



IC 2016

Capitalist globalization, imperialisms, geopolitical chaos and their implications

5 August 2016, by **Fourth International**

Chapters

Introduction

I. A new imperialist galaxy

II. Chronic geopolitical instability

III. Globalization and crisis of governability

IV. The new (proto) imperialisms

V. New far right forces, new fascisms

VI. Authoritarian regimes, demand for democracy and solidarity

VII. Internationalism against campism

VIII. Capitalist expansion and climate crisis

IX. A world of permanent wars

X. The limits of the superpower

XI. Humanitarian crisis

XII. Increasing instability?

The implosion of the USSR and the disintegration of the Soviet bloc, at the beginning of the 1990s, made possible the generalisation of neoliberal policies originally applied in countries such as Chile, Britain and the USA. Capitalist globalization has

really taken off, giving birth to a new mode of international domination with many and deep implications.

The neoliberal order remains nevertheless unfinished, unstable and has engendered a chronically chaotic international situation. Some traditional imperialist powers have continued to decline, while new capitalist powers are asserting themselves, heightening geopolitical rivalries. In several countries and regions, the universal violence of neoliberal diktats has led to the decomposition of the social fabric, to acute regime crises, and indeed to popular uprisings, but also to dangerous counter-revolutionary developments. Many peoples are already paying a heavy price for the global ecological crisis – in particular but not only to global warming – which is getting continually worse.

We now have an experience of capitalist globalization and its effects which make it possible for us, with hindsight to update our previous analyses and to deal with new themes. The “theses” that follow do not claim to be exhaustive or to present finished conclusions. Their main purpose is to nourish an international process of collective reflection. They often rely on already shared ideas, but try to push further the discussion of the implications of these analyses. To this

end, at the risk of oversimplifying complex realities, they “filter” present evolutions, which are often incomplete, in order to highlight what seems new.

I. A new imperialist galaxy

First observation, the situation today is quite different from those that prevailed in the early twentieth century or during the decades from the 1950s to the 1980s. Of particular note:

• A profound change and a diversification of the status of the traditional imperialisms: a United States “super power”; failure of the constitution of an integrated European imperialism; “reduction” of French and British imperialism; militarily “toothless” imperialisms (Germany especially, but also Spain in relation to Latin America); continuing subordination of Japanese imperialism; crises of social disintegration in some Western countries (Greece) belonging historically to the imperialist sphere...

• The affirmation of new (proto) imperialisms – starting with China, which is now emerging as the second world power, but without ignoring the

particular case of Russia.

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

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

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

II. Chronic geopolitical instability

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

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

that its original function has not lost its relevance, as the border has again become a conflict zone.

NATO now is ready to act beyond the transatlantic theatre. The crisis in the Middle East, however, shows that NATO is not an operational framework capable of easily imposing its rule everywhere. The military contribution of its European members remains marginal. Tensions are high with its regional pillar, Turkey. Alliances of variable geometry have been forged to suit each theatre with regimes opposed to each other such as Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Inter-imperialist competition has revived. On the geopolitical level the newcomer China is demanding to enter the top league. Russia intervenes in its enlarged zone of influence (Syria). The Japanese government is trying to reduce its military dependence on the US and to free itself from the pacifist clauses of the Japanese Constitution. Economically, competition is intense, the freedom of movement granted to capital even making it possible for “sub-imperialisms” to enter the lists beyond their regional spheres. Ideologically, the ruling classes are facing a crisis of legitimacy, and often, important institutional malfunctions. – they are losing control of the electoral process in key countries like the USA (Trump’s victory in the republican primaries) and the United Kingdom (the Brexit victory). The state of war is permanent. The global ecological crisis is already strongly felt. In various parts of the world, the social fabric is disintegrating. Humanitarian disasters and forced movements of population have reached a level not seen since the Second World War.

The peoples are paying an exorbitant price for the imposition of the new neoliberal order. The current chronic crisis has multiple causes.

â€¢ The imperialist states still have the role of ensuring favourable conditions for the accumulation of capital, but the global capital operates more independently from them than in the past. This separation has helped to make porous or dissolve the former “private hunting grounds”, the areas of almost exclusive influence of

traditional imperialism in the world (apart to a large extent in Latin America?). The high mobility of capital has had devastating effects on social equilibrium, undermining state action.

Capitalist globalization, financialization, the increasing internationalization of production lines have also reduced the capacity of governments to implement economic policies.

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

â€¢ The debt system now operates in both North and South. It is a key instrument of the dictatorship exercised by corporate capital and plays a directly political role, as the case of Greece confirms, in imposing the maintenance of the neoliberal order. Together with the free trade agreements, it blocks a national government implementing alternative policies to get out of the social crisis.

â€¢ A real “currency war” (currency) is engaged; it is an aspect of inter-imperialist conflicts, the use of currency defining areas of control.

â€¢ The geopolitical alliances were yesterday “fixed” by the East-West conflict on the one hand and the Sino-Soviet conflict on the other (which explains, for example, in South Asia, the India-Russia axis versus the US-Pakistan-China one); they have once again become more fluid and uncertain. Latin American regimes tried for a time to loosen the straitjacket imposed by Washington.

â€¢ Inter-imperialist rivalries are feeding a new spiral in the arms race, including nuclear weapons that countries like the US and France seek to “modernize”, that is to say to make

operational and politically acceptable as part of localized conflicts.

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

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

One of the questions that is posed to us by the evolution of the international situation is the link between the post-1989 turning-point (conquering imperialism) and the one that took shape in the mid-2000s (geopolitical instability).

From this point of view, the financial crisis of 2007-2008 was a real turning point. Bringing up to date the contradictions inherent in capitalist globalization, it has had major consequences that are both political (delegitimization of the system of domination) and social (very brutal in countries directly affected) and structural - including the explosion of debts. It is the background of the great democratic movements that emerged a few years later (the occupation of places), but also reactionary openly antidemocratic developments such as in Thailand: White shirts, nourished by the great 'fear of the middle class.

Combined with the ecological crisis and the massive displacement of populations, the structural instability of the global order creates new forms of poverty (see eg the Philippines), which require the progressive

organizations to implement appropriate policies.

III. Globalization and crisis of governability

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

This project involved in fact:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Capitalist globalization represents a new global mode of class rule, unfinished and structurally unstable.

It leads in fact to open crises of legitimacy and of ungovernability in many countries and in entire regions; to a state of permanent crisis. The supposed centres of regulation on a world scale (the WTO, the UN Security Council ...) are unable to fulfill their role effectively.

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

At the time when there were empires, it was necessary to ensure the stability of colonial possessions - as well as (although to a lesser extent) that of the spheres of influence during the Cold War. Let us say that today, because of mobility and financialization, it depends on the time and the place... Thus, entire regions may enter into chronic crisis under the blows of globalization. The implementation of neoliberal diktats by worn-out dictatorial regimes provoked popular uprisings in the Arab world and vast mobilizations in Africa, open regime crises and violent counter-revolutionary ripostes, leading to acute instability.

The particularity of globalized capitalism is that it seems to accommodate itself to crisis as a permanent state of affairs: crisis becomes consubstantial with the normal functioning of the new global system of domination. If this is really the case, we must profoundly change our view of "crisis" as a particular moment between long periods of "normality" - and we have not finished measuring, and suffering, the consequences of this.

IV. The new (proto) imperialisms

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

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

Can we call it a new imperialism? It is obviously necessary to define what we mean by this term in the present world context, which is the subject of this text. But since China has become the second world power, it seems more and more difficult to deny it that status, regardless of what may be the fragility of the present regime and of its economy. For many members of the left opposition to the Russian regime, the same can be said for Russia, although it remains economically dependent on exports of primary goods (of which petroleum products account for two-thirds). Can we in this last case talk about "weak imperialism", or a weak ability to

develop an imperialist economic policy?

The BRICS have tried to act together in the arena of the world market, without much success. The countries that make up this fragile "bloc" do not all play in the same league. Brazil, India and South Africa can probably be described as sub-imperialisms - a notion that dates back to the 1970s - and regional gendarmes, but with a significant difference in relation to the past: they benefit from a much greater freedom to export capital (see the "great game" that has opened up in Africa, with competition between the United States, Canada, Britain, France, India, Brazil, South Africa, China, Qatar, Turkey, Nigeria, Angola...).

Three conclusions here:

1. The competition between capitalist powers is reviving, with the affirmation of China especially, but also of Russia in Eastern Europe and in the Middle East. These are really conflicts between capitalist powers, therefore qualitatively different from those of the previous period.

2. More generally, concerning the free movement of capital, the bourgeoisies (even subordinate ones) and transnational corporations of the "South" can use the rules conceived after 1991 by the traditional imperialist bourgeoisies for themselves, particularly in terms of investment, making competition in the global market more complex than in the past. As far as the flow of commodities is concerned, the generalized setting of workers in competition with each other admittedly remains largely driven by the enterprises of the traditional imperialist centres, and it is they and not the firms in producer countries who control access to the consumer markets of the developed countries; however this is less true today for China and indeed India or Brazil.

3. There is not only a crisis of legitimacy of the ruling classes, but also an ideological crisis. This is shown in the scale of the institutional crisis, when the "wrong" candidates assert themselves against the establishment (Trump in the US),

when the election itself loses all credibility in the eyes of a growing portion of the population. Unable to answer, they will increasingly resort to “divide and rule”, using racism, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, xenophobia and stigmatization, whether Koreans in Japan or Afro-descendants in the USA and Brazil, Muslims in India, Shiites, Sunnis or Christians in Muslim countries ... the fight against racism, and xenophobia is more than ever a critical area of resistance at the international level. The same the same for other forms of discrimination (gender, sexual, social ...).

V. New far right forces, new fascisms

One of the first consequences of the phenomenal destabilizing power of capitalist globalization is the equally spectacular rise of new far right forces and new fascisms with a (potential) mass base. Some take relatively traditional forms, such as Golden Dawn in Greece, within which there are new xenophobic currents and those based on falling back on national identity. Others emerge in the form of religious fundamentalism, and this is the case in all the “great” religions (Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim...), or of “national religious” fundamentalism (the Zionist far right)... These currents represent today a considerable threat in countries like India, Sri Lanka and Israel, and have been able to influence the policy of governments as important as that of the United States (under Bush). So the Muslim world has no monopoly in this domain; but it has taken there a particular international dimension, with “cross-border” movements like the Islamic State or the Taliban (see the situation in Pakistan), and networks connecting up more or less formally, from Morocco to Indonesia and in the south of the Philippines.

In general, we have to further analyse the new far right movements, whether they are religious or not: they are not mere replicas of the past, but expressions of the present time! This

is particularly true for religious fundamentalist currents. It is important to define them politically in order to understand the role they play (remember that not so long ago, a significant part of the international radical left saw in them an expression of an “objectively” progressive, although ideologically reactionary, anti-imperialism). It is also necessary to combat “essentialist” interpretations of the “clash of civilizations”.

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

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

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

More generally, the renewal of the radical right strengthens a dangerous reactionary thrust that aims to put into question in particular the fundamental rights of women and LGBT+ people, often relying on the

institutional churches concerning abortion (in Spain, where a reactionary proposed law abolishing the right to abortion was defeated, in Italy...), family law (advocating a return to a very conservative view of the role of women...), and even triggering real witch hunts against homosexuals (Iran, African countries where evangelical currents are powerful...) or transsexuals. Reaction is thus frontally attacking the right to self-determination of women and of individuals (recognition of the diversity of sexual orientation), rights that were won after prolonged struggles.

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

VI. Authoritarian regimes, demand for democracy and solidarity

Capitalist globalization has provoked the crisis of so-called democratic institutions (where they existed) and of bourgeois parliamentarism. Faced with this loss of legitimacy, the dominant trend is towards the establishment – sudden or creeping – of authoritarian regimes not subject to popular sovereignty (exceptions confirming the rule, former military dictatorships can still have to give up or share part of their power, as in Burma).. The right to choose is simply denied to peoples in the name of treaties and regulations endorsed by their governments.

The democratic imperative – “real democracy now!”- thus acquires a more subversive dimension that is more immediate than was often the

case in the past, making it possible to give it an alternative, popular content. Similarly, the universality of neoliberal policies and the accompanying commoditisation of “common goods” make possible the convergence of forms of social resistance, as seen in the global justice movement. The consequences of climate change, which are already being felt, also offer a new field of potentially anti-capitalist convergences.

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

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

VII. Internationalism against campism

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

In the past, without ever aligning ourselves with Beijing’s diplomacy, we defended the People’s Republic (and the dynamics of the revolution) against the Japan-US imperialist

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

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

Campism can also lead to support in Syria the murderous Assad regime and the Russian intervention – or the coalition under US hegemony, including in particular Saudi Arabia. Other currents content themselves with condemning the imperialist intervention in Iraq and Syria (which we must certainly do), but without saying what the Islamic State is doing and calling for resistance to it.

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

Similarly in the case of conflicts at the border that currently divides eastern Europe, as in the case of Ukraine, our

orientation has been to fight in every European country, in or outside the EU, for another Europe based on free association of sovereign peoples against all relations of domination (national, social) – which means for us socialism.

VIII. Capitalist expansion and climate crisis

The reintegration of the Sino-Soviet “bloc” into the world market has led to a huge expansion of the geographical area in which capital dominates, which is the foundation for the optimism of the imperialist bourgeoisies. It is also the foundation for a dramatic acceleration of the global ecological crisis, on multiple terrains. We have arrived at a point where the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions must begin without any further delay in the major emitting countries of the South and not just of the North.

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

There is certainly always the need for “North-South solidarity”, for example in defence of the victims of climate chaos. However, more than ever, it is a common “anti-systemic” struggle that is on the agenda in “North-South” relations from the point of view of the working classes: that is to say a common fight for an anti-capitalist alternative, another conception of development in the “North” as in the “South” (the quotation marks are there to remind us that the heterogeneity of the “North” and the “South” is now such that these concepts can be misleading).

The starting point is the socio-environmental struggle to “change the system, not the climate”; its base is composed of social movements and

not just specific coalitions on the climate. We must therefore work on the articulation between the two. If we do not “ecologise” the social struggle (following the example of what can already be done in peasant and urban struggles), the numerical expansion of “climate” mobilizations will remain on the surface of things.

The effects of climate chaos are already being felt and the organization of the victims, their defence and help with their self-organization, are also part of the base of the ecological struggle.

The consequences of a global fossil fuel based energy system on are now absolutely clear. As a result of the rising global temperature the ice caps are shrinking, sea levels are rising, deserts are expanding, water is become more scarce, agriculture is under threat and extreme weather events are becoming more frequent. The effects of super-typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines surpassed in scale what we had already been warned about. The future that is announced is already part of the present. This has destabilizing consequences that extend far beyond the regions that are directly affected and gives rise to a chain sequence of tensions (for example the refugees from Bangladesh and the conflict with India on the question of migrants).

Scientists agree that a global surface temperature rise of 2°C over preindustrial levels would trigger climate feedbacks, which, once started, will be impossible to stop. With this in mind there are a number of major issues that remain entirely unresolved.

Melting ice sheets and glaciers threaten a catastrophic rise in the sea level. Even if the global temperature increase stabilised at 2°C the rise in the sea level by the end of the century is likely to be something between 0.6 and 2.2m. If a 2°C increase was exceeded such levels would be much higher. Coastal cities around the globe are under threat from this as are island communities and low lying countries and regions. Over 50% of Bangladesh would be under direct threat.

Now a completely new dimension is added to this with signs of the destabilisation of the vast Western Antarctic ice sheet, the melting of which could raise the sea level by 7m.

As the earth’s temperature rises we can expect a devastating impact on fresh water resources with increasing droughts and heat waves. The glaciers are retreating at an unprecedented rate and the aquifers are drying up. The rivers are losing their capacity. More than 50 percent of the world’s freshwater comes from mountain runoff and snowmelt. Wars over water resources will become far more prevalent.

The problem of how to feed the rising global population of the planet without increasing resorting to factory farming (agribusiness) and the ever increasing use of pesticides and herbicides and GM food that destroys the biosphere. In the Global South the key issue is food sovereignty. This would give people the rights and means to define their own food systems. It would give control to those who produce, distribute and consume food rather than the corporations and market institutions that dominate the global food system. It would mean an end to land grabs and would require extensive land redistribution to put the land in the hands of those who produce the food.

Possibly the biggest single most damaging aspect of the environmental crisis is the impact it is having on biodiversity – ‘the sixth extinction’ as it is increasingly known. An increase in global average temperature of around three degrees, for example, would mean that 50% of all species – plants and animals – will be driven to extinction. A quarter of all mammal species are at risk. The acidification of the oceans that is taking place means that coral reefs are dying off, as are organisms that rely on calcification for their shell structure. It is a crisis in which our own future as a species cannot be separated.

IX. A world of

permanent wars

We are probably not going towards a third world war along the lines of the First and Second World Wars, because there is not a conflict for the territorial division of the world in the sense that there was in the past. But the factors pushing towards war are very profound and diverse: new conflicts between powers, competition on the world market, access to resources, decomposition of societies, the rise of new forms of fascism escaping from the control of those who brought them into existence, a chain sequence of the effects of climate chaos and of humanitarian crises on a very large scale...

We have well and truly entered a world of permanent wars (plural). Every war must be analyzed in its specificities. We are confronted with very complex situations, as today in the Middle East where, in the framework of a single theatre of operations (Iraq-Syria) there are interlocking conflicts with specific characteristics (Syrian Kurdistan, the region of Aleppo, etc.).

This situation of permanent war does not only relate to international conflicts. It also characterises the internal situation in some countries in Africa or Latin America, such as Mexico.

Wars are here to stay, with many faces. We need to look again at how they are conducted, particularly by popular resistance movements, in order to better understand the conditions of a struggle, the reality of a situation, the concrete requirements of solidarity ...

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

X. The limits of the superpower

The common set of rules of the global capitalist order does not prevent some countries from being more equal than others; the United States takes the liberty of doing things that it does not allow elsewhere. It plays on the place of the dollar to “export” its “right” to legal proceedings; controls much of the most advanced technologies, and has at its disposal unmatched military power. Its state continues to maintain global sovereign functions that others no longer have – or no longer have the means of having.

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

It is also the case that this power, as “super” as it might be, does not have the means to intervene in every direction in the conditions of structural instability. It would require secondary imperialisms capable of supporting it. France and Britain have now only very limited capacities; Japan has yet to break the civic resistance to its complete remilitarization. Brexit is the final blow to the constitution of a unified European imperialism: the United Kingdom commands one of the only two operational armies of the Union, one of the main diplomatic and financial networks and one of the major economies in Europe.

Whoever says war should say anti-war movement. Since the wars are very different from each other, the building of anti-war movements in synergy does not go without saying. The way activists in (Western) Europe approach this question seems

pessimistic, a consequence of how “campism” has gnawed at and rendered impotent the principal campaigns undertaken in this field. But there are anti-war movements, particularly in Asia – and in Eurasia; the overcoming of the frontiers inherited from the era of the blocs will take place particularly around this question.

XI. Humanitarian crisis

Neoliberal policies, war, climate chaos, economic convulsions, social breakdowns, exacerbated violence, pogroms, the collapse of social protection systems, devastating epidemics, women reduced to slavery, forced migration: children slowly dying of thirst, abandoned along with their parents in the middle of the Sahel... Triumphant capitalism, unbridled, is giving birth to a world where humanitarian crises multiply, causing degrees of suffering that are unimaginable for those who have not experienced them – and unspeakably atrocious for those who have experienced them.

The breakdown of social order has impacted the state head-on in countries like Pakistan (which has nuclear weapons); or again Mexico where the mafias, in symbiosis with the political class, use terror to impose their domination – hence the denominations of failed states, of mafia-ridden states, of narco-terrorism.

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

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

After a period when the very concept of internationalism was often disparaged, the global justice wave, then the multiplication of “occupations” of public squares or districts, have restored it to its full importance. Now it is necessary for this revived internationalism to find more permanent forms of action, on all the terrains of contestation.

XII. Increasing instability?

This part should be rewritten as the situation evolves, exchanges and the progress of other documents (as far as the last paragraph is concerned).

In this context, it is quite futile to try to predict the future. However the instability is tending to increase rather than lessen and that we are reaching in many countries or regions important “turning points”. Of particular note:

In Latin America, we are living the end of a cycle, that of the “progressive governments” taking their distance from Washington. The end of the cycle is taking the form of open crises in Venezuela and Brazil.

In Europe, the influx of refugees in 2015, the political development of countries like Hungary, the Brexit victory in Britain have highlighted deep divisions and centrifugal tendencies within the EU. The European integration project is in check. Further east, the war policies of Putin do not hide the seriousness of the economic crisis and the wezring out of the regime.

In East Asia, the KMT lost the last election in Taiwan, the new government is showing a more independent policy vis-À-vis Beijing, and this while tensions between China, Japan and the United States are particularly acute.

In geopolitical terms, one can say that the United States Reports / China are evolving from “competition in interdependence” to “interdependence in the confrontation.”

In India, the Hindutva (BJP-RSS) is attacking the very foundations of the

secular state.

In the Middle East, the massive and deadly intervention of Russia has changed the situation, supporting the Assad regime. US imperialism has interrupted the very limited military aid it granted to non-fundamentalist Arab opposition. The Western media now present the Russian-Assad military reconquest as the "liberation" of a city or territory. Yet major popular mobilisations have shown that resistance to Assad's dictatorship remains alive, deserving our support.

For the global economy, are questions that do not have any obvious answers. A new financial crisis threatens, without that we know what would be

the detonator and implications. We find ourselves in a long period of stagnation? Technological innovations related to computers or they will have no significant effect on labour productivity? A certainty anyway: the precariousness of the social fabric tearing employment will continue.

Globalized capitalism leads a global social war.

The rejection of the neoliberal order and resistance to this class war are manifested in many forms, including in the developed capitalist countries like the United States (behind Sanders), Great Britain (behind Corbyn), the Spanish state (the crisis of bipartisanship and Podemos) and France (the movement against the

destruction of the Labour code). The issue of convergence of struggles, both within each country and internationally, now appears more essential than ever.

APPENDICES

An appendix on Europe written after the Greek crisis had been integrated. After Brexit it has to be rewritten.

Other regional (or thematic) appendices are expected "which could lead to specific resolutions. For example on the world economy, going further than what is already integrated into the theses, ecology, or population movements on a world scale.