedregal - Ciencias

AxM Colectivo

Colectivo Transdisciplinario de Investigaciones Críticas (COTRIC)

Colectiva Feminista Socialista Voces de Lilith

Pacto Morelos por la Soberanía Alimentaria y Energética y los Derechos de las y los Trabajadores

Comisión Independiente de Derechos Humanos de Morelos A. C.

Rebelión

Espacio Estudiantil 2 de Octubre

Revive México A.C.

Colectivo “¿Qué hacer aquí con esto?”

Brigada Animal México

The Save Movement

Climate Save Movement

Centro Integral de Comunicación Comunitaria

Cooperativa TRADOC

Red Yo voy 8 de Marzo

Cuerpos Parlantes

Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de México (CUT)

Colectiva Vulvurina

Colectivo de Mujeres de Puerto Vallarta

Frente del Pueblo (FP)

Comité de Unidad Popular (CUP)

Consejo Popular Magonista (COPM)

Sendero socialista (SS)

Organización Nacional del Poder Popular (ONPP)

Organización Proletaria Emiliano Zapata (OPEZ Histórica)

Grupo Socialista Obrero (GSO)

Partido Revolucionario del Pueblo (PRP)

Frente Socialista (Fp, CUP, COPM, PRT, SS, OPT, ONPP, OPEZ Histórica, GSO y PRP)

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On political crisis in Moscow

24 August 2019, by Russian Socialist Movement (RSD)

The first warning signal for the Kremlin were last year's regional elections, where pro-regime candidates for governor collapsed in Vladimir, Khakassia, and Vladivostok. Protest votes there were not only connected with regional agendas, but, first of all, with general discontent with growing poverty and reforms undoing social provisions  in the first place, with the raising of the retirement age. The upcoming elections in Moscow and other regions 8th of September deepen and radicalize this tendency.

The blunt refusal to allow independent candidates in elections (including left and social activists, like Sergei Tsukasov)  is the direct result of their real chances to win. The active campaign of gathering signatures in various neighborhoods has shown the growing number of protest voters, whose arrival at voting places on September 8 could bring down the city government's desired outcome.

The first street actions also showed a high level of mobilization. After the mass demonstration of July 20, the authorities rely only on force, which only leads them further to a dead end.

The following protests  not liberal-bourgeois, as some "left patriots" insist, but democratic, uniting different social and political groups. On their outcome hinges not only

whether ordinary residents of Moscow, St. Petersburg, and other cities influence the decision making in their cities, but the relation of forces between workers and the oligarchic elite on the scale of the entire country.

Today we are fighting not only for fair elections, but for the participation of the masses in politics  with the help of elections, strikes, rallies, and all forms of self-organization. But even limited popular rule frightens the ruling oligarchy, raising the spectre of social revolution.

The Kremlin is already using the model of the massive police provocation on Bolotnaya Square seven years ago, declaring peaceful protests as riots organized from outside. As in 2012, the main victims of repression are arbitrarily chosen ordinary participants in the rallies. The main message of the Federal security service and police - each person who goes into the street can end up in jail. Seven years ago, this partially worked, but today that's not a fact.

Growing impoverishment and social discontent increasingly draws into the protest movement not only the lower middle class, which was prevalent at the Bolotnaya protests in 2012, but the working class, the youth, and the residents of the regions beyond the

capital. Many of them already have nothing to lose.

The main lessons of 2011-2012s protests   the necessity of a broad social coalition and clear demands on social issues    must be grasped. The duty of the left is not only to unconditionally support the popular movement, but also to bring into the protests demands for social justice, and the complete removal of big business from power. The RSD calls on all democratic forces, free trade unions, and ecological and urban protection movements to a coordination of actions, to broadening the geography of the protests and to mutual solidarity.

The "Moscow case" must end and its 13 prisoners must be released!

Candidates disqualified for political reasons should be registered!

Otherwise the elections to the Moscow City parliament, which have been devastated by the city government, must be cancelled and conducted later  with maximum transparency, without the use of "administrative resources", fraud and discriminatory filters.

The system of "managed democracy" as a way of defending the authorities from society  to the dustbin of history!

Oppose Continuing Assaults on Idlib and on Kurds in Northeastern Syria

24 August 2019, by **Alliance of Middle Eastern and North African Socialists**

Solidarity with Idlib against the attacks by Assad's regime forces and its Russian ally

After months of attacks by the Assad regime and Russian airstrikes on the Idlib region and northern Hama, the Syrian regime's forces recaptured Khan Sheikhoun, a town in southern Idlib province, and now nearly totally abandoned as residents emptied out the town and fled to areas further north. The town is of strategic importance as it is situated on what was once a vital commercial highway connecting the large northern city of Aleppo to the capital of Damascus. The town is also symbolically significant. Khan Sheikhoun captured headlines in April 2017 when a sarin gas attack by the regime killed some 90 people, including children.

Since the end of April 2019, around 880 civilians have been killed, mostly as a result of the relentless campaign of airstrikes by the Syrian regime and its Russian ally. More than 500,000 people have also been forced to flee their homes, heading to displacement camps where there is no adequate food, water, medicine or even shelter according to the UN, which warns of a humanitarian "disaster".

With the nearby Turkish border closed to refugees, many of the displaced are now living in olive groves and sheltering beneath trees. At the same time, At least 47 medical facilities have been bombed and 30 aid workers have been killed.

Idlib province, now home to around 3 million persons – of whom 1.5 million are internally displaced persons – is controlled mostly by the jihadist coalition Hayat Tahrir Sham (HTS, led by formally al-Qaeda-linked Jabhat al-Nusra), which has imposed its own institutions and violently repressed activist networks and civil society organizations.

While affirming opposition to the jihadist coalition of the HTS and other reactionary armed groups in Idlib, progressives are also opposing the shelling and military offensive by the regime and its foreign allies, Russia and Iran. We must stand in solidarity with civilians in Idlib against these military threats, which have already created a humanitarian catastrophe.

We reiterate also our support for the popular sovereignty from below of the Syrian popular classes against all actors, whether local or foreign, preventing them from deciding of their own destiny and achieving the initial objectives of the uprising: democracy, social justice and equality

Solidarity with the Northeastern regions against Turkish military threats

For months, the Turkish military has been threatening and assaulting the northeastern regions of Syria controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) which is led by the military wing of the Kurdish Party of Democratic Union (PYD) and its People's Protection Units (YPG). In

mid-August 2019, the United States and Turkey concluded an agreement to establish a so called "safe zone" in northeast Syria. The details of the so-called safe zone are yet to be determined and will be implemented gradually, with some operations beginning soon.

Neither Ankara's nor the United States' "safe zone" dimensions were agreed on during the talks. Ankara is seeking much deeper control in Syrian territory than the US was ready to accept. To avoid a deadlock, both sides agreed to go ahead without sorting out the zone's dimensions. Both Ankara and Washington prioritize the establishment of a joint operation center, and a coordination center in Ankara. These centers will eventually decide the access routes of Turkish units to the east of the Euphrates. In these locations, the US and Turkish observation posts will be constructed; the YPG will withdraw under supervision of the US military; and the YPG will hand over its heavy weapons, artillery, mortars and multiple rocket launchers to US soldiers. The centers will also facilitate the coordination of the air space and security matters in town centers.

While a possible Turkish military invasion of these areas has been frozen temporarily or at least postponed, the real objective is not only to create a buffer between the Turkish border and areas controlled by the Kurdish-led YPG – which is supported by the US in their fight against the jihadist group ISIS. Turkey's objective is also to expand Turkish control and influence and crush any form of Kurdish self-determination close to its borders. President Erdogan and Turkish officials have actually declared that

Turkey could pursue its own solutions if the United States does not cooperate in meeting Ankara's "safe zone" demands.

If Ankara were given the green light to launch a new military operation against the SDF, the operation would represent the third incursion of the Turkish army in Syria against the Kurdish-led forces since 2016. The first Turkish incursion was operation "Shield of the Euphrates" in August 2016. The second incursion was operation "Olive branch" in January 2018, which culminated in the occupation of the Afrin region in March 2018, leading to the forced displacement of more than 150,000 Kurds and constant violations of human rights.

Ankara considers the YPG and PYD in Syria, as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which the United States, the European Union and Turkey have labeled a terrorist organization. The Turkish army has actually also launched military operations and airstrikes since mid-July against various regions of the Northern areas of Iraqi Kurdistan because of the PKK's presence. In addition to this, Turkish authorities started a new campaign of repression in Turkey against Kurdish representatives of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) by replacing democratically elected Kurdish mayors with state officials in three cities (Diyarbakir, Mardin and Van) and by detaining more than 400 people for suspected links with the PKK.

Another objective of the Turkish

government in Syria is to forcibly transfer, Syrian refugees from Turkey to the areas east of the Euphrates. In the past several weeks, Turkey's government has accelerated campaigns of forced expulsions of Syrian refugees in the country towards Syria. Thousands of Syrians have been subjected to mass deportations or forcibly returned to Syrian territories since the mid-end of July.

Thus, Turkey's aims are to establish a zone of control along its border where it can manage flows of internally displaced persons, forcibly repatriate refugees from Turkey, and attack the PYD and its Syrian Democratic Forces.

The Alliance of Middle Eastern and North African Socialists also condemn the role of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces (known as the Etilaf), composed mostly of liberal and Islamic conservative and fundamentalist groups and personalities, in its support for Turkish plans against the northeastern areas. The Syrian Coalition and members close to it have also continued their previous chauvinist and racist policies and statements against the Kurds in Syria. Similarly, the head of "National Army", Syrian opposition military groups composed mostly of Islamic fundamentalist and reactionary groups, guilty of many violations of human rights in Afrin and elsewhere and acting as a proxy in favor of Ankara, has also declared that its troops, 14,000 men, were ready to assist the Turkish army in any military operation against the northeastern

regions of Syria.

The U.S. and Turkish agreement, and the collaboration between Moscow and Ankara demonstrate once again that international and regional powers have no willingness to see any Kurdish national or autonomist aspirations come to fruition.

In the face of these continuous counter-revolutionary offensives, what is needed is solidarity between all Arab, Kurdish and other ethnic and religious minority progressives and democrats who are against the Assad regime, Islamic fundamentalist movements and all the regional and international imperialist powers and who support the struggles for social justice, women's rights and the rights of oppressed minorities.

The Alliance of Middle Eastern and North African Socialists reiterates its support for the right of self-determination of the Kurdish people in Syria and in other countries in the region. This does not mean that we take an uncritical stand on the policies of Kurdish parties leading these struggles, whether the PYD or the Kurdish Democratic Party or others, notably regarding violations of human rights against civilians. We denounce for example, the latest SDF campaign of arbitrary arrests against civil society workers in the province of Raqqa.

Oppose all forms of sectarianism and racism

Solidarity with the oppressed!

August 22, 2019

On Trump and Netanyahu and mutual interests

23 August 2019, by Susan Pashkoff

Needless to say, the Israeli government was certainly not happy about the visit to the occupied territories by the two Congresswomen

and was looking for a way out. [13] Given the law allowing the prohibition of visas to those supporting the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction

(BDS) movement, they could have done this easily; this is not a new law and discussions began in 2015 with the law being passed in 2017 where

BDS is viewed as a strategic threat to Israel. [14] However, one thing is blocking political activists; it is quite another situation to prevent US Congress members from visiting using this law given the amount of money the Israeli government gets from the US. [15] The other point relates to the idea of Israel as a democracy; what kind of democracy prohibits entry by its critics? [16] In fact, in July, the Israeli government said that they will allow the congresswomen to visit "out of respect for Congress." [17]

So what was the Israeli government to do? Enter President Donald Trump to the rescue. Earlier this week, the President in an interesting day on twitter tweeted that Israel should not to allow the two congress members to enter the country; to add insult to injury he describe the two as antisemites.

The Israeli government clutched at the lifeline given by Trump. It is not as though Trump has been reticent to support the wishes of the Israeli government; both the move of the embassy to Jerusalem and his recognition of Israel's control over the Golan Heights have come to mind (many American Jews were very uncomfortable with his decisions, but the feelings of American Jews were not what he was interested in to be honest). Within hours the Israeli government said that Tlaib and Omar were not welcome in Israel. [18]

Reading their decision is almost bizarre, it is as if they only just found out about Omar and Tlaib's support for BDS (which is odd as that is well known as they sponsored legislation supporting the use of BDS). [19] What is also extremely amusing is the bizarre meme circulating that Trump bullied Netanyahu into blocking their visit. [20] AOC's statement that Trump is exporting his bigotry only demonstrates her ignorance on this question; there is a law in place already blocking entry to the country on the basis of support for BDS; this was put in place under Netanyahu. [21] To think that "poor Bibi" is an innocent in this matter is absurd.

But there was certainly a miscalculation on both Trump's and

Netanyahu's parts and it was a serious one; within hours, the Democratic Party leadership (Pelosi and Schumer), AIPAC, other Jewish groups and newspapers and even a few Republicans (e.g., Marco Rubio) came out against the decision by Israel to block their visit. [22] Bernie Sanders's statement is notable:

"Sanders said Thursday that "the idea that a member of the United States Congress cannot visit a nation which, by the way, we support to the tune of billions and billions of dollars is clearly an outrage."

"And if Israel doesn't want members of the United States Congress to visit their country to get a firsthand look at what's going on" and I've been there many, many times" but if he doesn't want members to visit, maybe [Netanyahu] can respectfully decline the billions of dollars that we give to Israel," Sanders added." [23]

Almost as grotesque as the initial refusal, the Israeli government offered to let Tlaib in to Israel as a private citizen to visit her grandmother with the condition that she doesn't discuss BDS. [24] Tlaib has correctly refused the offer; having conditions imposed on her visiting her family is beyond inappropriate and being banned as a congresswomen but allowed in as a private citizen is ridiculous. [25] Saying that she was setting them up as she had asked for a visit to her grandmother is cynical; she obviously realised that this was not a great idea. To have to make this decision to not visit her family must have been extremely difficult; Jewish Voice for Peace celebrating Shabbos with her in Detroit stood by their representative; recognising her courage and how heart-breaking it must have been to make this decision, they stood with her in solidarity. [26]

On the normalisation of antisemitism

"I am only involved from the standpoint of they are very anti-Jewish and they are very anti-Israel," Trump said. "I can't imagine why Israel would

let them in, but if they want to let them in, they can, but I can't imagine why they would do it [27]"

Given Trump's antisemitism, it was almost actually humorous that he felt he had the right to accuse anyone of antisemitism (I do recognise that I have a cynical sense of humour).

But Trump has form in accusing others for what he is; like calling "the squad" racist and calling someone that he thought was disrespecting him at a speech "fat." So his calling other people antisemitic when he is an antisemite is just more of the same crap. [28]

Why do I think that Trump is an antisemite? Trump's use of antisemitic tropes in speeches and tweets are well known, especially his attacks on George Soros (criticism of Soros is not antisemitic in itself, it is the nature of the criticism itself which reveals the antisemitism of Trump and his supporters, in many senses George Soros has replaced the Rothschilds in modern antisemitic discourse by the far right (and that is not limited to the US, see Hungary for example, where Viktor Orbán's last campaign victory was based on anti-immigrant and anti-Soros rhetoric); google Soros and Rothschilds if you don't believe me, it is disgusting). Â [29]

My personal favourite example of his antisemitism relates to his telling American Jews that Netanyahu was our Prime Minister; American Jews do not have a prime minister, we are instead blessed with an antisemite as President. [30] Trump's statement usually fall under what is called classic antisemitism like the Jewish Bankers meme, that American Jews have dual political allegiances (the "you are not to be trusted by fellow citizens due to your dual loyalty") and the other wonderful one that you are not really Americans because you have another country to go to which has your allegiance. [31] The problem, of course, with this position is that it ignores the reality that American Jews have different political and religious beliefs; moreover, we have very different perspectives on political Zionism as a solution to antisemitism.

To add to the continuing pile of

evidence concerning Trump's antisemitism, there is his latest statement accusing American Jews that vote for the Democratic Party of disloyalty falling into classic antisemitism of the dual loyalty of Jews. Given that American Jews overwhelmingly vote for the Democratic party, this is a very dangerous accusation. [32]

Criticism of Israel is not antisemitic, neither is Anti-Zionism

How to fight antisemitism is an old debate among Jews; you can go back to the end of the 19th century to see the arguments among Jews; we all agree that antisemitism exists, but how do we fight it? Zionism is only one "solution" to deal with antisemitism. Other beliefs have included Assimilationism, Bundism (we struggle as Jews together to fight antisemitism and in favour of dignity and socialism where we live) and the struggle for socialism as part of the broader movement as socialists not as Jews. [33] It was the horror of the holocaust that led to a shift in support for the creation of a Jewish state to address antisemitism.

However, the Israeli government's and military's actions have led to a situation where, in absolute, more and more Zionists are actually Christian fundamentalists (that is no surprise given the number of Christian fundies as compared to American Jews) but there also has been a relative shift among American Jews away from support of Israel (especially unconditional support), this is especially among young American Jews as they shift towards the left and away from liberalism. [34] But the passage of nation-state law in 2018 which in many senses legalised apartheid in the country was just the latest in a series of actions in Israel which made American Jewish liberals extremely uncomfortable and the reaction of the Israeli government to

the Pittsburgh murders (covering for Trump's antisemitism) infuriated many American Jews. [35] Disavowing Trump's responsibility for rising antisemitism in the US is not only insulting, it made it very clear who the Israeli government was willing to protect and it was not American Jews.

When I became an anti-Zionist at the age of 14, anti-Zionist Jews were called self-hating and antisemites. We were considered as shande (a disgrace, shame) such was the strength of support for Zionism amongst American Jews. This perspective has been shifting for some time and it derives as much from the actions of the Israeli government and military as it does from the revival of the left in the US. American Jews have been very active in the protests against the anti-immigration policies of Trump and ICE; the recognition that we must stand together with the oppressed against oppressors is once again becoming fundamental to the political and religious beliefs of Jews. [36] To quote Marek Edelman, the last surviving commander of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (and a member of the Jewish Bund):

"To be a Jew means always being with the oppressed, never with the oppressors. Never with the oppressors." [37]

The reality is that most Zionists these days are Christian fundamentalists and they are also antisemites; their support for Israel is based on their belief that in order for Christ to return, the Jews must be in Israel and they will then fight the battle of Armageddon. [38] It is interesting to contrast this with the religious Zionism among Jews where the Jews can only return to the Holy Land after the Messiah returns. But what needs to be understood is that antisemitism and being a Zionist are not contradictory and it is not only Trump that exhibits that position. For many antisemites having a place to send the Jews (rather than being in their countries) is incredibly useful; they really do not want us there and this kills two birds with one stone.

Watching the rise of antisemitism in the US has been more than disconcerting. From the chants of neo-Nazis in Charlottesville chanting "The Jews will not replace us" to the murder of Jews in a synagogue in Pittsburgh, the antisemitism of the far right has always been frightening, but they were a small number of disgusting people. But when the President of the US uses antisemitic tropes this is a normalisation of antisemitism that should worry everyone that opposes racism. We cannot stand silent in the face of racist ideology and attacks; we must stand in solidarity with those facing racism, misogyny, antisemitism, Islamophobia and homophobia.

My first reaction to the murderous attack on a Jewish synagogue in Pittsburgh was "oh my god, no!" My second was, "thank god my mother is dead and doesn't have to see this; it would kill her." My mother knew that antisemitism existed in the US (she was not stupid; I remember driving with my parents in Miami and her pointing out a hotel that didn't allow Jews to stay there), but she loved the US, she said, at least there are not pogroms here.

Pittsburgh destroyed this sense of security for American Jews and the additional armed attack against a synagogue in California and prevented attacks by antisemites against other synagogues are extremely worrying. However, it is the response by many American Jews against ICE raids and standing with refugees and migrants that fills me with pride; it is recognition of the role of Jews in repairing the world (tikkun olam) and represents a positive struggle for the future.

Standing in solidarity with Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar is obvious; not only I will never support Trump's racism and his attempt to play divide and rule, I always stand in solidarity with those facing oppression - it is quite simple.

Republished and slightly edited from [Daily Kos](#)

Puerto Rico: The organic crisis and the alternatives

22 August 2019, by **Rafael Bernabe**

The discredit attained by the dominant parties, by the legislature, by the “politicians” and even “politics” itself, defined inaccurately, but viscerally despised by many people, recalls the concept of “organic crisis” advanced by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. Authors such as Stathis Kouvelakis have used it to analyse the movement of the *gilets jaunes* in France. An organic crisis involves a breakdown of the ability of the ruling class to “maintain its leading role”. One of its “most visible symptoms” is the “collapse of support for traditional parties”.

This crisis is distinguished from a situation of radical change by the absence of a social force capable of replacing the order in crisis. It is an unstable, precarious situation, full of opportunities and dangers. The ruling class tries to regain its ability to lead. For this, despite discredit, it has large reserves. Thus, the organic crisis “unleashes a recomposition of political personnel”, including the struggle between leaders and parties and the emergence of new ones, constitutional reforms and so on.

Since the resignation of Rosselló (Puerto Rico’s governor until August 2, 2019) the slogan has been to return to “normality”. But that is not achieved by decree, as evidenced by the episode of Pierluisi and the internal struggle of the PNP around the governorate. [39] The ruling class wants stability but does not agree on how to achieve it. Everyone, from Rivera Schatz to the *Nuevo Día* newspaper, from the leadership of the PPD to the radio commentators, from the Chamber of Commerce to the employers’ offices, has different ideas on how to achieve it. Each tries to bring the charcoal to their sardine.

Given this process it is useful to

review some ideas. Puerto Rico does not live under a “partyocracy”, as is sometimes said. It is not dominated by parties. It is dominated by those who dominate through the parties. To put it bluntly: it is dominated by plutocracy. The owners of money, wealth and capital. The employer class. The rich. Give it whatever name you want.

But this ruling class is not homogeneous, nor does it act as a unit. It does not meet somewhere and decide what its policy will be. It depends on structures that allow it to elaborate positions: its press, analysts, think tanks, organizations (Industrial Association, Chamber of Commerce and so on) and its parties (the PPD and the PNP).

The relationship between this class and its parties is not simple. Under an elected government they are subject to different pressures. Elected officials are supposed to serve the ruling class, on the one hand, and gain and maintain the support of the electors on the other. Otherwise, they would be of little use to the ruling class. But that electoral support is not achieved with beautiful smiles and phrases only. It often requires making real concessions to people or not giving way to the most voracious employers’ demands.

This was the case with Law 80, which the employer class wanted to eliminate, something that some of its politicians considered would have an unacceptable electoral effect. [40] The employer class has always had this problem with its elected representatives: the latter are more subject to electoral pressure and therefore do not implement the entire anti-worker agenda of the former. Hence also the sympathy of the employer class for the Board: by not

being elected, nor having to worry about re-election, the Board would dare to act without fear where the “politicians” falter (Law 80 is also an example of this). The employer class, of course, also loves to criticize the “politicians”, presenting themselves as part of the people, outraged by corruption and so on, even though that is the other side of corruption: a “[p]olitician” can only sell themselves if there is someone to buy them.

Thus we have a double hypocrisy inherent in our employer democracy: employers’ politicians despise the people, but they have to present themselves as friends and servants of the people (which sometimes implies real conflicts with the employers they represent) and the employers sometimes distance themselves from corrupt politicians who remain at their service. The publication of the “chat” altered the operation of this machine. It exposed the first hypocrisy: the contempt of politicians for the people was exposed. [41]

But the “chat” was the trigger, not the cause of the summer of 2019. An “organic crisis” is not forged in three days: it was prepared for a little over a decade. Since 2006 our economy has been sinking into an increasingly serious crisis. 250,000 jobs have been lost. Hundreds of thousands have had to emigrate. Young people find no future in their country. Faced with this depression, the government first became indebted, imposing new sacrifices (the Sales and Use Tax in 2006). When the debt became part of the crisis, it imposed austerity measures to try to pay it off: law 7, law 66, budget cuts, attacks on pensions, school closures, increases in the Sales and Use Tax. Meanwhile, corruption continued, uncovered by some scandals, such as Anaudi Hernández. [42]

The discrediting of traditional parties was already reflected in 2016 with the victory of Rosselló with 42% of the votes. Then the Board came to impose increasingly severe austerity measures. On top of this reality came the blow of Hurricane Maria: more than 4,000 dead, \$90 billion in losses. The response of the colonial and imperial governments was inept and corrupt (remember Trump throwing paper towels and the Whitefish contract). [43] Frustration with all this broke out in July 2019.

The crisis will be long precisely because our ruling class has no project. They love to blame the government, but they haven't articulated a coherent plan to get us out of depression. As a candidate for the governorship, I proposed to their

organizations to recover profits that are now fleeing to reinvest them here: they were the first to reject these measures, which would benefit them. They prefer to be harmed rather than touching the privileges of external capital. They are a dependent bourgeoisie, with no vision of the country or the future.

But they will continue to rule until we build our alternative. Their goal now is normalization. Several strategies will be used: the crisis will be attributed to Rosselló's excesses. Once that is resolved, things must return to normal. They thought Pierluisi was the man to achieve this. For two days GFR Media sold him as the man of stability. But the crisis was too serious. With the manoeuvre being repudiated by the Supreme Court, they detached

themselves from Pierluisi and attributed everything to his mistakes.

Now a more insidious manoeuvre will come: we will be asked, what was the use of the struggle, the mobilization, the protest if, after all, everything remains the same? That is, they will try to turn the limits of victory into an argument against struggle. We cannot allow it. While those above try to rebuild their domain, we have to build our alternative. The perspective cannot be to make a new constitution for the colonial regime, but to unleash decolonization accompanied by the fight against the Board and bipartisanship. That means remaining on the streets and also preparing for the polls: we took down Rosselló in 2019, let's finish cleaning the house in 2020.

5 Ways to Support Palestinian Queers

21 August 2019, by **alQaws**

alQaws has since denounced such fear-mongering by Palestinian authorities, and criticised efforts to position the organisation as a "foreign agent." alQaws and its members and activists are an integral part of Palestinian civil society working both to support LGBTQ groups in Palestinian society, as well as fighting for freedom from Israeli occupation and colonisation. alQaws has refused the ban on its activities and noted it will continue its work to fight patriarchy, colonialism and homophobia across historical Palestine.

We are overwhelmed by the support we have received from across Palestine and internationally. It is important for us to shed light on 5 ways you can make your report or post more supportive of Palestinian queers and alQaws:

1) Center Palestinian LGBTQ voices in your reporting

We are constantly talked about but our voices are rarely heard. When reporting on issues that pertain to

LGBTQ Palestinians, just ask yourself: whose voice does this story center? If it doesn't center the voices of LGBTQ Palestinians, then your actions might lead to more harm even if your intentions are to help. Come talk to us and hear our perspective. Do not simply copy and paste translated Hebrew/Israeli media to tell our story. alQaws activists and staff always provide our names when interviewed, so if you read an article/post with a claimed quote from us with no name attributed, you should know it is not from us.

2) Realize that colonialism, patriarchy and homophobia are all connected forms of oppression

Singling out incidents of homophobia in Palestinian society ignores the complexities of Israel's colonization and military occupation being a contributing factor to Palestinian LGBTQ oppression. We have been living under more than 7 decades of Israel's military occupation. We see the Israeli occupation of our land and bodies as connected to and amplifying

the diverse forms of oppression experienced in every society around the globe. alQaws believes the way to truly counter homophobia in Palestine is by understanding and applying the broader political context in any solidarity activities. We ask that you situate Palestinian LGBTQ oppression within the larger context of Israeli occupation, colonialism, patriarchy and homophobia at large.

3) Steer clear of pinkwashing

Perpetuating tiresome tropes of presenting Palestinians as inherently oppressive and Israel as a liberal state that protects LGBTQ rights is counter-productive and factually baseless. Israel is a settler-colonial state that offers no rights to Palestinians, queer or otherwise. Our struggle as queer Palestinians is against Israeli colonialism as much as it is against homophobia and patriarchy in Palestine. Israel uses pinkwashing tactics to lie about "saving" LGBTQ Palestinians from their society. We ask that you steer away from these lies that are intentionally used to justify

their colonization of Palestine. alQaws and our allies in Palestine will continue to amplify our message as well as provide protection and a political home for LGBTQ Palestinians. Israeli LGBTQ groups do not have a say in the work that should be done to fight patriarchy and homophobia in Palestine, including the incitements led by the Palestinian police.

4) Understand our commitment to our local community organizing

alQaws has been organizing in historic Palestine to educate Palestinian

society on sexual and gender diversity since 2001. We are a small team of dedicated activists who believe change comes from working within our local context. We put enormous daily and strategic efforts in our local grassroots advocacy organizing in Palestine. Therefore, and especially in such a crisis, we prioritize providing education and safety to our communities first. Please be patient with us as we respond to your media inquiries.

5) Support our work and vision

We believe in the power of people to make social change possible. Some practical ways you can help amplify our vision for change is by educating yourself and your networks on the work that we do at alQaws. Follow us on social media, share our resources, talk to your friends and family about the importance of standing up against bigotry towards LGBTQ people, and make sure that your vision of liberation and freedom in Palestine includes us all.

[alqaws](#)

Palestinian Authority bans LGBT group, calls for repression

21 August 2019, by alQaws

This statement comes a week after alQaws held a widely published discussion-based event in Nablus, and three weeks after last month's stabbing of the Palestinian queer teen and alQaws' subsequent organizing around it. Prior to Irzeqat's statement, there had been a wave of unprecedented attacks by dozens of people flocking to alQaws' social media platforms, angered by the announcement of our event in Nablus, considered a sacred "traditional" Palestinian city. Those hateful messages and posts threatened violence and prosecution, promoted lies about alQaws and our activities, as well as myths about LGBTQ people in general.

alQaws condemns the use of prosecution, intimidation, and threats of arrest, be it by the police or members of society. We have always been public and accessible about our work, through maintaining an active website, social media presence, and engagement in civil society. However, we have never received threats to this extent before. This backlash paves the way for unethical media practices to thrive by adopting and fueling violent discourse that is gaining traction and legitimacy in social media. We believe

that the police and Palestinian society at large should focus on combatting the occupation and other forms of violence that tear apart the sensitive fabric of our society and values, instead of prosecuting activists who work tirelessly to end all forms of violence.

This recent backlash is in direct response to the dismantling of societal denial regarding the existence of LGBTQ Palestinians! For the past couple of weeks, alQaws and LGBTQ Palestinians have faced an unprecedented amount of violence and incitements, which has escalated in the last couple of days. However, it is clear that this backlash is the response to twenty years plus years of field-work. That and alQaws' strategic focus in the past few years to challenge society's denial through various grassroots professional and community initiatives.

The crackdown against the fight for sexual and gender liberation is not new. Throughout modern history, it has served as a powerful card for oppressive regimes and governments. Sadly, the PA statement and subsequent public responses are well-honed tactics in the game of political

gain and smoke-screening, not limited to the Palestinian Authority or to this particular event.

While we face a storm of attacks and violence, we want to uplift the love and appreciation of our many supporters and allies. Especially those who have publicly rejected the violence and prosecution and taken an active stand in support alQaws and LGBTQ Palestinians. This past month our allies have advocated publicly to combat social violence and take a clear stand in support of LGBTQ people in Palestine.

The police's statement prohibiting alQaws' activities in the West Bank and calling for the prosecution of our team is unacceptable. Furthermore, the accusation of alQaws being a "suspicious entity" working to break up the Palestinian society is unfounded and entirely untrue. As such, we request the police and its spokesperson, Irzeqat, read and educate themselves on the values and the work of alQaws.

We are a Palestinian anti-colonial organization that works in all of historical Palestine since 2001 and challenges patriarchal, capitalist and

colonial oppression. We have collaborated with dozens of other Palestinian civil society organizations to create programming and spaces to discuss gender and sexual diversity issues. For two decades, alQaws has

worked tirelessly to combat the violence of the Israeli occupation as well as social violence against LGBT Palestinians as part of our vision for a liberated Palestine. We will continue

to do so despite colonial barriers and threats of prosecution, in the hopes of expanding the discussion around sexual and gender diversity.

[alQaws](#)

Support for Hong Kongers in struggle for their democratic rights

20 August 2019, by NPA - Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste

The five main demands of the protesters all relate to fundamental democratic rights:

- The final withdrawal of the Bill authorising Beijing to request the extradition of any person in Hong Kong for trial on the mainland. They would no longer be entitled to the minimum guarantees provided by the Hong Kong judicial system;
- The withdrawal of the characterisation of the demonstrations as “riots”, a term that disqualifies them politically and which could serve to justify particularly severe repression;
- The unconditional release without charge of all arrested demonstrators;
- The establishment of an independent inquiry into the police use of force and abuse of power;
- The resignation of Carrie Lam, and the implementation of universal suffrage. The current Legislative Council is in fact only partially elected by universal suffrage, which reinforces the weight of the business community and of elements supportive of the Beijing regime.

For years now, the Beijing regime has

been working to strengthen its direct control over Hong Kong. We have reached a turning point today. A defeat of the ongoing democratic struggle would have very serious consequences.

This is in no way a confrontation between a “communist” power (Beijing) and a “capitalist” enclave (Hong Kong). Xi Jinping’s China is a capitalist power and does business with International Capital! The restraint that Donald Trump has shown so far on the current crisis, despite the showdown with Beijing, and the great discretion of Emmanuel Macron are witness to this!

The representativeness of the current democratic movement has been demonstrated more than once during these four months of mobilization.

- More than two million people were on the streets on June 16, constituting the majority of inhabitants of an age to demonstrate;
- Right In the middle of August, 1.7 million Hongkongers were in the street on Sunday 18 in the pouring rain, despite the ban on this new demonstration;

- To open this day of action on

Sunday, August 18, a specific demonstration of teachers had previously brought together 22 000 participants;

- On August 5, Hong Kong was partially paralysed by a general strike that particularly affected two such flagship sectors as air transport and the financial sector, as well as by roadblocks;
- Civil servants, who had massively mobilised on the 2nd and 5th of August, initiated new militant actions;
- Among students and high school students, there are calls to boycott classes at the beginning of the next school year.

Beijing’s military intervention is only a last resort. While waving this threat, the Chinese regime is able to intervene in many ways from within the territory while biding its time, sowing division and hoping for the decay of the current movement.

In any event, the fight for basic freedoms in Hong Kong deserves our full support.

Montreuil (France) Monday 19 August 2019

With the constitutional agreement, the Sudanese Revolution enters a new phase

20 August 2019, by **Gilbert Achcar**

The constitutional agreement between Sudan's people's movement and the country's armed forces was signed on Saturday, August 17. The following article sheds light on the circumstances of this agreement. It was first published in the Arabic daily, Al-Quds al-Arabi, on July 30 and reproduced on the website of the Sudanese Communist Party [44]

On July 5, jubilant Sudanese masses celebrated the victory they had achieved under the leadership of the Forces for the Declaration of Freedom and Change (FDFC) when the Transitional Military Council (TMC) was forced to backtrack in the wake of the huge demonstrations organized on June 30. The military had to give up their attempt at quelling the mass movement, allow back its free development, including the restoration of the Internet, the movement's main communication means, and revert to the track of negotiation and compromise after having failed to impose their will by force of arms.

The Sudanese Revolution entered a third phase at that point, after a first phase capped by the fall of Omar al-Bashir on April 11 and a second one capped by the TMC's retreat on July 5. The FDFC, particularly their main component, the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), have proved their full awareness that each phase is more difficult and dangerous than the previous by maintaining the mass mobilization and consolidating it in view of the ongoing as well as future confrontations.

Victories achieved until now have been only partial indeed: they are essentially compromises between the old regime represented by the TMC and the revolution led by the FDFC.

The compromise inaugurating the third phase was formulated in the

political agreement between the two forces on July 17. It reflects the duality of power on the ground in this transitory phase, between, on the one hand, a military leadership that insists on keeping the ministries of defense and the interior (that is, all military and security forces) under its control, as the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces had done in Egypt after getting rid of former president Hosni Mubarak on February 11, 2011, and on the other hand, a revolutionary leadership that mobilizes the masses in confronting the military and seeking to steer the mass movement into a war of positions that would allow it to gradually control the country.

The FDFC's aim is to win over a majority of the armed forces in support of the movement's civilian and peacemaking goals, so as to isolate their most reactionary wing. The main figurehead of the latter is the commander of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), Muhammad Hamdan Dagalo (known as Hemedti), backed by the regional reactionary axis constituted by the Saudi kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, and the Egyptian regime of Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi.

It is in this context that the Sudanese Communist Party is leading the ranks of the critics of the July 17 political agreement and the FDFC concessions that it entailed, pledging to carry on the struggle until the complete fulfillment of the revolution's goals as summarized in the Declaration for Freedom and Change adopted on January 1 of this year. Those who regard this position as divisive of the revolutionary movement and believe that it weakens it are wrong.

Other key forces of the movement, especially within the SPA, share the Communists' resentment of the

conditions that the military insist on imposing as a price for accepting to share power. It is in the best interest of the Sudanese Revolution that a section of the movement keeps exerting revolutionary pressure without being bound by the agreement in order to fuel the radicalization of the ongoing process and counterbalance the reactionary pressure exerted by the Islamic fundamentalist forces, a pressure which the TMC invokes constantly in hardening its position.

The next stage of the present phase consists in adopting the Transitional Constitutional Document, which combines very progressive principles, more advanced than all Arab states' constitutions, including the new Tunisian constitution, with the formalization of the present balance of forces and duality of power in legalizing the military command's participation in the exercise of political power in a way that is worse than Egypt's present constitution.

And yet, even this compromise with all its defects is still jeopardized by a military command that is intensely trying to circumvent the movement's demands and pervert them in practice as it did recently with the purported investigation in the massacre perpetrated by the RSF. The armed forces' most reactionary wing keeps trying moreover to subvert the compromise and push the situation toward a military coup, as illustrated by the killing of demonstrators in El-Obeid on July 29.

"Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun," says one of the best-known quotations from the leader of the Chinese Revolution, Mao Zedong. This statement echoes a revolutionary experience that won by force of arms through protracted people's war. It

conveys nevertheless the elementary truth that political power is never complete without the control of armed force. The Sudanese Revolution's major challenge consists indeed in eventually achieving control of the armed forces by steering the force of the unarmed popular movement to that end.

If the revolution manages to move

peacefully into a fourth phase, with the duality of political power embodied in governmental institutions in which the popular movement is predominant, the revolutionary leadership's ability to fulfill the masses' aspiration to peace and their social and economic demands will become crucial in allowing it to gain control of the armed forces and

democratize them. Short of this, the Sudanese Revolution will be stuck halfway, and may thus end up digging its own grave as happened to previous experiences in Sudan's history and the history of popular movements worldwide.

18 August 2019

[Jacobin](#)

The battle of the Bogside

19 August 2019, by **Vincent Doherty**

"The Derry Citizens Action Committee declares that after 50 years of Unionist tyranny we have finally come to the crunch. Either we smash Unionism now or we go back to sleep for another 50 years." Irish Times, 14 August 1969

This week marks the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bogside, an event which is recognised as an indelible moment in modern Irish history. It fundamentally altered the relationship between the oppressed Catholic minority and the Orange State that had existed in the 6 north eastern counties of Ireland since the British imposed partition of the island in 1921. It also happened to be the summer I'd left the ancien regime that was the Christian Brothers School, Brow of the Hill, a school that was located at the bottom of a winding street known as Hoggs Folly, at the junction of the Bogside and the Brandywell.

My class was made up of 15 and 16-year-old boys, many of whom would later spend long years in prison cells, on the blanket protest, on hunger strikes, prisoners of a conflict which grew out of the events in Derry in August 1969. We were the teenage rioters who took on the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and later the British Army. There had been rumblings of discontent and resistance to the Stormont regime across the North since the Civil Rights March in Derry on 5 October 1968. The march

gained worldwide attention when it was brutally attacked by the RUC, a heavily armed, overwhelmingly loyalist militia, which included the infamous 'B' Specials, an auxiliary paramilitary force created out of the wartime UVF at the time of partition. Like much else in the Orange State the police force was a representation of the local Stormont regime, famously described by one Northern Ireland Prime Minister as "a Protestant parliament for a Protestant people." In this case, a Protestant police force for a Protestant people.

You are now entering Free Derry

The Bogside had become a particular thorn in the side of the Orange State with ongoing engagement between locals and the RUC often supported by far right loyalist gangs. Following sustained and bloodied assaults on a People's Democracy-led student march from Belfast to Derry in the early days of 1969, a march inspired by the Selma to Montgomery march in the US, the RUC had invaded the Bogside and terrorised the local community, breaking into homes and beating people indiscriminately. By August '69, in anticipation of further RUC attacks, the local community were better prepared to defend the area. Following the annual highly

provocative Orange Order parade through the predominantly nationalist city, the RUC and loyalist mobs charged into the Bogside to disperse protesters who had gathered at the edge of the area. What awaited them was unforeseen. They were met by ferocious resistance by local people inspired by youthful radicals including Bernadette McAliskey and Eamon McCann. A contemporary report from the Irish Times captured the moment:

"For the second night in a row Derry is in flames and chaos reigns About 5,000 men, women and children hurl petrol bombs and stones at the RUC and B Specials. A new station - Radio Free Derry - is broadcasting and urging people to man the barricades. Fires are burning at several points across the city and there is widespread street fighting. The heavy blanket of CS gas has taken its toll, particularly the old, the sick and the very young."

The same paper also reported widespread solidarity protests across the 6 counties, in Coalisland, Enniskillen, Dungannon, Strabane, Armagh and in Dungiven, "where police are besieged in the local RUC station." This was mass action on a scale not seen before, people power at its most vivid and dramatic. A petrol station on the edge of the Bogside had been "liberated" and the production of petrol bombs - Molotov cocktails was on an industrial scale. The Bogsidiers effectively drove the RUC, the B

Specials and the loyalist mobs out of the area and a famous slogan was born, which to this day adorns a wall at the site of the battle - "You are now entering Free Derry."

The Falls Road Pogrom

I recall as a 15 year old making my way home from the Bogside past heavily armed B Specials, gathered in small groups on every street corner, to find my father and other men from our area, who had never engaged in any form of protest before, preparing to go on patrol to defend the local Catholic Chapel, amidst threats that it might be burned down by loyalists. Even the normally hesitant leadership of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association warned: "A war of genocide is about to flare across the North."

The loyalist onslaught aided and abetted by the RUC and the B Specials had already begun across the north. But it was to be in Belfast, where many protests in solidarity with the Bogside had taken place, that it was to

be at its most vicious. Determined to subdue the risen people the Stormont regime gave carte blanche to the police and the loyalist gangs to terrorise the local Catholic areas. Firing from heavy machine guns mounted on armoured cars the RUC overran areas of the Lower Falls in West Belfast killing a nine year old boy in his home in the Divis Flats, whilst creating cover for loyalist mobs who burned down whole streets of Catholic houses. Over the 3 days of disturbances in Belfast 7 people would die and 750 would be injured. Thousands of Catholic families and businesses were burned out with many fleeing over the border to special camps set up by the Dublin Government to provide basic foodstuffs and accommodation for what were effectively refugees from what generally became known as "The Falls Road Pogrom."

No going back

The events of August 1969 saw the effective alienation of the vast majority of the Catholic nationalist population from the institutions of the

Orange State. The introduction by a British Labour Government of British troops "To aid the Civil Power" demonstrated to many that the British Government, when all was said and done, would side with the Unionists despite all the injustices that were the hallmark of the Stormont regime. Despite military occupation and repressive policing the resistance to injustice would never again be totally tamed or contained. Hard-won reforms on housing and voting rights were achieved but they were seen by many in the nationalist community, particularly amongst the youth, as "too little, too late." There was to be no going back. A new dynamic was now in place, which questioned the very notion that the Orange State could be reformed from within, or whether it needed to be effectively overthrown. That was the real message that emanated from The Battle of the Bogside and subsequent events.

The genie was out of the bottle; there was to be no going back.

August 14 2019

[Counterfire](#)

Statement on India's Revocation of Jammu & Kashmir's Autonomous Status by the Indian Government

19 August 2019, by Alliance of Middle Eastern and North African Socialists

The people of Kashmir were never given the option of having their own state. Since 1947, their land has been fought over by India and Pakistan and divided between the two. At Independence in August 1947, Jammu and Kashmir was a princely state ruled by Maharaja Hari Singh, and was given the choice to join either India or Pakistan. Since J&K was a Muslim-majority state, many expected it to join Pakistan. On the other hand,

the party leading the independence struggle, the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, was secular and allied to the Indian National Congress.

As the Maharaja dithered over the decision, there was a Pakistan-backed invasion of tribesmen from the west in October 1947, and Hari Singh appealed to India to help fight them. India agreed on condition that J&K accede to India, and the Maharaja

signed the instrument of accession which on the Indian side was conditional on approval by the people of the state. As fighting continued, the UN Security Council passed a resolution requiring Pakistan to withdraw its forces, India to withdraw most of its forces, and a plebiscite to be held to decide whether Kashmir should join India or Pakistan. However, neither side withdrew their forces, the plebiscite was never held,

and the state has remained divided to this day.

In 1952, on the Indian side, Article 370, which specified the conditions on which the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) had acceded to India, was incorporated into the Constitution of India on the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir. In 1954, Article 35A was added with the agreement of the J&K Constituent Assembly. Since the Constituent Assembly dissolved itself on 25 January 1957 without recommending revocation of Article 370, it has been deemed to be permanent by the Supreme Court of India.

On 5 August 2019, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government of India revoked Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which had given the state of J&K a considerable degree of autonomy, including having its own constitution and its own flag.

The Constitution of India does allow Article 370 to be revoked, but only with the prior approval of the Kashmiri people's elected representatives in J&K's constituent assembly. Even the approval of J&K's legislative assembly was not sought because it had been dissolved in November 2018 by the BJP-appointed governor. On August 5, he fraudulently provided consent on behalf of millions of Kashmiris as they were held in captivity in their homes at gunpoint, while elected political leaders, even those who have been in coalitions with the BJP, were detained and all means of communication, including cellphones, landlines and the internet, were cut off.

The Revocation of Article 370 also involved the scrapping of Article 35A of the Indian constitution, which, crucially, reserved the right to own land and immoveable property, as well as the right to vote and contest elections, to seek government employment and obtain state welfare benefits, to permanent residents of the state. Now, J&K has been carved up into two Union Territories ruled directly from Delhi, a move designed to further humiliate the already subjugated population.

This revocation by the Indian government is the most impressive feat yet achieved in the BJP's steady demolition of India's democracy over the past five years. The central government's unilateral abrogation of the terms on which Kashmir acceded to India means that the state is no longer legally linked to India, and India becomes a foreign occupying power. Previous governments have been guilty of grievous violations of Article 370 as well as human rights violations in Kashmir, but this is the first time that the Indian military occupation of Kashmir has no legal basis whatsoever.

The excuses provided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah for making this move - to end separatist violence and develop J&K to the level of the rest of India - make no sense. Separatist violence will not be ended by enraging even those Kashmiris who previously wanted to be part of India by demolishing their democratic rights. The economic arguments the Indian government gives are bogus too.

Far from lagging behind the rest of India, Kashmir is ahead of many states in India, including Modi's and BJP president and government minister, Amit Shah's home state of Gujarat. Kashmir has much lower infant and under-five mortality rates, lower percentages of underweight children and women, higher percentages of fully immunised children and girls aged 15-19 with at least 8 years of schooling, and higher life expectancy despite the ongoing conflict. Most strikingly, the poverty ratio in Kashmir is much lower than the national average. This is in large part due to Kashmir's own constitution, under which extensive land reforms were undertaken in the 1950s, drastically reducing the landlessness and rural poverty which haunt the rest of India. Kashmir's special status has been responsible for this reduction in poverty, both by allowing for the land reforms and by preventing non-Kashmiris from acquiring land in Kashmir.

This brings us to the real reasons, political, economic and ideological, why this drastic move has been made by India: it opens the door to a land-

grab by settlers from the rest of India, which will also make it possible to change the demography of J&K. Muslim-majority Kashmir has always been a thorn in the flesh of Hindu supremacists, who in 1948 had killed and expelled hundreds of thousands of Muslims in Jammu. The abrogation of Article 370 allows them to 'integrate' J&K into India by changing its ethnic composition. In other words, the intention is to turn Kashmir into a settler-colony like Palestine. It is not a coincidence that India, which from Independence had been a strong supporter of the Palestinian liberation struggle, has under Modi - the first Indian prime minister to visit Israel and literally embrace Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu - become a staunch ally of Israel.

At the same time, Pakistan-backed Islamic fundamentalists (both armed and unarmed) who call for uniting Kashmir with Pakistan offer an 'alternative' that would be disastrous for women, religious minorities, and the secular majority. They have acted in tandem with the Hindu supremacists to silence progressive voices and undermine democracy in Kashmir.

Meanwhile, the war hysteria whipped up by Hindu supremacists in India and Islamic fundamentalists in Pakistan serves to divert attention from the abysmal failure of both these states to satisfy even the most basic needs of their people, and can lead to an escalation of the armed conflict between them. Russia backs India, China backs Pakistan, and the US calls on India and Pakistan to remain calm, while Trump's overt racism and anti-Muslim bigotry serves to encourage the same attitudes in India.

At this moment of unprecedented trauma and repression, we, the Alliance of Middle Eastern and North African Socialists, express our whole-hearted solidarity with the people of Jammu & Kashmir and reaffirm their fundamental right to determine their own future in their own land. At a time when support for Jammu & Kashmir's freedom is treated as treason in both India and Pakistan, we would especially like to extend our solidarity to socialists and progressives there

Confrontation looming on Brexit

17 August 2019, by **Alan Davies**

Johnson has abandoned any pretence of seeking a new agreement with the EU as his preferred option. A crash out Brexit on the (self-imposed) deadline of October 31 is now the outcome he is working toward – although disingenuous rhetoric continues to blame everyone else. As former Tory Chancellor Philip Hammond has rightly said, Johnson has now blocked negotiations with the EU by the introduction of an unachievable precondition in the form of a complete withdraw of the Irish backstop – which he knows the EU cannot and will not concede. [45]

As a result, we are facing an unprecedented confrontation between government, Parliament, and people. Gordon Brown and Dominic Grieve have both described it as the biggest constitutional crisis since the English civil war of 1642 (no less), that will be launched next month in advance of the October 31 deadline. [46]

Labour strengthens position

In response, Jeremy Corbyn has now written to the other opposition parties and remain Tories to say that Labour will table a motion of no confidence in the government as soon as it is clear that it would win, and that in the event of this being successful Labour would seek form an interim administration with the aim of calling a general election. [47] In that election, the letter says, ‘Labour will be committed to a public vote on the terms of leaving the EU including an option to remain’.

This throws down the gauntlet to the

Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru, the Greens and rebel Tories, at a time when remain MPs have been discussing a government of national unity led by the likes of Ken Clarke or Yvette Cooper. The letter’s clear commitment to a second referendum in the context of a general election is a major step forward in Labour policy and opens up clear battle lines with the Brexiteers and the hard right.

The response of the Liberal Democrats to Corbyn’s letter has been completely outrageous. We have a situation where nationalism, and Little Englander populism, reigns supreme in what is the most right-wing government since the second world war. The Tory party is effectively the Brexit Party mark II and Johnson is Britain’s Donald Trump – a grotesque addition to the growing band of hard right governments around Europe and the world.

The Lib-Dems whole sales pitch over the last two years is that they are the leaders of the pro-remain movement and that in the interests of stopping Brexit all other political differences should be put aside. The proposal put forward by Corbyn could do precisely that – bring down Johnson and call a general election with Labour committed to a second referendum. But Swinson’s response is to accuse him of playing personality politics – when in fact it is her party which is using their enmity to a radical anti-austerity party to potentially hand the momentum back to the beleaguered Tories. [48]

The Lib-Dems were more than happy to enter a full austerity coalition with the Tories but are not prepared to give support to a temporary Labour-led government aimed at bringing down the Tories and stopping Brexit. Even a number of rebel Tories have been

more friendly to Corbyn’s proposals than Swinson’s party – but she is clearly under significant pressure both from the media and public opinion. [49] She has been forced to concede that she will meet Corbyn, while still currently justifying her unjustifiable response to the letter.

To their credit the Scottish National Party have said that they will work with Labour to defeat the Tory Government. Caroline Lucas, who had previously and regrettably called for a government of national unity with an all-women’s leadership, excluding Jeremy Corbyn – and indeed senior black women such as Dianne Abbot – has also said she will back this move. The SNP, the Greens and Plaid Cymru all argue that a second referendum should precede a general election. [50]

In the meantime, Unite General Secretary Len Mc Cluskey’s intervention once again peddles the myth that there is such a thing as a Brexit that will protect jobs and services. [51] The backward looking dynamic of his trajectory would undermine the positive move made by the Corbyn letter and needs to be strongly rebutted both inside Unite and more widely across the labour movement. No possible Brexit would protect communities ravaged by years of austerity – only a radical Labour government can right the wrongs of many decades of neglect,

Previous moves

The initiative Corbyn took with his letter is not his first attempt to grapple with the constitutional crisis and the antics of the Johnson government.

According to the Fixed Term Parliament Act, a vote of no confidence in the government would trigger a general election after two weeks if no alternative government was successfully formed. A confidence vote has become more problematic for the government since the number of Tory MPs that have been prepared to vote against the government on this has been augmented by some of those sacked in Johnson's reshuffle. It only remains in the balance because (scandalously) a number of Labour MPs, led by Caroline Flint, seemed prepared to support the government in such a vote. Any Labour MP who does so should immediately have the whip withdrawn.

Meanwhile the role of the bulk of the radical left remains dire. The new Left Campaign, launched recently by the Morning Star and supported by others on the left - such as Costas Lapavistas, Kevin Ovenden, and Alex Gordon - is dedicated ensuring that Britain leaves the EU on October 31, and is completely uncritical of the no-deal Brexit being planned by Johnson and oblivious (apparently) to the racist, hard right, neoliberal nature of the exit they are supporting. They have been urging Jeremy Corbyn (fortunately unsuccessfully) to end any support for a second referendum.

Outrageous Cummings

Since a successful no confidence vote would produce an election before October 31 that the Tories think they would lose, Johnson's special advisor, Dominic Cummings has proposed a different and completely outrageous reading of the Act. [52] He argues that since the date of such an election is the prerogative of the Prime Minister, Johnson should ignore a no-confidence vote, stay in office, and call a general election with a date that would ensure that it concluded after October 31 giving the Tories a better chance of winning by claiming that they had implemented the 2016 referendum vote.

Any attempt by Johnson to bypass Parliament and people will not be

easy, or even achievable, however slick the Downing Street operation. A majority of both the population and MPs are against it, and opposition is growing as the implications become ever more clear. The Commons Speaker John Bercow has said, speaking in Edinburgh, that it is possible for MPs to block an exit on October 31, and he will strain every bone in his body to ensure that Parliament's voice is heard. [53]

Jeremy Corbyn rightly branded this, in a letter to the cabinet secretary Mark Sedwill on August 8, as "an unprecedented, unconstitutional, and anti-democratic abuse of power". [54] He went on to demand from Sedwill clarification of the rules surrounding 'purdah' which are designed to prevent an incumbent government from taking major policy decisions during an election campaign to the detriment of opposition parties.

He also asked Sedwill to confirm that in the event that Britain becomes required to leave the EU under the terms of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act during an election campaign, that the government would avoid this by seeking an extension to article 50 in order to allow an incoming government to take a decision of Brexit on the basis of the result. "Forcing through no deal Brexit against a decision of Parliament", he said, "and denying the choice to the voters in a general election already under way, would be an unprecedented, unconstitutional, and anti-democratic abuse of power by a Prime Minister elected, not by the public, but by a small number of Conservative Party members.

The reply Corbyn received from Sedwill was non-committal on this issue, and as a result Corbyn then sent his letter of August 14.

The break-up of the British state

Whilst it is no surprise that the hard Brexit zealots around Johnson are prepared to play fast and loose with the jobs, lives, and living standards of the working class in Britain it is more surprising that they are prepared to

do the same with the break-up of the British state, which is now directly posed by a no deal Brexit. Johnson appears oblivious to the implications of this for Scotland and Ireland and ignored the views of Ruth Davidson when he visited Scotland and the pro-remain parties when he visited Belfast.

The Labour leadership, however, in the form of John McDonnell, have responded to this situation (in terms of Scotland) with an important change of policy. McDonnell intervened at the Edinburgh fringe to say that Labour would support the right of the Scottish people to have a second independence referendum if that is what the majority wanted. [55] McDonnell held his ground, continuing to push this democratic approach when the backlash came from inside Labour mostly from the Scottish Labour Party, which is determined to stick to a tribal approach which has seen the party crumble over recent years. [56] Recent opinion polls in Scotland show a 52 per cent majority for a second independence referendum, which is the margin by which leave won the referendum in 2016. It was always obvious that McDonnell would not have made the intervention he did without first discussing it with Corbyn, but the fact the two agree was latter explicitly confirmed. [57]

Although this move does not, in itself, break with Labour's traditional Unionism, it is a significant challenge to it. Most significantly it opens the way for a new relationship between Labour and the SNP, in particular it strengthens the possibility of Labour forming a government with the support of the SNP in the event of a hung parliament.

McDonnell's shift on a Scottish independence vote is in line with the approach that Jeremy Corbyn took to a border poll in Ireland, which is provided for in the Good Friday agreement, when he spoke at Queen's University in Belfast on May 24 last year to argue that Brexit must not lead to a hard border. [58] He said that whilst he was not asking for or advocating a border poll, but would ensure the Good Friday Agreement is implemented "to the letter". When

asked by the BBC how a Corbyn government would respond to the issue he said: "It's within the terms of the Good Friday Agreement that such a poll could be held if there was a willingness to do so, at that point you don't stand in its way, but it is within the terms of the Good Friday Agreement and I think the UK government should be neutral in that respect".

All this is in line with the views of Labour Party members. A poll in the Times of July 23 2019 found that two thirds of Labour Party members

support a referendum on Irish reunification, and only 41 per cent of members oppose Scotland leaving the UK.

Johnson's attitude to Ireland is as ignorant as it is reactionary. Short of a successful border poll coming out of this situation Ireland, North and South, stand to be amongst the biggest losers from all this since a no deal Brexit puts the external border of the EU between the two which will mean a hard border and customs checks.

Meanwhile, Johnson's government is spending large sums of money attempting to resolve this entirely self-imposed crisis, like preparing to airlift food and medicine into the country, or buying up and destroying large amounts of beef and lamb that will become unsaleable after Brexit. They claim that they are now ready for a no deal Brexit. This is rubbish. It is impossible to be ready for such an event. This would take us into uncharted and extremely dangerous waters.

[Socialist Resistance](#)

On the fight of the Sudanese Professionals Association: "We Want to Take Sudan From This Dark Corner to a Bright Future"

16 August 2019, by **Ella Wind, Niall Reddy, Nuha Zein**

The agreement follows more than eight months of protests, sit-ins, and political mass strikes across the country. At the forefront of the uprising has been the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), an umbrella coalition of seventeen white-collar trade unions that had been officially banned in the country since its founding.

SPA activist and geophysics professor Nuha Zein represented the group at the 2019 convention of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). DSA delegates Ella Wind and Niall Reddy conducted this interview with her on the day the constitutional agreement was announced.

Ella Wind (EW): During the uprisings that swept the Arab world almost a decade ago, Sudan experienced a string of popular protests, but nothing that matched the scale of neighboring countries. What set the masses in motion now? Was there a particular trigger?

Nuha Zein (NZ): It was kind of an

accumulation of reasons because, if you think about it, from the beginning, when the regime of al-Bashir came to power on June 30, 1989, it overthrew an elected government. So, this is one.

The second thing is that Sudanese people, in their behavior, are very peaceful. So they were very patient about the mistreatment and brutality that the government was meting out during the initial years.

And then came this kind of Islamic terrorism and the embargo of the US administration in 1993 for Sudan, and life was terrible for Sudanese people. And then there was the discovery of oil. Life was getting a little bit better, but at the same time you see your money is leaving the country.

At the same time, people were just trying and trying to say no and to raise their voices. The brutal regime used to either detain or kill them; all kinds of brutal responses.

We also have a problem in the south. South Sudan, separated from Sudan in 2011, is also an issue.

So for thirty years, a host of accumulated issues stifled the protest movement. We tried to have a revolution in 2013. They killed many people. Maybe the Sudanese people were not very ready for that. In 2016, we went on disobedience for three days. That was successful, but it was also not enough to go on a revolution.

The last point is about political parties in Sudan. They have a long history, but they didn't practice democracy enough for the last thirty years to sit down at one table and discuss how to oppose this regime.

The al-Bashir regime used to reserve 70 percent of the state budget for security. So he managed to allocate full security for himself, and 1 percent of the budget for health care, and 0.8 percent for education. When people went out on [the streets] in December, even if they didn't go out to bring him down, they went out because the price of bread was very high for them. They were just going out protesting that we need better life. The demands were not that high. But when the response [from the regime] was very violent,

people escalated their demands.

My association was formed officially in June 2018, and the revolution started in December 2018. So they stood by each other on the street and planned, organized leading, and then [the revolution] went [forward].

Niall Reddy (NR): So the revolution started really over bread-and-butter issues – literally – but it ended up completely changing the political regime in the country. Can you tell us in a little more detail what actual demands people were fighting for, and how they changed over time?

NZ: When people were suffering, there was no freedom to voice our struggles. There is no dignity for people in Sudan. The security forces have the right to strike and humiliate anyone. At the same time, the regime managed to somehow to persuade the Sudanese people that, if you take to the streets, Sudan will end up like Libya, like Syria, like Yemen. We will have civil war. And Sudanese people were scared of that.

They also tried to persuade people that, even if the regime is terrible, al-Bashir is the best man for now. People believed that, among the political forces, there was no one else qualified to be our president. So people took to the streets for very simple demands, and then when the response [from the regime] was very violent, the demands were escalated. We had this declaration of Freedom and Change, which had three main points: the first, to bring down al-Bashir and his totalitarian regime, the second, to form a civilian government that would exude democracy, justice, and freedom; and the third, to present these perpetrators for a trial according to the International Charter.

For the second one, the formation of a civilian authority, we had a lot of work to do. Because the regime has been there for thirty years; it's not easy for them to be replaced. So the easiest thing that they did four months after the beginning of the revolution, al-Bashir down stepped down and they brought in another general. But we

didn't want to replace a dictator with another dictator. So people continued. And there were three things that kept us alive: we were peaceful, we were organized, we were united around the slogan "Freedom and Change."

So no matter how they try to provoke us to use violence, people wouldn't. How many times they try to kill and rape girls and put us in prison. People have lot of anger, disappointment, a lot of sadness, but we kept ourselves peaceful. It wasn't easy, but that's how it was.

EW:What were the key turning points in the process of the uprising?

NZ:The revolution started December 13, 2018.

And it wasn't in Khartoum. It was in a very far, small region in southeastern Sudan, in a place called Ad-Damazin. And then from there, it went to another city in the north. The regime killed people in the first place, and the next place. The revolution went to another city in Sudan near the Red Sea. And then, after, it came to Khartoum. So the revolution didn't start like any other revolution, from the capital city.

NR:It all started from the periphery.

NZ:Yes. People just go from school demanding lower bread prices. It was a protest with simple demands.

Exactly seven days after that, my association was already aligned with the revolution. And we started organizing meetings according to a schedule. It would go on Facebook every Sunday in the morning, to show people what to do from Sunday to next Saturday. So every day we would have a procession for something. We have a procession to clean the neighborhood, we have a procession to go to the palace. We have another procession to visit the mothers of killed protesters in their houses. Thousands of people would go to visit a mother and support her because she lost her son. It was amazing how many peaceful mechanisms we found.

NR: Wow. So there was a constant stream of this kind of activity and

protest and solidarity?

NZ: Yes.

NR:And then on April 6 there was an important event?

NZ: Yes. And why April 6? Because it is the anniversary of our last revolution in 1985. Just four years after that, al-Bashir came to power. So it was our last peaceful revolution in which we got an elected government. The SPA organized what we called "the million procession." People went to the headquarters of the Sudanese Armed Forces in Khartoum. People were, to be honest, afraid to do a sit-in in front of the Sudanese Armed Forces building. But it succeeded. This sit-in continued for two months. Many diplomatic people went and visited the protestors over there. It was very peaceful.

NR: How many people were involved?

NZ: Six million. The brutal regime, in its deep state counterrevolution, always tried to find excuses to oppose us. So sometimes they call us communists. Sometimes they say we are anti-Islam. Sometimes they call us drug dealers. Every day there was a new accusation. One Friday, the sit-in was the biggest Friday prayer in Sudan for the last thirty years.

Christians were helping cover praying people from the sun because it was very hot. They were just stretching very big sheets out over them. So it was really peaceful between all kind of religions. So this revolution has nothing to do with religion, has nothing to do with race or tribes or anywhere. It was just for Sudan.

The sit-in went amazingly well. You didn't have to worry about what to eat or what to drink, because everything came to you. We had lots of tents in the sit-in. We had a tent for medical care, for emergencies – all for free. We had many tents for free food. We had lots of tents people just set up at the wall around the headquarters of the Sudanese Armed Forces.

It was just this amazing picture until May 3. Then the Janjaweed [a militia group active in the Sudan and Chad] came. This Janjaweed are quite

malicious. When Bashir couldn't control them, he negotiated a deal with the Janjaweed [six years ago]. So they undertook mass killings of foreigners in Sudan in collaboration with al-Bashir. And then he promoted [the Janjaweed] and brought them to Khartoum to be an official armed force.

So, on May 3, they tried to kill many of the peaceful protestors. They shot some of them. People were very angry, but we continued our sit-in. The military council realized that they will never manage to dismantle or to stop this sit-in.

The government went to Egypt to get some advice from the intelligence security service there, because in Egypt, they did it. They had killed two thousand at the Rabaa Massacre [in 2013].

So they went to learn from the experience of Egypt. And one week later, they did it. It was the last day of Ramadan, people were fasting. They came at 5 a.m., when everyone was asleep, and they killed 180 in two hours. And threw tens of them alive in the River Nile. People found the bodies with cement blocks tied on their feet so they couldn't float. They raped girls, they raped doctors, females. Even they raped males. When the males tried to protect girls, they raped boys. This is the Janjaweed. This is what happened.

This is the turning point in the revolution. They burnt the tents and everything. For one week, there was a lot of anger, a lot of sadness. But with my association and other forces they recovered again, and we started our procession again. Then we decide, this is the time for disobedience. We carried people to do it. And it was very easy because people were full of anger. It was very successful, disobedience in the whole of Sudan.

EW: What kind of disobedience?

NZ: Nobody left their home. People just stayed at home. That needed preparation, so for the week beforehand we had committees for resistance in all the neighborhoods taking care of poor people. They prepared them for the three days by

bringing them all kinds of food and money and everything. So they don't need to go out. It was amazing support. And it was very successful for three days.

And then the military council asked supporters of Freedom and Change to come back for a negotiation. People were divided about whether to negotiate because they were very angry after the massacre. But we were adopting two lines. We have the line of public pressure, but we also have the line of negotiation. They happen at the same time. Very peaceful public pressure, and at the same time, expert people in the negotiations.

NR: So when was al-Bashir forced out?

NZ: On April 10. Just four days after the sit-in started.

The military forces and the brutal regime immediately removed Bashir and brought in another guy, General [Ahmed Awad Ibn] Auf. He stayed for thirty hours. People rejected him because we know he belongs to this regime. So after thirty hours, they also had him resign and brought us another general, [Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who is still there now. Starting at that time, they asked us to start negotiations. They recognized that we are the representatives of the people, so they wanted to sit down with us. And we have our conditions. We want civilian government. No more from the brutal regime party. No more. None of them will participate in the coming transition of government. They can participate in the election after three years, but not now. And to put on trial not just the perpetrators who killed our protesters in May and June, but the crimes since al-Bashir came to power in 1989.

And they accepted it. But the deep state tried many times to make our negotiations fail. So it was like up and down, up and down sometimes in the negotiation until [July]. They signed the political agreement. It says that the Freedom and Change forces are a representative. The military council and us agreed to sit down. This is last week. This morning they signed the initial letters, the constitutional announcement, which is seventeen

pages. It is about everything. About equality, about justice. About the three councils of the transitioning government. The sovereign, the legislative, and the executive council. The rights of women, the rights of youth. How to bring justice, everything. The majority of this sovereign council is civilian. We have representatives from the military council, but the majority is civilian.

So finally we got our civilian government.

EW: So the main group that has been leading the revolution has been the SPA, the Sudanese Professionals Association. Can you tell us more about the origins of this group? Who does it represent, and what was it doing in the years before the uprising?

NZ: We have a long historical legacy, since 1947, when the labor unions were struggling for their rights under British colonization. After that, things were improving until 1989, when al-Bashir came. At that time, al-Bashir froze any activities of these unions and impeded any attempts to form any trade unions. Instead, the regime had their own unions who serve their policies but not the interests of the people. So we tried to refound ourselves again in 2012. It failed because they detained and put our leaders in prison. Then, in 2014, it failed again.

From 2016 until mid-2018, just six months before the revolution started, they managed to build the SPA. And the three main unions that composed the SPA were the schoolteachers' union, the medical doctors' union, and the Democratic Lawyers Association. They signed a charter. Then new bodies came in, in like my body, the Professors Association, then the journalists. As of now, twenty-five bodies have signed the charter to be under the umbrella of the SPA.

So, after the revolution started, SPA aligned with the people. On January 1, 2019, they made a declaration, which is called the Declaration of Freedom and Change. We asked the political forces and opposition forces to sit and discuss what we have to do to fight this brutal regime. And for the first

time in Sudan, those forces sat on one table beside armed movements, beside committees from neighborhoods and the resistance, beside civil society forces. More than seventy bodies under the umbrella of the Forces of Freedom and Change.

But they gave their mandate to the SPA to lead and organize the processions. They did that for three reasons. The first reason is because our body is the first one who aligned with the people. Second, because our leaders, our members are on the street with them. The third reason is that we don't have any ambition for future executive leadership in the new government. We are just a union. So that's why people trust us a lot for any plan to achieve this revolution. People just execute it and do it together.

NR: Could you give us a sense of other key players, the key members of the coalition? Were there other trade unions, industrial workers, etcetera, involved? Other social movements? You mentioned that there were neighborhood councils.

NZ: Yes. The most effective body for the last few months was the committee of neighborhood resistance. They are not only in Khartoum, we have these committees in all cities in Sudan. They respond and contact each other when there is a procession for justice.

These neighborhood committees will not stop. They will continue as civil forces because they have to watch the representatives in the legislative council. From these committees and from these neighborhoods, there will be members in the legislative council. So their job is not finished. They will continue within the transitional capacity, but not us.

EW: Can you give us a sense of whether there were other demographics or social groups in Sudan that are very well represented in the protest movement, like youth, or any parts of the country where it's been especially strong.

NR: It seems, for example, like women have been at the forefront of things.

NZ: From all sectors and from all areas, citizens, students, and women were amazing in this revolution. No matter if they were from the village or from a town. Whether they're educated or not. The mothers were especially amazing. They would go outside and encourage the protestors, "We lost our son, but we see our sons in your eyes, so their blood is not dry yet, so you have to go and complete this revolution." People were so encouraged by women.

Sometimes revolutions go up and down. Sometimes people feel very frustrated that we are not gaining anything. The military council doesn't respond. So usually women at the procession encourage men to continue. If we women are outside, what are you doing inside? So they just go outside.

Sometimes there was teargas. We had many of these strong women throw it back and burn their hands. They would send it back to the military forces. This encouraged us and the men that we have to continue.

NR: You've already spoken about it quite a bit, but could you elaborate again on some of the key tactics at different moments in the revolution?

NZ: When the revolution started, many people were on the internet, because it was the only way to contact each other. They were saying, "Why don't we go on civil obedience? Why don't we go like this?" We said, we are not ready. And, really, we were not ready at that time. December and January, before the sit-in, we had a partial political strike. We did it a couple of times.

We had instructions for how people could do it. These helped to inform people and made them aware that striking is their right.

And then the sit-in came, and we did a full strike also. After the sit-in and the massacre, people were really ready to undertake disobedience. They were ready because they had lot of anger, for the blood of the two hundred young people that had been spilled at that time. So the disobedience was very successful.

But sometimes we got in a lot of arguments. About this is not the time, it's not good timing to do this. People had different opinions. But each time, the SPA managed to do something good, so they trusted us more.

Regardless of the main methodologies or tactics, day by day, it depends on the response of the people. It depends on what the military council is doing at that time. We make our plan according to the situation.

EW: In the teacher strikes we've seen in the United States, teachers really benefited from having organic social ties with the community around them. I'm wondering if you all, as professors and teachers, also interact with the community that way.

NZ: I can give you one example. Young and old people were killed in this revolution. But one of the worst killings happened to a schoolteacher. The whole of Sudan got very angry about what happened. Because he was raped by a big metal object until his intestine was bleeding, and he died. He was a schoolteacher who used to oppose the regime for many years. And he was against the fake teacher unions that were aligned with the government, because they were not acting in the interests of the people, but in the interests of the brutal regime. So he used to oppose them a lot, until they killed him while they tortured him in prison.

You can't imagine how many people went to the streets for him. His students made songs for him. He was something very special. So, yes, I agree, the schoolteachers have more interactions with more people. They know the problems, how they feel. It's not like they are bosses, or far away from normal people.

NR: Something that seems to be quite important about Sudan, that it shares in common with Tunisia, the other country that was most successful in toppling its regime, is that both revolutions seemed to be led centrally by a labor movement or a labor coalition. Do you think that is significant?

NZ: Over the last ten years in the

Middle East, if you see Libya, if you see Yemen and Syria and Tunisia, and then Egypt and then Sudan, you'll see different ways of conducting the revolution. For us from Sudan, we see the Tunisian experiment as the best.

The mechanisms and tactics that they used in the revolution were very close to ours. It's not like the other countries. At the same time, we both stuck to being peaceful. Because of the labor thinking. As I told you, when leaders come from inside the people, they know how to handle them. But when leaders come from outside, they will not understand how to organize them, how to lead them. So we were very close to the Tunisian revolution in the way the labor movement was involved.

EW: The Sudanese victory has come at a time when, in the rest of the Arab world, people have really lost hope. You said even the regime in Sudan was using these as examples to discourage you from trying to undertake an uprising. So how do you see the Sudanese revolution in the context of these uprisings more broadly?

NZ: Before starting the revolution, there was fear that it would be like what's happening in Libya and Syria and Yemen. The regime also managed to persuade people that the US embargo on Sudan was the main reason why we have a bad economic situation. People believed it to some extent. But this embargo was released in 2017; by the time 2019 arrived, the

economy was only getting worse and worse. Then people realized that [our economic problems] have nothing to do with the US embargo. It has something to do with the way that the leaders in Sudan deal with government.

We didn't want to go the same course as the Arab revolutions that failed or resulted in civil war. Besides, we have two peaceful revolutions in our history, so we have more experience with that. Another thing is that a Sudanese citizen is totally different from an Arabic citizen. We are an Arabic country, and we're part of the Middle East because we speak Arabic, but not because we are Arabic. It's different, we belong to Africa more. But at the same time that we are a part of Africa and the African Union, we are also a part of the Middle East. We are mixed. So stability in Sudan will affect the stability of the whole region, especially in Africa.

Besides that, we were lucky to have the SPA and other good leaders. They increased the awareness of the youth of how to have a peaceful revolution. We are very proud about what is going on in Sudan. And we felt that our neighbor countries encouraged us. Especially in Africa, in many countries, like Algeria, which also has a revolution right now. We support each other during that.

We all look to each other and try to do it the best way and keep it peaceful, even if the regimes provoked us. I wouldn't say it was easy. It wasn't

easy, because some days seeing the videos or being there, you just cry. Because you have nothing to do. You are just going outside very peacefully and they kill us. But people were very determined.

NR:What do you think happens next in Sudan? It seems there have been incredible victories and you have secured key concessions from the regime, but how do you see the process unfolding from here? What is there still to fight for?

NZ :Yes, because when the regime delegations signed the constitutional announcement, that doesn't mean we succeeded. We still have two challenges. The first challenge is dealing with the deep state or the counterrevolution. They are still there in all institutions. And they will not kept silent, they will try to keep us down. We know that. So this is our first challenge.

The second challenge is to build Sudan. We want to take Sudan from this dark corner to a bright future. We don't have any kind of infrastructure in Sudan. Everything is collapsed. The economic situation is very bad. So is the health situation and the education situation. Our international relations are also misdirected. In each aspect, Sudan needs to be rebuilt. So this is our second challenge. It's to defeat this deep state and to build our new one. So we have not succeeded yet, we are just in our infancy. It's a long way

[Jacobin](#)

The Portuguese solution and how to use it

15 August 2019, by **Françisco Louçã**

Of course, contemporaries will see this as nothing but a diverting curiosity. But the adage can be interpreted in a modern way, suggesting that each history has its time and mode, which holds on both sides of the border. And, if you will allow me to give some advice, it may be better that in the Spanish political

debate no simplifications should be imposed on the "example" or "Portuguese model", as acting president Pedro Sánchez uses it in a self-interested manner in his negotiation strategy.

It would be convenient for the Spanish stxzte not to rely too much on

Portuguese winds and perhaps even less on fortuitous weddings that can cross the border. The risk of instrumental readings of the specific events of each country or of diverse political strategies is too great, especially in times of strong emotions and hard conflicts such as those experienced in the Cortes in the vote

on the future government. Read these notes as simple information or interpretation about what has happened over the past four years and the differences between Portugal and Spain.

Two different countries, two different histories

I start with what is obvious to those who read these lines. There are several differences in the way politics and the expression of electoral or public opinion are realised between Portugal and Spain. I think there are, above all, three.

First, Portugal experienced a post-dictatorship transition marked by a revolutionary crisis (from April 1974 to November 1975). The most important consequence, for what interests us here, was the form of reconfiguration of the political system: the main right-wing party in Portugal – the Partido Popular Democrático/Partido Social Demócrata (Democratic People's Party/Social Democratic Party – PSD) – was born from a dissident wing of the party of the dictatorship, which was in open conflict with the government on democratic issues, and had separated from it, for all purposes, by 1974. Thus, when the dictatorship fell, the bourgeoisie was reorganized around this new party and another reactionary force, with much less weight, the Partido del Centro Democrático Social-Partido Popular (Party of the Social Democratic Centre-Popular Party – CDS). The political apparatus of the dictatorship was largely destroyed. This allowed the imposition of a constitution that recognized broad popular rights, democratic electoral laws and other rules (even today the strike law is essentially that of 1975). In the Spanish state, on the contrary, the PP constituted a delayed adaptation of the Francoist apparatus. As a result of all this, the Portuguese party system is more open. And, perhaps for that reason, the Bloco de Esquerda (BE – Left Bloc) was the first European party of convergence of the new left, created in 1999 for political reasons.

In the Spanish state, however, a powerful social movement was necessary, many years later, in order to give rise to Podemos. Thus, only in recent years has the alternation between the right and the social democratic centre been questioned in the Spanish state. And this happened suddenly, while in Portugal this bipartisanship had been slowly eroded since the emergence of the Bloco twenty years ago.

Secondly, Portugal is a homogeneous country, while the Spanish state is a map of nationalities. That means that in the Spanish state there are multiple forms of political expression, in the form of several parties and regional or regional governments. This also structures the threatening rigidity of the central power – and even the role of the monarchy and the armed forces – and a malleability of negotiation, which the PSOE and PP governments have taken advantage of, with the PNV or with CiU and other forces. That is, the Spanish state has a central power which is more violent, but more articulated with regional mediations.

Thirdly, Portugal was more directly punished by the austerity program and by the humiliation of the troika's ruling presence during the years of "adjustment", from 2011 to 2014. In the Spanish state the same orientation was applied – in fact it is genetically inscribed in the rules of the euro – but in a context of greater room for manoeuvre and preservation of the halo of the national political authority. The Spanish state is a larger, more developed and integrated economy, and has more political power in the EU. For those who read these lines in the Spanish state, I would remind you that the right-wing prime minister in Portugal stated explicitly and courageously that his goal was to "impoverish Portugal" and that it was necessary to take "measures beyond the troika's programme", to demonstrate national compliance with austerity and the power of the creditors.

You will realize where I want to go with these three notes. If the Portuguese population had the feeling and experience of an economically destructive austerity program, which was associated with the right-wing

government (PSD-CDS), and a political solution was expected, it could only depend on the left-wing parties – the Bloco and the Communist Party of Portugal (PCP) – and the centre party – the Socialist Party (PS) – as a result of the 2015 elections. Since these conditions made the traditional alternation between the right and the centre unfeasible, the "Portuguese model" of agreement on specific programmatic points to allow the creation of the new government of António Costa was imposed by the overwhelmingly will of the majority will on the bases of these three parties.

That model was prepared by a daring initiative from Catarina Martins, the coordinator of the Bloco, in her television debate, during the campaign, with the secretary-general of the PS, whom she challenged to accept elementary conditions to open the door to an agreement. They were basic conditions: not to continue freezing the value of pensions, abandon laws that would facilitate dismissal and not reducing employers' contributions to social security. That is, cancelling three measures that were then included in the PS program. To summarize a long story, on the Sunday of the electoral count informal meetings between the two parties had already begun to coordinate these conditions and others, such as the increase in the minimum wage, for example.

In this process, they faced neither a unified right, nor difficult questions of a constitutional order (such as the nationalities in the Spanish state), nor alternatives of political arrangements with several parties. Based on the electoral results, the PS had only two options: either it left the right (with 38%) to govern or, with its 32%, it came to an understanding with the left parties (the Bloco, 10%, and the PCP, 8%). [59] It chose the "Portuguese solution".

The Portuguese model

There was thus an understanding, recorded in written agreements. I will not summarize them, as they are

published and easily available. Their most important peculiarity was to include, on the one hand, a list of measures to be complied with: stopping privatization and reversing those that had already occurred in the public transport system; a 20% increase in the minimum wage; an increase in wages and pensions and a reduction of direct taxes on labour; a broader coverage in the fight against poverty. And on the other hand, leaving each party freedom of position on other issues, such as European and financial issues, for example.

The PS did not propose, and nor did the left parties raise, the issue of their participation in the government. I know that here I have to write with all the care in the world, because I do not want any reader to interpret my testimony as a suggestion about what should happen in Spain. At the level of political action in which I situate myself, as someone who takes decisions and participates in a public debate that is decisive, it is necessary to know and experience the details, to have a deep knowledge of each context to understand the dynamics and relations of forces. And I do not intend to be read as someone who suggests a conclusion for the Spanish political elections. What I write refers only to Portugal: we did not want to be part of the government and we knew, in fact, that, given the history of an unexpected convergence, that path was impracticable.

Certainly, the government could present itself to the European Union as a continuity of its essential political commitments. This was only partially true, since the PS could ensure that it would meet the macroeconomic objectives of deficit reduction, but some of the most important measures that the EU continued trying to achieve were blocked by the agreement with the left, such as new laws to facilitate dismissals or the reduction of the employers' contribution to the social security of employees. By the time the new government was threatened with European sanctions - paradoxically, because the accounts of the previous government had deviated by 0.3% of GDP in relation to the deficit target - this positive relationship of the PS with Brussels was used to argue

against a new confrontation along Greek lines. But this was also advantageous for the left-wing parties, which maintained their independence and were able to oppose the government on fundamental matters, winning in some cases, such as when the government tried to alter the conditions of social security financing, and losing in others, such as commercial bank financing after a crisis or changes in the employment law to increase the probationary period in a job.

I think everyone made the right choice. The left and the PS did not have a level of programmatic understanding and experience of working together that would allow for government cooperation. In fact, if this had happened, the government would have been undone in a few weeks: it took office in November 2015, and immediately in December, under pressure from the European Commission, it sold a small bank, the BANIF, to Santander, spending three billion euros on this operation, which the left did not accept. If at that time there had been ministers from the left parties, they would have resigned from the government and the agreement would not have lasted a month. Presence in government requires a determinant relationship of forces, as well as social capacity for immediate mobilization, technical preparation and a coherent political strategy. But it cannot be a short-term game, it has to be a consistent dispute over social hegemony.

The results of the "Portuguese solution"

I will not dwell much on the results of the "Portuguese solution", which are sufficiently known. They benefited from three favourable conditions: cheap oil, low interest due to liquidity injections from the ECB's quantitative easing program (purchase of public and private debt securities) and, in addition, a certain increase in the expansion of European demand in the timid recovery we are experiencing. This evolution allowed, for the first time in twenty years of the euro, a real

convergence with the European average, a positive trade balance and the reduction of the balance of payments deficit thanks to short and medium term debt issues with negative interest. Consequently, the official unemployment rate was reduced by half (6%); and the increase in tax income and social security, the reduction of unemployment expenses, plus an inadequate adjustment of public investment, will allow a deficit close to 0% in 2019. In all current coexisting criteria, these results are considered positive: for orthodox budget rules, it is a notable case; for workers and pensioners, it was a significant relief; for the pressure of the sovereign debt interest, it is a success, at least in the short term; for macroeconomic management, it has the benefit of an expansion, even if it is limited.

The audacity of the left parties, given the restrictive nature of written agreements, allowed them to go further than this. In each annual budget, other measures that were not initially planned were approved. This process of pressure and negotiation was essential to extend some rights and to create new solutions. This is how a social energy tariff was defined at low prices for one tenth of the national population; a special programme was created to guarantee stable employment contracts to tens of thousands of precarious workers in the public sector; there were extraordinary annual increases for lower pensions, while tuition fees at public universities were reduced.

On other issues, conflicts between the left and the government sharpened. In particular, on the recovery of the frozen employment seniority of teachers, on the wages of public officials or on the public-private management of public hospitals. In some cases, these conflicts and alternative solutions were carefully prepared for the left to obtain results. The best example is that of the Health Bases Law. A former coordinator of the Bloco, João Semedo, drew up with a founder of the Socialist Party, its honorary president, António Arnaut, a law to reorganize the structure and policies of health. [60] They published their proposal in a book that had a remarkable impact,

guiding the debate in the country. This work of confluence marked Portuguese politics. The government initially supported the proposal – the prime minister and several members of the government participated in its presentation – then decided to present an alternative and commissioned this from a former minister representing the right of the PS. Then it abandoned that proposal and sought an agreement with the left. Then, under pressure from financial groups with interests in this area, it sought an agreement with the main right-wing party. Finally, all these manoeuvres having failed, it accepted a last-minute agreement with the leftist parties. The result is a progressive law and the existence of a strong debate on the experience of private management of public hospitals – there are three hospitals with that model. For the Bloco, this process is an interesting political event without precedent in Portuguese politics. First, a common proposal of historical leaders of the PS and the Bloco was presented. And secondly, the Bloco conducted an intense debate that conditioned the government; always maintained its coherence; managed to resist the pressure of big finance; and, in the face of government failure, pushed the bases of an agreement that won a majority in parliament. All politics is dispute.

Never simplify what is complicated: this is a minority government of a centre party, the PS; it is not a leftist government; it has a majority parliamentary base with agreements and important commitments for the population and that must be fulfilled;

it responds to an immediate demand for political change and was, therefore, an essential path for Portugal.

The tensions between the PS and the left

This process has been marked by tensions and agreements and by the majority approval of annual budgets, which enshrined these difficult balances. But the political map of the “Portuguese solution” evolved and became complicated, as was inevitable.

In these four years, despite the fact that the two leftist parties have been very aligned in budgetary, fiscal, economic and employment matters – they diverge in social matters; the PCP opposes the proposals of the Bloco in favour of parity between men or women, or the legalization of assisted death – and have jointly achieved important concessions from the government, the PS has defined different responses to the challenges proposed by the two left-wing parties. The strategy of the Socialist prime minister has been based on a distinction between the two parties: favouring the PCP (whose electorate is considered as very sealed off in relation to the PS) and being aggressive with the Bloco (which appears as a party with more possibilities to establish bridges and dialogue with PS voters).

That policy, however, has harmed the PCP and favoured the Bloco: in the

2016 presidential elections, the Bloco candidate won three times the votes of the PCP candidate; and in the European elections – in which in 2014 the PCP won three seats and the Bloco only one –, the Bloco again surpassed the PCP, as had already happened in the 2015 parliamentary elections. The polls this July, two months before the new elections, scheduled for October 2019, seem to indicate the possibility of better results for the Bloco. Politics is dispute.

As always, nobody has the last word. The story is not over. For the Portuguese left, there will be victories and defeats and the correct orientation does not always mean victories. That's life. Politics is a game of chess with many variables and many of them depend on forces that we do not control or anticipate. But the better we know our people and our adversaries, the better prepared we are to respond to the immense responsibilities of the present times: guaranteeing security to those who fear for employment and for wages, disputing the sustainability of security and social protection against finance, preventing the uberization and precariousness of work, rejecting the extreme individualism affirmed by the neoliberal program in everyday life, building a collective movement culture, intensifying democratic education against authoritarianism. And, if I learned one thing from the experience of Podemos, it was the need to live and display an inclusive, cheerful, mobilizing politics free of rancour. We are normal people fighting for ourselves, side by side. That is the strength of the left.

India: The meaning of Kashmir

14 August 2019, by Ammar Ali Jan

The abrupt pace of events has combined feelings of hurt and helplessness with numbness. Naomi Klein once argued that shocking opponents into submission will be the

new model for imposing unpopular economic decisions. The Indian government is displaying the political equivalent of the Shock Doctrine, disorienting the public with a

blitzkrieg in which citizens are reduced to mere spectators, helplessly watching as the conquest of Kashmir unfolds.

But what does it mean to conquer a territory that is already the most militarized space in the world? Or perhaps we can ask broader historical questions. What has been the meaning of Kashmir for disparate political actors in our region's recent history? Or to put it differently, what fears, injustices and hopes does Kashmir today stand for?

In the immediate context, the current move provides an impetus to the jingoistic agenda of Modi's government- not only allowing him to cement an internal base that wants a "final solution" for the Kashmir problem, but also opening up Kashmir's land and resources for India's business elite. The belligerence is meant to link Kashmir to the pursuit of a "Hindu Rashtra" and unbridled corporate profit, the two fantasies that sustain fascism in contemporary India.

The move has worked to solidify the BJP's support as Indians across the spectrum celebrated "integration of Kashmir into India", making it abundantly clear that it was presented and viewed as a conquest. What is more unfortunate is that the latest aggression has exposed the hollowness of Indian liberalism. Many liberal pundits are oscillating between feigning 'cautious' celebration for the event and pointing out possible legal gaps in it. Fear and shock have gripped the Indian polity as opposing Modi's whims is being equated with treason. With the shameful silence of liberals in the wake of the onward march of fascism, the very existence of reasoned debate in India is rapidly vanishing.

Kashmir today means the spectacular unraveling of Indian democracy in front of an arrogant authoritarian order. Kashmir of course has deeper, older meanings for the Indian and Pakistani national projects. Its disputed legal and administrative status is the legacy of the incompleteness of the partition of the Subcontinent. In that sense, Kashmir is both a remainder of the disorderly British exit from the region, and a reminder of the violence and terror at the origins of the two-nation states.

As a wound that refuses to go away, it brings forth the psychic investments

that citizens carry with the birth of the two nations. And these emotions have been manipulated by the ruling classes to produce internal consent. In India Kashmir was associated with the sense of loss connected to Partition, propelling state paranoia and centralization against demands for regional autonomy. On the other hand, in Pakistan, Kashmir has been viewed as an unfinished task that was conflated with the existential threat posed by India to the country's territorial integrity. Yet, this has often been used to delegitimize internal dissent by designating critics as 'foreign agents'. Once reserved for politicians from the peripheries, such allegations can now be used against entire oppositions, signaling the intimate relationship between external enemies, state paranoia and internal repression.

It is clear that Kashmir has been an essential part of the narratives that sustain national identity in India and Pakistan, any deviation from which is identified as treacherous. For nationalism in South Asia, then, Kashmir refers to the manipulation of historical wounds to curb internal dissent.

The current crisis also poses questions about the effectiveness of the 'international community' that has hosted a number of international resolutions, conferences and summits on the Kashmir problem. Yet, the world has watched helplessly over the decades as the region was embroiled in conflict and militarization. The same international community that identified the non-existent 'weapons of mass destruction' in Iraq was unable to see the world's first mass blinding carried out by Indian armed forces in Kashmir, where hundreds were shot in the eyes with pellets by security forces. And today, as the valley is gripped in fear and uncertainty, the international community can only "caution" India and Pakistan, without any guarantees of safety to the beleaguered people of the region.

The devastation in Kashmir is therefore a tragedy that cannot be mourned, since it does not fit neatly into the frameworks of international politics where interests trump adherence to principles. Kashmir then

also means exposing the hypocrisy of the global conscience as it submits to the logic of state interests.

Most importantly, Kashmir has a meaning as a site of resistance that is more universal in its appeal. For places like Palestine and Kashmir, the experience of modern sovereignty has not been one of law, citizenship or freedom of expression. In fact, it has not even been one of dictatorship in the ordinary sense, where citizens fight for rights denied by an authoritarian structure. Instead, Kashmiris have experienced modernity as a form of erasure; an erasure of their sovereignty, their identity, their citizenship and even their suffering. The latest assault by Modi is the intensification of this larger trajectory in which Kashmir's territorial integrity as well as history is being erased to allow for the smooth functioning of a toxic national narrative.

Yet, Kashmir remains the site of a profound refusal to fade away, a festering wound that is nourished by the sacrifices of hundreds of thousands of Kashmiri youth who continue to fight for freedom. Nothing perhaps signifies the resilience of the people more than the half-widows of Kashmir whose 'missing' husbands reside in the unapproachable zone between life and death. Their breathtaking resolve to resist the erasure of their husbands' memories by organizing regular protests is a testament to the courage that has sustained the will to freedom in Kashmir.

Kashmiris are today teaching the world to dream again and to fight again. Therefore, Kashmir today also stands for the courage to sustain a rebellion in the midst of unspeakable tyranny.

This refusal to adjust to the logic of domination is perhaps the greatest universal lesson from the struggle of the Kashmiri people. Rather than offering hyperbolic and jingoistic statements, we must ask what it would mean to think like a Kashmiri in our own contexts, including being attentive to the ethnic, class and gender-based suffering that surrounds us.

More importantly, we should resist the temptation to make Kashmiris 'Indian' or 'Pakistani' in our own national narratives. Instead we must acknowledge that for far too long have

Kashmiris proven themselves worthy of carrying the burden of our history. Perhaps, instead we should prove ourselves worthy of becoming

Kashmiris, with all the courage, humility and sacrifice such a gesture entails.

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13 August 2019

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Scourge of Unemployment Shows Need for Drastic State Intervention

12 August 2019, by AIDC

It is patently obvious that cutting back on government expenditure will not in any way draw the country out of this calamity. The plans to cut down the size of the public service will in no way alleviate the shocking unemployment and the myriad of problems that follow. The overtures to neoliberal populism favoured by Mboweni and Ramaphosa are misguided.

Instead the moment calls for a massive increase in state led spending on public social infrastructure. We need the state to invest in a low carbon industrial strategy. This

entails, but is not limited to, a wide scale housing programme (building real houses in the centres of the city, not serviced sites in the periphery), expanded public transport, an ESKOM driven renewable energy programme.

On that latter point, the One Million Climate Jobs campaign should be a rallying point for all. Research indicates that we can create one million climate jobs, specifically: 250 000 renewable energy jobs, 390 000 public transport jobs, 200 000 construction jobs and 100 000 agriculture jobs and 110 000 jobs in waste, industry and education.

It is important to note that taxation of the wealthy and corporations will be a crucial pillar in this process. Increasing corporate taxes, which have fallen since 1994 will have to be a priority. So too will the combatting of illicit financial flows and, base erosion and profit shifting. These mechanisms' that have been used by companies like Lonmin (of which our President is no stranger to) cost the country billions in lost taxes and wages. This is in addition to capital sitting on R1,4 trillion in idle bank accounts which should be part of a prescribed assets regime.

Achieving this ambitious, but realisable programme will need economic policy that strongly deviates from the norm of inflation targeting and austerity. Options available include a combination of increasing taxes on the super wealthy, the introduction of prescribed assets, making use of the Public Investment Corporation (PIC) fund. This must also include the introduction of a basic income grant and the abandonment of BEE in favour of affirmative action

that serves the interests of the poor majority.

These and other mechanism aimed at undoing the damage of neoliberalism will require an alliance of the unemployed, labour, communities and civil society to fight for them.

South Africa is in crisis and the approach favoured by Ramaphosa and Mbweni will lead us down a deeper

path of social, economic and environmental decay. Drastic reorientation of the governments approach to the economy is the only way out of this quagmire. The fact that so many South Africans are without the most basic means to subsist calls for action. The state has a duty to act now, solutions to our problems can no longer be left to the markets and economic elites!

02 August 2019

Hong Kong's Fight for Life

11 August 2019, by Wilfred Chan

On the sweltering first Monday of August, Hong Kong residentsâ€”from bankers to broadcasters to bus driversâ€”launched a general strike, leaving thousands of normally hectic businesses barren. The city's meticulously on-time subway network was crippled as protesters jammed doors for hours; even the international airport was nearly empty as workers stayed home, grounding hundreds of flights, with ripple effects across the world. It was a desperate bid for a breakthrough after more than nine brutal weeks of massive anti-government demonstrations, originally sparked by an extradition bill that could expose Hong Kong citizens to the Chinese legal system.

By mid-morning, Carrie Lamâ€”the city's obstinate, Beijing-backed leaderâ€”made clear she would do nothing to defuse the political emergency that has now seen more than 2 million on the streets, multiple suicides, and the arrests of nearly 600 people, including many students, who may each face up to a decade in prison on rioting charges.

Instead, at a press conferenceâ€”as her police battalions violently dispersed demonstratorsâ€”she defended China's sovereignty over the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and slammed the movement for “trying to topple Hong Kong.” By

nightfall, protesters had also been attacked by armed thugs and hit by cars. Journalists were bleeding. Police reported firing over 800 rounds of tear gas on Monday alone.

More than any previous Hong Kong protest, the 2019 anti-extradition movement embodies bitter anguish over the city's place in a world that no longer seems to need it. In the twenty-two years since the former British colony's sovereignty was transferred to China, Hong Kong has justified its in-between existence by interfacing Western neoliberal globalism with China's statist authoritarian capitalism. Life under this coercive bargain has not been easy: the same state-business collusion that makes Hong Kong a famed financial hubâ€”and a prime outlet for mainland Chinese capitalâ€”has also left the city with one of the highest Gini coefficients in the world, where one in five people live below the poverty line, where skyrocketing rents mean the average college graduate must now save their entire salary for thirteen years just to afford a down payment for an apartment. But even ordinary Hong Kongers believed that their culture, language, and ways of life might be kept precariously intact as long as the city continued being a “window to the world” for China's elite. That was surely preferable to being swallowed whole.

Now that window is closing. China no longer depends on Hong Kong, which means the West no longer does either. It feels almost absurd to recall the hopes of Hong Kong's progressive politicians of the 1990sâ€”a time when Hong Kong's GDP equaled as much as one-fourth of China'sâ€”that the city might one day bring liberal democracy to the mainland. Today China's GDP is over thirty times greater than Hong Kong's, and China is the one remodeling Hong Kong in its own image. In the last two decades, Beijing has systematically captured Hong Kong's most powerful institutions, paid off oligarchs, consolidated monopolies, and rammed through white-elephant infrastructure projectsâ€”recycling the machinery left by Hong Kong's colonial ex-rulers to achieve its authoritarian ambitions.

Hong Kongers have responded to these changes with a mix of indignant protests and resigned accommodation, while holding out hope for an eventual political solution. The heartbreaking failure of the 2014 Umbrella Movementâ€”in which protesters staged massive street occupations for seventy-nine days to demand universal suffrageâ€”dealt a shocking blow to this expectation. The increasingly merciless police violence, publicly endorsed by Beijing, that has met this year's protests confirms Hong Kongers' most dreaded fear: that their

lives are irrelevant to the central authorities' plan for the city's future.

There is a common saying among some protesters: "loosely, 'We alone can save our Hong Kong.'" Like so many Hong Kong slogans, the phrase speaks in multiple registers: it is both a rallying call and a pained observation of the city's existential isolation. In the same way, it points to the impotence of global neoliberalism and its empty promises to safeguard "freedom" in (wealthy) societies everywhere.

Contrary to China's propagandistic accusations that the Hong Kong protests are being propped up by nefarious Western agents, there is little indication the West craves any involvement. Even as protesters have made desperate attempts at "people's diplomacy"—flying foreign flags, buying global newspapers ads, lobbying officials—British and American politicians have offered no more than a couple tweets, muted statements, and occasionally, symbolic legislation, much of it undermined by Donald Trump blurting out what others have been too polite to say out loud: that the protests are "riots," and "China could stop them if they wanted."

That the globalist gods won't even answer the distress signals of this Asian capitalist citadel should be the clearest example yet of what oppressed people around the world have long known: neoliberalism has never been a framework for transnational solidarity as much as a self-serving logic of global exploitation. To the extent that

conscious observers, in Hong Kong and elsewhere, harbor reluctance to give up on the post-Cold War fantasy of free-market world peace, it is due to the lack of viable alternative frameworks.

The crisis in Hong Kong demonstrates that neoliberalism is declining not because progressives are winning, but because it is being supplanted by a newer, more efficient ideology of authoritarian capitalist violence that is consolidating power everywhere against an alarmingly fragmented opposition. And it shows just how dangerous the world has become due to the lack of a coherent international left position. Automatic word wrap

For today's Hong Kongers, there are no obvious escape routes, no postcolonial models of self-determination, that would set the city free from the grip of Chinese state power. Even the protests' most popular slogan, "liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times" (often translated as "liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times") is ideologically muddled: the verb can also mean "restore" or even "retrogress," making it unclear whether it looks forward or backward. To pull through, Hong Kong's people must find a way to reclaim their historical agency and develop a positive vision for their own home.

At the same time, it is imperative that the international left work with Hong Kongers to form a new analysis that does not simply transpose regurgitated Western frameworks onto Hong Kong's condition, but dares to reimagine an anti-capitalist, anti-

authoritarian politics of survival from the perspective of this in-between place.

To do so would require remaking the world. This kind of solidarity from American leftists would include disestablishing the United States' key role—from the Marshall Plan through the Washington Consensus and beyond—in creating and maintaining a postwar geopolitical system that has intentionally overridden the aspirations of Third World self-determination with the logic of global neoliberalism. British leftists can start by demanding their government take responsibility for the damage wrought by their former colonial systems, which have become potent tools of extraction and oppression in the hands of the new authoritarians.

A tiny border city of 7 million people cannot singlehandedly dismantle the hegemonies that ensnare it. But its struggle at this critical moment should be an urgent call for all leftists to help undo those structures while rethinking the organization of societies beyond the capitalist model of nation-states. Then, perhaps, the people of Hong Kong would be able to join in building what Bernie Sanders has called the "international progressive front"—and, as he writes, "do everything that we can to oppose all of the forces, whether unaccountable government power or unaccountable corporate power, who try to divide us up and set us against each other." From the death of this neoliberal city, an emancipatory new history could be born.

[Dissent](#)

Puerto Rico: Summer 2019: results and perspectives

10 August 2019, by **Manuel Rodríguez Banchs, Rafael Bernabe**

These two weeks of mobilization provided a great purifying blast against the widespread idea that “nothing can be done” faced with a reality that was considered unalterable. They have expanded our sense of reality. They have shown that what was previously considered impossible is possible.

Since 2016, we have indicated that the country was debating between two mixed sentiments: on the one hand, the feeling that its political, social and economic reality required great changes; on the other, the feeling of helplessness of many, the feeling that nothing could be done, that nothing could be changed. Hence the hope among many that someone, whoever, would make the necessary changes. Hence the initial faith of some people that the Financial Oversight and Management Board would fix things or teach the “politicians” a lesson. And we argued that the only Board, the only supervisory force we needed was the people itself. The defenders, whether open or devious, of the existing reality responded: those are empty phrases. And we see: the country has mobilized as never against a vile and corrupt governor. And it has brought about his resignation.

Do not underestimate the scope of this moment, in which we have had the joy and privilege of participating: for the first time in their history the inhabitants of this island have removed their governor from below, from the street, through intense and incessant mobilization.

From Trump to the Management Board, from the bondholders to the Puerto Rican business class (who until yesterday saw Rosselló as a useful representative), from the *Nuevo Día* newspaper to the PPD, they are now trying to take advantage and kidnap the people’s victory against Rosselló. [61] They do this by calling for “normality” and “tranquillity”, diverting attention to secondary reforms (such as creating a vice governor), denouncing the politicization of “protest” and in other ways. That is why we must carefully reflect on what has happened and on the tasks that lie ahead for those of us who aspire to deepen democracy, social justice and decolonization.

Unexpected explosion?

Some people talk about an unexpected social explosion. Certainly, nobody could predict what was going to happen in July 2019. To begin with, nobody or almost nobody knew about the existence of the infamous chat, which, together with the arrest of Julia Keleher, detonated the days of July 2019 in Puerto Rico. However, different movements and people have long pointed out the presence of the flammable material that was waiting for a spark to ignite it.

Since 2012 we have argued that Puerto Rico is going through an economic crisis, a true depression, analogous to that of the 1930s. And we argued that this depression caused the division and collapse of the dominant parties of that time (Liberal, Union-Republican and Socialist) and a crisis of legitimacy of the institutions of the colonial state. And we pointed out that sooner or later the current crisis would have the same results. The victory of the PNP with just 42% of the votes and divisions in both dominant parties were already indications that this process was advancing. Now, suddenly, the total discrediting of those two parties has been revealed.

Not only that: the unprecedented mobilization on the street has surpassed the existing institutional arrangements. It is not a revolution, but there is no doubt that it has been a revolutionary action: to get Rosselló out no one waited until 2020, nor for an impeachment process, nor for any legal or institutional mechanism. The people, on the street, took matters into their hands and brought about Rosselló’s resignation. For those of us who think that people should one day create new institutional arrangements from below, this is an extraordinary precedent, which we have to value and treasure.

Spontaneity or

fruit of seeds of consciousness?

The days of July 2019 in Puerto Rico were not a spontaneous explosion. Thinking they were can lead to future mistakes that we should avoid. What happened was prepared by tens and hundreds of conscious initiatives, near and far, often seen at the time as useless, but now bearing their fruit. The work of the Center for Investigative Journalism, for example, has nothing spontaneous about it: it is a work consciously undertaken by a small group which has suddenly acquired a national and international impact. Other cases could be mentioned. For example: the speed with which broad sectors set up pickets outside Fortaleza, the home of the Governor or the Capitol, the seat of the Parliament, the march and the rally as ways of protesting, the call for strikes as a way to structure the resistance, cannot be explained without the country’s long education about these forms of resistance and protest, thanks to the past struggles of students, workers, and women as well as environmental struggles and those around Vieques, among others. [62].

Similarly, we must not forget that the success of the biggest mobilizations (those of July 15 in San Juan and July 22 in Hato Rey, for example) is due, on the one hand, to the very visible call by well-known artists -Resident, iLe, Bad Bunny and Ricky Martin, to mention the foremost - with deep roots in the country, and also to the almost invisible but crucial organizational and logistical contribution of the workers’ organizations, which over the decades have acquired the experience and skills to develop these types of activity.

Consider the sweeping rejection of sexist violence and homophobia that followed the publication of the infamous chat of the governor and his friends. The seed for that explosion was consciously sown by the *Colectiva Feminista en Construcción* and other feminist organizations and the LGBTTIQ community, through dozens of activities and initiatives in the past. We could also talk about the many

experiences of community self-organization before, during and after hurricane Maria; as well as the commemorations that sought to express the pain and indignation for the dead like the initiative of the shoes in front of the Capitol.

The same can be said of the left. It can be argued that this uprising took place outside of “political lines” and political organizations or the left. The reality is that almost all forms of struggle and resistance, including the most popular slogans and demands made (on the debt, the Board, privatization, the continuity of the struggle) are not new: they are the ones that the left has popularized in Puerto Rico. We are not interested in stressing this as such. But we are concerned that it will be ignored or denied, especially if denial is used to try to limit the transformative political impact of the movement, an issue we will return to later.

Anyway, what happened in July 2019 is unprecedented. But nobody should think that it renders obsolete or refutes the “old” forms of struggle or all the old forms of organization: they are the result of those efforts of many decades, which we must now update, expand and modernize, but not despise in an erroneous cult of “spontaneity”.

Importance and limit of minorities

But while the days of July 2019 cannot be attributed to a sudden spontaneous explosion of the people, they also offer lessons to minority groups that have long been resisting in the street and which hundreds of thousands have joined this summer. It has been shown that the key to victory lies in the massive incorporation of the people into the struggle: from hundreds to thousands (from July 10 to 14 in Fortaleza), to 20 or 30,000 (on July 15 at the Capitol and in Fortress), to about 400,000 (July 17 from the Totem Capitol), to about one million (July 22 in Hato Rey). Thus, the resistance grew.

And it is not just what happened in San Juan: as the days progressed,

large and small activities were added in Ponce, Mayagüez, Dorado, Aguadilla, Lares, Guaynabo, among other towns. The route to victory is not the “radicalization” of the action of the militant minority “because pickets and marches do not achieve anything”, as it is sometimes posed: the key is to make each activity ensure that the next one is still wider and bigger than the previous one.

We are not pacifists

We know that the state will attack the struggles of the people in a violent and criminal way: this has also been proven. To say, as some people do, that this has been a peaceful struggle is to idealize things. People have exhibited great patience. But the state has been anything but peaceful: arbitrary arrests, illegal searches, gas, macanas and rubber and metal bullets attest to it. [63] We recognize the importance of self-defence and an adequate response to these aggressions. The July sessions show that these actions, such as those of the (mostly) young people who faced the riot police, when they occur in the context of a struggle that has achieved great support, acquire a high degree of legitimacy as a form of struggle and resistance.

That is why it is necessary to prepare this form of resistance, but never in place of or as a substitute for, much less to the detriment of, the task of convincing increasingly broad sectors to join the struggle and mobilization. We saw, for example, calls on the internet that people who were not prepared to face the riot police did not go to San Juan. Not everyone can respond in that way. But they are also part of the fight. The other option is to aspire to the struggle of the militant minority against the state. This leads to isolation and defeat. But let us not be misunderstood: the response against the riot police was correct and had broad support. We just have to try to get the best lessons from what happened.

The ruling class regroup

The July days have left the ruling classes in panic. Their two parties are more discredited than ever. Much of the press has been exposed as a mouthpiece of those parties. Now comes the campaign to save the existing order. This cannot be done by attacking the mobilization directly. They have to withdraw and make concessions. The demobilization strategy will have several elements.

First it will be recognized that the struggle was justified. It will be recognized that reforms are needed. But everything will be limited to suggesting that adjustments must be made to the political system, to the electoral provisions and so on. We will hear ad nauseam of a “crisis of representation”. That is, what is intended is to divorce the fall of the Rosselló government from the other fundamental problems that affect the country: the economic crisis, the debt crisis, the policies of the Board, the colonial condition. The problem will be reduced to the corruption and incompetence of Rosselló and this will be separated from the social class that Rosselló represents. Attention will be diverted to talk of creating a post of deputy governor or similar changes, which will not affect anything essential.

The truth is that most of those who have participated in the mobilizations against Rosselló were motivated by the revelations of corruption and the infamous chat. This revealed to them the real face of the ruling classes: their contempt for the people, their machismo, their racism. It was an invaluable weapon that Rosselló has given us to fight against a class that is inevitably hypocritical: that tries to present itself as a friend, committed to the people, while living to exploit and devalue it.

But most of the participants in the protests still do not make the connection between Rosselló and his friends in the “chat” and their attacks on working people with employment reform, charter schools, austerity policies, cuts to pensions and the

University of Puerto Rico. The ruling class, from the PNP and the PPD, to Nuevo DÑa and Manuel Cidre, do not want them to make that connection. It is our task to have an increasingly large number do so. We have to remember a slogan in the July mobilizations: "Ricky resign and take the Board with you". We have to relay the fight against Rosselló as much as possible to the resistance to the Board and its policies.

Until now we were told that nothing could be done against the Board: now we know that it can be. Many times, we raised the need to mobilize against the Board and the press told us: the Board and Congress do not care what we do in Puerto Rico. Protest is useless. Now we see the potential strength of the people when activated.

The mobilizations in Puerto Rico have had an impact around the world. They have raised sympathy throughout the planet, including the United States. With that strength we can defeat the Board and the bondholders, we can obtain the reparations to which we are entitled from Congress and we can also achieve decolonization. But for this we cannot allow attention to be diverted to mere secondary reforms.

The people need a program and organization

The struggle we have been through had an important but simple objective: to achieve the resignation of the governor. That was enough for mobilization and as an immediate end. Now that Rosselló is leaving, the campaign against his possible substitute Wanda Vázquez is on track. It is good that this is the case, although the mobilization may not be as big as the one generated in the fight against Rosselló (hopefully we are wrong in this). But as we indicated above: such activities are important, although their fruits are not seen immediately.

However, it soon becomes clear that it is not enough to reject Rosselló or Vázquez or the successor who ends up entering Fortaleza. The movement

needs a program. That is, a set of proposals on economic development, tax policy, incentive policy, on public services and privatization and on many other issues.

To start with: a citizens' debt audit; a moratorium on any payment of the debt and agreement on it until that audit is completed; an adequate contribution by Congress for the economic reconstruction of Puerto Rico; the restoration of employment rights eliminated by the Rosselló government; a progressive tax reform; the recovery of a greater part of the profits that are now fleeing the country; democratic government reform and zero privatization of essential services; revocation of PROMESA and the neoliberal, anti-democratic and colonial Financial Oversight and Management Board, among other measures; convening of a constitutional assembly to resolve the colonial problem at once.

We need an assembly of movements that allow us to take on this program (or something similar) and promote it through constant mobilization. It must be a simple and flexible structure. A place of meeting and discussion. It should boost demands that have overwhelming support, and everyone should continue taking the initiatives they deem appropriate. In the fight against the privatization of Telefónica, the Comité Amplio de Organizaciones Sociales y Sindicales (CAOSS) made up of workers', student, women's, religious, environmental and political organizations, among others, worked for one year (August 1997 to August 1998). It is a model that we can adapt to the current situation. But it should be clear: activity now should not be subordinated or waiting upon the birth of such a structure. However, at some point, a coordinating body will be necessary.

The participation of artists has played a central role in this process. This must be recognized. However, we cannot permanently depend on this ability to appeal. Nor can we claim it replaces what only organization and the development of a program can supply. Nor can any supreme leader replace this. This must be stressed: despite the presence of celebrities, this movement has had no identifiable

leaders. It has really been a collective movement. We have the opportunity to continue developing it with collective structures and with collective leaders.

Political representation

But this movement also needs political representation. And this is one of the thorniest problems we have to tackle bluntly. There is a position that states that the fight against Rosselló should not be "politicized". That rejects the presence of organizations, flags, parties and political organizations in the fight. Which states that only Puerto Rico flags and perhaps other national flags should be brought to activities, but not political flags. Which objects to the protest activities endorsing the registration of a movement for the 2020 elections.

We fully understand the emancipatory and progressive sense that underlies this position: the rejection of the traditional "politicians", of the usual "parties", of the dirty politics to which we are accustomed. We share that feeling of rejection. But precisely because we want to end the control of those corrupt parties, we reject censorship and the prohibition of political expression in protest activities.

We reject it because we reject censorship wherever it comes from. Because we do not confuse unity with uniformity or unanimity. Because we think that unity occurs in diversity. Because we think that everyone should have the freedom to participate with the national, union or political flag with which they identify: that of Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republican, the rainbow, that of feminism, the red of the working class, the black of anarchism, and also that of their party if they wish.

And we reject censorship because it hinders the growth, organization and registration of new options and has the real effect of helping to perpetuate the control of existing parties. If we do not register something new, what options will the people have in 2020? The PNP and the PPD. As usual. Is that what we want? Of course not.

Then we must stop celebrating unity above colours and without parties: that is what those who now govern want to hear. They know perfectly well that as long as we do not organize politically they will continue to govern; they will continue to monopolize politics. We do not only want to protest; we want to govern. And for that we need political organization.

The authors of this text are participating in one of these registration efforts. Perhaps the reader does not agree with this project. That is legitimate. This is not the place to debate it. But in that case, you have to create other political projects. What we cannot do is turn our backs on that task. It is not enough to get rid of Rosselló. Without

building our political alternative, we stay halfway, under the government of the Board and the same employer class. The July days have begun a new era in the history of the country. Let's take advantage of the possibilities it offers us.

* Rafael Bernabe and Manuel Rodríguez Banchs are activists in the Movimiento Victoria Ciudadana

Radical Socialist (India) statement on the Scrapping of Articles 370 and 35A

9 August 2019, by **Radical Socialist**

Abrogation of Article 370 could only have been done with the assent of a reconstituted J&K Constituent Assembly which was dissolved in 1957. So first a Presidential Order impermissibly (without a Constitutional amendment) changes Article 367 so as to shamefully equate the J&K state assembly which has representative authority to the Constituent Assembly which has a superior sovereign authority. Since there is President's Rule in J&K, on the recommendation of the Governor, the President then acts to scrap Articles 370 and 35A.

Furthermore, for the first time in the history of independent India, a Reorganisation Bill was presented and passed in the two houses of Parliament to downgrade a region having the status of a state into two bifurcated Union Territories of J&K, which like New Delhi and Puducherry will be allowed to have a legislature, while Ladakh will join the five other Union Territories that have no legislature. This Reorganisation Bill at least would not have gone through if it was not for the pusillanimity of the opposition parties which went along with the BJP.

The Congress (most responsible historically for systematically eroding J&K autonomy) formally opposed these actions by the current

government but with some of its leaders (e.g., Abishek Singhvi and Jyotirmoy Scindia) and members voicing objection to the manner in which this was done but not to the outcome. Only the mainstream left parties immediately organised street protests and called for an all-India day of protest.

Let us be very clear, the main motivation for this sanctioning of a brazen political and military occupation by the BJP government and Sangh is

- a) first, hatred of Muslims and the fact that this was the only Muslim majority state in the country.
- b) Second, it expresses the determination to humiliate the Valley population hence the prior sending of 35,000 more troops beyond the more than 650,000 armed personnel already there, along with house arrests of leaders of the mainstream Kashmiri parties, curfew orders

and a complete communications lockdown on the whole of the Valley population.

- c) Third, it is to further advance the project of establishing a Hindu Rashtra.
- d) Fourth, it is a way of sending a geo-political message to Pakistan, the US and the rest of the world that there is no longer any 'regional dispute' that must be settled bilaterally with Pakistan, let alone that it should feature in any way on the UN or international agenda, humanitarian considerations be damned!

What now to expect in the

shorter and longer run

The issue will be taken to the Supreme Court (SC) and a Constitution bench will be set up. This bench, given how suborned the SC has now become to the will and power of the Executive, will never have the courage or integrity to even give a stay order temporarily halting and reversing what has been done till a final judgement is reached, let alone be honest and faithful to the precise constitutional provisions regarding these Articles. This bench can be fully expected to endorse by a majority, if not by consensus, the abrogation of 370 and 35A. It is possible, but still unlikely, that there will even be a ruling against the downgrading of status from state to Union Territory in either or both of the cases.

A Delimitation Commission is very likely to be set up probably before forthcoming elections to the J&K legislature to gerrymander more assembly and LS seats for the Jammu region so as to enable a majority for the BJP and allies via future elections.

Scrapping of 35A was necessary to begin the process of changing the demography of J&K, including of the Valley, so as to eventually render Muslims living there a minority.

In the Valley there will be growing anger and deeper and wider public alienation from the rest of India

especially among the youth. There will very likely be greater recruitment and support for, as well as collaboration with, cross-border insurgent forces themselves abetted by the Pakistan government. This, and even non-violent mass actions will be taken as an excuse by the Indian government and armed forces for the exercise of greater brutality and repression including use of the newly amended legislations on 'terrorism' and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act or UAPA to arbitrarily and pre-emptively arrest, harass and even torture those deemed as 'suspects'.

For all the talk about how development in the region was stalled and can now proceed, in actual fact the Sangh's Hindutva project in the Valley is to 'integrate' it by trying to completely finish off all popular resistance through brutal force and enduring military occupation.

The likelihood of cross-border military skirmishes with Pakistan rises significantly as also the possibility of these turning into a conventional war of some scale and degree thereby also raising the chances of a miscalculated or inadvertent nuclear exchange breaking out.

The fact that this move by the current government will generate throughout the rest of the country far more public support than opposition, reflects how deep and widespread are the tentacles today of a hubristic, aggressively muscular Hindu nationalism. None of

the opposition parties, including the mainstream electoral Left, have consistently or seriously opposed this anti-secular and anti-democratic way of trying to build a 'strong' India. This way of thinking has become largely hegemonic and requires a long term fight by a new intransigent Left.

Our Position

We warn that the erosion of federalism and state powers more generally, is very much part of the Hindutva project and carries a danger even for those regional forces who think they can grow and expand through their despicable alliances and tacit agreements with the BJP at the Centre.

We call on all progressive-minded people who recognise the Hindutva project for what it is and oppose it, to stand in solidarity with the people of Kashmir. Justice and respect for Kashmiris demands the immediate demilitarisation of the Valley and the complete freedom for them to move around, to voice their legitimate anger at how they have been treated and to democratically protest in whatever way they see fit.

We strongly oppose the kind of exclusivist, culturally racist and militaristic nationalism that is being generated and of course reaffirm the right to full political self-determination by the oppressed people of Kashmir.

[Radical Socialist](#)

A Strike to Keep Us Working

8 August 2019, by **Cole Stangler**

Laurent Gleizes, forty-seven, has been working in Nice's public hospital system since 1994. But this nurse "a union representative for the General Confederation of Labour (CGT)" says conditions have never been so dire, characterized by pay freezes, overcrowding, and patients' boiling resentment against staff. That's why

he went on strike last Wednesday, joining dozens of his colleagues across emergency rooms at the city's four public hospitals "and thousands more workers nationwide.

"We're calling out management and the government over the lack of both human and material support that are

necessary to fulfil our mission of public service," he told Jacobin at the CGT's union office in Nice's Cimiez Hospital. "Working conditions have been declining systematically."

Many nurses seem to agree "and not just in Nice, where roughly a third of the city's two hundred public

hospital emergency room staffers have gone on strike since Wednesday, according to the CGT. Strikes are also affecting a whopping 203 emergency rooms nationwide, according to a count from a national workers' coordinating committee in late July. That's a sizable share of the 478 public emergency health services across France. [64]

"We've arrived at a general sense that enough is enough," says Stéphane Gauberti, forty-eight, the head of the CGT at Nice's four public hospitals.

But if workers are unhappy, the nature of this workplace makes it a rather atypical strike movement. Indeed, so-called minimum service laws legally bar strikes from shutting down emergency rooms. As a result, many of those officially declaring themselves "on strike" are in fact withholding their labor for short intervals, all the while ensuring that care isn't interrupted. Others have taken medical leave in protest, while still other sympathizers have stayed on the job while showing their solidarity in different ways: attending rallies, wearing armbands, and signing petitions.

In any case, the emergency room strike wave has only grown since kicking off in March, becoming an inescapable source of headaches for Emmanuel Macron's government. The workers' actions may not have generated as much media attention as the Yellow Vests. But much like the *gilets jaunes*, nurses, health aides, and other emergency room staff are drawing attention to one of France's defining political issues: the defense of public services at a time when they're under attack like never before.

Services Under Pressure

While France's health-care system remains a world leader, there is a widespread sense that the quality of care has declined in recent years. In 2000, the World Health Organization ranked France's system as the world's best, but more recent studies have placed France further down the league tables. [65] A 2018 study from

the *Lancet* measuring health-care "access and quality" ranked France in twentieth place, ahead of the United States and the United Kingdom, but behind Canada and neighbors like Italy and Spain. [66] The most recent annual Euro Health Consumer Index report, meanwhile, put France eleventh out of thirty-five in Europe "a study that accounts for patient rights, waiting time, services, and prevention. [67]

Strikers pin the decline in quality on a very simple reason: a lack of funding. Hospitals are largely financed by payroll taxes "that is, contributions from employers and employees that finance the national health-insurance system. Since 2010, the government has aimed to control costs by fixing the annual health-insurance-spending growth target at under 3 percent. At the same time, actual health-care spending is growing at a faster rate "around 4 percent per year "reflecting an aging population and the fact that more people are seeking care today. [68] Between 1996 and 2015, the number of annual emergency room patients nearly doubled. [69]

Instead of boosting spending, the government has tightened the screws "forcing hospitals to make do with fewer resources and fewer workers to bear the brunt. Along with the rest of the civil service, public hospital employees haven't seen a raise since a modest pay bump in February 2017. Base pay had been frozen for six years before that. [70] At the same time, hospital employees have seen the introduction of new management techniques to manage the crunch. Workers now have individualized plans with specific targets and are expected to master several different specialties over the course of their career "to become, in French management-speak, *polyvalent*.

The tension is all very palpable on the shop floor, says Gauberti, the CGT leader who started as a health assistant in Nice in 1993. "Today, we're focused on budgets and accounting, while back then, we were still grounded in a vision of public health. When we had patients to bring in or work to do, we weren't asking ourselves the question, "How much is it going to cost?"

Public Support for Public Services

The movement began at a Paris hospital back in March, triggered by a string of physical assaults against staff. [71] From January to March, emergency room employees at Paris's Saint-Antoine Hospital counted eight separate incidents, against the backdrop of long waiting times and a lack of beds for patients. The strike quickly spread to other emergency rooms, with activist workers launching a collective to improve coordination: Inter-Urgences. Critically, this took place outside formal union structures. While employees do rely on unions to make official strike declarations "providing legal backing for absences from work "they've coordinated demands and various actions through the collective. Their central demands today include a "300 monthly pay raise, ten thousand new hires in emergency rooms, and an end to the practice of admitting patients on stretchers "a desperate measure undertaken when there are no beds available.

"We didn't want unions to negotiate in our place," one Paris hospital employee told the AFP news agency in June. "We saw quickly there could be little squabbles between them."

In some cases, hospital unions are seen as stodgy and not responsive enough to shop-floor demands. In others "like in Nice "unions did organize the strike. Regardless, the movement has tapped into a sense of frustration. By April, around twenty-five hospitals were on strike, most of them in Paris. [72] By early June, that number had reached eighty nationwide. [73] On June 6, the Inter-Urgences collective organized a march in front of the Health Ministry in Paris, drawing two hundred protesters, according to *Le Monde*.

That demonstration finally led to concessions from the government. Last month, health minister Agnès Buzyn announced a "100 monthly bonus for emergency room workers and promised funding aimed at making more hires. But this has done little to slow the movement. Strikes

didn't just continue â€” they expanded to reach more than 130 services by the end of June. [74] Many are demanding the full â‚¬300, in the form of a full-fledged pay raise â€” thereby ensuring that it comes with the social contributions that help fund the health-care system.

The workers taking action also enjoy overwhelming public sympathyâ€”in large part because much of the French population is familiar with the very problems that employees are denouncing. An Odoxa poll in late June found that nine in ten French people

backed the strike. [75] That's even bigger support than the Yellow Vests could point to at the peak of their movement late last year, or indeed striking rail workers in the spring of 2017.

The public approval doesn't come as a surprise to Gleizes. "It's linked to the health system in this country," the nurse says. For him, it's about an "ideological battle to maintain a system funded by social contributions, and not just a system of big private insurance that penalizes the most precarious people."

As the movement rolls on, a key question is whether the government will make further concessions. No matter the final outcome, though, it's a reminder that collective action still gets the goods in France â€” even under Emmanuel Macron. And as unions gear up for a tough battle over the proposed hike in the retirement age this fall, they could use just about as much encouragement as they can get.

26 July 2017

[Jacobin](#)

Women's/Feminist Strike in Switzerland: A Step Forward on the Road of the Internalization of Feminist Struggles

7 August 2019, by **St fanie Prezioso**

It is hard to analyze the success of such a mass movement, necessarily heterogeneous in its social composition and the political, cultural, national, religious, or generational origins of its participants. It is all the more arduous to understand, as from the start, by its decision to mobilize on the 14th of June, as opposed to the 8th of March as in the rest of the world, this movement appeared to stand apart from the transnational mobilizations of the three preceding years. These mobilizations have given rise to a new feminist wave, upheld by millions of women who have come together, demonstrated and/or have gone on strike to oppose socially regressive policies that disproportionately affect women*, worsening the various forms of patriarchal oppression that dominate our societies.

However, the scale of the movement and its unmistakable success in Switzerland are in my view a product of the combination between the offensive nature of this new international feminist movement and the reactivation of the crucial

experience that was the 1991 June 14th women's strike within a deeply conservative and patriarchal country, ranked 20th by the World Economic Forum as to gender equality. This date symbolizes a key moment for the renewal of feminism in Switzerland.

The transmission of the experiences and knowledge of those who took part in the 1991 strike was all the easier because each generation present in this mobilization (including the one formed in 1968 years) understood its invaluable importance. Taking possession of one's past to surpass it while updating it to counter neoliberal amnesia was a compelling necessity, all the more so because the history of feminist struggles is systematically forgotten, when it is not deliberately deleted. The stakes were high. On June 14, 1991, half a million women* had mobilized throughout the country to ensure that gender equality (*de jure* and *de facto*), written ten years earlier in the Swiss Federal Constitution, was finally implemented. The movement had then grown all the more surely because it reflected a widely held feeling that enough was enough, in

one of the last countries of Western Europe to have granted the right to vote to women, well after the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, Spain, France, and Italy.

The Swiss feminist movement had been fighting for political rights for women for decades. In 1971, male voters finally accepted these rights in a popular vote at the federal level by a 65.7% majority. As the proposal was rejected by eight cantons, these rights were not fully implemented in all Swiss cantons until April 28, 1991, just weeks before the first women's strike. At that time, no significant and concrete progress had occurred as to equality in the workplace, in the family, etc. It was not until the second half of the 1980s that the new matrimonial law stripped the male "head of the family" of his extensive prerogatives. As for the right to abortion or maternity leave, they still appeared, on the eve of this first major feminist mobilization, as out of reach goals. Suggested as a joke by female watchmakers in the Vall e de Joux (at the heart of the watchmaking industry, devastated at the time by

massive dismissals), the strike as a means of action was finally adopted not without provoking strong resistances, including among those who supported the need for mobilization.

In Switzerland, the so-called “social peace.” based on a 1937 agreement between the metalworkers’ union and the employers’ organization called “peace at work” (Paix du travail, Arbeitsfrieden), was widely adopted in all sectors and ended being perceived as a supposed element of “collective identity.” On an imaginary plane, cleverly cultivated by bosses and trade union leaders, in a country marked by a surprising continuity of elites, this “peace at work” was and is still presented as flowing from a trait of national character that explains the exceptional economic growth of the postwar decades. One should remember that since just after the Second World War, the Swiss dominant elites based their political action on an uncompromising economic liberalism, reflecting an economic system spared by the war, strongly marked by the power of the banking sector and devoid of any heavy industry requiring state intervention.

On June 14, 1991, a purple wave (the color of the strike) swept the country, from the windows of dwellings to public spaces, to workplaces, revealing the discriminations prevailing in all productive and reproductive sectors. During the following decade, no doubt thanks to the impressive mobilization of 1991, the revision of the law on equality, prohibiting any form of discrimination “direct or indirect in all work relationships,” the right to abortion and maternity leave were obtained. From the beginning of the 2000s, feminist mobilizations underwent important developments, as also gender studies, opening up new perspectives for concrete thinking, in relation to the affirmation of new subjectivities and new subjects. This revival was felt on the social front (in defense of public services and benefits) and in defense of migrant and undocumented women, but also revived international action and awareness, especially through the World March of Women.

From One Strike to the Next

It is interesting to note that while in 1991 the use of the word “strike” was considered problematic, last year the debate focused rather on the term “feminist,” an adjective viewed by some as too “radical” or too “excluding” or, on the contrary, too “dated” or mainstream for others. In particular, young women of immigrant origin, very present in the movement from the start, were the most cautious, even if they were not fundamentally hostile to the use of the term. They feared that the restricted and disembodied meaning assigned to it by neoliberal capitalism in the previous decades might repel their generation. This had proven to be true when, in 2015, the Federal Commission for Women’s Issues launched a project calling for a “woman’s vote,” seeking thereby to erase in the name of the “universal feminine,” various forms of oppression suffered by the vast majority of women in Switzerland.

Did not feminism very often serve to legitimize political scenarios that promote neither social justice nor “gender justice”? Added to this was the fact that it had been unable or simply refused to grasp the relationship between sexism and racism, promoting in the name of “the emancipation of women,” a battle against other women, especially veiled Muslim women, scapegoats of the nationalist or liberal right or even of sectors of the so-called “secular left.” Thus, figures such as Martine Chaponnière, an early Swiss Women’s Liberation activist, defended a ban on the veil at school in March 2016. [76]

This feminism had also helped to exclude “invisibilized” or precarious social layers from its militant agenda. The most revealing case is of course that of undocumented migrants, who, according to available estimates, are in their majority women employed in the domestic economy. Migrants without legal status, in precarious positions, working for a meager salary and without social insurance, they take on part of the housework and care, allowing women of the middle

and upper classes to escape to a certain extent, the overwork due to the growing privatization of domestic chores and their unequal division between women and men. As Nancy Fraser has written:

Mainstream feminism has adopted a thin, market-centered view of equality, which dovetails neatly with the prevailing neoliberal corporate view. So it tends to fall into line with an especially predatory, winner-take-all form of capitalism that is fattening investors by cannibalizing the living standards of everyone else. Worse still, this feminism is supplying an alibi for these predations. Increasingly, it is liberal feminist thinking that supplies the charisma, the aura of emancipation, on which neoliberalism draws to legitimate its vast upward redistribution of wealth. [77]

The 200 or so women* gathered on a hot day in June 2018 in an overcrowded hall in Lausanne intended precisely to put these issues on the agenda of the mobilizations planned for 2019. Seeking to reclaim a fighting feminism and invoking strike actions as a means of struggle, in a country where political strikes are illegal, was therefore an important step. They could also claim a first and, as its initiators admitted, unexpected success. Originating as an idea put forward at the 13th Women’s Congress of the Swiss trade-union umbrella organization Union syndicale suisse, whose basic line has long been that of collaboration with employers’ organizations, the idea of a Women’s/Feminist strike immediately took hold and grew.

In fact, the convening of the Feminist Conference in Lausanne took place in a particular context. At the national level, only a few months earlier, radical left-wing political forces, mainly solidarités, minority union sectors, feminist activists and pensioners’ associations, had won a major victory against a government project adopted by the Parliament, with the support of the Social-Democratic Party, aiming to raise the retirement age of women from 64 to 65 years (after two successive rises, led by the social-democrat minister Ruth Dreyfuss, from 62 to 63 in 2001 and from 63 to 64 years in 2005). For

months, since April 2017, these activists had taken to the streets to gather the 70,000 citizen's signatures necessary for this new law to be put to a popular referendum, thus weaving links between them, reinforced by a spectacular victory in the ballot boxes, in September 2017. Together, they had succeeded in imposing their action in numerous places, carrying a social demand for real (and not only formal) equality between women and men. Faced with a unanimous bourgeois bloc, supported by the Social-Democratic Party, this victory at the polls revealed an important mobilization potential against the policies of social regression (offensives against wages, social insurance, public services, and benefits) affecting the entire country.

In the Cantons and Communes, budget cuts with a direct impact on women - because they are at the forefront of care and education, but also because they make up the majority of people in the country below the poverty line - had affected education (with an overall funding reduction of 1 billion francs in 2017), health, asylum and development aid. According to the Federal Statistical Office, the pay gap between women and men is now 19.6%. Women are overrepresented in low-wage jobs (2/3 of employees earning less than 4000 francs), 60% of them hold part-time jobs (forced by their employers or by the unequal distribution of household chores). Only 10% of women with a child under four work full-time, and the proportion of young mothers who have to give up work tends to increase because of the shortage and high costs of childcare facilities. [78] Today we speak of the "mother's ceiling" to account for this reality. In 2014, 20.2% of mothers with children under 25 years of age were unemployed, compared to 4.4% of fathers in the same situation; 82.5% of women with a child under 15 worked part-time, compared with 13.3% of fathers.

These inequalities in wages and career paths have a major negative impact on the level of pensions. Overall, women only receive little more than half of the sum of the pensions earned by men, because women have lower wages, because they work in less paid sectors and part-time jobs, and/or

have had to give up work to care for children. As a consequence of these massive economic discrimination, the extreme limitation of maternity leave (conquered in 2005 at the federal level, it covers the loss of earnings after childbirth for 14 weeks only) and the absence of paternity leave (1 day in most sectors) or parental leave, most domestic work is still women's work in Switzerland today. And as if all this were not enough, the hard right tried, thankfully without success, to abolish the reimbursement of abortion costs (proposal voted on the 9th of February 2014).

With the campaign against raising women's retirement age and the battle against the massive decline in taxation of large companies, won in 2017, political organizations of the combative left, as well as militant sectors of the trade unions and the associative world forged important links on which the mobilization of June 2019 could count.

At the international level, since 2017, faced with the victory of Donald Trump in the United States and the coming to power of conservative and fundamentalist forces around the world and their declared war against women*, the poorest, the precarious, the migrants, the March 8 mobilizations have grown in Switzerland too. Young women, often very young, have outflanked and overflowed more traditional feminist gatherings, with a significant participation (mixed or not) of "autonomous" sectors, marching against violence of all kinds against women, reinforcing and/or diversifying the 8 March committees somewhat sleepy until then. They were a thousand in the streets of Geneva in March 2017 and more than twice as many in March 2019, as the strike was in preparation.

Feminism, Class Movement, and Internationalism

After the Conference in June 2018, local collectives were created all over the country, patiently building the mobilization from one canton to the

next: first in French-speaking Switzerland, where a coördination was put in place and collectives created in each region (Vaud, Geneva, Neuchâtel, Fribourg, Valais) then in Italian speaking Switzerland and finally in German-speaking Switzerland. These collectives were the expression of the perceived urgency of addressing and challenging the various forms of domination depending on an individual's place in society. This necessity was all the more imperative, as they held together different generations, including political generations and distinct organizational cultures (where they existed) of associative, political, and trade union activists, with a variety of socio-professional categories and origins. But the aim also was to integrate these varied experiences into the broadest possible movement, reflecting new feminist aspirations.

The strike manifesto, first drafted by a small group of women* appointed by the general assembly during the second plenary session of the French-speaking coördination in Lausanne in September 2018, and then discussed, amended, corrected and amplified by the local collectives, is undoubtedly one of the most successful results. The discussion of this manifesto aimed to be as horizontal as possible, to bring together all the forces present, those of experienced activists, most often from the radical left, migrants and women's associations, and trade unions (from the private and public sectors), but also those of the youngest activists who wanted to make their voices heard. This method made it possible to determine together the modes of action and the demands of the strike. Amongst which were equal pay, a minimum wage, reduction of working hours; insurance and social benefits; the rights of migrant women at work and in their migratory journey (call for regularization and legislation that protects them); combating discrimination and violence against women* (a national plan for preventing and combating gender-based violence and sexual violence, acceptance of the right to asylum for these reasons); freedom to live one's sexual orientation and to choose one's gender identity; presence of women in the public/political space.

The radicalism of this manifesto, which questions the patriarchal and capitalist system, was a decisive conquest. In Bienne, in March 2019, the 500 women* present adopted a Call to strike. It is this Call, known as the "Appel de Bienne," which was to be read on June 14th at 11 am in places of work and public spaces of Switzerland:

We all, women, with or without a partner, in community, with or without children, with or without employment, and whatever the nature of that employment, healthy or sick, with or without disability, heterosexual, LGBTIQ, from the youngest to the oldest, born here or elsewhere, with different cultures and origins, we call for a feminist and women*'s strike on June 14, 2019. We want equality in the facts and we want to decide ourselves about our lives. For this, we will go on strike on June 14, 2019! [79]*

If during the months of preparation, the collectives grew for the concrete preparation of the strike (setting up websites, writing brochures, organizing choirs, initiating actions of all kinds, flash mobs, etc.), other mobilizations helped fuel the strike's demands. The September 2018 mobilization in Berne, for equal pay, brought together more than 20,000 people, and its leaflet was translated into eleven languages (in Switzerland, immigrants without political rights make up more than a quarter of the population). In Geneva, a strike by the cleaners of a private bank who held pickets for days in the cold of winter, as well as the fight against an islamophobic law prohibiting the wearing of the veil in the cantonal and municipal parliaments and for the workers in all state or public service entities, made it possible to widen these struggles and make them more concrete. Two weeks before the strike, "[Purple Scarves-<https://lesfoulardsviolets.org/2019/07/03/le-14-juin-2019-nous-avons-ecrit-lhistoire-toutes-ensemble/>]," gathering Muslim women wearing headscarves or not, called for the strike.

Lists of demands by professional sectors were also produced and filed in different workplaces. They are today a major challenge for the

continuation of the huge mobilization of 14 June. Many initiatives came from below, especially in the public sector (daycares, schools, universities, hospitals, public administrations...) It is undoubtedly there (but we do not have all the figures yet), that the mobilization was the strongest and that the strike was the most followed. In the private sector, it was particularly difficult. In fact, in watchmaking and metallurgy, the trade union centers did not support the call to strike, with the collective labor agreements containing clauses proscribing any work stoppage. Yet, in some cases, bonds of solidarity between women workers in the public and private sectors were manifested through specific lists of demands. Thus, that of employees, students, PhD students of the University of Lausanne, included demands for women workers in the cafeterias and cleaning companies (quite all immigrants) hired by private companies on campus.

The popularity of the movement amongst the population, as evidenced by an opinion poll released by the press, as well as its scale, triggered a sort of strikewashing: some companies allowed extended breaks or released women at 3:24 pm, a symbolic hour of the day which marks the beginning of women's unpaid working hours in Switzerland (since they are not paid as much as men). The mobilizations also sought to make the invisible visible by promoting demonstrations in front of workplaces where women are massively employed (department stores, hotels...) to show solidarity with those who could not join the movement. The invisibles were also present at the final end-of-day demonstrations, represented by silhouettes or placards worn by other women in solidarity.

After the mobilization on June 14, one could read that the call to strike, criticized by much of the press for its left-wing and anti-patriarchal radicalism, far from constituting an obstacle to mobilization had been "the expression of a true feminist, anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-capitalist tide." [80] An encouraging analysis of the movement, but probably somewhat too optimistic. It is true, that despite the pressures and attacks on an illegal

strike, "confiscated by the left," "excluding men," etc., made by broad sectors of the right and the employers, relayed by some of the media, the mobilization was of unequaled magnitude. The links it created in living places and workplaces, the new solidarities that emerged and the themes that were put forward and constantly repeated since the call to the strike was launched in March were without doubt key conditions for a new awareness of the relations of domination and exploitation that are established in a capitalist society like Switzerland.

However, it must be noted, as our comrades in Poland also observed, that for the moment "Women do understand themselves as 'the oppressed,' but class analysis is present only in small parts of the feminist movement, mainly associated with academia, radical grassroots groups and, to a much lesser degree, in the unions." [81] But there is hope. The movement was patiently constructed from below, in a capillary fashion, in connection with social movements and militant and trade union organizations, without renouncing the radical elements of its program. This is undoubtedly one of the keys to its success, manifest on the evening of the 14th of June. An unprecedented, broad and national movement, in a conservative and patriarchal country that has made its well-proven federalism one of the elements of its political continuity, undoubtedly opens a field for political and social protest throughout the country, effectively imposing a renewal and/or strengthening of its modes of action.

The next step will undoubtedly see this impressive movement, whose first concern - no doubt justified - was to signal its continuity with the June 14, 1991 strike, to connect with the international movement of March 8. This orientation will be debated after the summer break and probably adopted by the various groups. At the internationalist feminist meetings organized last April, in Geneva, by solidaritéS, to which Sara Farris and Tithi Bhattacharya notably contributed, the call to create a feminist international was well received. [82] In the coming months,

the campaign for the election to the Swiss federal parliament will put back on the table the demands of the Manifesto, which will be submitted to all the parties presenting candidates. The future of this new feminist

movement, at the forefront of the fight against the hardening of capitalist exploitation, but also against its consequences in the reproductive sphere and against the rise of a

nakedly racist patriarchy, has enormous potentialities. Its conscious international articulation today depends very much on its most radical wing. Our responsibilities are therefore considerable.

DSA Convention 2019

6 August 2019, by Dan La Botz

Beyond those debates, the delegates adopted significant political positions, such as a motion stating that in the event that if Bernie Sanders loses the Democratic Party nomination, DSA will not support any other Democrat in the 2020 national election. And they passed a measure requiring nationally endorsed candidates to run as open socialists. The assembly also adopted a radical position in support of open borders, came out in support of an ecosocialist priority and the Green New Deal, and carried a resolution opposing U.S. imperialism. And by a very narrow majority the convention voted to support anti-fascist work. The convention reasserted the centrality of union work, adopting several resolutions on labor organizing. Ongoing efforts, such as work on the Bernie Sanders primary campaign and the fight for Medicare for All, were implicitly endorsed by the convention.

The convention elected DSA's new leadership, a 16-member National Political Committee (NPC) made up of individuals from various caucuses or independents who more or less proportionally reflected the convention divide, with about ten members committed to the more centralized organization and half a dozen leaning toward the decentralization position. The previous NPC, riven by factionalism, failed to work together harmoniously or very efficiently, and the challenge for this leadership will be to find a way to implement the convention decisions and to face new challenges collectively and effectively. Overall, despite debate that was sometimes heated, all of the delegates left the convention

committed to building a larger, stronger, and more active DSA.

The Nature of the Convention

The previous convention held in 2017 had only 700 delegates expressing the will of 25,000 members. This 2019 convention was made up of 1,056 delegates from every state, many cities, and suburban and rural areas throughout the country. Unfortunately in numerous DSA chapters, many members did not vote in the delegate elections, reflecting a larger problem that, as members stated in convention remarks, in many locales only perhaps ten or twenty percent of the members are active.

The convention delegates were mostly young (a great many between 25 and 35), much more white than people of color, but with an important role played by women and LGBTQ comrades throughout. For many delegates, some of whom had only been members for a year or two, this was their first national convention. A visiting Latin American comrade observed, "In truth, this seems more like a youth congress than a national political organization." Yet it is also true that this was a more mature convention than the last, reflecting that in the last two years DSA has done an enormous amount of work in political campaigns, labor union strikes, the fight for immigrant justice, housing issues, and other areas.

The general organization of the convention unfortunately made it

difficult to hold extended political discussion and to debate such important issues as the American political scene, DSA's relationship to the Democratic Party, U.S. foreign policy, or the question of oppressed groups in the United States. The convention was not organized around major political issues but rather around a series of short summary reports, resolutions, and constitutional amendments. At the same time, certainly scores and perhaps hundreds of members rose to speak on these items in what was a highly participatory convention.

Originally more than 125 such items were presented which were reduced through a series of pre-convention delegate votes (with a low level of participation) to a short consent agenda and about 30 remaining items to be taken up over the convention's more or less 16 hours in working sessions. The political convention novices spent a great deal of time in procedural motions and "questions of personal privilege" that frequently frustrated the body. And on a few occasions resolutions on complex questions were bundled together and dealt with in haste. Nevertheless, by and large the convention rules worked, the delegates behaved respectfully toward each other, and the convention accomplished its business. Several international observers commented on being impressed with the democratic character of the convention and by the attention given to making all members feel comfortable and able to participate.

Several caucuses organized around political platforms—Build, Bread and Roses, Socialist Majority, Collective Power Network, the Libertarian Socialist Caucus, Reform and Revolution and others—drove much of the debate and whipped vote on crucial issues. Build and the Libertarian Socialist Caucus tended to lead the decentralizers, while Socialist Majority and Bread Roses led the centralizing forces. The upstart Collective Power Network that appeared shortly before the convention tended to muddy the waters with some centralizing and some decentralizing proposals. Many members not in caucuses, however, wavered in their views, voting one way on one motion and another on the next. No caucus or alliance of caucuses dominated the convention.

The Great Divide and the Political Significance of the Convention

The great divide in the convention between the centralizing and the decentralizing forces could be characterized as a difference between those who want a democratic socialist party-type organization based on indirect representation by conventions and national committees and those who want something more like a of regional and local activists groups based on participatory democracy. In a series of votes on questions of political education, organizer training, dues and the national budget, as well as other organizational issues the centralizers tended to win about 55 percent of the vote, while the decentralizers got about 45 percent. Yet it would be a mistake to draw the lines too deeply to suggest that it was socialists versus anarchists, because that would certainly be wrong. People on both sides of the divide appreciate having a national group and those on both sides want a vigorous democratic would lay claim to participatory democracy as part of that agenda.

The convention was devoid of any references to Marxist theory and there were few references to socialist

history, and as already mentioned, the organizing structure of the convention made deep political discussion and debate on the convention floor virtually impossible. While the International Committee of DSA arranged for international guests from left parties and social movements in a variety of countries—among them Brazil, Japan, and Venezuela—who spoke in a few special sessions, foreign policy remains one of DSA's weakest areas. A hasty bundling of several motions on international questions including Palestine, Cuba, and anti-colonialism—while motivated by the delegates strong desire to express their anti-imperialism—led to a short and inadequate discussion and the adoption of a problematic document. All of this reflects the insufficiency and unevenness of political education over the last few years, which a resolution on political education passed by the convention, should help to remedy.

What the Convention Says about DSA's Politics

While the convention issued no general analytical document or manifesto, our organization's politics can be inferred from the conventions resolutions and the discussion around them.

First, DSA remains a democratic socialist organization committed to bringing to power a socialist government, socializing the means of production, creating an egalitarian and democratic society. To do so, DSA continues to see its role as building a socialist presence through campaigns in the Democratic Party combined with the construction of a stronger labor movement and more powerful social movements (as expressed in the class-struggle election resolution that passed). Different than the Socialist Party of America in its heyday at the turn of the last century or the Communist Party in the 1920s, or elements of the New Left of the 1960s and 1970s, DSA does not in general

talk in terms of either a workers' party, a workers' government, or the need for socialist revolution, nor do any of its caucuses—though many individual members would describe themselves as revolutionary socialists. The adoption of the Bernie or bust resolution represents an important statement, as does the requirement (in Resolution 31) reinforcing previously adopted positions that all nationally endorsed candidates run as open socialists.

Second, DSA placed an enormous amount of emphasis at the convention on the discussion of labor. While far from it now, DSA clearly wants to be a working class organization. The invitation to Sara Nelson, International President of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, AFL-CIO, to speak at the convention emphasized that commitment. The Bread and Roses caucus has been (under various names) the principal advocate of the rank-and-file strategy, largely influenced by the International Socialists (IS) and Solidarity from the 1970s to the 2010s. B&R caucus adopting that strategic outlook and looking to the examples of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) and the Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators (CORE) in Chicago, as well as Labor Notes, worked to get DSA members into union jobs, to work in rank-and-file movements, and to transform the labor movement. The newly created Collective Power Network, a rival caucus that also emphasizes labor offered a broader, decentralizing proposal, putting less emphasis on the rank-and-file approach. Members of the San Francisco DSA put forward a resolution that passed the convention calling for DSA to work directly with labor unions to organize, as the SF DSA chapter did with the International Longshore and Warehouse Workers (ILWU) at Anchor beer. In the end, a series of labor proposals, somewhat contradictory in their emphases were adopted, but nevertheless continuing the emphasis on the need for militant grassroots unionism. What has often been missing in all versions of the union debate is a clear analysis of the labor bureaucracy as a social caste within the unions—balancing between the corporations and the workers—with its own ideology and the power and perquisites of office.

Third, DSA once again adopted resolutions expressing its desire and its plans to work with communities of color, such as the resolutions adopted in the omnibus consent agenda on immigrant and refugee rights, support for open borders, and orienting to Latinx communities, as well as other resolutions on community organizing and housing. Taken together with early decisions, such as the creation of the Afrosocialists and Socialists of Color Caucus, all of this is very good. Still, turning this corner will be very difficult, especially establishing relationships with Black working class people through their unions and communities and winning them to socialism. The long history of American racism, including in the Democratic Party, in the labor unions, and sometimes in the left, presents formidable obstacles, as does the fact that up largely out of white, college-educated people trained for work in high skilled jobs and professions. What DSA must also do is find

organized, political Black and Latino organizations and find a way to work with their leaderships and members, that is the historic path to an integrated left party, though this is not at this time part of the strategy.

Finally, foreign policy, that is, international questions and the issue of imperialism, remains one of DSA's weakest areas. Once again, there are no doubt historic reasons for this. The old DSA of the 1980s worked closely with the Democratic Party and aligned itself internationally with the Socialist International, inevitably placing it on the Western side of the Cold War divide. The new DSA arose in the effervescence of the Bernie campaign of 2016 with its emphasis on domestic issues and Bernie's own weaknesses on foreign policy questions. While the terms "internationalism" and "anti-imperialism" appear in DSA resolutions and discussions, the group and its members have not actually done much thinking about these issues. The DSA International Committee has

begun to develop positions on these questions, and needs to continue to develop an internationalist and democratic foreign policy.

Overall, the Convention 2019 demonstrates that while DSA has firmly established itself as the most important organization of the American left in decades, it is also true that it has not yet consolidated itself, certainly not in the working class or communities of color. Nor has DSA developed a full-fledged Marxist analysis and strategy to deal with American politics, much less international question. And that is not surprising, given that it is such a new, youthful group and still a relatively small socialist organization (55,000 in a nation of 327 million). Still, for leftists in America, DSA remains the place to be and to fight for revolutionary socialist ideas.

5 August 2019

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South Africa: Transforming community protests into an uprising

5 August 2019, by Trevor Nwagbe

In Caledon, Western Cape, two protesters were shot dead by private security during a march and a land occupation. In Alexandra, the state president, Cyril Ramaphosa, addressed the protesting community after a tumultuous week, including a march to nearby ultra-rich Sandton.

Protesters were not celebrating their freedom and their right to vote. Many were saying they saw no need to vote because politicians and political parties habitually abused their vote, promising heaven and earth, but never honouring those promises. There were threats of disrupting the elections. As things turned out, they proceeded smoothly, albeit with a low turnout, especially by the youth, and a few sporadic instances of disruption.

The coincidence of protests and elections is not new in this country. What was new was the ferocity and proliferation of the protests. **The images of chaos in the country's urban working class townships during the elections implied that there was a crisis underlying South African politics.**

The "urban crisis" is a crisis of labour. The central problem is that those who produce are not benefiting enough from the fruits of their labour. Workers are getting less than they need in order for themselves, their families and communities to have a decent life. As a result, the majority must endure their everyday life always short of food, water, energy, sanitation, housing, healthcare,

education, transport, etc. It is worse for unemployed workers who must depend on the overstretched wages of employed family members and friends, or the paltry social grants provided by the state. Youth suffer the most because four out of ten are unemployed and, compared to adults, they have less social power, experience and networks needed to survive the hardships of working class life.

With freedom and the vote, too little changed and too much remained the same. Hence the call for a boycott of the elections.

A new social force

The dissatisfaction with bourgeois democracy is not unique to South Africa. Since the dawn of the 21st century we have seen everywhere in the world people rising up in protest against various aspects of the social injustice of the political and economic order. For example, the Egyptian and Tunisian uprisings, the Occupy Wall Street Movement, the high school students' climate change movement, the Gilet Jaunes (yellow vests), etc.

But that resistance has not systematically been led by an organised working class. Instead it has more often been led by an insecure middle class, or groupings of refugees from the organised mass of the working class. The resistance has inspired new generations and layers confronting the situation from outside the traditions established by workers and their organisations.

In South Africa, at the forefront of the protests are unemployed and precariously employed workers and youth, including those eking a living in the informal sector. **Protest action mostly takes place in poor working class communities (townships and villages) with about a quarter located in shack settlements or led by backyard shack dwellers.** The number of protests has increased consistently and sharply since the days of mass mobilisation by the 'new social movements', from about the year 2000.

From 'new social movements' to community uprisings

By 'new social movement' organisations I am referring to organisations such as the Landless People's Movement, Treatment Action Campaign, Jubilee SA and the Anti-Privatisation Forum, to name just a few. At the time, they organised across communities and aimed at building national and even international campaigns, mostly

around a single issue or set of related issues.

From about 2004, beginning with the protests in Diepsloot and Harrismith, there has been a proliferation of community-specific local protests that focus on the grievances of a single community. These protests have mostly been about "service delivery" (water, houses, roads, etc.), although dissatisfaction with the "quality of democracy" in terms of accountability and government responsiveness appears to be a crosscutting issue. The protests are mostly peaceful, but they have increasingly been associated with disruption and violence.

From disruption to violence

To understand the protest methods and dynamics, we must distinguish between disruption and violence, and also between the violence of the protesters and of the police. **Disruption arises out of the protesters' desire to stop business as usual in their locality. This often includes declaring a 'stayaway' and stopping workers from going to work, with school students sometimes expressly exempted and allowed to attend classes. This is achieved through barricades consisting of burning tyres, boulders and logs strewn across the streets. An important aim is to stop police movement, including that of official and commercial vehicles.**

Bringing the locality to a 'standstill' or 'shutting it down' is a method of grabbing and directing the attention of the authorities and the media to the plight of the community. Attention is an indispensable tool of modern political culture. Protesters also want other communities to know about their action and the media serves this role especially in the absence of a national protest movement or organisation.

Sometimes violence is deployed to register the anger of the people and the seriousness of their resolve. Such violence, in the form of vandalism and arson, is often directed at symbols of

state authority such as government buildings.

Research suggests that peaceful and disruptive protest often turns violent as a result of police intervention. Yet even the police sometimes express their unhappiness that, instead of the relevant authorities, such as the mayor or minister, coming to hear the grievances of the people, law enforcement officials are sent. This underlines the repressive and often violent response and contemptuous regard for the protesters of the political and economic elite. White farmers recently used tractors and private cars to block highways in a protest against farm murders - you could not smell a whiff of teargas.

The South African ruling class is ready and willing to use violence to shore up its rule. The Marikana massacre tragically demonstrated this. When working class communities timed their protests to coincide with the election season, it suggested a political calculation: the political elite would be most receptive to their demands at this particular time. The elite was also at its most vulnerable because it wanted their votes and hopefully would not respond too violently.

The call for a 'no vote' was probably a threat to goad the authorities into action to meet the people's demands. It was also, for some, a rejection of the elaborate political machination that legitimates the so-called democratic order.

For the 9 million unemployed, and the millions who live in shacks, the South African social and economic order excludes and marginalises them. The solidarity of employed and unemployed workers in working class households, including in the backyards of formal housing, provides an organic basis for developing a working class consciousness that unites the various segments of the class.

But organisationally, these ties were broken when organised labour was drawn into a formal alliance with the ruling party and as a consequence turned its back on the poorer sections of the class, especially the unemployed. For 20 years, Cosatu militancy was contained and pacified

in the name of supporting the ANC government.

The unemployed youth of today know no other labour movement. It has not seen a workers' movement that moves forward in determined and sustained struggle against the bosses, and in the name of the working class as a whole, as in the 1980s. The only militancy it sees and can be part of is that of protesting working class communities fighting and challenging state and corporate violence, rebelling against state neglect, super-exploitation and grinding poverty. For this youth, the resistance of protesting communities is the most dynamic source of fundamental rebellion against an unjust system.

Political parties

Some of this youth are inspired by the message of Julius Malema's Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). During the elections the EFF spoke its militant rhetoric of struggle, of land redistribution, of nationalisation of the banks, mines and factories. Significantly, it attacked xenophobia and called for the dismantling of African colonial borders. But like all the other political parties, its currency was promises and it presented itself as a messiah that will solve people's problems. It does not tell them: 'you are your own liberators'. Rather: 'the EFF will liberate you, just vote for us'.

Some young and older workers looked to the Numsa-inspired new party, the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP). Some unemployed township militants joined the party and campaigned for it. It turned out that it was not a mass party but vanguardist, in the elitist, top-down sense. Members must serve six months probation before they are accepted as full members; the party insisted on individual membership instead of basing itself on existing, struggling, tried-and-tested working class formations, etc. Its greatest shortcoming was its apparent failure to convince Numsa and Saftu members to vote for it.

The greatest blow to the class is that the idea of a workers' party

was undermined by this poorly planned electoral effort. As socialist militants, we cannot wash our hands of the SRWP. We have to help rebuild it from the ground up in order to keep alive this most important idea: a workers party for a workers government.

From community protests to class politics

Community protests are fragmented, inward-looking and sometimes xenophobic. They need a class politics. The protesters do not own the means of production, they are mostly unemployed workers even if some of them have never worked in their lives. Employed and unemployed workers, including youth and students, face the same enemy.

A key missing ingredient is therefore a workers' movement that provides a centre of authority for the various struggles. We have to support the revitalisation of the workers movement through recognising and supporting every instance and opportunity of struggle by the class. We have to point to, celebrate and build upon moments when the organic capacity is visible and in action. And the constant message should be: 'We are strong when we unite. We can win if we support each other in struggle. We must move forward in struggle against the capitalist system if we want control over the decisions about what happens in our lives every day. No saviour can liberate us; we are our own liberators'.

The message to protesting working class communities is: 'We, as employed workers and union members are there with you when you fight for the things you need to make your everyday life more tolerable and enjoyable. Your struggle is a struggle against a bosses' government that protects the bosses and their profits. It is a struggle for water and electricity. It is also a struggle for power. The power to bring real lasting solutions. Because if the bosses' government is forever in power, and the bosses forever own the wealth,

then we will forever be in that struggle. Because there will forever be the problems - not the solutions'.

Johannesburg United Front

The first step on this road is to unite protesting communities. One way of doing this is to develop a set of common demands that will provide a basis for solidarity and joint campaigns by communities in protest. The United Front in Johannesburg, together with a group of protesting communities, has drawn up, an Emergency Programme of Demands. This document will be taken to all protesting communities in South Africa under the slogan: "One Voice, One Action, One Rebellion. Free Quality Services for All".

This will take time but at the end of the process it should be possible to have a common day, week or month in which many communities would take action throughout the country behind the same set of demands. The idea is to overcome the fragmentation and thus stop the government's divide and rule tactics. The aim is to combine the movements and protests, turning them into an uprising.

From protest to uprising

Single issue and single community struggles are important building blocks in the campaign to keep the fires of struggle and hope burning among the various sections of the working class. But the militancy of the community protesters must combine with that of organized and unorganized workers, students and unemployed youth, women fighting against rape and patriarchy. A conscious and planned build-up for an uprising can provide a basis for joint work and knitting together campaigns, with the aim of winning partial victories and strengthening bonds between the different sections of the working class movement.

An uprising will show a glimpse of what is possible when the working

class movement is moving together in solidarity and action. It will liberate creative energy that will generate new ideas and methods of self-organisation and struggle. It will generate historical convulsions that can change

the balance of forces, providing emerging movements with goals that can be generalized beyond the local and sectional. It will restore hope in the vision that things can be different, that a better world without oppression

and exploitation is possible. An uprising will be about taking forward the Spirit of Marikana.

June 18, 2019

[Amanda](#)

“More Tribal, More Sectarian, More Crony Capitalist Than Ever”

5 August 2019, by **Joe Hayns, Joseph Daher**

In September 2011, Syrian leftist Yassin al-Haj Salah warned that the revolution was entering “a fateful situation, predisposed toward destruction.” The first peaceful protests that spring were viciously repressed by Bashar al-Assad’s dictatorship, and over the summer the revolt developed into an armed uprising. Yet after eight years of this “fateful situation,” today it is the Assad regime that has prevailed.

Despite the length of the war and the catastrophes it has brought, the deeper forces behind Syria’s conflict remain poorly understood, even on the Left. The protagonists are too often seen in the culturalist terms of “Sunnis vs. Shias,” or “Islamists vs. Secularists.” Just as often, the war is reduced to pure geopolitics, with the lead actors assumed to be mere proxies for America and its international opponents (or allies).

Rarest of all is any developed discussion of the class dynamics that shaped the Syrian state and society even before the 2011 conflict. Yet these had a decisive effect on the uprising and the regime’s ability to withstand it. Grasping these social elements of the conflict is just as important today if we want to understand the Assad regime’s strategy for the “new Syria,” and how it intersects with the plans of his Russian and Syrian allies.

Joseph Daher is the author of *Syria After the Uprisings: The Political*

Economy of the State Resilience (Pluto, 2019). He spoke to Joe Hayns about the deeper origins of the conflict, reasons for the Assad regime’s survival, and its strategy for the “new Syria.”

JH : Gilbert Achcar uses the word “patrimonial” to describe those countries in the Arabic-speaking world in which clusters of families “own” both the state and capital: Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and the other Gulf states. Meanwhile, he describes others like Egypt and Tunisia as “neo-patrimonial” — countries in which kin, capital ownership, and state control overlap, but not to such an extent. You put Syria in this first group — why is that?

JD: Achcar’s use of patrimonial and neo-patrimonial was very useful. By “patrimonial,” I mean a state that was completely privatized, within a family and its own networks. This made overthrowing the state much more difficult than in the “neo-patrimonial” ones you mention, where the key sections of the state power were able to remove Ben Ali and Mubarak while maintaining the basic form of rule.

In Sudan and Algeria — which are each seeing huge uprisings today — there have been neo-patrimonialism processes, though the real power is held by the highest strata of the military. This hasn’t reached the level of Syria, where bureaucratic, military, and financial power is *completely* in

the hands of one family and its wider network.

JH: Given this continuity, could you explain the shift you see, from “corporatist” to “neoliberal” state policies?

JD: There was an extension of neoliberal policies with Bashar al-Assad becoming president in 2000 and a weakening of corporatist organizations — the Ba’ath Party, peasants’ networks, and the General Federation of Trade Unions. These networks were never meant to empower peasants or workers, instead being organs of control and clientelism. Yet they were used less after 2000.

It has been forgotten that when [Bashar’s father] Hafez al-Assad came to power against the radical wing of the Ba’ath Party (in 1971), he had to choose: annihilate the existing institutions, or use them. The first people he repressed were Ba’athists, and other leftists outside the party. He retained the institutions as networks of control, while also seeking collaboration with sections of the bourgeoisie, especially in Damascus.

But in the mid to late 1970s, you began to see an “opening” — *infitah* — to capital, which widened in the 1980s with the fiscal crisis. With Bashar you had an acceleration along this path of foreign banks, foreign investment, etc. With this broad change came a weakening of the regime’s ties to its historic social base

â€” namely, the middle-class peasantry and workers, especially in the public sector â€” and a switch to a reliance on the urban upper middle class and sections of the bourgeoisie-proper.

Bashar wasn't like his father; he grew up in Damascus, among the richest strata of society, and was educated in Britain. And in the 2000s, there was a new generation of technocrats, enacting classic neoliberal policies, saying "this is the solution for Syria." But the general move from a state-capitalist to a patrimonial-neoliberal mode began as early as the later 1970s.

JH: If the regime's reliance on popular institutions diminished through the 2000s, were the popular classes able to generate autonomous institutions, through which to express themselves politically and make demands?

JD: Into the 2000s, there were more than 170 debate clubs around Syria, some of which looked more toward national democratic rights â€” those of Kurds, Assyrians, and so on â€” and sometimes other topics like the economy and the state. There were leftists, too. In Damascus, there were small clubs of people organizing on a left-wing basis â€” there was a group inspired by Attac (a campaign for a tax on financial transactions), for example. Most debating clubs were forcefully closed after only a year; people were attacked.

There were also students trying to organize independently from the main students' union, especially around the Palestinian *intifada* in 2003. They were repressed by the regime, for they were seen as a threat which might develop into something more radical.

Every time workers tried to organize or resist liberalization policies â€” and there were also strikes â€” they were either repressed or co-opted by the regime's own General Federation of Trade Unions. There was not â€” as in Egypt, for example â€” any attempt to organize independent trade unions. And, we could see this in the [2011] uprising: there were no mass groups organizing on an explicitly class basis.

The capacities of groups independent from state organs were very, very limited. At the end of the 1970s, trade unions and professional associations played an important role, but they were nearly completely repressed and replaced by regime-built organizations.

JH: Did anything of these unions remain through later decades â€” if not institutionally, then as a strain of collective memory? Were there any personalities that weathered the 1980s and 1990s?

JD: Unfortunately, no institutions survived, and hardly any collective memory remained of the significant strikes and demonstrations that happened across Syria in the 1970s and early 1980s. This history was not well-known by the new generation of protesters in 2011 â€” it was only known by older generations, those who been involved in leftist movements and groups.

Many once-prominent leftists did act as independents in various Local Coordination Committees and other structures established during the uprising, rather than through formal political organizations. Many were also involved in the coalition of fourteen leftist and democratic organizations â€” *al-Watan*, or "The Nation" â€” which brought together veteran oppositionists with the younger generations. But by 2012, this coalition disappeared, faced with the severe repression of the majority of its members.

JH: In northern Syria, through the 2000s, Kurdish groups organized along both national and social lines. Why such a pronounced difference with the rest of the country?

JD: There is, of course, a long history of Kurdish political organizing and resistance in Syria. The first Kurdish political party in Syria was established in the mid-1950s â€” before, most were in the Syrian Communist Party but since it was "nationalistic" it didn't defend their rights, and so many left.

On the eve of the uprising, there were over ten Kurdish parties, some very

much personality centered, and some organized on a mass level, for example, Yakiti, a very important party established in the 1990s by Kurds with a left-nationalist background.

In 2004 protests spread through Kurdish areas around Syria. They were organizing on the basis of opposition to the discrimination they faced but, also, yes, around socioeconomic issues. Historically, the areas with the largest Kurdish populations are also the poorest, despite being important for agriculture and oil.

But the greater use of socioeconomic discourse did not necessarily imply organizing on a class basis. Even if you look at the PYD (Democratic Union Party) â€” the sibling of the Kurdish Workers' Party, PKK â€” in the late 2000s, it started abandoning the PKK's earlier class-based discourse.

There was, though, a kind of collective common sense concerning socioeconomics. You had these kinds of things being raised at the beginning of the uprising. One example: in Da'ra, they targeted Syriatel's offices â€” owned by [Bashar al-Assad's cousin] Rami Makhluf â€” as if to say "this is the guy who's robbing us." This common sense was present, but not primary.

JH: If the popular classes lacked institutions of their own, there were still collective ways of thinking, including along ethnolinguistic and sectarian lines, which became more pronounced during the war. Authors like Rima Majed and Yassin al-Haj Saleh, to name just two, have theorized sectarianization as a strategy deployed by the state. But was it only a state strategy?

JD: Hafez maintained some redistribution through his reign, but this diminished through the 2000s, leading to increased poverty levels. At the same time, there was a *strengthening* of "primordial" identities and relations, as encouraged by the regime â€” tribal relations, grouping around religious figures, and

so on, partly also because the withdrawal of services left space for religious charities.

Sectarianism was built up at the beginning of the uprising, in the more mixed regions. Regime crimes “especially in the Hama countryside and the Homs region” nurtured the process. It also spread thanks to the way the regime represented any protester “even if they weren’t Muslims” as Salafi, as “extremists,” as a way to scare people and increase sectarianism. Nor should we forget how the regime released Islamic fundamentalist and jihadist prisoners at the beginning of the uprising, precisely in order to give the uprising a more sectarian definition.

Definitely the main force producing sectarianization in Syrian society was the state; that does not mean it was the only one. We need only look at the onset of the military conflict between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Brotherhood used sectarianism to portray itself as the representative of the Sunni community in Syria. This never worked, because the Sunni community is not one single political identity “in fact, it bears great social and political varieties.

JH :If one reason for the regime’s resilience is its use of “sectarianization” “fomenting political divisions among the opposition” another is its own ability to look past religions, languages, and so on. We could mention, by way of example, its relationships with Sunni capitalists “maybe “capitalists who are Sunni” “through the 2000s.

JD :That’s right. It is wrong to say it’s an Alawite regime, but it does have a preponderance of Alawite personalities, especially in the security services, whose higher echelons are often directly linked to al-Assad’s family.

But if it was *only* Alawite, it would have been gone a long time ago “this is why it’s important to say it’s a patrimonial state that has to use various tools of repression and various

types of networks, both through and above sectarian differences.

JH: Still, there was much cross-sect, even anti-sect organizing through 2011 and 2012. Looking just at the PYD and the Kurdish situation, while multiple tendencies in the English-speaking left see the PYD as *the* party of progressive, even revolutionary, change, others criticize its relationship with the regime and the United States. Its links with Arabic-speaking tribes and other Arab groups tend to undermine the most cartoonish representations of the party. But no one would deny that it has been nimble, tactically, faced with a long-term, mortal danger from US-backed Turkey, and, from late 2013, an existential threat from Da’esh.

JD: In this kind of war, it’s difficult to have a sustained strategy, but it’s clear that the PYD’s aim has been to strengthen its influence and control the areas it could, through even short-term relationships with the actors around them.

We should remember that the PYD was not the main actor within the “Kurdish street” at the start of the uprising “indeed, no Kurdish party was. It was mostly youth networks. Within this movement was the Yekiti Party “already weakened by divisions” and the Kurdish Future Movement, a smaller party that still had influence. After 2011, there were Local Coordination Committees, organizing throughout Kurdish areas, in collaboration, mainly in cities, with other ethnicities, whether Arab, Assyrian, or Syriac.

The PYD really became the main Kurdish political party in mid-2012, when the regime withdrew from various areas in order to concentrate on others. The PYD was allowed to build its own political and military capacities. But the accusation that the PYD is a “tool” of the regime is completely wrong. Both actors collaborated at certain times, but this didn’t turn into a longer-term relationship. The PYD wanted to follow a line independent of both regime and opposition.

That shouldn’t prevent us from criticizing the PYD. As I say, although

there have been understandings between the two, the PYD is not allied to the regime. One sign of that is the regime’s continuous refusal to acknowledge any kind of Kurdish rights. When the regime captured Aleppo in 2016, it gradually took back the areas under PYD control, because it could not deal with this other powerful force.

Bashar al-Assad and other officials have accused the PYD of being a “US stooge” and “tool” and have said they will “crush it,” considering [former Da’esh capital, now PYD-held] Raqqa to be occupied territory. In Afrin, for instance, the Russians pushed the PYD to make a deal with the regime, saying “if you remove all your heavy weapons and give in to the regime, Turkey will not come in and invade this area.” The PYD refused, and the result was the Turkish occupation of Afrin last year.

Even if there are now negotiations, the regime has refused any kind of conditions put by the PYD for federalism or decentralization. It’s wrong to say that they’re allies, even if at some points there have been understandings between them.

JH : Looking back, do you think the lack of popular-class, Arab-Kurdish collaboration after 2012 was inevitable, given the historic weakness of popular-class organizing as such and, indeed, the fact that Turkey played such an important role in the “opposition in exile”?

JD: I think we should make the distinction between socialism from below and popular-class organizations. Obviously, the long-term absence of the latter was a weakness in the Syrian uprising.

But there was collective organization from below “the Local Coordination Committees, and subsequently, the Local Councils were able to challenge state domination. In summer 2012, they were at the doors of Damascus, with large areas of the country outside of regime control. In terms of the Syrian revolution, they were radical. It meant the state had disappeared from a certain area, so you had a kind of attempt at dual power.

The vast majority promoted a democratic, nonsectarian discourse. Some also conveyed a socioeconomic appeal. Because of the socio-geographic makeup of the uprising, socioeconomic issues were raised, as was corruption, even if it was not at the center of things.

When it comes to the Kurdish issue, unfortunately, there is a long tradition among various sections of the Syrian opposition “and even some leftists” refusing Kurdish self-determination. Ten to 15 percent of the population is Kurdish, mostly in the northeast. But even there, they are a narrow majority, and over half the Kurds were in Aleppo and in Damascus. So they were not interested in separating off as an independent state, but rather a federal system, decentralization, more recognition of Kurdish national rights, the removal of “Arab” in the “Syrian Arab Republic,” etc. “something, incidentally, that was refused by the wider opposition, at the first conference in the summer of 2011, and which showed the limitations of the traditional political opposition.

From the beginning of 2012, Kurdish coordination committees increasingly raised their own demands, but from the outset they were completely rejected by the official opposition. Anyone raising Kurdish national demands was accused of separatism.

But to say it was definitely going to happen this way .??.? I think there were possibilities, especially from the collective organizations from below, and there were experiences of co-organization in Aleppo, in mixed cities, and also in Qamishli, where you had Assyrian, Kurdish, and Arab coordination committees working together, raising their common demands in each of the languages.

It was really the opposition in exile, with its historical Arab-nationalist approach, that refused Kurdish national rights. This refusal was supported by foreign actors, especially Turkey, which saw the PYD presence at its borders as the biggest threat, which is why it opened the doors to Islamic fundamentalist organizations to attack the Kurds.

JH: You write about the “reconstruction” of the country and the state’s huge need for foreign investment. I was surprised to read that neither Russia nor Iran, the states that have supported the regime the most, appear willing or able to provide such investment, returning us to a question that’s hung over the counterrevolution: what has led those countries to support it so staunchly?

JD: We must be clear, without Russian and Iranian assistance “including Hezbollah and other sectarian militias” the regime would not have been able to sustain itself politically, militarily, and economically.

These forces’ interventions were key. And even though Russia’s official mass intervention started in 2015, it had troops on the ground already that were aiding the regime’s security services. Iranian-backed forces “Hezbollah and others” played a role from 2012. That was the key element.

Why did they intervene? The first reason is obviously to preserve their geopolitical interests. We understand imperialism as both economic interests and geopolitics, and the relationship between them.

It is also important to remember that this came *after* what happened in Libya. Russia felt betrayed by the US administration, which said it would only intervene in Benghazi if Gaddafi’s troops attacked the city. But it instead mounted a full-blown intervention against the regime, which had economic ties with Russia.

Iranian and Russian possibilities in Syria were also related to the weakening of US imperialism in the region, especially following its defeat in Iraq, the international financial crisis in 2008, and the uprisings themselves. Barack Obama did not want a new Iraq War in Syria, but rather an understanding between the ruling parties and conservative oppositions “usually Brotherhood or Brotherhood-allied groups” that would serve US interests.

Russia wanted to preserve its interests with the country in the Middle East

region with which it has the strongest relationship. As Putin said even before 2011, Russia wanted to expand the two naval bases there. It’s different in the Iranian case. First, it needs to preserve a route for the delivery of weapons to Hezbollah in Lebanon. More generally, its strategy is to seek a better position to negotiate with stronger actors by acting as a “nuisance” “through its ability to cause trouble elsewhere. Iran attempts to counter any threat from the United States or other regional actors by saying, “if you strike us, we are able to counter-attack,” whether in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, maybe in Yemen, even possibly now through Hamas, with its new leadership.

With Russia, it was a matter of keeping its main ally; for Iran, it was leverage and preventing what it saw as the unacceptable prospect of Syria into the hands of regional enemies such as Saudi Arabia.

JH: Why the lack of investment from either country “something that would presumably offer great opportunity for profit and political power? Why the help with the regime’s resilience, but not its reconstruction?

JD: You just have to see their own economies. Both countries are facing sanctions and domestic socioeconomic protests. In Russia, Putin provoked massive demonstrations when he tried to raise the pension age, and in Iran, you can see, on a nearly continuous basis, strikes from various sectors of the society. Especially with the sanctions, neither country has the capacity to really lead Syrian reconstruction “Russian’s economy, remember, is only as big as Spain’s.

You can see this in official Russian discourse, telling the world, “if you want to see the refugees back in Syria, you have to pay for reconstruction.” This is starting to appeal to some states, particularly the more right-wing, even fascistic governments in Europe “and it also might appeal to some sections of the liberal-authoritarian governments, even though they are not convinced yet and are still refusing to participate in any kind of reconstruction unless there is a process for a political transition.

JH: Some challenge the notion of Russian and Iranian “imperialism” in Syria by invoking Lenin’s definition of imperialism, claiming it instead focuses on the export of capital .??.

JD: Russia’s intervention began for geopolitical rather than directly economic reasons “it had economic interests, but they were not so large. The same goes for Iran.

In fact, the biggest actors investing in Syria before the war were Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey. If you were to follow a literalist reading of Lenin, these countries would have been the first to defend the Syrian state. In the first six months, these countries did, indeed, attempt to seek an understanding between the regime and some sectors of the conservative opposition, trying to calm the repression, and only [when that failed] did they turn support toward certain sectors of the opposition “the most reactionary ones.

Now Russia is attempting some kind of restitution because the war was costly in financial terms, most notably by seeking control of natural resources. But, as I said, it is finding reconstruction difficult.

JH: The counterrevolution has destroyed infrastructure and industries. Some capitals have been ruined; others have made fortunes. Most obviously those who sell the weapons of war, but also those investing in reconstruction sectors “real estate, transport, the production of secondary commodities, steel, concrete, and so on. If the state has to manage the relationship “the competition “between capitals in this “new Syria,” is the Assad regime capable of doing so?

JD : The capitalist class has shrunk, massively. Especially those more independent from the state have left.

Today, the large capitalists who remain are very much linked to the security services, to the regime “otherwise, they couldn’t have grown. Very often, we’re talking now about merchants, traders, and frontmen: people who could purchase oil, large

amounts of wheat, and so on, for the state.

In other words, the regime is, in all aspects, more patrimonial “its social base has shrunk. It is more sectarian, more tribal, more clientelist, more crony capitalist than before.

A process that began before the uprising was the growing importance of rents, of trade, and services “the productive economy has been hit very badly, and the share of salaries as a proportion of national income has decreased from 33 percent before the war to 20 percent now. Both will make managing the capitalist class easier.

JH: In the book, you detail Law No. 10, which tightens the demands on Syrians to prove that they own their properties. Millions of Syrians are outside the country and millions more are internally displaced. As you write, informal housing was very common in pre-2011 Syria, and, for obvious reasons, refugees may not possess property deeds. What effect do you think this will have?

JD: The threat of people being dispossessed of their houses is real, and it’s not the only one used to dispossess people “it’s an expansion on Decree No. 66, enacted in 2012. These laws have two objectives.

First, they present economic opportunities, since much land is becoming available. Thirty to 50 percent of housing in Syria is informal. People left without proof that they were owners of particular areas or properties “how to prove it? And even if you can prove it, you have to fear security measures, you may have to pay a certain amount of money, and so on. Second, they also have political motivations; they aim to exclude socially dangerous classes and socially rebellious groups.

This has partly happened already at Basateen al-Razi in Damascus, where there was very low compensation “and this was for people who did have the right papers, who remained in Syria.

This threat exists, and if implemented

on a national scale, could be very, very dangerous. Indeed, the people returning face multiple threats “the threat of young men being conscripted, or imprisoned. Even where so-called reconciliation agreements are in place, people are being killed, as happened in Da’ra, where military officers and personalities belonging to the opposition are being targeted by the security services and others.

If your area has been destroyed, what can you “come back to”? Indeed, there are 5 to 6 million IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) in the region who can’t go back, for this reason. If you look at eastern Aleppo, it’s still very much destroyed, and state services are very bad; the same in Eastern Ghuta, outside Damascus, where there has been no large-scale reconstruction. In Homs, it’s also going very slowly.

And, again, to do what? There is still an economic crisis, and there is no plan for a productive economy. State employment is restricted to the families of soldiers and the security services, and so for many, finding work is very hard. There’s very high inflation, too “Syrians’ real purchasing power has fallen massively since 2011.

Despite what the regime says, they don’t want the vast majority of the refugees to come back. There are various reasons why it’s hard to speak of return today, even if threats in other countries “the surrounding counties but also Europe “are “pushing” refugees to go back.

JH: I believe that after the first protests in Sudan in December, the very first foreign leader whom Omar al-Bashir visited was Assad. Should those that supported al-Bashar stay quiet about al-Bashir’s regime and about popular organizing in the Middle East generally?

JD: I think among small sections of the left, internationalism is still important. Not only in a rhetorical sense, but as a means to learn from certain experiences abroad.

Even if Karl Marx’s ideas are,

somehow, coming back, radical left organizations in Europe and the United States – indeed, across the world – are in crisis. At the same time, you have sections of the Left focusing only on Western imperialism, without trying to learn from popular struggles from the Middle East. They point to their limitations alone, without noticing that these uprisings have shaken the world.

Yet the square-occupations movement came out of Tahrir Square. And look at the refugee issue and how it is

influencing European states – including through the rise of authoritarian and even fascist parties.

Much more can be done to criticize the relationship between Western ruling classes and the despotic regimes in the region. The latest example was the European Union's funding of Sudan's Rapid Support Forces in order to serve its racist anti-immigration policies. Today these same forces are being used to repress

protestors in Sudan.

For Syria, much more could have been done in terms of international solidarity, and the reasons it wasn't owed a generalized crisis of the Left. If it used to raise its internationalist flag very high, you now have sections that are much more nationalistic, taking sides with this or that camp. That's a direct result of the weakening of class consciousness. And yet all our destinies are linked.

[Jacobin](#)

The far right, LGBTIQ people and a strategy for resistance

3 August 2019, by **Peter Drucker**

The far right and heteronationalism

As the far right has risen, examples of its attacks on LGBTI rights have multiplied. Brazil's new far-right president Jair Bolsonaro is a prominent and disgusting example. He has openly said that he would prefer a dead son to a gay one. Not surprisingly, his election has produced a surge of anti-LGBTIQ violence in Brazil, which was already one of the countries with the highest levels of anti-LGBTIQ violence. Although Donald Trump's positions were less clear before his election as US president, he too has catered since then to the reactionary anti-LGBTIQ right. His administration has intervened in the courts to oppose measures against discrimination, and has tried to purge trans people from the military.

There are similar examples in Europe. The Italian Lega was the most relentless opponent in parliament of same-sex civil unions – not to mention same-sex marriage! – submitting over 5,000 amendments in an attempt to kill the bill. And here in the Spanish

state, the far-right party Vox has on its website denounced Pride events as – ‘scandalous’.

Some people call these right-wing anti-LGBTIQ attacks – ‘political homophobia’. This may not be the best term. Although the people who use it don't necessarily mean it this way, it sounds like a kind of mental illness. I think it makes more sense to talk about – ‘heteronationalism’. This is one dimension of broader right-wing nationalist projects with deep roots in society.

What is the source of anti-LGBTIQ prejudice on the nationalist right? Why is the far right attacking LGBTIQ people? One key reason is its deep hostility to women, its misogyny, which is linked to its contradictory relation to neoliberalism. The combination of misogyny and economic populism helps the far right appeal to angry straight men. Deindustrialization and stagnant wages in many economies, most recently following the deep recession that broke out in 2008, has undermined many men's sense of masculinity. Many cisgender straight men blame this on women and LGBTIQ people.

Scholars like George Mosse, himself a gay man whose family fled from Nazi Germany, have shown how closely aggressive nationalism is linked to a narrow concept of masculinity. This concept naturalizes the patriarchal family, sees women as bearers of children and helpmates of men, and sees LGBTIQ people as weakening the nation's moral fibre. This was one reason why the Nazis in Germany were fiercely hostile to homosexuality, at least among Germans: they thought that it weakened the – ‘Aryan master race’. The far right around the world today still has a similar concept of masculinity. In Catholic countries especially, it has taken up the pope's attack on – ‘gender ideology’ and his defence of the traditional bounds of masculine and feminine roles.

This misogynist and sexually reactionary far right has been on the rise in many countries where LGBTIQ movements have been winning victories. These LGBTIQ movements emerged and grew stronger especially after 1968, when they had radical left leaderships that saw them as part of a broader radical left. Their militant visions and tactics helped win the first victories in the 1970s and 1980s against discrimination and violence.

Later, as LGBTIQ movements grew larger and the broader radical left grew weaker, mainstream LGBTI groups became more moderate. They put less emphasis on solidarity against sexism, racism and class oppression, and focused more narrowly on issues like marriage equality. But this has not made the far right love them. The far right in most countries still opposes same-sex marriage, often fiercely.

Mainstream LGBTI groups have however built ties to the social-liberal centre-left and even the neoliberal centre-right. Some of the most anti-LGBTIQ far-right positions need to be understood, at least in part, as reactions to official support for LGBTI rights, which predominates now in the political centre in Western Europe and some other imperialist countries. This is not a factor everywhere. Trump's attacks on LGBTIQ people are not especially inspired by hostility to Europe, although he is often anti-European, and anti-LGBTIQ attacks in Brazil don't particularly reflect an anti-European discourse either. But many neoliberal, authoritarian African and Arab regimes do claim – despite a lot of historical evidence to the contrary – to be defending 'their own' cultures against European LGBTIQ influence. And something similar is going on with the Eastern European far right.

In Western Europe, reforms like decriminalization, anti-discrimination laws and marriage equality were national reforms rooted in national politics. Some Eastern European reforms had national dynamics too; East Germany for example decriminalized same-sex sex a year before West Germany did. But more recent Eastern European reforms have mostly resulted from European Union policies. LGBTI Eastern Europeans have benefited from legal gains as a result. But many Eastern Europeans now see protections for LGBTI people as something imposed from outside.

And at the same time that the EU has been promoting LGBTI rights, it has been an instrument of neoliberalism in Eastern Europe. This has meant a growing presence of Western European capital, cuts in social protections and increases in

inequality. Neoliberal policies have been justified with a liberal ideology of freedom, including LGBTI rights. This has helped make LGBTI people targets of anti-EU resentment and resurgent nationalism. In a reflex response to the instrumentalization of LGBTI rights by neoliberalism, heteronationalism has been instrumentalizing anti-LGBTI attitudes. In countries like Poland and Hungary, the right in power is playing on resentment of neoliberal ideology, while maintaining many key features of neoliberal economics.

In this climate, violence against Eastern European lesbian/gay pride events has been partly the work of neo-fascist groups who believe that the EU is 'run by fags'. The Greek fascist party Golden Dawn has a similar dynamic, seeing LGBTI rights as part of the same EU agenda that has impoverished the Greek people.

The far right and homonationalism

Now I need to make the discussion more complex, by talking about the less homophobic side of the far right. This means talking about homonationalism, a term coined by the US scholar Jasbir Puar. It means the instrumentalization of LGBTI rights in the service of imperialism and nationalism.

Although the far right is usually anti-LGBTIQ, I think far-right homonationalism is also a serious problem. For one thing, the contemporary European far right is sometimes inconsistent on issues of gender and sexuality. If we take the Nazi hostility to homosexuality 80 years ago as the baseline, today's far right is not always in continuity with earlier fascist traditions.

And a phenomenon that may seem marginal in analyzing the European far right as a whole can sometimes be far from marginal in some countries' LGBTI communities. The gay far right is a current within the broader gay right, and they have both been growing. Mainstream LGBTI leaders may not support the far right, but their failure to fight neoliberalism and

racism has left many ordinary LGBTI people open to the far right's appeal. A poll in Brazil the week before the second round of last year's presidential election showed that 29% of self-identified non-straight voters planned to vote for the open homophobe Bolsonaro. And polls have shown comparable levels of support, particularly among white cisgender gay men, for Le Pen in France and the far right in the Netherlands.

The European far right's hostility to Muslims sometimes seems to outweigh their hostility to LGBTI people. In Eastern Europe, the right appeals to Europe's Christian heritage to justify keeping Muslim refugees out. In Western Europe, the far right warns of the danger of what it calls 'Eurabia' to justify a hard line against immigration, against some social benefits that people in immigrant communities receive, and against some Muslim practices (like headscarves and halal food). The Marxist feminist Sara Farris has shown how the French, Italian and Dutch far right have adopted a kind of 'femonationalism' that claims to defend European women, even women of immigrant origin, against Muslim men and other men of non-European origin. In some cases a similar dynamic has led some north-western European far-right parties to adopt a degree of homonationalism, defending 'their' lesbian and gay people against a supposed Muslim threat.

Dutch columnist Bas Heijne has described how a Muslim threat has been used to justify a right-wing turnaround on LGBTI issues. In 1998, Dutch right-wing columnist Gerry van der List expressed disgust at what he saw as gay men's sexual exhibitionism at the Amsterdam Gay Games. Yet a few years later the same Van der List was enthusiastic about gay men's exuberant behaviour at Amsterdam's Canal Pride. This time he thought they were heroically resisting Islam. 'They're still the same naked blokes,' Heijne summed up, 'but now they stand for something different.'

There have been some similar changes in the public standpoints of several north-west European far-right parties. Flemish far-right leader Filip Dewinter

voted against same-sex marriage in the Belgian parliament in 2003, but in 2014 he declared that his party was now in favour. Breaking from her father Jean-Marie Le Pen, French far-right leader Marine Le Pen declared to ‘gay voters’ in 2010, ‘I know that you suffer from discrimination. And who discriminates against you? Immigrants and Muslims.’ In the Netherlands, Martin Bosma, an MP for the far-right Freedom Party, said in a parliamentary debate on gay rights that ‘hostility to gays permeates Muslim culture’. Members of the far-right Sweden Democrats have led a so-called ‘Pride March’ through a predominantly immigrant Stockholm neighbourhood, chanting ‘No homophobes on our streets!’

This kind of far-right homonationalism is not just an opportunist way of getting LGBTI votes. It fits into a broader discourse in ‘defence of the family’. Homonationalism needs to be more broadly understood as one dimension of ‘homonormativity’, which Lisa Duggan has described as a gay mindset that does not ‘contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them’. Homonormativity helps some lesbian/gay people integrate into existing family institutions, adapting in order to occupy a more secure niche within the neoliberal order. To some extent, some far-right parties have been adopting a homonormative outlook. And at least a minority of gay voters like it.

In some cases lesbian and gay people can even be found at the summit of far-right parties. In Germany, the chair of the far-right Alternative for Germany’s parliamentary party, Alice Weidel, is an open lesbian. The former national secretary of the French National Front, Florian Philippot, is an open gay man. Despite Donald Trump’s attacks on LGBTIQ people, he has gay defenders among the so-called Log Cabin Republicans. He has appointed an openly gay ambassador to Germany, Richard Grenell, who has been publicly supporting far-right parties around Europe. Stranger yet, even in the administration of an open bigot like Bolsonaro in Brazil, his Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights includes openly lesbian

and trans high officials, who represent Brazil in international human rights meetings.

A word of caution here, though: even the most homonationalist far-right parties find that supporting LGBTI rights puts them in tension with their own base. An official Dutch study concluded that despite the far-right Freedom Party’s public pro-gay statements, its voters had more anti-LGBTIQ attitudes than those of any other major party. And far-right parties that move too far away from their base can lose votes, as we’ve seen recently with the Dutch Freedom Party and the Danish People’s Party. This helps explain how cautious far-right support for LGBTI rights can be. When for example the Dutch parliament recently voted to ban so-called ‘gay conversion therapy’, the two far-right parties initially gave signals that they would vote in favour; but in the end they voted against.

The French National Rally (formerly the National Front) has perhaps wrestled the most with this contradiction. As I mentioned earlier, Marine Le Pen was starting to appeal for gay votes a decade ago. Then in 2012, when the SP government’s project for same-sex marriage faced mass resistance, Le Pen’s party could not resist the temptation to claim leadership of the crusade against marriage equality. Yet neither would it give up its appeals to gay voters. Le Pen herself mostly kept quiet on marriage, leaving the dirty work to her niece Marion Maréchal Le Pen. In its programme for the 2017 elections the party tried to reconcile its gay and anti-gay supporters by pledging to convert existing same-sex marriages into strong civil unions.

Beneath all these contradictions, though, there is an underlying unity of purpose. There’s an analogy here. In the last analysis, the far right defends the capitalist order, even if it sometimes adopts populist social policies. Similarly, in the last analysis it defends patriarchal families and gender roles, even if it sometimes shows some tolerance for some LGBTI people and relationships.

And yet, some lesbian and gay people are still attracted to the far right’s

vision. This suggests that LGBTIQ communities, like the far right, are cut across by contradictions.

Strategies and perspectives for international LGBTIQ resistance

So with all these tensions and contradictions, how can the radical and revolutionary left help mobilise LGBTIQ people against the far right? The key is solidarity, joined with flexible and creative united front tactics. We need to be prepared to unite in action with any LGBTIQ groups and people that are willing to mobilize against the far right. This means particularly standing up for and building alliances with Muslims and other racialized groups threatened by the far right, showing how racism and heteronationalism are linked. When the far right claims to protect LGBTI people against Muslims and Africans, LGBTIQ people need to respond, loud and clear: Not in our name!

At the same time, we mustn’t keep quiet about the responsibility that mainstream LGBTI groups bear for losing part of their base to reactionary populism. We need to call for a return to the spirit of 1968. This year, the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall rebellion, all the official Pride celebrations are claiming the legacy of Stonewall, while understanding little or nothing of the radical left politics that informed the rebellion and the Gay Liberation Fronts that emerged from it. In some cases far-right contingents have been able to march behind banners with slogans about Stonewall – which is an absolute travesty. We need to reclaim Stonewall’s true, full legacy. This means not talking about tolerance, not even about just acceptance, but about sexual liberation. And sexual liberation requires challenging gender roles, requires transforming the family instead of just integrating into it, and requires transforming society as a whole.

Above all we need to mobilize LGBTIQ working people, homeless queer

youth, women, racialized and oppressed people – who are after all the too-invisible majority of LGBTIQ communities – against both the far right and neoliberalism. We need to make clear that the anti-poor policies of our governments are inherently homo-, trans- and bi-phobic. By mobilizing the working-class and oppressed majority of our communities, we can reach masses of LGBTIQ people who have suffered from and been embittered by neoliberal policies – and in some

cases, unfortunately, have turned to the reactionary right to express their anger. Building broad progressive alliances that include open LGBTIQ people against neoliberalism and reaction can be an effective way of combating anti-LGBTIQ prejudices. And where some gay people and lesbians have an abiding commitment to the far right, out of racism or perceived class interest, mobilizing the LGBTIQ majority around a vision of solidarity can make it possible to

throw the far right out of our movement and keep it out.

We need to send this message at Pride events in particular, using whatever tactics work best in a specific situation: building broad anti-racist blocs, or organizing radical queer contingents, or if there is too little space for that, alternative Pride events. This will require a lot of creativity and discussion, trial and error. So let's begin the discussion here!

The rebellion in Hong Kong is intensifying

2 August 2019, by **Au Loong-Yu, Kevin Lin**

Hong Kong's ongoing protests are a dramatic reminder that mass street demonstrations can defeat seemingly undefeatable legislation.

Last month, the million-strong marches forced the Hong Kong government to shelve its China extradition bill, which critics say would allow Beijing to muzzle dissident voices in the former British colony. Unsatisfied with mere suspension, protesters have demanded the bill's complete withdrawal and the resignation of Hong Kong's Beijing-approved chief executive, Carrie Lam.

Unlike Hong Kong's 2014 Umbrella Movement, which had multiple spokespersons, the youthful protesters reject any leadership and show no interest in channeling their anger into electoral directions. Instead, they have escalated their direct actions, fighting pitched battles with police, momentarily occupying the Legislative Council, and protesting inside the Hong Kong International Airport.

The Chinese government has warned the protesters of touching its "bottom line" of "one country, two systems" (the principle, first devised by Deng Xiaoping in the early 1980s, that treats Hong Kong as part of China but gives it a measure of autonomy). Beijing has even hinted at possible military intervention. Thus far it has

refrained from more direct involvement, but the threat of a serious crackdown hangs over the increasingly physical battles, with forty-four protesters just charged with rioting for the first time in two months of demonstrations.

Neither Hong Kong and Beijing nor the protesters show signs of backing down. And given the widespread anger among ordinary citizens of Hong Kong – who still lack the ability to choose their chief executive without Beijing's involvement – it is not certain that even Carrie Lam's resignation would resolve the impasse.

Jacobin contributor Kevin Lin spoke to longtime socialist and author Au Loong Yu about the intensifying demonstrations, the ideological composition of the protest movement, the role of unions in the upsurge, and the effect that various geopolitical relationships (Beijing and Hong Kong, United States and China) are having on the simmering rebellion.

KL : Since the mass rallies in June, we have seen more militant actions by groups of protesters targeting the Hong Kong authorities. What should we make of this escalation?

ALY : Within the "yellow ribbon" camp – those who support democratic reform – there are two factions: the

radical youth (who play the vanguard role) and adult supporters and pan-democrats (the liberal opposition since the 1980s that has pushed for universal suffrage while maintaining the "free market" of Hong Kong). The young generation is more determined than the older generation to demand the government withdraw the China extradition bill. There is strong anxiety and bitterness among them – and fear that, if they cannot win this time, they will lose forever.

Since July 6 there have been three big protests in different districts. We have also seen cycles of violence between the two sides, although it is always the police who are much more provocative and violent. Despite the violence, the young people are still widely supported by the broader yellow ribbon camp. How big is the yellow ribbon camp? The turnout on June 9, June 16, and July 1 was 1 million, 2 million, and half a million, respectively. In contrast, the pro-Beijing "blue ribbon" camp mobilized no more than 150,000.

There is also growing anger among older citizens now. Not only were they duped into believing Beijing's promise of universal suffrage, but also their children may end up with the same disappointment and face even worse social mobility.

KL : How would you characterize the relationship between the Beijing and Hong Kong governments?

ALY: We have the most absurd situation: everyone knows that it has been Beijing's decision to rush through the bill, but both Beijing and Carrie Lam continue to pretend that it is entirely the latter's decision and that the former is just being supportive.

It is Beijing and Carrie Lam's fault if few believe in them. Since Xi [Jinping] came to power in 2012, his Liaison Office in Hong Kong has broken its predecessors' policy of keeping a low profile and has become visible in everything in local politics, including meddling in elections. Carrie Lam happily and publicly endorsed Beijing's intervention since coming to office two years ago. Moreover, the China extradition bill involves Taiwan and therefore goes beyond the Hong Kong government's usual jurisdiction. How would it be possible for the bill to be brought forward solely by Carrie Lam?

Beijing is widely believed to be using the bill as a bargaining chip in Xi's negotiation with Trump over the trade war. Hence the rush. Beijing tried to cool the situation down by making Carrie Lam shelve the bill on June 15, but it has no wish to make her take one more step back by withdrawing the bill.

Right now Hong Kong is in a deadlock. Carrie Lam already announced that "the bill is dead," but because her administration enjoys no legitimacy and everyone knows it is the Liaison Office, not her, who calls the shots, no one will believe her until she officially withdraws the bill.

Yet, according to media reports, it is something she cannot do because this could imply Beijing has also made mistakes "and for Beijing, saving face is always paramount. The need to save face at all costs produces a super rigidity on the part of the Communist Party leadership. This presents less of a problem for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), as Beijing is not transparent at all. But Hong Kong still maintains certain elements of liberal

governance "accountability, freedom of speech, procedural justice, independence of the judiciary" that give its residents more ability to guess what is happening behind the closed doors of the Liaison Office and the Chief Executive office.

Hence Beijing and the Hong Kong government's rigidity and lies look even more silly and contemptible. And the youth have not been hesitant to show their complete disdain for the CCP: on the evening of July 21, youngsters sprayed paint on the national emblem of the Liaison Office. Constrained by the politics of "face saving," both the Liaison Office and Carrie Lam are now left with no alternative but to stick to the old policy of cracking down on the radical youth.

It is a reasonable guess that Beijing is setting traps for the protesters. The July 1 occupation of the legislature is quite suspicious "the police retreated in the face of a besieged legislature, allowing the youngsters to break in. Again, after the big march of July 21, there was a call out of nowhere for continuous marching to the Liaison Office. Yet, before the procession arrived, the police guarding the office had been evacuated, allowing the protestors to spray paint and graffiti on its wall. The same night, mafia indiscriminately attacked passengers in the Yuen Long West Rail. And then another youth suicide occurred that night as well. All these developments have further antagonized the yellow ribbon camp and may further radicalize the movement.

The CCP has a long record of provoking a premature uprising among people just to legitimize the later bloody crackdown. We should watch closely whether this is the case. The more worrying side of the story is that if Beijing's regime remains stable, a Hong Kong people's uprising probably will not end well.

KL: One of the most encouraging actions during the protests was a call by the unions for worker strikes. But unfortunately, they were unsuccessful in convincing workers to walk out. How would you explain this failure?

ALY: Hong Kong's union density as of 2017 is 25 percent, which isn't low. But this level of density is accomplished through ridiculously low union dues "so low that the main trade unions do not rely on membership dues for their funding but on running retraining programs funded by the government, operating for-profit businesses, or receiving foreign funding, especially from the United States. Few members are really active. Although there are many "industrial unions," most of them are either very small or just in individual workplaces.

Given this, it is not surprising that the call to go on strike was unsuccessful. On the date that the strike was called, a rally was also launched by the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU) near the government headquarters, but only a few hundred attended.

The HKCTU leadership, for two decades, followed the pan-democrats' advocacy of democracy within the constraints of the Basic Law without any criticism. Even after its leader, Lee Cheuk-yan, founded a small Labour Party in 2011, his party continued to follow the liberal right's political line.

In terms of labor rights, both the Labour Party and the HKCTU have become more outspoken in the past ten years and moved a bit closer to the center left. Yet their long-standing political stances made it difficult to connect with the rising young generation, who tend to despise the pan-democrats. Their inability to pull off a successful strike during the Umbrella Movement in 2014 doubtlessly added to their failure. Finally, Lee and another Labour Party legislator lost their seats in the 2016 legislature election, and Lee failed to win it back in the 2018 by-election. These defeats have meant that both the HKCTU and the Labour Party have only been able to play a marginal role in the present movement.

KL: The protest movement has sparked more discussions in Hong Kong about the special region's relationship with mainland China, with the so-called "localists" "who view the mainland with

contempt” playing a prominent role. What are their politics, and how influential are they in the protest movement?

ALY: Western mainstream media outlets tend to view the Hong Kong localists in a positive way, seeing them as democratic fighters against Beijing. Yet the picture is far more complicated. The Chinese term “localism,” when first adopted by social movements, was used by people who were broadly leftist. However, it is the right wing that has grown bigger and bigger. These localists are more like nativists — very xenophobic.

Several years before the Umbrella Movement, this current began to gain a following among young people. Their spokespersons were Raymond Wong and scholar Chin Wan-kan. Together with Raymond Wong’s apprentice, Wong Yeung-tat, they constituted a xenophobic trio. Their actions in the occupation area consisted of silencing the voices of other democrats, using violence or the threat of violence, making racist statements about Chinese people (calling them “locusts” that should be removed), and attacking Mainland Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong for supposedly stealing government welfare.

The xenophobia trio also ferociously attacked the HKFS (Hong Kong Federation of Students) during the Umbrella Movement. On October 12, following the call of Chin Wan-kan, the localists went to Mong Kok to disrupt the HKFS street forum. That this later developed into the destruction of its stages, attacks on its pickets, and eventually the dismantling of the HKFS is not surprising.

The xenophobic trio packaged itself as more radical than other currents. Their slogan was “HKFS does not represent us,” and they opposed all signs or symbols of leadership: stages, flags, and attempts to convene an assembly. They were especially keen on calling for *chaidatai*, or “dismantling the stage,” and put it into practice whenever the HKFS held a discussion forum with a stage.

Probably because they were too crude,

the trio all lost in the 2016 election, but a younger generation of xenophobic localists was elected, such as Youngspiration. The latter, although a bit more sophisticated, inherited the basic idea of the trio. Their idea of “dismantling the stage” has also influenced the young generation in the anti-China extradition bill campaign, where young radicals favor a “leaderless” movement with “no central stage giving orders.”

There is support for this right-wing localist current among certain social strata. In April 2016, two years after the occupation, one study found that the “localists” enjoyed 8.4 percent support, with that number higher among youth between eighteen and twenty-nine.

Still, people favoring the term “localism” do not have the same interpretation of what it means. The anti-extradition bill movement exhibits many fewer xenophobic tendencies than the Umbrella Movement. This is probably because the old trio is seen as out of fashion, and localists like the Youngspiration have seen their two legislators disqualified by the government and fallen into inactivity since then, leaving today’s young radicals largely on their own. Even if some exhibit prejudice toward Mainland Chinese, this hasn’t been crystalized into a political program or project. So instead of criticizing from the outside, the Left should get involved and try to win the young people over.

KL: What is your understanding of the support, or lack thereof, in mainland China for Hong Kong’s protest movement?

ALY: The repression in Mainland China is surely the most direct factor in isolating and exterminating solidarity efforts with the Hong Kong resistance. But the Chinese regime is also very good at manipulating public opinion. Selective reporting or outright fake news about Hong Kong are the crudest tricks of this game.

There has been a more sophisticated effort by Beijing to tear apart the bond between Hong Kongers and Mainland Chinese. Some people think that the

xenophobic trio and their core supporters are Communist Party provocateurs. In 2016, two Youngspiration legislators modified their oaths — pronouncing the word “China” as “Chi-na,” a derogatory term to the Chinese — and Beijing disqualified them, along with four pro-self-determination legislators. This foolish and racist act sparked debate about the real identity of these two localists.

It is difficult to know how far provocateurs have infiltrated into the movement. But objectively speaking, the “localists” have helped Beijing tighten its grip over Hong Kong by provoking China unnecessarily, with their racist politics and attacks on Mainland visitors, immigrants, and the democratic forces. They have also helped Beijing in estranging Mainland Chinese people from Hong Kongers.

KL: How has the US-China rivalry impacted the protest movement, and what are the structural roots of that rivalry?

ALY: One of the reasons that Beijing decided to make Carrie Lam shelve the bill on June 15 was because China was eager not to make Xi Jinping look bad when he attended the G20 summit in Osaka two weeks later. As for the United States, it surely had sufficient reason to ask difficult questions about the extradition bill, as it was meant to target anyone in Hong Kong, including foreign investors or foreign visitors passing through.

Even if Beijing’s decision to shelve the bill helped Xi deal with Trump, it proved incapable of appeasing the Hong Kong protestors. In general, there is strong sympathy for the US government among the liberal media here, especially the *Apple Daily*. The latter is essential in promoting the opposition’s view, but it is also heavily pro-US government and even sometimes pro-Trump. This kind of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” logic may push the Hong Kong democratic movement in an undesirable direction.

China’s capitalism is a kind of “bureaucratic capitalism,” where the ruling class combines the coercive power of the state and the power of

capital. This kind of capitalism is highly exploitative, monopolistic, and, importantly, expansionist. Hence the US-China rivalry. Yet we must understand that China is still far from being on par with the United States in many fields.

The last time the United States launched a trade war with the second largest economy in the world was during the 1980s, with Japan. This largely ended after the United States brokered the Plaza Accord, which forced the Japanese yen to appreciate significantly, followed by a 100-percent tariff against Japan's imports. Japan's economy was dealt a big blow, but the US-Japan alliance remained intact.

This time is different, partly because Beijing has learned from the Japanese case. Since the 1980s, the Japanese case has always been the subject of debate among Chinese economists, strategists, and nationalists, and the nationalists' argument has always been the strongest: China, as a developing country, cannot afford a Japanese-style defeat at the hands of the United States, and China must resist the United States if Washington begins to show its teeth. This is precisely what Xi has done so far.

There is another lesson from history as understood by Beijing hard-liners:

the only way for a second-rate country to avoid being invaded or bullied is to strive to become the top hegemonic power. Unlike Japan, the CCP under Xi is not going to accept, indefinitely, a second-rate position. Unlike Japan, Xi wants to replace the "Western" version of globalization with his "Chinese" version, right here and now.

It is common to see US presidents bashing China during their election campaigns and then, once in office, turn to engaging China. This cycle seems to have come to an end. Trump may make more tactical twists and turns in the near future, especially when the 2020 election approaches, but the general trend of an intensifying US-China rivalry may persist, because now both the Democrats and the Republicans have consensus over China policy.

This trade war is no regular trade war. It is merely the first battle of a prolonged US-China rivalry, and one that would bring disaster to the world.

KL: What should progressive people in mainland China, Hong Kong, the United States, and elsewhere do to support democratic movements in Hong Kong and reduce tensions between the United States and China?

ALY: The two sides in this rivalry are going to make people choose "either

Washington or Beijing." All progressive people, whether in Hong Kong or beyond, should refuse such choices. They are not real choices for working people in Hong Kong, China, or the United States. Workers have nothing to win in this rivalry.

Trump's project is to make the American army and its corporations great again, and in the course of it to sacrifice working people and the environment, in the United States, China, and the rest of the world. Xi's project of modernizing China, carried out in the name of his people, has no common ground with working people's interests. He is defending interests in the South China Sea while giving away the future of China — its natural resources, its ecological balance, and its people's health. He is defending the mandarins' assets and position while destroying people's livelihood. Hong Kong was essential in the rise of China, and now Beijing is paying back its debt to Hong Kong by defaulting on its promise of granting universal suffrage to Hong Kong.

We must not fall into the nationalist trap of supporting either US aggression or Chinese aggression. That will be the first step toward opposing the US-China rivalry and preventing it from turning into a war.

[Jacobin](#)

Change the orientation, Don't repeat mistakes, Build the alternative!

1 August 2019, by **Anticapitalistas**

Given the strength shown by the group of three aggressive and threatening right wing formations with respect to what were supposedly consolidated social and cultural conquests and in the absence of advances of the popular movement in the street and at the polls, a significant number of people on the left thought, understandably, that a

PSOE-Unidas Podemos coalition government could resolve their fears. But it has not turned out that way, nor could it ever have done so. Therefore, after the sad parliamentary spectacle and tactical failure, we must reflect and extract lessons from what happened so as not to generate false illusions (and fall into traps) in the imminent next steps.

The discourse of coalition government has ignored three issues that need to be taken up again. First, establishing the essential demands at this time to defend the interests of the social majority. Secondly, being clear about the nature of the Socialist Party and, therefore, what can be expected from it without strong pressure and demands from the left. And, finally,

assessing the correlation of electoral and social forces between the PSOE and the left to avoid the latter's subordination.

The objectives of the left at this time are threefold: 1) to prevent the right from governing – an unavoidable issue on the horizon of the undesirable call of an autumn election, in the face of which the PSOE shows an irresponsible excess of confidence; 2) to achieve immediate improvements for working people and popular sectors; and 3) to trace an eco-socialist and feminist horizon in which to frame each tactical step, or what is the same thing, to offer a project of a just, democratic, egalitarian and sustainable society. All of this needs a strategy that mere governmental tactics lack.

In terms of the immediate demands that cannot be waived because they are essential to reversing the situation of popular prostration and the correlation of existing forces (social, economic and political), it is worth highlighting 20 democratic, social and environmental emergency measures:

1. Mobilizing all economic resources and establishing the appropriate legal and cultural framework to combat macho violence inside and outside couples or from former partners.
2. Immediate promotion of unilateral measures without waiting for international agreements to prevent the emission of greenhouse gases in industry, transport, agriculture and services;
3. Ending the repressive policy towards the democratic aspirations of the Catalan people.
4. Enabling the binding referendum demanded by the majority of Catalan society.
5. Repealing the gag law that poses a serious risk to our freedoms and putting an end to any mechanism that threatens the rights of migrants such as Detention Centres for Foreigners.
6. Exhuming Francoism from the institutions and judging its crimes and criminals.
7. Repealing the two employment

reforms that undermine social and trade union rights.

8. Promoting public education and schooling and putting an end to the state financing of semi-private schools.

9. Increasing spending and investment in public university education.

10. Prioritizing support for research.

11. Shielding pensions and equalizing contributory and non-contributory pensions.

12. An immediate rise in the minimum wage.

13. Ensuring that that no one receives a pension, unemployment benefit or salary less than 1,200 euros.

14. Increasing the salaries of public service employees so that they recover the level of income lost through austerity measures and promoting massive public procurement to ensure public services.

15. Ending precariousness and the contracting model that protects it.

16. Adopting the necessary measures to ensure equal pay between women and men and avoid the threats to real equality through legislation to detect and penalize fraud in the same wording on categories of agreements, in the mechanisms for the allocation of functions and promotions.

17. Establish a general wage increase route resulting from the combination of parliamentary and trade union action.

18. Regulating rental prices and approving the proposals of the PAH (Platform of People Affected by Mortgages).

19. Prohibiting layoffs in profit-making companies.

20. Amend Article 135 of the Constitution to prioritize social spending and public investment.

All of these are reasonable, feasible and necessary issues, which imply providing the government with financial means through a progressive fiscal reform that seriously increases

taxes on high incomes and assets, as well as the profits of big companies and banks, while ignoring the impositions of Brussels on the fiscal deficit.

With arrogance, the PSOE leaders have blackmailed the left and promised the electorate in the campaigns things they then failed to deliver. Neither in September nor later, if there is a new call for elections, must the left repeat the old failed tactic determined by the effort to form a government at all costs with the Socialist Party. To enter a government led by the PSOE is to be tied hands and feet to a party that has shown that what it really does is to decaffeinate the desire for popular change. The PSOE is today one of the guarantors of the monarchical political regime of 1978 and of the antisocial treaties of the European Union, both aspects that determine the strategic orientation of its governmental action. The left needs political independence in order to chart its own path with the capacity to condition government action and promote its own alternative for the future.

To continue insisting on a failed tactic, to continue with the mind set on an agreement on the formation of a government by means of the distribution of ministries, would be to incur again in a failed and harmful strategy for the social majority and, of course, for the future of the political left itself.

If the PSOE wants to govern in a minority with the temporary permission of the left without it being compromised and silenced by the impositions of staying in a government that is not its own, it must win the votes of the transforming forces by complying with those requirements. That is why our position has been and is to negotiate from the left a programmatic investiture agreement that we propose is based on the demands raised above in exchange for allowing the government of Sanchez and moving into opposition, conditioning with the votes the legislative and governmental action, organize and mobilize society and patiently raise the alternative to liberal social hegemony.

If the PSOE wants to govern as a minority with the temporary permission of the left without the latter being compromised and silenced by the impositions of staying in a government that is not theirs, the votes of the transforming forces must

be won in compliance with those requirements. That is why our position has been and is to negotiate from the left a programmatic investiture agreement that we propose is based on the demands raised above in

exchange for allowing a Sánchez government and moving into opposition, conditioning the legislative and governmental action with votes, organizing and mobilizing society and patiently raising the alternative to social liberal hegemony.