



## IV587 - December 2023

# Macron takes on the colours of the far right on immigration

31 December 2023, by **Léon Crémieux**

The law that has just, in December 2023, been passed in France by a joint vote of the Macronist alliance, the right-wing LR party and the far-right RN is the most regressive in France since the one passed almost 40 years ago, in 1986 (Pasqua law) and it contains even more reactionary aspects. It is totally in line with the premises of the far right, which designates foreigners and immigration as a danger, a threat to the country, stirring up the fantasy of “a flood of migrants”, of the economic and social imbalance created by migrants, and confusing immigration with insecurity, delinquency and the threat of terrorism. These themes are widely developed in Europe, but particularly in France by Marine Le Pen’s RN and Marion Maréchal and Éric Zemmour’s small Reconquête party.

Over the last twenty years or so, the traditional right has also made them widely popular, gradually picking up on the ideological propaganda of Jean Marie Le Pen and the Front National on these issues. In the early 2000s, Nicolas Sarkozy in particular tried to divide French society by introducing a debate on “national identity”, even incorporating this concept into the title of the Ministry of the Interior, designated as the “Ministry of the Interior and National Identity”, following the idea of one of his

advisers, Patrick Buisson, who came from the “revolutionary nationalist” far right of the 1970s.

Macron and his government have therefore also taken these muddy paths, initially thinking they were making a parliamentary manoeuvre to destabilize the Republican party. The manoeuvre turned into a boomerang against the presidential camp.

At the start of his second term, in the summer of 2022, Macron and his interior minister, Gérald Darmanin, announced the presentation of a new law on entry and residence conditions, centred on the right of asylum, just three years after the one he had pushed through in 2019. Explicitly equating delinquency with asylum seekers, the announced aim was to fight to “prevent non-European migratory flows”, “speed up procedures for asylum seekers” and “deportation procedures”, all classic reactionary themes.

Above all, at a time when people’s main concerns were inflation, the crisis in the healthcare system and threats to pensions, the main aim was to try to polarize public debate on this issue by brandishing the “unbearable threat of migration” and, once again, to blame migrants for the social situation of the working classes. Darmanin’s stated aim was to “make

life impossible for migrants”. His arrogant profile was even that of a “Mr Plus”, boasting that he was tougher on migrants than the far right, speaking with a touch of sexism about Marine Le Pen’s “softness” and Georgia Meloni’s “inability to deal with migration problems”. This bill was fought from the outset by the social movement and the left, with the *Unis contre l’immigration jetable* (United Against Disposable Immigration) (UCIJ) collective bringing together 800 collectives and associations (including hundreds working on a day-to-day basis for the reception of and solidarity with undocumented migrants and asylum seekers), with the support of the Greens, LFI and the radical left, including the NPA.

Since the June 2022 elections in which Macron emerged without a parliamentary majority or an alliance with other parties, he and his government have had to negotiate bill by bill with the other parties, mainly the party of the traditional Gaullist right, the Republicans (LR). As a result, they voted for two-thirds of the legislation introduced by the government between June 2022 and June 2023 on a piecemeal basis. Darmanin had therefore opened the door to dialogue with the LR on his legislation. The rise of the anti-

retirement reform protests in the spring of 2023 forced the government to shelve the debate on this bill. The LR, for their part, saw the debate on this bill as an opportunity to regain a place in the political debate. The result of the June 2022 legislative elections - 62 out of 577 MPs, a loss of 51 seats - has reduced the Republicans to the position of Macron's auxiliaries, behind the Rassemblement National and France Insoumise, and they are finding it hard to exist as an independent force, squeezed between Macron and the Rassemblement National.

Moreover, many Macronist leaders are transfers from LR and Nicolas Sarkozy has on several occasions called on the party he led for a long time to form an alliance with Macron. As a result, in spring 2023 LR attempted a political operation by themselves introducing two laws attacking immigration and foreigners living in France. Considering that this was the only ground on which they could make a voice different from Macron's, their bills seamlessly took up the main elements of the Rassemblement National's programme, notably adopting "national preference", discriminating against social rights for non-EU foreigners with reduced entitlements to social benefits, going back on "droit du sol" for children born in France, introducing new obstacles to adopting French nationality, with stronger repression and faster deportations of undocumented foreigners. Over the past year, the LR party has developed an obsessive campaign against the flood of migrants, the invasion of migrants and the exorbitant cost of immigration, making itself much more vocal than the far right on this issue.

## Growing ideological pressure from the far right

Although France has long been a country of immigration with open legislation, since the 1970s it has significantly tightened entry and residence rights. Still marked by the

acquisition of nationality through "droit du sol", the country practices the great divide between a welcoming attitude and increasingly closed practices. This is as true for immigration as it is for the reception of refugees. France, with 7.7% of its population made up of foreigners, is below the European average (8.4%), compared with 8.7% in Italy and Sweden, and 11-13% in Spain, Germany and Belgium. This is a far cry from the "over-generous policy" the government and its new friends constantly decry.

As far as refugees are concerned, the war led, in particular in 2014 and 2015, to an exodus of refugees from Syria. The reality is that most of the 6.8 million exiles remained in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. Only 17%, just over 1 million, applied for asylum in the European Union, with France registering 2.2% of these 17%... around 25,000! In the case of Afghans, the effort was slightly greater, with France accounting for 8% of Afghan refugees in Europe. Similarly, while there are around 4.6 million Ukrainian refugees in the EU and 120,000 in France, and no one has protested against the arrival of a population that is "lucky" not to be of Muslim origin, here again the figure is not at all commensurate with France's economic (17%) and demographic (15%) weight in Europe. Macron's pretentious and self-satisfied talk about "France's share in welcoming refugees" is irrelevant. Especially since France has one of the lowest protection rates in Europe when it comes to asylum applications. Around 70% of asylum applications are refused protection status (refugee or subsidiary protection), leaving asylum seekers in irregular and precarious situations and at risk of being deported.

European and French leaders are living in schizophrenic denial about international migration. Migration is a natural and inescapable phenomenon in the past and present history of humanity, a phenomenon in which Europeans themselves have participated and continue to participate, and which today affects Africa and the Middle East much more than Europe. But reactionaries are trying to turn it into a question of a

war of civilizations, of barbarian invasion, of demographic submersion. Unfortunately, it is true that wars and climate change will accentuate migratory phenomena, once again without the European Union being the first destination. The EU's denial is obviously that it is one of the main culprits of climate change, directly through environmental pollution and indirectly through European industrial and commercial capitalist groups, that it maintains neo-colonial relations with the countries of the South, causing some of its citizens to leave their homes, that its foreign policy is also responsible for open conflicts and wars, with all their human catastrophes, but that it wants to hinder natural migratory flows, putting hundreds of thousands of men and women at extreme risk, and leading to the deaths of tens of thousands of human beings on the migration routes.

The other denial is that France and the EU as a whole are themselves organizing international immigration, which is largely legal, organized by the European states because it is part and parcel of the European economic and social system. In 2022, for every 350,000 undocumented migrants entering the European Union, 3.5 million did so legally. And beyond the purely ideological reactionary demagoguery, three reactions in France following the vote on the law were characteristic: that of 3,500 doctors, including emergency doctors, that of the presidents of the major universities and the heads of the grandes écoles, and that of the President of the MEDEF. The doctors protested against the threat of abolition of the Aide Médicale de l'Etat (AME) and publicly undertook to continue to provide free care to undocumented migrants if the AME were abolished, out of respect for the "Hippocratic Oath" to treat anyone who is ill and out of concern for public health.

The presidents of the universities and the heads of the grandes écoles are protesting against the "return guarantee" system, which already exists in other European countries (a sum that foreign students will have to deposit in their bank account before arriving in France), and against the

limitation of social assistance that foreign students will have to endure from now on, on the pretext of the fantasy of “false students taking advantage of the social systems”. There are currently around 400,000 foreign students in France, or 13% of the total. They are a pillar of the university system, particularly in the grandes écoles, and contribute to its vitality and, of course, to the internationalization of university education for students, including 70,000 PhD students....far from the xenophobic fantasies of bogus students that are the obsession of Ciotti, President of the LR party, and Darmanin.

The latest reaction came from Patrick Martin, President of the MEDEF, who said that “unless we reinvent our economic model”, 3.9 million more foreign workers will be needed in France in the coming years, and at least the same number in the rest of the European Union. Because, unlike the spokespersons of the LR and RN parties, employers are aware of a reality that has long been proclaimed by OECD economists: far from being a financial burden for host countries, foreign and migrant populations in all OECD countries present a “net balance sheet” surplus in the budgets of host countries. In a chorus of nonsense over the last few months, a member of the French Nationalist Party picked up on an article in the right-wing daily *Le Figaro*, which claimed that immigration “costs more than it brings in” and quoted a figure of 53.9 billion. Other figures were quoted, but always with the common thread of the idea that foreigners come to take advantage of the social system, living off social benefits and unemployment insurance. The reality of the exhaustive studies carried out by the OECD in 2021, covering the period 2006/2018, is that in the 25 countries studied, the net budgetary contribution is always between -1% and +1% of GDP, with an average surplus of 10 billion euros per year for France during this period. Beyond these accounts, the obvious reality is that foreigners obviously participate in the economic life of the country where they are, often in Europe with less well-paid work and more difficult working conditions. These difficulties stem both from the difficulties that

some people have in regularizing their situation and from the climate of discrimination that makes access to employment more difficult, not only for foreigners but also for the descendants of 2nd or even 3rd generation foreigners. Maintaining this climate of racism is obviously a weapon used by employers. But employers in sectors which, by definition, cannot relocate their activities, such as transport, logistics, the hotel industry, construction and care, very often call on foreign workers or workers with an immigrant background.

And the reality in Europe is that the natural demographic curve is now on a downward trend everywhere, excluding net migration, and France is no exception to this trend. So, behind the rhetoric of the more or less extreme right-wingers, which serves to divide the working classes and keep them away from the people who are really responsible for the policies of social breakdown, there is obviously the inescapable reality that not only is immigration not a cost, but that to try to hinder it would be to create a social and economic imbalance over the coming decades. The hypocrisy of the dominant classes is that they most often support the discourse of the extreme right, and cultivate it in their written and broadcast media, fantasizing about the “suction power” that the slightest regularization of undocumented migrants would represent, while at the same time thinking about the present and the future by integrating the reality of a continuing influx of migrants. A utilitarian, hypocritical policy that deprives millions of men and women of social rights and decent living conditions, that maintains discrimination and police violence in working-class neighbourhoods where many children of immigrant origin live, but that nevertheless maintains the immigration nets that are essential to economic and social equilibrium.

This policy is even more serious when it comes to migrants and undocumented migrants trying to reach Europe via the Mediterranean or continental borders. The right, the far right and their media relays talk about flooding, when the figures tell a different story: according to

government figures, there are between 4 and 5 million undocumented migrants in Europe, or less than 1% of the total population. Half of them live in Germany and the UK, around 700,000 in France and between 5 and 700,000 in Italy. But the fantasy of submersion and xenophobic and racist propaganda justify inhuman treatment for those who want to come to Europe. Tens of billions are spent on securing and controlling borders, turning back arrivals and negotiating with African and Middle Eastern countries to block border crossings. These amounts are to be compared with the small sums granted for reception, housing and aid to migrant populations. Refugees from Ukraine were the only population to be granted “temporary protection status” by the Council of the European Union. In France in particular, they were the only ones to benefit from proper reception conditions: immediate residence permit, access to the labour market and housing, medical assistance and access for children to education, the right to open a bank account. These rights should obviously apply to all asylum seekers from Syria, Afghanistan or elsewhere.

## **Darmanin and Macron caught in a trap**

So, with regard to the continuation of the debates on this law in the spring of 2023, the Republicans, in their anti-immigration bills presented in May 2023, also wanted a change to the Constitution so that France could derogate from European law regarding obligations towards asylum seekers, and oppose any regularization of undocumented migrants in so-called “short-staffed” occupations (the hotel industry in particular), which is what Darmanin proposed in his bill. They also wanted to abolish state medical aid (AME), which gives undocumented migrants access to healthcare covered by the social security system in hospitals (380,000 people benefited from this in 2023). Darmanin and the government were opposed to this abolition.

LR, still benefiting from a majority in the Senate, thought it could bring strong pressure to bear to force Darmanin and Macron onto its turf. Darmanin, for his part, hoped that by adopting some of the measures proposed by the LR, he would get at least some of their MPs to vote in favour of his plan, further weakening the LR in the Assembly. This sordid political game on the backs of foreigners also served Darmanin's purpose in trying to find his place in the race to succeed Macron as president in 2027.

Darmanin's bill was therefore put on hold until the start of the new academic year in 2023. Here again, after 6 months of mass protests over pensions, after the revolts in working-class neighbourhoods over the summer in the face of violence and the murder of young people by the police, the government wanted to stigmatize the population of immigrant origin and stifle the social concerns that are predominant among the population: purchasing power, health, the environment.... These concerns are clearly evident in social mobilizations, and even in recent opinion polls (IPSOS institute, September 23, for example, where immigration only appears in ninth place as a concern for those polled). The hyperbolization of migration issues in the media arsenal of the extreme right and reactionary leaders has maintained a nauseating climate aimed at mixing immigration, insecurity and Islamism and making this amalgam the main political issue, with the predominant help of the network of media and written press that are in the hands of the main French capitalists, first and foremost the media galaxy in the hands of Bolloré... This issue did indeed occupy the field of public debate from September to December, but not with the outcome that Macron and his government wanted.

Hoping to manoeuvre as it did on a number of other issues, the government's timing was simple. The debate began with a vote in the Senate in early November, where the Republicans amended Darmanin's draft with all their measures borrowed from the far right. Then, at the beginning of December, the Assembly's Law Committee, where the

balance of power gave the government a relative majority, cleaned up the bill, bringing it back to its original version, a reactionary version that did not include many of the Senate's additions (e.g. the abolition of the AME, the 5-year period of legal residence to obtain social benefits, regularization in "short-staffed" occupations). Then, logically, the game of abstentions should have enabled Borne and Darmanin to pass the law, article after article, counting on the contribution of votes from the Republicans and abstentions from the Socialist Party, depending on the articles of the law.

And that's when things started to go wrong. The ecologists, opposed to the bill along with all the NUPES groups, tabled a motion to reject the bill, thereby blocking its consideration by the Assembly. On 11 December, against all expectations, this motion was adopted by a majority vote of the NUPES, but also of 2/3 of the LR and RN MPs: 270 votes in favour of rejection and 265 against. The trap then closed on Darmanin and his government. There could no longer be an article-by-article vote in the Assembly on the government's version. Macron had the choice between withdrawing his text altogether or making a new attempt at compromise by jointly drafting a new text between MPs and senators (in a joint committee (commission mixte paritaire - CMP)), followed by a block vote in each of the two chambers on the same text. After suffering a resounding defeat and being outvoted in the Assembly for the first time, Macron refused to acknowledge his failure by withdrawing the law. He preferred to put the bill in the hands of the Republicans, since it was only possible to write a joint text in this 14-member CMP (7 deputies and 7 senators) through an agreement between the 5 Macronists and the 5 right-wing Republicans and centrists. In reality, the new draft was negotiated directly between the Prime Minister, Elisabeth Borne, and the Republican leadership.

The text, which was ultimately voted through by the Assembly and Senate, is therefore a very close copy of the positions of the LR, inspired by the Rassemblement National. The latter, without having taken part in the

slightest negotiation, and even displaying their hostility right up to the end to a draft they found too moderate, finally seized the opportunity to show their support by voting for a text largely inspired by their positions, creating a general outcry. This is the first time in 40 years that traditional forces have voted for the same text as the far right on immigration. In addition, Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne has formally committed to a parliamentary vote to revise the Aide Médicale de l'Etat. While Macron and Darmanin had hoped that this law would provide a political "coup" by fracturing the Republicans and isolating the RN on its own favourite terrain, the outcome was the opposite: the RN appears to be the political winner of a law that takes up its xenophobic obsessions and adopts national preference, discrimination for social benefits and tougher conditions for naturalization. Thanks to their control of the Senate, the LR parties have emerged stronger, while the Macronists have emerged weakened and divided: only 131 out of 171 MPs voted in favour of the law, 20 voted against and 17 abstained, the "Young with Macron" group has disavowed the law and the Minister of Health has resigned from his post.

## **The urgent need for a left-wing response**

The weakened position that Macron had after his second election had already been shattered by the huge mobilization in defence of pensions, and then by the revolts in working-class neighbourhoods at the start of the summer. The government now appears to be a mere hostage of the right and the far right.

On the left and in the NUPES, unfortunately, this shift towards the far right is having trouble creating the necessary jolt. The government, backed by a relentless, multi-faceted press campaign, has done everything in its power over the past year to discredit the NUPES, which emerged as the leading opposition force in the elections, and first and foremost France insoumise, ostracized and

demonized by Macron and Borne as having “left the republican arc” (following, in particular, its stance during the uprisings in working-class neighbourhoods and on the murders committed by police officers) while the tricolour carpet was rolled out beneath the feet of the RN. Maximum pressure was therefore exerted to push for the break-up of this alliance, which was never able to go beyond the status of a parliamentary intergroup. The components of the NUPES, for various reasons, have themselves always refused to build a national popular political force, structured in the towns and neighbourhoods. Despite the convergent positions of its components in support of the mobilization for pensions, no political

momentum was created on that occasion. For several months now, it has been the electoral question of the 2024 European elections that has seen the centrifugal tendencies bring the NUPES to a standstill and lead to its de facto break-up, with the parties allied to the FI refusing to present a united list, in particular because they did not want to adopt the radical programme of the NUPES on the European Union.

Despite the broad convergence of the trade union and community movement against police violence and, more recently, to demand an immediate ceasefire in Gaza in the face of the massacre perpetrated by the Israeli army, the left-wing opposition to Macron today appears incapable of

building a real united political and social balance of power. Nevertheless, following the December vote tens of thousands of activists were up in arms at the sight of the far right dictating government policy. In April 2022, half the votes for Macron against Le Pen came from left-wing voters wanting to block Le Pen’s *Rassemblement national*.

Around the calls of the UCIJ coalition thousands of people took to the streets in several towns. But the challenge at the start of this year will be to build a united popular force and mobilization to match the social demands and the threat of the far right.

31 December 2023

## “A Heavy Blow”

30 December 2023, by **Heinz Bierbaum**

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**Sahra Wagenknecht and nine other MPs from Die Linke’s parliamentary faction announced their resignation from the party on Monday and their intention to found a new party later this spring. Sixteen years after the establishment of a nationwide force to the left of Social Democracy, Die Linke is undergoing its first serious split. What does this move mean for the German Left both in- and outside parliament?**

Wagenknecht’s decision means the loss of Die Linke’s status as a parliamentary faction in the Bundestag. Even if Die Linke remains in parliament as a group, it will lose considerable resources and, more than anything, political influence. It will be less visible. This inevitably also will lead to a weakening of the party as a whole.

I worry that personnel debates and the competition between Die Linke and the Wagenknecht project will continue to remain in the foreground and overshadow political issues. That said, the timing is still open as to when the separation will actually take place. In any case, it is already clear that it will weaken left-wing forces as a whole. The founding of a second party will not strengthen the broader Left — on the contrary.

**What is the medium-term plan? When will the party stand for elections, and what will it even be called?**

I assume that the new party will run in the European elections next year. Under what name, I don’t know. So far, the project is highly focused on Wagenknecht as a person. Everything depends on her.

**Before you became chair of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, you were President of the Party of the European Left (EL), in which Die Linke historically plays an important role. Will the split have**

**consequences for the European Left?**

The decision of Wagenknecht and her comrades-in-arms to leave Die Linke and found a new party is a heavy blow for the European Left. Die Linke has always been an essential part of the EL, looked up to by many other left-wing parties around Europe. The weakening of Die Linke will also weaken the EL.

This is especially true with regard to the European elections, where the EL had hoped to present itself as a united and strong left-wing force. Instead, we are dealing with splits. This is also the case in France, for example, where the NUPES coalition, which was successful in the last parliamentary elections in France, will no longer contest the European elections as a united alliance.

**The new party comes after years of feuding between Wagenknecht and the leadership of Die Linke. Can you explain what the main points of contention are? What was ultimately the trigger for this final**



**break?**

Wagenknecht has always accused the party leadership of not caring enough about social issues and putting more emphasis on climate issues and diversity. In my opinion, this is not true, although it is the case that there are different emphases within Die Linke. These points of contention were never really seriously discussed. The debate was highly personalized.

The migration issue, where there are very clear differences, also played a major role. The party leadership rightly criticized Wagenknecht's position on this issue. There are also differences around the Ukraine war.

**According to its founding manifesto, the new party stands for "reasonableness and justice" — but that could mean all kinds of things. How would you describe the new party's political orientation, and how does it differ from Die Linke?**

So far, the party doesn't have a concrete programme. The statements are very general and vague. It is clear that they want to offer a new political home to people who no longer feel represented by the existing parties, and they are mostly focused on the social security of so-called "ordinary people". Their messaging is especially aimed at non-voters.

Some speculate that the new party could weaken the Alternative für Deutschland, the right-populist party that has been surging in the polls. I don't think so.

**At Monday's press conference, Wagenknecht and other MPs from her circle were joined by Ralph Suikat, a millionaire entrepreneur who has campaigned for a just tax system for years.**

Wagenknecht's political

rapprochement with small business owners is nothing new — for years, she has written about the need to protect innovative entrepreneurs from the power of big monopolies. The BSW founding manifesto speaks of "those who make an effort and do good, honest and solid work" in contrast to those who are "only driven by the motivation to make more money out of money".

How would you explain her class perspective? Isn't it a bit strange for someone who led the Communist Platform, the hard-line current in Die Linke, for years?

On economics, Wagenknecht's politics have been ordoliberal for some time now. She wants the state to provide a regulatory framework to strengthen private entrepreneurship. In her view, the real opponent is finance capital.

Wagenknecht thus operates within a nostalgic social-democratic and highly bourgeois framework that has nothing to do with a class orientation derived from the conflict between capital and labour. These days, it's hard to believe that she was once a leading representative of the Communist Platform.

**Many in Die Linke welcomed the news of the split, hoping that the party can now present a united face and hopefully find its way to its former strength. It's no secret that the party has struggled, and many members cite Wagenknecht's public attacks on the leadership as the source of its difficulties. Will it be easier for the party to win back lost ground now that she's gone?**

Wagenknecht's step does indeed represent a kind of political clarification, but it will not catapult the party back to its former strength as some seem to think. It will not solve the party's deeper problems. There are still contentious debates within

the party, such as over the focus on ecological and/or social issues. Here, we can see how the failure to conduct a proper debate in recent years has really taken its toll.

**Amira Mohamed Ali, until recently Die Linke's parliamentary co-speaker and now the chair of BSW, said on Monday that she and the others are leaving "without resentment" and do not want to attack their former party, but instead focus on issues like social justice, peace, and "freedom". What do you think Die Linke should focus on in the future?**

Amira's statement is as correct as it is banal. Social justice and peace are, of course, key issues for the Left. Die Linke must, and does, focus on the cost-of-living crisis and social security. Peace is and remains a central issue where Die Linke must agree on a common position despite differences of opinion on certain questions. Germany urgently needs a shift in migration policy, which must be humane and integrative.

A central issue for Die Linke is the ecological transformation of the economy and especially of industry. We fight for a socio-ecological transformation, which also means tackling the question of social justice.

That said, it is not only about protecting the jobs of affected workers, but also about including them in the transformation process itself. That means we have to link the green transition to concepts of economic democracy, which in turn means cooperating with the trade unions will be crucial. A real socio-ecological transformation will only succeed if it begins within the structures of the status quo, but then begins to transcend them — and that means adopting a socialist perspective.

Source: [Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung](#)

## **A new Constitution is rejected again: back to**

# square one in Chile?

29 December 2023, by **Franck Gaudichaud**

This new national election is taking place four years after the major social uprising of 2019, and two years after the election of the young president of the progressive left (a coalition comprising the Communist Party and Frente Amplio), Gabriel Boric. Once again, the more than 15 million voters came out clearly against the constitutional proposal: 55.8% were against it.

## A class vote

Once again, in the capital, as nationally, there was a class rejection, while the three richest municipalities in the country voted “for”. Only two regions voted in favour of the constitutional proposal. However, big business and its media invested heavily in the “for” campaign, in order to defend a project that is even more reactionary than the existing Carta Magna. Drafted by the far right and the right wing in a process that was much more “controlled” by the traditional parties than the previous one, the proposal prevented any legislation in favour of abortion,

protected the system of funded pension funds, consolidated the commodification of water, education and health, and set in stone one of the most conservative labour codes in Latin America.

## A defeat for the far right

In September 2022, more than 62% of the population had already rejected a constitutional proposal. At the time, it was a rather left-wing, feminist text that defended new rights for indigenous peoples and sought to move beyond - in part - the neoliberal subsidiary state. Despite the differences, and against a backdrop that is now gloomy, dominated by talk of security and economic difficulties, a massive rejection was once again expressed on Sunday: the ongoing crisis of hegemony is far from over.

José Antonio Kast’s Republican Party, an extreme right-wing party that has emerged strongly over the last three years, and which has built its position on a return to “order”, also suffered a

major defeat with this vote. Especially as Kast already saw himself as the new president from 2027. The knives are out between the traditional right-wing coalition (Chile Vamos) and the Republican clan, each seeking to claim responsibility for the debacle.

Overall, this result gives a breath of “fresh air” to a progressive government which, since 2021, has been characterised by a lack of transformative capacity and, above all, no desire - even minimal - to confront the dominant sectors. With a minority in parliament, locked into a managerial logic and allied with the social-liberal Socialist Party, Gabriel Boric immediately called for “national consensus” while closing the door on any continuation of a constituent process. In this context, only a revitalisation of the rebellious spirit of October and of the popular, indigenous and feminist struggles could reshuffle the cards and reopen an emancipatory horizon.

21 December 2023

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# Is exercising citizenship a crime in Algeria?

28 December 2023, by **Lahcène G.**

What did he do? No offense, no misdemeanour, no crime. Better still, he tried to do what his duty as a citizen dictates, as proclaimed by the country’s constitution and the laws of the republic. Thanks to an order from the *wali* opening a public inquiry, he supported the citizens and associations of his region with the local institutions in learning about and

expressing their opinions on the impact study concerning the Tala Hamza/Amizour lead and zinc mine project. Relying on the laws on the environment and mining law and the international Ramsar convention ratified by our country, and the decree of the *wali* of Bejaïa number 13/1066 of 06/05/2013 classifying the Soummam valley as a protected

wetland of international importance, they expressed their rejection of the project, considering that since the study presented is not serious, and guarantees do not exist, the environmental risks and dangers to human health are immense.

But the authorities don’t see it that way. In the name of reasons of state, they violate the sacrosanct principle of

the will of the people in whose name they govern, they turn their backs on the laws of the republic, they decide to force their way through. This fait accompli was perceived by the villagers as violence by the state against them. Outraged, they began to write petitions, to raise awareness among their fellow citizens about the major risks of this project, but above all to call on the public authorities to reassure them and protect their integrity as stipulated in the constitution. Unfortunately, the response of the authorities has been and remains harassment and repression. This is what Kamel Aïssat is accused of and what is characterised as a crime against the national interest.

We only gag the mouth that tells the truth! Hundreds of citizens have expressed their rejection of this project and have petitioned against it, but only Kamel Aïssat is harassed, why? Kamel Aïssat is no ordinary citizen. He is a veteran political activist from the popular camp, a convinced activist for democracy and human rights, resolutely committed against injustice and oppression. A seasoned trade unionist, he has taken part in all workers' struggles. He is also an environmental activist who has regularly communicated about environmental pollution. As an academic teaching natural sciences, he regularly provides advice to farmers in the region. He has hosted several programs on the subject on Soummam radio. As an expert, he was commissioned by the Ministry of Agriculture to provide training in agricultural subdivisions and forest conservation. Today, he is a professor of microbiology and as such he is designated as coordinator of North African countries within the International Organization for Biological Control. It is his scientific insight that he has put at the service of his fellow citizens, his ability to challenge the reliability of the impact study carried out by pseudo-experts in the pay of Terramin that have earned

him harassment and targeting.

Why do the public authorities turn their backs on the laws of the republic? In 2012, the Minister of Energy and Mines, Youcef Yousfi, during a visit to Béjaïa, indicated that "the study that was presented by Terramin was not satisfactory". Two months later, in an interview with the *Quotidien d'Oran*, he said of Terramin that "small companies have come to try to do good business and they do not have the technical means to develop these mines in a rational way and in a way that can ensure the safety of the population and protect the environment." As a result, the contract was terminated. Two years later, a new mining law was promulgated "prohibiting, in its article 3, all mining activities on sites protected by international agreements and/or by legal texts".

But since 2020, the revival of mining has become one of the key axes of the Algerian government's economic policy to revive the crisis-ridden economy. Is it because the project is being revived at the initiative of the president that the intermediary authorities are allowed to discharge their responsibilities towards the law, trivialize a prominent environmental disaster, gag critics, repress dissent, ignore the laws of the land and put the lives of thousands of citizens at risk? Isn't it the first mission of the state to protect the integrity of its citizens? Doesn't the Constitution stipulate that the state shall protect agricultural land; ensure a healthy environment with a view to protecting people and developing their well-being; ensure continuous awareness of environmental risks; ensure the rational use of water, fossil fuels and other natural resources; and ensure protection of the environment in its land, sea and space dimensions by taking appropriate measures to punish polluters (Article 21).

Is it not the purpose of the environmental law to prevent any form of pollution or damage caused to the

environment by ensuring the safeguarding of its components, to strengthen information, awareness and participation of the public and the various stakeholders in environmental protection measures?

The Minister of the Environment and Renewable Energies recently stated that "all measures have been taken to protect the environment from the possible impacts of the project". But why on earth do we hide everything from the people and refuse to respond to their requests? Doesn't the Environment Act stipulate that "everyone has the right to be informed about the state of the environment and to participate in procedures prior to taking decisions that may have adverse effects on the environment"?

Article 7 of the same law stipulates that: "Any natural or legal person who so requests shall receive from the institutions concerned information relating to the state of the environment. This information may relate to any data available in any form relating to the state of the environment and to regulations, measures and procedures designed to ensure and organize the protection of the environment." This is what Kamel Aïssat and the citizens of the region have been calling for in vain.

In the current context, taking into account the state of ecological consciousness of society, it is not obvious that Aïssat's struggle is getting the attention it deserves. It is in the years to come, when the damage has been done, that we will perhaps measure our collective responsibility for the irreparable degradation that we have inflicted on nature. In the meantime, only a few whistleblowers will be rowing against all odds. Good people are like candles, they burn themselves to give light to others. Solidarity with Kamel AÏSSAT!

24 December 2023

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from ***l'Anticapitaliste***.



# Ahmed al-Jaber carves his name in the history of capitalist smoke and mirrors

27 December 2023, by **Daniel Tanuro**

Smiling at the applause, the Emirati president of the summit described the text drawn up under his leadership as “historic.” Many major media outlets have relayed this message, with the support of some scientists who participate in the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). In reality, however, there is little or nothing to justify this enthusiasm.

## “Historic”

What is “historic” is that a United Nations climate summit has been placed in the hands of the president of the national oil company of the seventh-largest hydrocarbon-producing country. What is also “historic” is that more than thirty years of negotiations to curb climate change have been able to take place without once mentioning the overwhelming and obvious responsibility of fossil fuels for global warming.

It can therefore be considered “historic” that the two little words “fossil fuels” appear for the first time in the document adopted by COP28. But it is also “historic” that they appear precisely at this 28th Conference of the Parties organized by a ferocious capitalist and patriarchal dictatorship, in a city known as the Mecca for laundering of all trafficking. All the more “historic” as the meeting, more than ever coupled with a trade fair, broke all records for infiltration by the world’s biggest polluters – representatives of the fossil fuel industry and agribusiness in the lead.

In his famous 2006 report, the former chief economist of the World Bank, the neoliberal Nicholas Stern, nevertheless described climate change

as “the most serious failure of the market economy”. [1] With the Dubai summit, we can measure the ideological progress made. All hint of self-criticism, all traces of scruples have disappeared. This is the “historic” message implicitly delivered by COP28: there is no hope outside the market; capitalism, its growth, its fossils and its technologies are the solution, regardless of the political regimes. So enough of politics! Let the businesspeople and the rulers do their work. Let us set aside these secondary issues such as social rights, democratic rights and women’s rights.

## Conjuring tricks

Sultan Ahmed al-Jaber has every reason to be proud of himself. A prince of smoke, he has achieved his goal: to concede a mention of fossil fuels in the central text adopted at the COP, while not giving the slightest credence to the idea that the extraction and burning of coal, oil and gas should be stopped.

It was a perilous exercise. It was achieved through a conjurer’s formula: Parties are “called upon to contribute to global efforts,” including by “moving away from fossil fuels in energy systems in a fair, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade, so as to achieve net zero by 2050 in line with science.” A fine example of Newspeak.

The original English text uses the expression “transitioning away from fossil fuels.” It poses so many problems of interpretation and translation that some have wanted to believe that it is synonymous with the “phasing out of fossil fuels.” They mistake their wishes for illusions. It’s definitely not about getting out of fossils. The aim is, as the text says, “to

accelerate action towards net zero by 2050”.

## Acceleration?

Accelerate action? What action? In thirty years of so-called “energy transition,” the share of fossil fuels in the global energy mix has barely fallen (from 83% to about 80%). The Dubai Declaration does not set any “targets” in this area, it only calls for “global efforts.” Accelerating these won’t be too difficult to achieve. There’s no need to fasten our seatbelts. Moreover, each state will conceive of “acceleration” in its own way, as national sovereignty requires.

The same goes for oil and gas companies. They made a whopping \$4 trillion in annual profits in 2021-22, according to the International Energy Agency. [2] All of them plan to increase their fossil fuel production in the short and medium term... by promising “net zero” by 2050 (they do not commit to anything by 2030). Last year, they invested only 2.5% of their profits in renewables. [3] Here too, “acceleration” will hardly be a problem. And each company will also design it in its own way, as free enterprise obliges.

In some quarters, “calls for Parties” to “contribute to global efforts” to “globally triple renewable energy capacity and multiply the average annual rate of increase in energy efficiency by 2030” are welcomed. “Efforts” in this direction are certainly commendable, but they are not a substitute for binding targets. In addition, it has been proven over the past thirty years that renewables can increase, or even explode, without fossil fuels significantly decreasing. Unsurprisingly, the text also deepens the conflation between “renewable

energies,” “carbon-free energies” (nuclear) and “decarbonised energies” (CO2 capture, swept under the carpet).

## OPEC dramatization manoeuvre

The diktat of big capital has been respected: no timetable, no constraints, no quantification, no declaration, even of principle, in favour of phasing out fossil fuels. Not even for the most polluting of all, coal: the text adopted in Dubai only recommends “accelerating efforts to reduce the use of coal without abatement” (5).

Much has been said about OPEC’s letter instructing its members at the COP not to accept any language that “targets” fossil fuels. [4] It provoked an outcry and indignant reactions from the followers of “green capitalism.” It is likely that this was a dramatic manoeuvre in order to facilitate al-Jaber’s task and consensus around his “historic” conclusions. Words, words, words.

## The carrot of

## financing

In addition to the question of mentioning fossil fuels, the other major question at this COP was to be financing. These included putting pressure on developed countries to honour their pledge to contribute \$100 billion per year to the Green Climate Fund and delivering on the COP27 agreement in principle on the creation of a special fund for “loss and damage” inflicted on countries most prone to disasters (which are also the least responsible for them).

No significant progress has been made on these issues. The 100 billion/year is still not on the table. The agreement on the “loss and damage” fund, announced with great fanfare at the beginning of the Dubai summit, does not solve anything. Apart from the satisfaction given to the United States: this fund will be managed by the World Bank. A few hundred million have been promised, while the estimated needs are around 1,000 billion. Dear friends of countries threatened by rising seas, come back to COP29.

Funding pledges are the carrot to move the donkey forward. As most of the funding is or will be in the form of loans, the carrot will quickly turn into a stick, in the form of increased debt.

## We won’t go to Baku

We welcome the fact that the multilateral process initiated by the United Nations Framework Convention (Rio 1992) continues, like the fire lit under the saucepan where the frog floats and does not see his end coming. A few more “historic” COPs like this one, and it will definitely be impossible to stay below 1.5°, or even under 2°C of warming, so that world capitalism will finally be freed from the “constraints” of the Paris Agreement”.

At COP29, the UAE’s work will be continued by Azerbaijan. Another oil state, another dictatorship will take over the smoke. The inspiration will be the KGB rather than the CIA; but, for the people, it makes no difference. Nor will it for the climate. The catastrophe will not be stopped by these COPs, but by the struggles, the convergences of the struggles and their international coordination.

15 December 2023

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Viewpoint* from *Gauche  
Anticapitaliste*.

## A regularization measure for immigrants is adopted in Greece!

26 December 2023, by **Andreas Sartzekis**

The introduction in a law on social protection of a measure allowing up to 300,000 immigrants to be regularized, passed on the same day that French MPs voted in favour of the shameful national preference law, was bound to cause surprise and reaction, particularly in the ranks of the right (ND: New Democracy). However, the measure adopted is obviously far from meaning free entry into Greece - on

the contrary!

## 30,000 applications for regularization

## underway

In recent years, tens of thousands of immigrants have been working in Greece under the worst conditions of undocumented workers, whether they be refugees or immigrants who have been unable to obtain or renew their residence permits. It is estimated that some 30,000 applications for

regularization are currently in progress, with extremely long waiting times. The legal provisions adopted provide a response to this situation, setting out the following conditions: a residence permit may be granted to any working non-EU immigrant worker - with proof of employment - provided they have been resident in Greece for at least three years as of 30 November. If you lose your job, your residence permit will be revoked. Family reunification is not authorized, but if the family is already present under the same conditions, it will be granted a residence permit valid for as long as the parent(s) are employed. This regularization will be accompanied by social rights that will, for example, make it easier to access healthcare. The measure will be in force for one year and will not be renewed.

## **An obvious improvement...**

Compared to the general situation of immigrant workers in Greece, and when we recall certain episodes such as the treatment of strawberry pickers as slaves, these measures constitute progress, and that is why they were voted for by the entire parliamentary left. It is, of course, for the same reason that the three fascist groupuscules voted against it, with arguments that would not have been denied by a Bardella or a Ciotti... in the gutter. And it was also because Mitsotakis feared that his hyper-majority group would split during the vote that the instruction to vote in favour was given.

Indeed, the extreme right of ND condemned the measure (with the exception of the Minister of Labour) and made it known that they were voting for it out of obligation, while speaking of a serious mistake. Only one member of ND was allowed to vote against it: the ultra-nationalist former Prime Minister Samaras, who is trying to unite behind him the entire

fascistoid current inside and outside ND. Hoping to isolate him better, Mitsotakis allowed him to carry out this "whimsical vote" by explaining that, as a former prime minister, he could be granted this right... which Samaras intends to take advantage of to try to get back on his feet.

## **Responding to the needs of employers**

More generally, the right-wing has been very vocal in its opposition to this measure, and even the right-wing press has 'wrapped' its justifications in nauseating rhetoric, as in the newspaper *Eléftheros Typos*: "Reservations of all kinds are respectable, especially on the part of residents of neighbourhoods where the fear of unfamiliar faces in the neighbourhood is real. However [...], rather than enrolling them in organized crime gangs or radical sections of Islam, it would be better for them (=immigrants) to register with Social Security and pay tax." There's a lot of grumbling and racist venom, but they don't dare go any further, because there's a higher reason for this measure, and the Minister for Migration (!) makes it clear: Greece is short of manpower in a whole series of key sectors, such as agriculture, construction and tourism, and it's estimated that there are 300,000 vacant jobs. Not only have many young Greeks left the land of the memorandums, but many immigrant workers have recently left Greece for countries with less unbearable conditions: Spain and Italy, for example, with its regularization measures... taken by Meloni!

The pressure exerted by employers on the government to facilitate the residence and employment of immigrants is therefore obvious: 63% of companies are finding it difficult to find well-trained workers in technical (non-university) specialities. For his part, the head of the Bank of Greece considers it essential to incorporate immigrants into key sectors where

there is a serious shortage of labour (Ef Syn, 20 December). As the KKE (Greek Communist Party) pointed out during the parliamentary debate: "It was not compassion that drove the government, but the need for the big construction groups to find cheap labour".

## **A measure that does not call into question the government's racist policy**

Indeed, a closer look at the preamble to the measure reveals that it is framed by martial declarations to the effect that the fight against the entry of refugees into Greece is not only unchallenged, but remains a priority for this reactionary government. The illegal deportations will therefore continue... To better serve the most racist MPs, the measure adopted is even presented as being in the service of this policy of permanent repression: Minister Kairidis explains that if an immigrant worker loses his job and therefore his residence permit, it will be easier for the police to arrest and deport him...

So, even if the Left could hardly not vote for this measure, it is clear that it bears no relation to previous regularization measures (1997, 2001, 2005) which enabled hundreds of thousands of immigrants to obtain permanent residence permits. And to illustrate the continuation of its policy, the government is in the process of cutting funding for the Helios refugee integration programme (which began with the eviction of thousands of refugees from their homes), with the threat that 4,000 refugees will be made homeless and 500 workers will lose their jobs.

*Athens, 21 December 2023*

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **l'Anticapitaliste**.*

# Start of radical political change for the working class in Japan

25 December 2023, by **Karen Yamanaka**

The Abe faction has sent many politicians to the heart of Japan's Kishida regime. The scandal began with criminal charges for underreporting income from ticket sales at fundraising parties. In fact, 80-90% of the income from the LDP factions' fundraising party ticket sales have become an underground economy where no one knows who bought how much. It was also alleged that the hidden income from the sale of party tickets for fundraising events had been kicked back to LDP members. In response to the kickback scandal, incumbent Prime Minister Fumio Kishida replaced four cabinet ministers, including the Chief Cabinet Secretary, on 14 December. And he also decided on their replacements. Five deputy ministers and a parliamentary secretary of the Abe faction also resigned.

The kickback scandals were also uncovered one after another in other factions other than the Abe faction. And even the Kishida faction, headed by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, came under suspicion. Furthermore, the allegations of kickback money scandals by key cabinet members and executives of the LDP continue to surface, and the allegations continue to grow. The problem cannot be solved by simply replacing Abe faction ministers and party officials. On 14 December, when the replacement of four cabinet ministers was announced, Japan's Jiji Press published the results of a public opinion poll. According to the poll, the Cabinet's support was at 17.1 percent and the LDP's support was at 18.3 percent, both the lowest since the LDP returned to power in 2012. [5] The anger of the Japanese people against the unaccountable government is shaking Japanese politics.

## Post-closing investigation of the current extraordinary Diet session

These kickback money scandals by the largest faction of the LDP exposed the institutional problem of politicians' management only for their personal benefits. The cabinet of Fumio Kishida has been significantly reshuffled in the wake of the scandals. It is an unusual situation for the LDP to have zero ministers from the Abe faction, which makes up a quarter of the LDP's parliamentary members. In November of this year, after the criminal complaint was filed, the Special Investigation Department of the Tokyo District Public Prosecutors Office launched an investigation into allegations that five major factions of the LDP, including the Abe faction, had failed to report a total of about JPY 40,000,000 income from fundraising parties in their political fund balance reports. [6] Abe faction leaders at the heart of the Kishida regime are all suspected of involvement in the kickback scandal.

The five main factions of the LDP include the faction headed by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida himself. In the course of the investigation by the Special Investigation Department of the Tokyo District Public Prosecutors Office, not only was the income from the sale of tickets to the fundraising party not included in the report, but it also turned out that the amount of money collected by the council members in excess of their respective "quotas" was hidden from both income and expenses and kicked back to them. In the case of the Abe faction,

the total amount is reported to be as much as 500 million yen. Since the kickback scandal was uncovered, the Japanese media have used many questionable terms such as "party ticket", "the kickback money", and "quota" in its daily coverage. Even many Japanese who do not normally pay attention to politics are now forced to realize that the government is in danger. A full-scale investigation by the investigative authorities after the current extraordinary Diet session ends on 13 December would be a major blow to the Kishida regime.

## How the kickback money is generated

To understand the kickback process in Japanese politics, it is first necessary to understand what parties are, how party tickets are sold, and how the kickback process is carried out. The word "party" will raise the spirits of many people. However, fundraising parties are not ones in the original sense. Fundraising parties do not intend to entertain attendees, nor do they expect them to come to the venue. The purpose of parties is to get people to pay for them. Particularly in the early 2000s, when the LDP was thriving, lawmakers held nightly parties at famous hotels around the National Assembly. After a short speech by the LDP leaders, the party moves to a standing buffet, which lasts about 30 minutes. Participants had little or no food. After the Covid-19 crisis, the number of "parties" where food was not even served increased. These unusual "parties" are held with about 2,000 participants packed into the venue.

It is a rule of Japanese law that the



income and expenses of “parties” must be reported. The reports are then made available to the public. The Abe faction’s report for 2022, released this November, shows that more than 70 percent of its income is actually profit. [7] And Abe faction members sold 2.5 times as many tickets as the venue, which accommodated as many as 2,000 people, could hold. In 2022, 59 companies and political organizations were listed as having made payments in excess of JPY 200,000. Some of these companies paid JPY 1,500,000. If party tickets are purchased by a political organization, this must be noted in its own report and made public. However, in the current report, the names are only listed in a small portion of the total income. Most of the records in the report do not show who paid for it.

## **The kickback money intentionally not mentioned**

The Abe faction’s report identified more than JPY 30,000,000 (“undocumented”) for the five-year period from 2018 to 2022. In addition, “undocumented” were found in all the reports of the five major factions of the LDP. The total amount was nearly JPY 60,000,000 over the five-year period. After a series of media reports, the LDP factions revised their descriptions of their reports. However, the failure to list such a large amount is not a simple mistake.

It is clear that the records were deliberately falsified. The purpose of the false reports is to make the kickback money. However, the false reports revealed this time are only the tip of the iceberg. The Special Investigation Department of the Tokyo District Public Prosecutors Office, which received the criminal charges, is currently conducting a thorough investigation. In the course of the investigation, it is suspected that the amount collected by the lawmakers of each faction in excess of their respective “quotas” was “kicked back” to them, concealing both income and expenses from them. These

“kickbacks” are nothing more than secret funds, as the exchange is not mentioned in the reports.

## **Japan, where secret funds are widespread**

The kickback scandal against the Abe faction of the LDP was pursued in earnest after Abe’s death during a campaign speech in July 2022. The dark side of Abe’s “one-strong” politics as a right-wing nationalist might have been hushed up, including the kickback scandal, had it not been for the 2022 incident. Moreover, secret funds in Japan are not just an issue for the LDP. The scandal being pursued against the Abe faction of the LDP is merely an overture in the pursuit of problems in politics, government and business that have been covered up by state power. Kickbacks in the Japanese police organization have been reported in the media many times, but have not been considered a major problem. [8] In the past, police organizations have committed the obvious crime of cheating on budget irregularities by double bookkeeping. However, these have not been prosecuted as crimes and investigations have not been initiated in earnest because the police officers who should be investigating the crimes have been directing the wrongdoing.

In 2009, it was revealed that major Japanese general contractors were inflating construction costs for Japan’s overseas projects, such as Official Development Assistance (ODA). [9] The company also makes elaborate efforts to pool the kickback money, such as setting up paper companies overseas. The illegal kickbacks were used to finance the LDP and other ruling parties to win domestic and overseas construction contracts, among other things. There are many politicians and bureaucrats in Japan and abroad who are dependent on bribes. The “politics and money” of the LDP, mostly the ruling party, has been one of the biggest issues in post-war Japanese politics (e.g., the Lockheed scandal in 1976 and the Recruit scandal in 1988). Politics has

become a big “industry” in Japan. Japanese politicians need to satisfy these “industries” to get a boost. And the darkness in Japanese society has been preserved and not pursued by the political dominance of the long-term government and the LDP, which has been maintained by the historical background of post-war politics in Japan.

## **For the struggle to end the LDP**

As of this writing today (19 December), the first mandatory investigations have begun into the offices of two factions, including the Abe faction. This is a situation that could destroy “the nation of Japan” if prosecutors seriously investigate (without restraint). The media’s pursuit of Prime Minister Abe’s “one-strong” politics and the LDP continues unabated. And the accusations against the LDP and its members are unfathomable. In response to the ongoing persecution of the LDP as a whole, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has announced that he will refrain from holding factional parties for the time being and that he will no longer serve as the leader of the Kishida faction. But all the statements of the LDP ministers are far from the public opinion. In addition to the need for testimony from the former general secretaries of the major factions, a thorough investigation of the kickback money allegations is needed.

It is imperative that Japan’s money politics be eradicated through a total ban on fundraising parties and corporate and group donations, including income from ticket sales for fundraising parties. It is also necessary to abolish subsidies to political parties, which have obvious harmful effects. The political party subsidy system, which allocates taxpayer funds to political parties, effectively forces political parties to make donations, and is a system that violates the Constitution by trampling on “freedom of thought and belief” and “freedom to support political parties”.

The death of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was the catalyst for



breaking the long succession of dishonest and undemocratic policies. Abe's pro-capital policies had ignored the victims and exploited the labour force with low wages and unstable working conditions in the name of "self-responsibility theory. Even many

Japanese who do not normally pay attention to politics are now aware of Japan's political crisis. Now is the time to continue the struggle to remove the LDP's dysfunctional far-right government and end the LDP's

policies that have been abandoned by the people. This is the starting point of a process of radical political change for the working class in Japan.

**19 December 2023**

## **Interview with Ukrainian and Russian socialists**

**24 December 2023, by Collective**

### **How did you get involved in politics?**

Vasylyna: My interest in political activism emerged during my studies in urban studies, where we often used Marxist theory to analyse different processes that affect our living spaces. Surrounded by lots of young progressive people from all over Europe at the university and united by similar struggles of being international students, we initiated a union for the students of our department, fighting for equal tuition fees for European and non-European students. I joined Sotsialnyi Rukh because theory alone is not enough, driven by an urge to be active on the ground. Facing devastating current challenges, Ukrainian society is extremely vulnerable but definitely more open to change. Obviously, things cannot go on in the same way as they did before. For instance, there is a lot more discussion on corruption, and journalists are uncovering examples at the highest levels of power, so it feels like things are starting to shift.

Mia: I became interested in politics during my school years. When I was 14 years old, the annexation of Crimea happened. This was a moment when I really started to dive into news reports and listen to political commentators. However, I was almost unaware of differences on the political spectrum. The opposition field in Russia is predominantly liberal, so for many, the

words "liberalism" and "democracy" are often equated. Like many people my age, I was anti-Putin, anti-conservative, pro-free elections, civil rights, and anti-corruption. I suppose my time spent at the university was important in this sense. I started reading a lot more about history and politics, and I was able to engage in political debates from a much more critical perspective. Since 2021, I have engaged in politics outside of the Student Council and university settings. I served as an election observer for the parliamentary and municipal elections of 2021 and started to participate in the activities of RSM. Soon after this, I became a full member.

### **What is Sotsialnyi Rukh's position on the Zelensky government?**

Vasylyna: The government's stance is clear about fighting for the sovereignty of Ukraine, and this gets a lot of support from people. But we as an organisation are extremely critical of the political direction of the government, accompanied by neoliberal reforms and massive cuts to public spending. In Sotsialnyy Rukh, we are finding ways to organise around these issues. People stand united to defend the country, but this does not mean that Zelensky has unanimous support.

Unfortunately, oligarchy and foreign capital have a significant influence on our current president. The current

government was not capable of transitioning from an economy based on profit to a war economy that would work for providing defence capacity and solving humanitarian problems. Seeking allies amongst international partners, mostly among the richest states that have their own imperialist interests (like the USA), could cause harm to the support of Ukraine and bring out confusion in the countries of the Global South. We do not believe that our government is capable of fixing mistakes. That's why there is a strong urge for mass grassroots pressure and political critique from a leftist perspective. The key priorities of the state should be based on the protection of people's interests, fostering social cohesion, and promoting global solidarity against oppression.

### **What campaigning work is the Revolutionary Socialist Movement doing?**

Mia: Campaigning work is difficult for our comrades in Russia due to the repressive regime. We try to work within the law because we don't want to endanger activists. Our main goals now are to shift the oppositional political conversation to the left and provide practical support for people. For instance, we have been doing work with independent trade unions in Russia. There is a union for delivery workers, which we have been helping to organise and support. When the activists and independent trade union

leaders are imprisoned, we organise help—financially and via media campaigns.

We are actively working within the “University Platform” that unites professors and students to defend their rights and freedoms. We try to build communities and provide a space to discuss politics to overcome the atomisation of Russian society. Even inside repressive regimes, there are still struggles and problems that are fought on the ground. When possible, we align with grassroots initiatives to defend people’s rights against construction companies’ lobbying and resist the destruction of nature. We are also prioritising the feminist platform as well as anti- and decolonial work within our movement; this is particularly important to us given the invasion of Ukraine. What is often overlooked is that while our government wages a colonial war against Ukraine, indigenous people in Russia are dying out. Indigenous populations often live in poor outlying areas of Russia’s periphery, where people are mired in poverty and debt. Mobilisation occurs disproportionately in poor regions of the country, where people are pressured to join the army to pay off debts, often lack the ability to resist, and have fewer sources of information than the rest of the population.

### **What about the war?**

Vasylyna: We support the Ukrainians’ right to resist the invasion and colonisation. Some Sotsialnyi Rukh members have joined the armed forces and are fighting the Russian army. There are not really other viable options in terms of separate fighting militias and units at the moment.

### **Some on the left say that the conflict is primarily a proxy conflict between imperialists; do you agree?**

Vasylyna: We do not see this as a proxy war. It is, first and foremost, a people’s war for national liberation. At the beginning of the full-scale invasion, people were self-organising, doing anything they could to resist the occupation, speaking to soldiers, and older women making homemade explosives. People from all walks of

life—LGBT+ people and women, artists, workers, and academics—joined the army to fight for the Ukrainians’ right to self-determination.

Mia: Some on the left have this false pacifism, and they put an ideological lens on the war that obscures rather than clarifies, but actually obscures the situation for real people on the ground. Of course, the Ukrainians have the right to defend themselves; they are the main victims in this conflict. This label of ‘proxy war’ doesn’t give any agency to the Ukrainians themselves. People calling for negotiations and a ceasefire need to be clear on what basis. The problem is, no one would dictate to Russia the price they would demand for peace. But some on the left want to dictate conditions to the Ukrainians and say they need to sacrifice their national sovereignty by accepting annexations. Why?

### **What is the strength of the far right in Ukraine?**

Vasylyna: The far-right can still be a threat to some individuals and social movements, but in general, Ukrainian society stands against authoritarian and chauvinistic ideas, as those ideas are at the base of Russian imperialism. Moreover, the influence and visibility of far-right movements in Ukraine are less strong compared to Western societies, for instance, Germany. Currently, far-right activists are not represented in big politics, but we need to be prepared to resist far-right interests in the future. History shows that wars, unfortunately, shape the favourable base for spreading hateful ideologies. Nevertheless, Ukrainian society demonstrated that it’s empowered by its diversity and not by cultivating ethnic nationalism and national isolation.

### **Will Ukraine win the war?**

Vasylyna: Of course! It is the only way to liberate the country. We have to end the Russian invasion as a priority. We definitely need more arms because this is an actual fight, and these things matter.

### **How can the international workers movement and left help?**

Vasylyna: We have the European Network of Solidarity with Ukraine, which meets weekly. There have been international visits by delegates from different countries. There was a good campaign to cancel Ukraine’s debt and, recently, to free the Ukrainian human rights activist Maksym Butkevych, who was captured by Russian forces and tortured before being sentenced to 13 years in prison. Anything that people can do to help spread information about people like Butkevych and put pressure on Russia to release him would help. We would very much like the international left to offer Ukraine progressive solutions that would allow us to implement a just reconstruction and ensure sustainable development. The people of Ukraine want to live in peace and decent social conditions, and for this, it is necessary to eliminate the influence of the oligarchy, transfer all economic resources to public ownership, and write off the foreign debt.

Mia: We urge comrades around the world, but especially in the Western world, where politics is more open and you can have more public discussions: We don’t want the Russian regime to win; it will be a disaster in Ukraine and Russia. There has been a precedent for lifting sanctions from Russian oligarchs in Europe (for example, the head of “Alfa Bank,” Mikhail Fridman). We claim that sanctions against Russian capitalists should be maintained, and the money should be directed towards the Ukrainian resistance, Russian civil society organisations, and helping reconstruct Ukraine after the war. We also call for international solidarity with political prisoners. Among them are leftists, anarchists, anti-fascists, and trade union organisers. We welcome direct actions to help us raise money to help those needing political asylum and those already imprisoned. Prosecuted activists often escape, but they end up fleeing to places like Kazakhstan and other countries under Russian influence, where they are detained and then face deportation back to Russia. At the same time, the visa regime is very restrictive, and the procedures take a very long time. Land borders with EU countries are effectively closed, and the simplified procedure for obtaining

visas has been canceled. There is a need to support those needing political asylum—those who refuse to be sent to war and escape. It is necessary to demand that the European Commission and the European Parliament adopt a unified approach to providing international protection for Russian citizens who are at risk of persecution.

**What was your view of the International Committee meeting?**

Vasylyna: It was very important to come and hear the arguments from different organisations. There are certainly some contributions that my organisation would disagree with. But also, I am interested in discussing within SR how to develop our policies and ideas based on some of what I heard.

Mia: There were some positives, but also some negatives. On the positive, everyone is open to hearing other

positions and wants to know more about the positions of the RSM and what is going on in Russia. But my criticism is that we merely exchange political opinions; the left spends so much time arguing over concepts like whether something is imperialist or not. But where is the practical solidarity? We need to do more to share what we are doing on the ground. It cannot just be ideological positions.

*Source: [Anti\\*Capitalist Resistance](#).*

# The first limits of the democratic government in Poland

23 December 2023, by **Jan Malewski**

However, it was not until two months later that the new Polish majority [10] was able to form a government and its Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, was sworn in by President Andrzej Duda on 15 December. The latter had initially reappointed the conservative Prime Minister Morawiecki on the pretext that his party had come out on top in the elections (35.58%) even though it did not have a majority (194 out of 460 mandates). The conservative right took advantage of these two extra months to appoint its own people to head the army and the state apparatus, to spend money and to continue to subjugate the judiciary.

## Independence of the judiciary and European aid

As soon as he became prime minister, Tusk flew to the European Council in Brussels to try to unblock European aid (€59.8 billion from the national recovery plan and €76.5 billion from the Cohesion Fund). The country had seen the payment of these funds blocked as a result of its policy of subjugating the judiciary. In particular, the EU is demanding the

abolition of the Disciplinary Chamber and the appointment of an independent tribunal to deal with disciplinary cases involving judges, the abolition of the texts allowing judges to be appointed, and the refusal to allow judgements to be handed down by judges appointed illegally. Adam Bodnar, the new Minister of Justice - an independent jurist - introduced regulatory changes as soon as he took office. However, it will take time to adopt the new laws, and if President Duda refuses to countersign them, the Sejm must vote by two-thirds of its members. The new majority does not have as many mandates. Tusk's first success: the EU has just granted an advance of more than €5 billion before the end of 2023, to be used to modernize and decarbonize energy systems.

Addressing the Sejm on 11 December, Tusk asserted that his coalition's election promises would be fulfilled: "teachers' salaries will be increased by 30% from 1 January, and the salaries of all civil servants will be increased by 20%, as promised", and "we will immediately introduce a second annual increase in pensions as soon as inflation exceeds 5%".

## The issue of abortion rights

While the "15 October coalition" owes its electoral victory to the majority women's vote, Tusk spoke of the "very painful problem of the right to legal and safe abortion". The coalition government does not agree on the legalization of abortion. The deputy prime minister from the conservative agrarian party has already announced that he wants a return "to the compromise" of 1993, i.e. limiting the right to abortion to three cases: rape, danger to the life of the woman and serious foetal handicap. This latter reason was ruled unconstitutional by the Constitutional court in 2020, however the court itself is widely considered to be illegitimate. The President of the Sejm has called for a referendum and is opposed to legalizing abortion.

As a result, one of the main issues that led to the victory of the democratic opposition remains unresolved. The small anti-capitalist party, Razem, rightly decided not to join the government, although it did vote in favour of it. For it is through social mobilization in the streets that the

main popular demands can be won, first and foremost the right of women to decide their own lives. For the

moment, the wait-and-see attitude is still dominant.

21 December 2023

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from *l'Anticapitaliste*.

## Putin transforms Wagner in Africa

22 December 2023, by **Paul Martial**

The Wagner company has enabled Russia to regain a foothold on a continent that has long been neglected. It is active in Libya, Mali, Sudan, the Central African Republic and more recently in Burkina Faso and perhaps soon in Niger.

### Trojan horse

Its presence has only very recently been officially recognised. Wagner has enabled the Kremlin to establish a military presence without assuming the political responsibilities and financial burdens. Because mercenary activity goes hand in hand with the plundering of natural resources. These can be gold in Sudan, logs and diamonds in the Central African Republic, oil in Libya, or payments by the authorities, as in Mali.

As soon as Prigozhin's death was announced, the Russian Ministry of Defence organised tours of Africa with a twofold objective. To reassure African officials of the durability of their military presence and to reorganise the troops on the ground.

In the open

Moscow had the choice between putting a new oligarch in charge or

integrating Wagner into the Russian army. According to the neo-conservative US think tank, the Institute for the Study of War, the latter option was chosen. Putin has entrusted Yunus-bek Evkourov, Deputy Defence Minister, with the creation of an "Africa Corps" attached to the army.

This new configuration will make it possible to avoid too great a margin of autonomy and, above all, to respond to the new political situation in Africa. There is no longer any point in Russia moving forward in disguise. The widespread but very real anti-Western sentiment allows Moscow to present itself as an alternative in a direct confrontation with Western countries opened up by the war in Ukraine. As Igor Korotchenko, the army's unofficial spokesman, was quoted by the NGO All Eyes On Wagner as saying: "For the Kremlin, the main opponents on the dark continent are the United States and its NATO allies, including France. The Russian military department will counter Western influence and strengthen Moscow's position in Africa".

### No supreme

### saviour

In Burkina Faso, where some fifty Russian soldiers recently landed, the modus operandi has not changed. It is a mixture of military and civilian presence, with the "African Initiative" association extolling the benefits of the saviours. As Korotchenko puts it:

The use of force in Africa should bring Russia not only political benefits (bringing friendly governments and regimes to power) and military benefits (renting out bases, airfields and logistics centres free of charge), but also economic dividends (control over deposits of gold, platinum, cobalt, uranium, diamonds, oil and rare earths, and their development on mutually advantageous terms with African partners).

A perfect definition of imperialism in Africa.

20 December 2023

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from *l'Anticapitaliste*.

## Could the U.S. Become Involved in a War Between Venezuela and Guyana?

## 21 December 2023, by **Dan La Botz**

President Irfaan Ali of Guyana declared, “EseQUIBO is ours, every square inch of it,” and sent troops to reinforce the country’s border with Venezuela. Brazil, which is a neighbor of both countries has also sent armed forces to the area. Brazilian President Luiz Inacio “Lula” da Silva expressed his concern about the situation, saying, “We are going to treat it very carefully because what we don’t want here in South America is war.” St. Vincent and Grenadines president Ralph Gonsalves and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres have persuaded Maduro and Ali to meet to discuss the issue, but Ali says he will not discuss the country’s borders and Maduro reiterates his claim to Esequibo.

Why is Maduro claiming Esequibo at this time?

Maduro, a virtual dictator, faces an election in 2024, and it is not clear that he could win a free and fair election. The country is racked by economic crisis, hampered by U.S. sanctions, and is experiencing mass emigration. Out of a population of 30 million in 2015, 7.7 million Venezuelans have migrated, principally to other South American countries, though almost a quarter of a million to the United States.

In the last election in 2018, Maduro won only after most opposition parties and candidates were declared ineligible, in a process riddled with irregularities, and with relatively few voters going to the polls. In 2019,

conservative challenger Juan Guidó claimed to be interim president and was recognized by over 60 countries, including the United States, throwing the country into a years-long crisis, though Guidó failed to take power.

In the coming election, Maduro will face Maria Corina Machado, an economic conservative and member of the opposition party in the Venezuelan National Assembly. She won in the opposition’s unofficial primary election, in which, remarkably, 2.4 million people participated. Machado has already been disqualified from holding public office because of her support for U.S. sanctions. The U.S. government says sanctions won’t be lifted unless the opposition parties can participate in the elections.

Claiming Esequibo allows Maduro to offer the promise of economic improvement. A war would provide him with a chance to wrap himself in the flag, declare a national emergency, and postpone the elections. But he may find himself in a war not only with Guyana but perhaps also with the United States.

The U.S. Southern Command which oversees Central America, South America, and the Caribbean, is already conducting joint flight operations with the Guyana Defense Forces. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told President Ali that he could count on Washington’s support “for Guyana’s sovereignty and our robust security and economic cooperation.” Maduro has criticized

Guyana for involving the United States.

Since the election of the leftist government of President Hugo Chávez in 1999, the United States has opposed Venezuela. In 2006, President George W. Bush imposed sanctions on Venezuela for its failure to cooperate in counter-terrorism and anti-drug efforts. President Barack Obama imposed further sanctions in 2014 because of Venezuelan human rights violations. The Donald Trump administration expanded the sanctions, though President Joseph Biden has subsequently moderated them, permitting the sale of oil. The U.S. recognition of Guidó as interim president was an attempt to overthrow Chavez’s successor Maduro.

Already involved in supporting Ukraine and Israel, the Biden administration would no doubt like to avoid another war. Since the discovery of enormous off-shore oil fields in Guyana, American and other foreign petroleum companies, such as Esso Exploration & Production Guyana, a descendant of ExxonMobil and Standard Oil, already have operations in Esequibo, and the oil companies have always played a large role in U.S. foreign policy.

War? Not yet. But the left must be watching, prepared to oppose U.S. involvement.

*11 December 2023*

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## **Shock policy and mano dura in Argentina**

### 20 December 2023, by **Lola Z.**

The Macri-Milei alliance means that key posts have been given to the traditional right, which has been

rewarded for its support for the outsider: the Economy to Macri’s former minister, Luis Caputo, and

Homeland Security to the defeated presidential candidate, Patricia Bullrich. Both demonstrated the full



potential of this alliance by embodying the government's first attacks this week: a blank cheque for austerity and repression.

## Flamethrower plan

Caputo's announcements? An economic "shock" that is even more violent than expected: strong devaluation, no price controls, but salaries, pensions and state budgets maintained. The aim was no longer to make the "political caste" pay the price of austerity, but to reduce spending... through inflation. The "flamethrower plan" replaces the "chainsaw plan": a scorched earth policy that will allow those who survive to enjoy the calm after the storm... If the plan works!

According to the projections of the minister - who hopes to resolve the crisis within 18 to 24 months - worsening the crisis and stagflation are inevitable for a better tomorrow. The "truth of the figures" (inflation estimated at 3,700%, at a rate of +1% per day) is being met with "intensive therapy".

## "Order and Progress": freedom according to Milei and Bullrich

The second salvo came when the object Bullrich announced his law and order programme in a press release soberly entitled "Without freedom, there can be no order or progress".

The Bullrich Protocol details the government's response to the protests. In view of the announcement by the left-wing forces and the unions of a first demonstration on 20 December, the anniversary of the days of 19 and 20 December 2001, which were in response to the same shock and anti-democratic measures, the decree clarified the Milei-Bullrich line on democratic dialogue: extra-judicial intervention by federal forces in all cases of indiscriminate blocking of roads, with identification and registration of organizations and individuals as "perpetrators, accomplices and instigators", transmission of antecedents to the authorities and to the courts in the event of environmental damage (tyre fires), and charging of the cost of operations, including repressive measures, to the organizations and perpetrators. This is no more and no less than applying anti-terrorist legislation to "internal enemies" and other social "hostage-takers", and doing so by decree.

Another indicator is the attack on left-wing MPs by an Avanza Libertad MP. The episode would have been anecdotal if, in response to a tweet from FIT-U leader Myriam Bregman denouncing the unconstitutionality of

repressive measures and defending the right to demonstrate that "nothing can stop", the MP had refrained from responding with an open threat and a thinly veiled call for violence: "[Yes]: prison or a bullet".

## Facing up to the extreme right

Milei confirms many of the fears raised by his detractors. How bitter must be those who, preferring to position themselves against the "false Massa-Milei dilemma" in the first round, opted *mezza voce* for passive resistance and abstention on 20 November.

The time has come for unity and building of resistance fronts. Over and above the immediate dangers for our social camp, an even more catastrophic defeat would be on the cards if we remain stunned.

How can we face up to the multiple offensives and enter into resistance while confronting a never-ending crisis, all the more so under the threat of criminalization and repression whose precedents are still vivid in our collective memory? The mobilizations of the next few days cannot be understood without taking this into account.

20 December 2023  
Translated by **International Viewpoint** from *l'Anticapitaliste*.

# Immigration at Center of Political Debate—and Biden Turns Right

19 December 2023, by **Dan La Botz**

Trump's racist position has not changed, but President Joe Biden, at least rhetorically, favored more liberal policies, has moved to the right and is now negotiating what could become much more restrictive immigration policies.

In four years, Biden never succeeded in implementing more humane policies. Trump's Title 42 health restrictions used to exclude immigrants remained in place for months, scheduling of interviews for immigrants seeking asylum remained

difficult, with many waiting for weeks in unhealthy and unsafe conditions on the Mexican side of the border—though finally there was minimal improvement in the system, it didn't satisfy either Republicans or Democratic Party progressives.

Republican legislators warn about an immigrant “invasion” and deplore “chaos on the southern border.” They call for closing the border, ending the asylum system, and revoking birth-right citizenship. Republican governors Greg Abbott of Texas and DeSantis of Florida sent bus and plane loads of immigrants to Democratic Party run cities like Chicago, New York, and Washington. The arrival of thousands of Venezuelan and other immigrants has created a sense of crisis in the cities. Though two-thirds of Americans still favor legal immigration, increasing numbers want some restrictions and many are concerned with the rise of immigration at the southern border and a sudden increase in the number of immigrants in some big cities.

Biden, anxious to pass funding bills for arms for Ukraine and Israel, has and seeing the shift in public opinion

regarding immigration, is negotiating the issue with Republicans. They, with a majority in the House, are refusing to vote for the Ukraine and Israel arms bills until Biden gives in to their immigration reform demands.

The Republicans want in particular to change U.S. asylum policy. U.S. law and the United Nations say that anyone has the right to seek asylum who fears persecution in their home country because of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or their political opinions. Republicans would in effect abolish asylum as well as humanitarian parole and temporary protective status that offer temporary residence and work permits to tens of thousands of immigrants. Biden is now prepared to expel migrants without asylum screenings and to expand immigration detention and

deportations. He would restore Trump’s Title 42 restrictions, now without the excuse of a health crisis.

Biden is taking this new more conservative position hoping to pass his Ukraine and Israel funding bill, but progressive Democrats, human rights and immigrant rights activists, and the left are furious over these proposed changes. Pramila Jayapal, head of the Congressional Progressive Caucus stated, “Throwing immigrants under the bus—including those who helped give Democrats the White House and Senate and will be expected to again—is bad politics and bad policy. I will not vote for a package that includes harmful immigration policies.” Still progressives are unlikely to desert Biden in the November election, when Trump is the other choice.

*17 December 2023*

## **Fossil takeover of the COPs**

**18 December 2023, by Daniel Tanuro**

Whether private or public, these large fossil fuel groups have for decades been in a defensive position, imbued more or less explicitly with climate denial. Over the years, they have successively contested global warming itself, its “anthropogenic” origin, the role of CO<sub>2</sub>, then the share of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions attributable to coal, oil and gas.

### **A long taboo**

Due to their enormous political influence, the energy capitalists have scored significant points: the major responsibility of fossil fuels is not mentioned in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, Rio 1992) ; nor is it in the Paris Agreement adopted at COP21 (2015). These documents argue for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, not for extracting and burning fewer fossils.

It was not until COP26 (Glasgow, 2021) that the expression “fossil fuels” appeared in the texts. During this COP, an attempt to decide on an exit from coal was rejected at the last minute, and the resolution adopted was only for the reduction of fossils (“phasing down”), not for their abandonment (“phasing out”). In the meantime, the United Nations inventory of policies followed in application of Paris has delivered its verdict: the world is heading straight into the wall, towards a temperature rise of 2.9°C. Will “phasing out” finally take hold? For all fossils or just coal? In any case, resource exploiters are under increasing pressure.

### **The pressure is rising**

Scientists have unmasked the lies of the “merchants of doubt” and defused the schemes to try to discredit their

conclusions [11]. Social pressure has continued to grow with increasingly frequent and violent disasters. It also gained traction within the ruling class, particularly among insurers. All this has translated at the level of the main governments into a desire to begin something like an “energy transition”. In this context, the old tactic of backward obstruction becomes difficult to maintain.

Energy groups like to present themselves as benefactors who offer humanity heat, light, mobility and development. Continuing to ignore climate issues could seriously damage their brand image. Populations convinced of the fact that these capitalists, with full knowledge of the facts, deliberately sacrificed their living conditions on the altar of profit could demand compensation for the damage, cry for revenge, or even demand the socialization of the energy sector with expropriation of the

capitalists.

## Obscene profits

The political risk is all the more serious as fossil yields have exploded, mainly thanks to Russian aggression against Ukraine: according to the International Energy Agency, multinationals (including Shell, ExxonMobil, Chevron, BP, TotalEnergies) reaped \$4 trillion in profit in 2022 – more than double the average profit of recent years. National airlines are not left out, particularly Saudi Aramco (\$161 billion, up 46 per cent compared to 2021), its little Emirati sister ADNOC (\$24.7 billion, up 27 per cent), Norwegian Equinor (\$151 billion, + 67 per cent) and their peers in other countries (Qatar, Kuwait, etc.).

These astronomical profits become downright obscene when we know that the number of people in the world living without access to electricity increased in 2022 for the first time in twenty years. And this is not about to change: at constant policy, according to the IEA, 660 million human beings will still be without power in 2030, including 550 million in sub-Saharan Africa. All this while the commitment made in 2009 by rich countries to pay one hundred billion dollars per year to the Green Climate Fund from 2020 is still not respected. Climate injustice is the major scandal of our time. It could fuel uprisings, even revolutions.

For companies, it is better to anticipate, adapt to the growing pressure and use it to orient the objectives, means and rhythms of climate policy according to their interests. The strategic objective does not change – to spend as little as possible and prevent any restrictive timetable for the release of fossils, in the short, medium, or even long term if possible. But the tactic is adapting: it is now a matter of positioning itself at the centre of the game by presenting the sector as the main part of the solution rather than as the main source of the problem. Launching a takeover bid for COPs is the mission that the president of ADNOC claims to embody.

## Geostrategic ambitions

We will see later the rabbits that al-Jaber pulls out of his hat at the COP to try to preserve the fossil empire. First of all, it is appropriate to consider the fact that the takeover attempt does not come from large American companies and their political representatives (who, on the contrary, are mainly recruited from the ranks of the open climate-denialists): it comes from the United Arab Emirates and, behind it, Saudi Arabia, through their national oil and gas companies.

This is undoubtedly linked to the new geostrategic ambitions of these two states, which are taking advantage of the growing rivalries between the great imperialist powers to advance their own interests. Recent news shows this: the Saudis and Emiratis intend to become independent from the tutelage of Washington. In the climate issue, this is expressed in the care that these two countries – the Kingdom of the Saudis in particular – take to position themselves as spokespersons for the right to development of the “Global South”... of which they are officially part.

Imagine Joe Biden claiming that it is to help the “sustainable development” of the South that the USA is drilling more new oil wells today than under Trump: no one in Latin America would believe it. The same scepticism would reign in Africa if Emmanuel Macron affirmed that TotalEnergies projects in Gabon and Uganda aim for the well-being of people while respecting the environment...

Generally speaking, Western imperialism is deeply discredited in the dominated countries. Putin and Xi Jinping understand this well.

As do the oil sheikhs. Although they swim in insolent fortune, oppress their people and mercilessly pressure the immigrant workers [12] their particular situation makes them, in the eyes of Southern governments, more credible actors in a “realistic”, “serious” and “pragmatic” climate policy, as al-Jaber says. In short: a policy that loosens the purse strings

and puts off indefinitely the end of the extraction and combustion of fossil fuels, in the name of the “right to development” of the poorest countries on the planet.

## “Anti-imperialist” demagogy

It is no coincidence that al-Jaber went out of his way to open the COP with “good news” for the South: contrary to all expectations, negotiations on the effective launch of the fund for “loss and harm” decided in principle at COP26, in Egypt, were successful. Standing applause from the delegates at the summit. In reality, this enthusiasm is misplaced: the World Bank will supervise the fund (as required by the United States), contributions will be voluntary, mostly in the form of loans. A few hundred million dollars were raised immediately. But it is billions, not millions, that the people of the South need, as Rachel Cleetus of the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) said.

The manoeuvre of the petromonarchies is crystal clear: use the legitimate demands of the peoples of the South to protect their empire. To this end, al-Jaber does not hesitate to deploy falsely “anti-imperialist” demagoguery. This is what emerged in his tense exchange with the former president of the Republic of Ireland, former UN special envoy on climate. The COP28 President accused Mary Robinson of believing “lies” from Western media (“your media”) who are making “false accusations” against ADNOC’s investment plans. He accused his interlocutor of wanting “a return to the caves” and challenged her to propose a “fossil exit plan” that was compatible with development. In the end, exasperated, al-Jaber took off the mask: “no science makes the release of fossils a necessary condition for remaining under 1.5°C of warming,” he declared [13].

## Fossil Investment Frenzy

In reality, ADNOC’s fossil investment plans are very real: according to the

US Energy Information Administration, the Emirates plan to increase their oil production by 25 per cent by 2027 [14]. The President of the COP28 contributes ardently to this: according to Climate Reporting, his agenda includes no less than fifteen fossil sales contracts (to China, Germany, Brazil and Egypt, in particular [15]). This is just the tip of the iceberg – all the fossil companies are doing the same. By 2025, the expansion projects of the ten biggest polluters in the fossil fuel sector will add 20 Gt of CO<sub>2</sub>, more than five times the annual emissions of European Union countries [16].

This investment frenzy goes completely against scientific consensus. Even the International Energy Agency says it: time is running out, phasing out fossils must begin now. According to the latest report from IPCC Working Group III “reducing GHG emissions across the entire energy sector requires (...) a substantial reduction in overall fossil fuel consumption.” The report specifies the extent: by 2050, the use of coal, oil and gas must decrease by 95%, 60% and 45% respectively (compared to 2019) to have a one in two chance of remaining below 1.5°C [17].

## Absurdities

To avoid the axe, the CEO of ADNOC is fully exploiting the idea that it is the reduction in emissions that matters, not the reduction of the use of fossils – we can pollute, it is enough to sweep the CO<sub>2</sub> under the carpet. For example, by injecting captured CO<sub>2</sub> into oil deposits... to increase extraction. Coming to Dubai to support his Emirati colleague, the big boss of ExxonMobil, Darren Woods, said it clearly: there is too much discussion about “the electron solution”. “Carbon capture will play a role. Hydrogen will play a role. Biofuels will play a role. We are good at this. We know how to do it [18].

This is obviously absurd. Let’s take the example of capture-sequestration. Except in the cement sector, it is particularly absurd. Even if all the intentions in this area came to fruition and if all the projects became

operational, in 2030 we would only capture 0.25 Gt of CO<sub>2</sub>, less than one per cent of current global emission [19]. The problem is that this absurdity is not entirely absent from the work of the IPCC.

## Responsibility of the IPCC

In the 5th report, which served as the basis for the Paris Agreement, 95 per cent of climate projections included the massive deployment of bioenergy with carbon capture and sequestration (BECCS) [20]. This sorcerer’s apprentice technology would consume so much land area that humanity would have to choose: eat or deal the final blow to biodiversity. The 6th report is less enthusiastic about BECCS, but remains focused on capture-sequestration and other similar technologies. In the summary report – a document more politically impactful than the thousands of pages blackened by Working Groups I, II and III – we read this:

Net zero emissions (in 2050) involves moving from fossil fuels without carbon capture and storage (CCS) to carbon-free or very low-carbon energy sources, such as renewable energy or fossil fuels with CCS (...) and removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere (CDR) [21].

In this text, 1°) the quantified objectives for fossil reduction cited by the GTIII have disappeared; 2°) the absolute reduction in the use of these fuels is replaced by a formula which combines renewables, fossils with carbon capture-sequestration (CCS) and technologies to remove carbon from the atmosphere (CDR)! The text goes so far as to assert that fossils with capture-sequestration (CCS) constitute a “carbon-free or very low-carbon energy source”, which is a scientific untruth.

## “Unabated emissions”

A good part of the COP28 President’s proposals are based on this untruth. Al-Jaber let his guard down in the face of Mary Robinson (“no science does the extraction of fossils, etc ...”). But it was a slip-up. Usually, he is careful to repeat that we must reduce the “unabated” consumption of fossil fuels “unabated” [22]. Jim Skea, the new president of the IPCC, even gave him his stamp of approval: “I can say that Dr. Sultan was attentive to the science”... [23].

In fact, “unabated fossil fuels” is the formula used by the IPCC to designate fossils exploited without technologies allowing carbon to be removed from the atmosphere. A footnote to the WGIII report gives the following definition:

Fossil fuels without abatement refer to fossil fuels produced and used without interventions (?) making it possible to substantially reduce (?) the quantity of greenhouse gases emitted over the life cycle; for example (sic) capturing 90 per cent or more (of CO<sub>2</sub>) from power plants, or 50 to 80 per cent of methane emissions from energy supply. [24].

This is very imprecise – “interventions” are not specified. Furthermore, the “example” of “90 per cent or more capture” is inconsistent: if the reduction is not 100 per cent, we are not at “net zero”. Even Fatih Birol, the very capitalist boss of the IEA, emphasizes that we must “as a priority do everything possible to stop putting carbon in the atmosphere” [25]. Sultan al-Jaber does exactly the opposite.

## Smoke and mirrors

Together, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates took advantage of COP28 to make public the “pact” concluded by 50 fossil companies which undertake to eliminate their emissions (“abated



", of course, that is to say with abatement) by 2050. This is a pure smoke and mirrors operation, mounted with the help of McKinsey. Not only is a commitment to 2050 an insult to urgency, but the "pact" only concerns "operational" emissions (directly linked to extraction activity). These represent barely 15 per cent of emissions due to the combustion of fossil fuels! The trick is so obvious that even the financial press is critical [26].

To divert attention from the "phasing out" of fossils, al-Jaber is taking advantage of his role as COP President to push governments to conclude partial commitments on many subjects. These are non-binding declarations of intent... but, carefully relayed to the media, they give the impression that the summit is accumulating successes.

Everything is thrown in : commitments to produce green, blue or grey hydrogen in the Tropics to be exported massively to developed countries [27]. This is neocolonialism at the expense of people, for climate efficiency close to zero: according to a recent survey, 94% per cent of carbon credits generated in equatorial forests correspond to nothing [28]. Will neoliberal ideologues introduce the

concept of "notional carbon credits"? Nothing should surprise us anymore in this crazy world where capital, as Marx said, presents everything upside down...

## Contracts, contracts...

If Sultan al-Jaber does not follow Fatih Birol on capture-sequestration, he agrees with him on renewable energies. The IEA calls for tripling installed capacities by 2030. The President of COP28 loudly approves. But he has an interest in it, since he manages not only ADNOC but also the Emirati company MASDAR, specializing in green energies. A few days before the summit opened, MASDAR inaugurated the world's largest photovoltaic power plant in the UAE [29]. Bingo: at the COP, we sign contracts with all our might [30]. For the Emirati ruling family, COP28 is a gigantic diplomatic-geostrategic-commercial operation. Climate diplomat Alex Scott says: "This COP is even more of a trade fair than those in Glasgow and Sharm -al-Sheik. I don't think all these financiers are here to watch hours of climate negotiations [31] In fact, the summit is completely corrupted by the fossil fuel industry, finance and their lobbyists,

present by the thousands even in the state delegations [32].

## Will it succeed? Or not?

Will the fossil takeover bid succeed? The Secretary General of the United Nations has thrown a spanner in the works. Twenty-four hours after the release of al-Jaber's proposals, Antonio Guterres declared at the COP platform that these proposals "are clearly not up to what is necessary" because "they say nothing about the elimination of emissions resulting from the consumption of fossil fuels" [33]. But the COPs take their decisions by consensus between capitalist governments, all followers of neoliberal policies, all devoted body and soul to the competitiveness of an economy which, thirty years after the Rio summit, still depends 80 per cent on fossil fuels. Only one thing is certain: only the struggle of people for an anti-capitalist alternative can stop the catastrophe.

6 December 2023

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **Gauche Anticapitaliste**.*

# European trade union demonstration: International class solidarity is the only answer!

17 December 2023, by **Collective**

We all know the consequences of the European Stability Pact that they want to impose once again: more austerity affecting workers throughout Europe, increasing job insecurity and depriving public services (already under pressure) of essential resources. At a time when soaring bills for housing, food, mobility and energy

have already plunged millions of people into poverty, we need billions in investment to deal with these problems and to ensure the essential ecological transition. Yet the European institutions, locked into their neo-liberal capitalist ideological straitjacket, have decided to continue their policy of protecting and

increasing (super)profits, to the detriment of workers (with or without jobs) and the environment. As a result, the far right is reaping the rewards of this policy, with successes across the continent.

In Belgium alone, the return of the "stability" pact would mean between 24 and 27 billion in additional savings.



That's why trade unions in several European countries, from France to Lithuania, via Italy, Belgium and Spain, have mobilized to oppose this prospect and to call for solidarity: within the working class, throughout Europe, but also outside, and in particular with our Ukrainian and Palestinian comrades. Against precariousness, for better wages and working conditions, for access for all to decent public services, and for a socially and ecologically just transition.

As the Gauche Anticapitaliste, we were present to support this message of international solidarity. It is clear that today's European project is contrary to the interests of the working class, whether in Europe or

elsewhere in the world: racist and repressive migration policies, support for oppressive and murderous regimes, economic policies with a generally disastrous social and ecological record... To confront this, however, we need much more than one-off action. We need an action plan with broad mobilizations and offensive demands

These include

- Massive investment in essential public services and in a real ecological transition (including the phase-out of fossil fuels and nuclear power);
- Financed by progressive taxation and a drastic tax on big money;
- Socialization of key sectors of the economy, such as energy, transport (people and goods) and banking;

- Collective reduction in working hours, with no loss of pay and compensatory recruitment;
- Open borders, no to Fortress Europe!

In the face of capital increasingly concentrated on an international scale, austerity policies imposed on us everywhere, a global ecological crisis and the rise of the far right, mobilization and international class solidarity are the only responses that keep open the hope of a better future and a habitable planet for all!

12 December 2023

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **Gauche Anticapitaliste**.*

## What solution in Palestine?

16 December 2023, by **Joseph Daher**

At the same time the liberation of Palestine must be a reconstruction of Palestine. It requires an agrarian revolution, allowing Palestinians who wish to do so to recover their land, without causing current agriculture to regress and reducing those who work it to poverty. It requires economic and human planning, allowing refugees to free themselves socially without expelling millions of Jews. This too is part of the structural changes that colonialism brought about. More generally, this must also include a comprehensive economic development and reconstruction project to guarantee Palestinians their social and economic rights. Any attempt to ignore them would not only be reactionary, but also doomed to failure.

From an internationalist point of view, any progressive solution to the question of Palestine requires recognition of the right to national self-determination of the Palestinian people, the right of refugees to reintegrate their homeland and to integrate the latter into a regional

socialist federal framework. .

Trotsky said the Jewish question will not be resolved by Zionism or the creation of a Jewish state.

The question of a binational state in Palestine, that is to say the recognition of autonomous rights of Israeli Jews or recognition of Israeli Jews as a national entity, can only be done when all Zionist institutions have disappeared.

Defending, today, the right to self-determination of Israeli Jews is either reactionary or absurd: reactionary because it amounts to recognizing the legitimacy of Zionist colonialism; absurd insofar as such a defence would be presented as a demand, while the Jews are in a position not only to achieve their self-determination, but also to refuse that of the Palestinians.

As members of the far-left Israeli party Matzpen in Israel said, "This is not about the right to self-determination of Jewish-Israelis in the current

context. What we are discussing here is the right to self-determination within the framework of the socialist revolution...". In other words, it is about the right to self-determination of Israeli Jews once Zionism is defeated and the Jewish state is destroyed. But they add: "The right to self-determination of Israeli Jews cannot limit the right of return of Palestinians."

But it is only through this regional revolutionary strategy that we can envisage this solution, which involves the establishment of a democratic, socialist and secular state in historic Palestine, with equal rights for the Palestinian and Jewish people, within a socialist federation across MENA.

To implement this strategy, Palestinians must forge a new political leadership committed to self-organization from below within historic Palestine and the region. They cannot do it alone, but must do it collaborating with socialists from Egypt to Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Turkey, Algeria and all other countries.

The most important task for those outside the region is to win over the left, unions, progressive groups and movements to support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel. The BDS campaign puts the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people at the centre of the concerns of the Palestine solidarity movement:

1. Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall;

2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to absolute equality;

3. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194."]] By imposing this on the institutions and businesses of the imperialist powers, especially the United States, we will help block their support for Israel and other despotic regimes and weaken their hold in the region.

The liberation of Palestine therefore requires the liberation of all people living under the tyrants of Damascus, Riyadh, Doha, Tehran, Ankara, Abu Dhabi, Cairo, Amman, and all the others. As a Syrian revolutionary wrote from the Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan Heights in the summer of 2014, "freedom, a common destiny for Gaza, Yarmouk and the Golan." This slogan carries the hope of a regional revolutionary transformation, the only realistic strategy for liberation.

*This is an extract from a longer work.*

# Divide and rule - policing London pro-Palestine demonstrations

15 December 2023, by **Julia Bard**

On the most recent Palestine demonstration in London, on 9th December 2023, the Jewish Bloc found itself subject to unwanted and unwarranted "protection" from the police. The route of the march was from the heart of the City of London to Westminster, and we had planned from the outset to stop outside St Clement Danes Church at the Aldwych and stand on the pavement as the march went past. This had the twofold aim of gathering stragglers who'd become separated from the bloc, and making a static, visible statement of Jewish solidarity with the Palestinians before we rejoined the march and continued on to Parliament Square.

We've done this on several Palestine demonstrations now. On this occasion, the Jewish bloc had gathered at the start of the march in Old Jewry, a medieval street in the City. Our meeting point was a plaque commemorating a former synagogue that had been on the site until 1272, shortly before the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290.

As has happened on every demonstration, the Jewish bloc was greeted with warmth and enthusiasm, and when we reached our stopping

point, the marchers cheered and clapped as they passed, defying the claim that these are hate marches fuelled by antisemitism, that are making our cities unsafe for Jews. On the contrary, participants come and talk to us, shake hands, hug us. They take photos of our banners and placards, which represent many Jewish groups, including the Jewish Socialists' Group, Jewish Voice for Labour, Na'amod, Israel Coalition Against House Demolitions, Black Jewish Alliance, Jews for Justice for Palestinians and others, as well as individuals who coalesce around the bloc.

This time, though, almost as soon as we stopped at St Clement Danes, a cordon of police officers materialised in front of us, separating us from the march. They apparently had the idea that, since we were Jews, we must be counterdemonstrators. We tried again and again to explain that we were there in support of the Palestinians, and had been present on the entire march. This shouldn't have been hard: anyone who could read the placards and hear the chants - Free free Palestine! Ceasefire now! Not in our name! - would have understood.

But they simply couldn't or wouldn't compute the idea of Jews supporting Palestinians. This isn't the first time. We're getting used to police seeing the word "Jewish" on banners and telling us which side we're on - and if we don't agree, trying to stop us joining the Palestine marches.

A month earlier, at the protest on 11th November, the several-hundred-strong Jewish bloc assembled in Belgrave Square before joining the main march as it passed a nearby junction. While we were waiting, two Forward "Intelligence" Team officers - the police in the baby-blue vests - asked to speak to "the organiser" of what they evidently thought was a separate protest. It was explained that this was a coalition and that we didn't have an individual organiser, but these seemed to be foreign concepts to them. They said that if we couldn't produce "the organiser", they would ban "this march".

Since they would not accept that people holding banners with the word "Jewish" on them could support the Palestinians, we spontaneously started chanting "Free free Palestine", until, eventually, one of the police officers got the point. The other one persisted

for a while, until he was persuaded by his colleague to leave – to cheers and drum rolls from the bloc.

But our first experience of this ignorance laced with racist assumptions about Jews and Muslims was on the demonstration to commemorate the Nakba last May. The Jewish bloc, on that occasion, was gathering in Upper Regent Street. We were greeting each other, making placards and setting up our banners when, again, some Forward “Intelligence” Team police came over and reassured us that they’d make sure we were safe. We had not been worried about our safety – why would we be? Then we heard one of the officers say into his walkie talkie, “I’ve found the counterdemonstration!” We fell about laughing, and he realised that he’d got something wrong, though he probably wasn’t sure what, and slunk away to hoots of derision.

The incident on this week’s demo provoked a lot of unease amongst the participants of the bloc. Jews being physically segregated from their non-Jewish comrades, friends and fellow protesters is alarming in itself, but also echoes historical experiences for us. Some people who were not there but read about it on social media, interpreted the police action as a conspiracy, based on instructions from the government. But most of us who experienced it felt that, although the police were making both antisemitic and Islamophobic assumptions, above all, they just seemed frighteningly dim.

Their “intelligence” gathering should

not have been problematic: all the Jewish bloc’s arrangements, as well as our experiences of being warmly welcomed on every march, were widely shared on social media. Instead, they seem to have accepted propaganda from political leaders, Jewish and non-Jewish, inventing scenarios that would stoke fear amongst ordinary citizens in an attempt to suppress criticism of Israel.

Indeed, there were more arrests on this recent demonstration than on previous weeks, mostly, judging from the Met Police’s tweets, for slogans on placards. The Met’s tweets have generated strings of comments from rightwingers, huffing and puffing about the demonstrations being “hate marches”, filled with threatening people [Muslims] chanting terrorist slogans, preventing ordinary law-abiding citizens [Christians] from doing their Christmas shopping. This is a complete invention. I’ve been on all but one of the national marches since the beginning of October. Their most striking characteristics are their diversity in background, age, ethnicity and religion, and the warm interactions between the marchers. I haven’t heard any threatening chants or seen any threatening behaviour (except from the police trying to prevent us from peacefully participating, as Jews). The route last Saturday did not include a single shopping street, and the only shoppers who might have had a problem crossing the road would have been getting their groceries at a Tesco local in the City, one of the few open shops we passed.

Some of us talked to individual police officers about their action. One said he’d been sent down from Durham and was just “doing what he was told”. Another had been drafted in from Wales to police an event that, week after week, had been peaceful and conflict-free, with scarcely any need for stewarding, let alone policing. Whether or not they, as individuals, were ignorant about a highly controversial war on Gaza that has dominated the news for two solid months, what is truly worrying is that their orders seemed to be coming from people who either perpetrate or believe the Big Lie coming from the government, the so-called leaders of our Jewish community, and the media – that the protests are making our cities unsafe for Jews.

What they must be objecting to about our visible, noisy Jewish bloc is that we are demolishing that flimsy narrative. On every protest, more and more Jewish people, devastated at Netanyahu’s relentless criminal actions in Gaza, are gaining the confidence to join us. The Jewish bloc is growing stronger both politically and numerically in support for the terrorised populations of Gaza and the West Bank, as well as for those Israelis who continue to stand alongside and help protect the Palestinians who share that land, and who are being shot at, imprisoned and threatened by their own state for refusing to be silent.

13 December 2023

© [Julia Bard](#), December 2023

## The British "Rwanda plan": a government caught in its own racist trap

14 December 2023, by **Thierry Labica**

This was a deterrent measure against would-be Channel crossers in makeshift boats: those intercepted would be deported to Rwanda. Faced

with numerous legal challenges, the programme has never been operational since.

# The Supreme Court rejects the government's plan

On 15 November, the UK's highest court, the Supreme Court, ruled against the government's plan, finding that Rwanda did not provide the necessary guarantees of compliance with international law: people deported there would risk ultimate refoulement to the country they had fled, where their lives could be in danger.

British leaders, praising the reliability of the authorities in Kigali, have chosen to circumvent the Supreme Court's decision by attempting to pass emergency legislation to override existing provisions that could prevent expulsions to Rwanda.

The British Parliament is due to vote on the matter at the time of writing. [34] Whatever the outcome of the vote, it should be noted that the UK is not the first state with which Rwanda has negotiated this kind of

arrangement. Denmark has a comparable agreement, but has not activated it. More unofficially, Israel did the same between 2014 and 2017 for the expulsion of thousands of Sudanese and Eritrean refugees who were, however, in many cases quickly expelled, after racketeering, once they arrived at their destination. The reservations expressed by British judges are hardly surprising.

## An increasingly racist and cruel policy

We should also note the enormity of the failure of ten years of anti-immigration policy, which has been set up as a major government priority, and which is becoming ever more outrageously racist and cruel: the 2014 and 2016 Immigration Acts, the 2019 Act on the end of post-Brexit freedom of movement, the 2021 Nationality and Borders Act, and the 2023 Illegal Migration Act. In 2022, however, net immigration was 745,000 and the number of people crossing the Channel reached 45,700,

making 2022 a record year in both cases.

In trying to put into practice the anti-immigration rhetoric heard since the 2016 referendum campaign, the Tory government is now torn between its extreme right, which is determined to push ever more violent measures, and its pro-business wing, which is aware of the imperative need for the British labour market to welcome the workforce that is in short supply in entire sectors of the economy.

Beyond these contradictions, the coherences remain clear: the brutality increasingly asserted both here and abroad, through the issue of immigration, against the world of work and the working classes; and the calmness with which the Tories accept their own infringements of a right deemed increasingly cumbersome and dispensable. Both here and abroad, the labour movement must oppose these brutal and inhumane laws.

14 December 2023

Translated by *International Viewpoint* from *l'Anticapitaliste*.

# Anger and mobilization grow in Peru

## 13 December 2023, by Sumate

The indignation is combined with the serious economic crisis that thousands of Peruvians are suffering as a result of the neoliberal economic model defended by the right, the CONFIEP endorsed by the Fujimori Constitution, which only created poverty, pollution and hunger.

From within *Nuevo Perú por el Buen Vivir* [New Peru for Good Living] at the national level we were part of the convening of this great day of national struggle on 7 December and the militants, together with their leaders at the head, and comrade Veronika Mendoza were together with our mobilized people, in Lima the participation was massive, if we are

not mistaken, more than ten thousand people, but the most important thing is that there were actions in many provinces of Peru

Our organization SÚMATE, internal current of the *Nuevo Perú por el Buen Vivir*, present in several regions of the country, salutes the effort and combativeness of the militancy, the workers and the people, present in the mobilizations to defeat those responsible for the crisis that the country is suffering.

**WHAT WE HAVE AND WHAT IS NEEDED TO THROW THEM ALL OUT**

The question that many are asking is: will Boluarte fall, will Congress be closed?

The conditions for a triumph have been in place, a lot of anger, the people are fighting, they are mobilizing, there is a consensus that they should all go, but there is still a need for greater unity and organization. But unfortunately there are ultra-sectarian vanguard sectors that believe that they are the enlightened ones who alone will defeat tanks, the Armed Forces, the PNP but the only thing they do is divide the struggle, just what the right wants, these sectarian politics end up playing into the hands of the government, the



Congress and the mafia, and in this same sector there are those who raise Castillo's restoration, an even more distant illusion.

And on the other hand, there are all the social organizations, trade unions, left-wing forces, citizens, who are grouped together in the CNUL, which proposes greater unity at the national level.

To make the slogan "throw them all out" a reality, it is necessary to group together in each province of Peru, the social organizations that exist, without losing their independence, must join

the CNUL with their criticisms and contradictions that surely exist, but the priority is to defeat this ultra-conservative coalition headed by the mafia of *Fujimorismo*, to make a united call to the citizens, organized neighbourhoods, women and their movements, youth, students, rural and urban workers. United as a single fist, organized we can achieve a victory, and fight all kinds of infantile sectarianism, it is not the time to play the "revolutionary" it is the time to unite and remove this mafia from power.

There is also a need for a plan of

struggle with initiatives to create the conditions for a national strike, which is worked on in each structure with assemblies to ensure that it is an effective strike.

Let's not wait for a saviour to come along to provide solutions, let's be the ones who decide the future of Peru by promoting a Constituent Assembly to bury the Fujimori constitution that surrenders and corrupts.

8 December 2023

Translated by *International Viewpoint* from *Sumate*.

# Building a new activist dynamic in Palestine

12 December 2023, by **Antoine Larrache**

**Antoine Larrache: Do you have any information on what is happening today in Gaza, and on the state of the Palestinian resistance?**

**L. S.:** Apart from what we hear in the media, all the information that is disseminated, what worries me a lot is the state of mind of the people, all the destruction they are facing. We talk about the number of deaths, but those are just numbers. We don't talk about the human stories behind them. We talk about children, but we don't know how many, we don't care about what will become of those who have lost their whole family. Families moving several times, from one place to another, represents great instability.

There is also the destruction of Gaza and its infrastructure. We've never seen these kinds of photos and images in previous wars: it's really a war waged not just to wipe out the population, but also to raze the territory to the ground. That's what's most worrying, along with the political project behind it.

The mental and psychological state of the victims is perhaps even more serious than their physical state. Because in all wars, in all displacements of population, we know

the humanitarian crisis, the destruction of homes, refugees, massacres, etc. But this is not a war. But this is not a conventional war: it's a colonial war, and Israel is waging it before the eyes of the whole world, the whole of the West and the Arab countries. We are dying in silence.

What is also worrying is what will happen afterwards: once the massacres have stopped, how will the people get their lives back, their families, scattered as they are, back to their homes? It's not just the human aspect, it's also the social aspect that's at stake. That's what Israel wants, and is doing with this war: not just crushing and razing the territory of Gaza, massacring as many people as possible, but also destroying Palestinian society.

There are no more workplaces, the schools have been destroyed, the hospitals too, and so on. So there will be no more life. Everything will have to be rebuilt if Israel has not invaded and carried through its political plan to drive out the population, build settlements and so on.

**Do you think their aim is to destroy the Gaza Strip piece by piece and colonize it?**

I think they're going to expand the settlements. They may not go into the most densely populated areas, they may have other objectives. It's also possible that Israel's objective will no longer be to set up a very large number of settlements, because that's expensive, but to do nothing with the land, turning it into buffer zones.\$

**Does the population of Gaza still have the capacity to organize itself to resist?**

There is a military resistance, which has been built up over all these years, even if it wasn't on the same scale as today. We never thought there would be an operation as organized as the one on 7 October. So it shows that the military resistance is very organized today, very well constructed, with stronger resources than in recent years.

There is a military resistance defending the Gaza Strip, but there is also resistance from citizens in the towns: all the Palestinian associations, the NGOs - even if some NGOs can be criticized for having become state apparatuses - who are doing work on the ground. So there is incredible civil resistance. And it's these people who are organizing the resistance and the



whole day-to-day life of Gazans since the blockade.

### **Can you give some examples?**

There really is a diversity of associations, small and medium-sized ones that work, for example, with young people, children, women and health associations. There is, for example, an association of women journalists.

There are trade unions, but they are not official trade unions. The Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) is really a state body. Its leadership is made up of representatives of political organizations within the PLO, who are appointed to lead the unions. And most of the time, they are not real trade unionists. There is also another trade union, also state-run, which represents the Union of Trade Unions which was formed outside Palestine when the PLO was in Lebanon. They set up a form of union to work with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The leadership came back when the PLO returned to Palestine. So there is sometimes competition between the two, but they are on the same political line, the official line of the PLO and the Palestinian Authority.

About fifteen years ago, there were other unions, called independent unions, which were set up by real trade unionists within the official unions, but which were able to free themselves and build real unions acting with the workers.

### **In what sectors, for example?**

In the education, health and electricity sectors. They also work in other sectors, but these three sectors are really the strongest for independent unions. So in Gaza, it's the independent unions that are organising the workers and defending their needs. There are also Palestinian workers in Israel, but that's a different matter.

**There is around 60% unemployment in Gaza. That's gigantic. So these unemployed men and women also depend on structures like NGOs?**

There isn't really any social

assistance, the equivalent of the RSA. There is family assistance, there are associations, but these have been cut back enormously in recent years. There is a lot of poverty.

In France, everything that is broadcast by the media is very schematic: it's the Hamas attack, without explaining that there are also other organizations, and without explaining at all what Hamas is. These organizations are on the list of terrorist organizations, so we're not supposed to understand why they do what they do. Can you try to explain the debates that may exist in Gaza and, a little more widely, in Palestine?

All the organizations are under the PLO umbrella, including the PFLP and the DFLP. Virtually only Hamas and Islamic Jihad are outside the PLO. The PFLP is divided, because some activists want to remain within the PLO, while others want the PFLP to leave. Outside the PLO, in Syria and Lebanon for example, the PFLP does not have the same working framework as in Palestine.

The Palestinian Authority manages the day-to-day administrative life of the Palestinians and, since the Oslo Accords, has de facto controlled the life of the Palestinian organizations. The PLO is very weakened. Fatah has lost ground and some activists are on standby because they do not agree with Fatah's official position. In Jenin and Nablus, there is armed resistance, and Fatah groups are working with Hamas and Jihad, in complete disagreement with Fatah's official position.

Even the PFLP has shrunk considerably in terms of the number of activists: unfortunately, many are in prison. Many have also withdrawn, or left altogether, because they no longer want to work within this framework, or because Fatah's position was not very clear-cut. Some agreed not to withdraw permanently from the PLO at the time of Oslo, and some PFLP leaders were absorbed by the Palestinian Authority.

This is also the case for the former Communist Party - now the PPP - which has lost its legitimacy and therefore many activists. Neither Jihad

nor Hamas are members of the PLO. There is also the Palestinian National Initiative created by Moustafa Barghouti, Haider Abdel Shafi and Ibrahim Dakkak. Haider Abdel Shafi, who was a doctor in Gaza and in charge of the Red Crescent, was a personality who was highly respected by the whole population: during the Madrid negotiations, he was the chairman of the Palestinian delegation (there was no official Palestinian delegation, because Israel and the United States did not accept it, but it worked in fact under the umbrella of the Jordanian delegation). Haider Abdel Shafi, along with other people such as Fana Nahshari, the spokesperson for this delegation, and Faisal Fosemi, a highly respected Fatah executive and a leading figure in Jerusalem, were one of the important pillars of this delegation for the Madrid agreement. When he found out that there were secret negotiations, he resigned, explaining that he did not support these negotiations. So he took responsibility and resigned. Haider Abdel Shafi is a highly respected person; Mustafa Barghouti, who headed a medical NGO set up at the end of the 1970s, was also a Communist Party official during the second Intifada, but there were differences of opinion: he wanted to go further in the resistance. The leadership didn't agree with him, so he and Haider Abdel Shafi withdrew, with the support of Edward Said, the Palestinian intellectual that everyone knows. Together they founded the Palestinian National Initiative as a third way between Fatah and Hamas. At one point, this movement was very successful, but unfortunately, over the last few years, they have also lost many of their supporters and activists. They officially joined the PLO a few years ago, but they are still active on the ground. It's a small movement.

In Gaza, after the election victory of Hamas in 2006, which Fatah did not accept and which triggered sanctions from the international community, Hamas was forced to take power again. They made a lot of mistakes; after clashes between Fatah and Hamas activists, they took power and crushed the other currents.

We're talking here about the political leadership, because there was no

armed group yet. The political leadership of Hamas depended on the Muslim Brotherhood, on aid from Qatar, and also on the Syrian regime. So Hamas was not yet considered to be part of the Palestinian national movement. It should also be remembered that when Hamas was formed in 1988, during the first Intifada, it was in the continuity of the Muslim Brotherhood movements, which did not officially exist in Palestine. There were only charitable associations dependent on them and, at the time, in Gaza, there was one of their leaders, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who was their spokesman: their main concern was to find a way to eliminate the PLO, to replace it, because its leaders were the only legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people, even though the PLO was officially banned in occupied Palestine.

In fact, at the time, all the left-wing parties (the Communist Party, the PFLP, the DFLP) and Fatah were working together: they were present on the ground as part of the unified leadership of the Intifada. So Hamas was on its own; its actions were always out of sync with the PLO's strategy. Their main concern at the time was to try to create an Islamist society and to attack women's rights: they tried to impose the veil in the Gaza Strip. They succeeded in doing so in conservative areas, such as the city of Hebron and the north of the West Bank. At the time, unfortunately, the Palestinian left-wing organizations did not defend women so as not to clash with them. In Gaza, it happened like this: even though at the time it was still an open society, during the first Intifada, to go to the funerals of Palestinian martyrs, for example, or to pay their respects to their families, feminist activists, out of respect, wore veils; it was then that Hamas took the opportunity to impose the veil on Palestinian women and succeeded in gaining hegemony in society. The Palestinian left did not do its job of waging this feminist battle, on the pretext that "now is not the time", as they say everywhere. At that time, the Islamic Jihad was not present, or was very discreet; in any case, it never sought to take power. Their main concern was to resist the Zionist colonial regime, which is a much more

respectable position.

From 2005, therefore, and until 2009, Hamas created its armed group, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigade, named after a Palestinian leader who had fought against the Zionist militias in Palestine during the British Mandate before 1948. From then on, it was the resistance, but the people did not agree with their methods of sending rockets which have no effect other than to provoke bombardments by Israel in return - even though this is not actually the case, because the bombardments take place anyway. Each time, the Hamas leadership has sought its own profit, not the general interest. It's different in this "war", where I believe that the military leadership took the decision to attack on 7 October independently of the political leadership, which seems to have been surprised, like everyone else.

**Almost all the political leadership of Hamas has been in Qatar for some time - which we don't understand, by the way, and people are angry: what is the political leadership doing in Qatar instead of structuring the struggle? Ismail Haniyeh goes everywhere, he goes to all the conferences, as does Mahmoud Abbas: so what's the difference between the two?**

I think the military leadership was right to try to bring about a change in the balance of power. The political leadership of Hamas is the interlocutor to negotiate with Qatar for the release of the Palestinian hostages and prisoners, but in fact the military leader of Hamas is in Gaza, and nobody knows where he is exactly.

**What is their objective now?**

The initial objective on the 7th was for Hamas fighters to go to this military base and take military hostages in order to use them to free Palestinian prisoners. That was their objective. But as they opened a passage, and many Gazans entered, they did enormous damage. This is not justifiable, but you have to take the context into account: when people who are locked up "break free", they act in an uncontrolled way. The

military leadership was overwhelmed by civilians: they came in on bicycles, with animals, mopeds... They were overwhelmed by the desire to get out; and now the media are telling us that Hamas has slit throats and raped women, when I have the impression that this was not their objective at all.

**Do you think that the military leadership sees an opportunity for resistance in the current war? Gilbert Achcar explains that the military resistance can't win without international mobilization, but the reverse is probably also true: you need a community of objectives to achieve victory.**

I think that the resistance will continue, that Israel will not be able to destroy it. In all its wars, Israel says that its objective is to eradicate Hamas: in fact, that means destroying the population. But its objective is also not to crush Hamas, because they need an enemy.

**What's more, they haven't chosen who will run Gaza after the war. They would probably like a very bureaucratic structure to manage it.**

That's what they'd like. In my opinion, they don't want Mahmoud Abbas, who is toast - even the Americans don't want him. They are looking for someone in his entourage to replace him and take control of Gaza. The political leadership of Hamas is something else. They may seek a compromise, but the leadership of the military resistance is not going to accept, unless, perhaps, there are real quid pro quos: the release of former prisoners, the political cadres of the organizations, the sick prisoners, etc. That's their main objective. That's their main objective.

The political leadership is completely rotten, but the military leadership of Hamas has understood that it is also necessary to involve the other currents, even if they are very weakened, in order to solidify some political gains. That's why they will continue to resist, even though there may be a compromise or a truce somewhere. But we can't predict what will happen, because we don't know what's going on behind the scenes, the

international stakes, the position of the Arab countries, the objectives of the political leadership of Hamas or those of the Palestinian Authority.

And we're talking about who's going to take power, when it should be determined by the people, from below. It's true that it's perhaps difficult to talk about elections today within the PLO bodies: the Palestinian National Council and the Palestinian Legislative Council, but we want a democratic process. This war has changed a lot of things, and will continue to do so, so we'll see how things develop.

**Is it an exaggeration to say that the population used the 7 October to try and relaunch a militant movement?**

I don't think it's an exaggeration. And it's linked to what's happening in the West Bank. We mustn't forget that this is the main issue today. And even the future of Palestine as a whole. I think it may take some time.

As the West Bank is sealed off, we can't travel outside the towns and villages where we live, so there are local demonstrations against the ongoing genocide, in support of the resistance and also against the settlers and the Israeli army in the West Bank. There is a structure, the Coordination Committee of Political and Islamic Forces, which calls for demonstrations, but that doesn't bring in many people. There are also young people calling on social networks,

without being organized. Usually, when it's organized, there's a framework, personalities arrive, representatives take the lead, and the slogans are well organized. Sometimes it's relevant, and sometimes it's frankly not political at all. When we talk to young people about getting organized, they refuse, for fear of the disagreements that might then emerge, and questions of power. It's a shame, because now is the time to go beyond the current framework.

For example, on the day of Macron's visit, which revolted people here against France's position, against Macron, there were reactions on social networks. At 4pm, there was a call to meet in Ramallah's central square, al-Manara Square. Young people were making signs in French about France's position, using Google Translation: "Monsieur Macron, dégagez-vous" ("Mr Macron, get out"), as well as signs calling for the release of Georges Ibrahim Abdallah, including young people who had studied in France.

At 5pm, another demonstration was called by all the political forces and the families of the prisoners to demand their release. So it's all very diverse. We need to structure this alternative movement. Will the war in Gaza and its aftermath shake things up? Will we succeed in creating a new dynamic that puts the old generation in the background? Structuring is also our role as Palestinians in the

diaspora. We don't want to set up a political movement in France, we're involved in associations.

As soon as we make political progress on the ground over there, it also helps us to advance our positions, and it helps the solidarity movement to solidify.

**In particular, can the DFLP and the PFLP play a positive role in this situation?**

Historically, these two organizations are part of the radical left, but they are no longer part of it: the PFLP of today is no longer the PFLP of the 1970s. They may publish statements, but they have been integrated into the institutions and have very little presence on the ground. Today, there is no longer a structured radical left movement: there are only individual activists. So the challenge is really to build a militant movement that is outside any established political framework and that defends broader positions: the end of the colonial regime, the demand for a single democratic and secular state. Our association is part of this movement, with publications such as One Democratic State and One Democratic Secular State.

*Interview by Antoine Larrache on 5 December 2023*

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **l'Anticapitaliste** la revue.*

# Building international solidarity with the Palestinians

**11 December 2023, by Antoine Larrache, Terry Conway**

Between the rejection of the war action of 7 October by a large part of public opinion and the political offensive carried out in its wake by the major ruling classes, it took several days, even weeks, to build up a mobilization, while bombs were falling

on the population. Astonishment gradually turned into militant indignation in many countries, albeit at very different rates and in very different ways.

**Mobilization at the heart of**

## imperialism

In Israel, for a start, mobilizations have been very limited. While several hundred people have been able to take part in a few demonstrations, it is fear that dominates because of the considerable political pressure exerted on activists: political demonstrations are generally banned as long as Israel is at war. On 18 October, five demonstrators were arrested in Haifa even before the start of a "solidarity vigil" for Gaza, while 12 were arrested during a similar demonstration in the northern Arab town of Umm Al-Fahm". [35] Hundreds of Palestinian citizens of Israel have been arrested and left-wing activists have received death threats and are victims of harassment, particularly on social networks.

Most of the demonstrations focused on the demand for the release of the hostages, a slogan which, even if it is not spontaneously progressive, encourages negotiations rather than indiscriminate massacres and, in the context of Israel, exerts pressure in the right direction. [36] The other demands, made by more progressive fringes but in a very small minority, concern the call for a ceasefire and the condemnation of all war crimes, including those committed by Israel. An urgent appeal to the international community to "stop the forced transfer to the West Bank" was published by B'Teslem and signed by around thirty organizations. [37]

In the United States, there has been considerable pressure to defend Israel's "right to defend itself". In mid-October, only 18% of the population considered Israel's attack to be excessive. But little by little, with the images of dead children, hospitals and refugees, solidarity began to be

expressed. By mid-November the majority supported a ceasefire [38] All the more so as Joe Biden, for his part, provided Netanyahu with funds and unfailing political support. Important mobilizations by organizations such as [Jewish Voices for Peace](#), for example an occupation of Congress and several of Grand Central station in New York gave courage and illustrated that neither the Israeli state nor Biden can rely on unanimous support from Jews in the US. An increasing number of US trade unions have signed calls for a ceasefire including the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE), the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), and the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) and most significantly the United Auto Workers [[https://www.lemonde.fr/en/tunisia/article/2023/10/18/thousands-in-tunisia-protest-against-israel-outside-french-embassy\\_6184670\\_232.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/tunisia/article/2023/10/18/thousands-in-tunisia-protest-against-israel-outside-french-embassy_6184670_232.html)] Egypt, in Algeria and in Morocco.

But these protests have been rather limited for a combination of reasons. The first, and most important, is the "normalization" of relations between the countries of the Middle East, in particular Egypt, and Israel, as part of an agreement with the Western imperialist powers, in particular the United States, with this "normalization" taking place at the expense of the Palestinians. The second is the systematic repression of protests in these countries, which fear that the rise of the working classes will destabilize the regimes in power by reviving the Arab Spring. And the second, which links the first two, is the fear of a general conflagration in the region, challenging the imperialist presence, upsetting the global balance of power... and opening up real

prospects for a socialist solution to the struggle in Palestine.

The struggle of the Palestinian people is a long-term one. The recent truce in no way resolved the situation, since the Palestinian people remain in a critical situation, with the destruction of infrastructure and the economy, not to mention human lives, while the Israeli government claims to want to eradicate Hamas, which can only be achieved by ethnic cleansing involving the displacement or murder of hundreds of thousands of people. The struggle will therefore continue, even if the forms it takes may change.

The role of revolutionaries is to help build mass resistance, in the Arab countries of course, but just as much, because it is easier from a democratic point of view, in the other countries of the world. The working classes are the most likely to get involved because of the possible connections in their consciousness between the different histories of colonialism and the question of racism.

However, these classes have few tools at their disposal to mobilize, as the traditional organizations of the workers' movement are not very accessible to them and are themselves not very active on the issue of international solidarity. In this context, the construction of local mobilization collectives seems to be a relevant tool, combined with a classic united front policy of agreements between organizations, to enable solidarity to be self-organized, a means which seems necessary to move from spontaneous reactions to a mass movement building a balance of power enabling imperialist forces to be pushed back.

8 December 2023

Source: [fourth.international](#).

## Historic feminist general strike in the Basque Country



10 December 2023, by **Luis**

More than 1,500 works councils joined the strike, which was supported by all the Basque trade unions except CC.OO and UGT (a minority in the Southern Basque Country). The aim of this mixed day of struggle was to demand a public and community care system in the face of casualisation, privatisation and mercantilisation, and to highlight the importance of gender, race and class in the economy of social reproduction.

## Picket lines

From 7 a.m. onwards, picket lines blockaded numerous industrial sites and halted traffic on the main access roads to Bilbao, Pamplona, San Sebastian and Vitoria. Around midday, other actions and rallies were called in front of town halls, provincial parliaments and even the Martutene prison, to highlight the inequalities in the conditions of women prisoners. In Bilbao, another rally was held at the initiative of a group of women workers in front of the Immigration Office to

denounce the working conditions suffered by home help workers, 42% of whom are immigrants. In the afternoon, demonstrations in the four Basque capitals and a dozen other towns brought together several thousand people in the rain.

The impact was very strong in the public sector, particularly in education (70%), but also in industry, though less so in commerce. The unions denounced excessive minimum services in the health sector in order to break the strike. The day ended with a number of clashes with the police during the blockades. Two women activists were arrested at the Michelin factory in Vitoria, and five others in Donostia for chaining themselves to a public building.

## Militant resistance and innovation in the struggle

This day is set against the backdrop of the long and victorious strikes by nursing home workers in recent years, as well as the 8 March strikes in 2018 and 2019. Despite this historic success, it was essential for the organisers to think of all those who could not be there, such as the "internas", the homecare workers. "We're not all here, the interns are missing" or "Precariousness is also violence", they chanted in the streets of Bilbao.

In an article published in *El Salto/Hordago*, Xavi Mínguez and Clara Sanchez (Antikapitalistak) point out that the long process of building this strike (since 2020) reveals the need to move forward with new mechanisms of solidarity and militant resistance, but also to continue building popular power and innovating strategies of struggle.

7 December 2023

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from *l'Anticapitaliste*.

# “Opposing US militarisation in the Asia-Pacific should not mean remaining silent on China’s emerging imperialism”

9 December 2023, by **Au Loong-Yu**



**One of the biggest challenges facing the left is coming to grips with China’s status within the**

**global capitalist system. China’s meteoric rise has led many to ask whether China remains part of the Global South or has become an imperialist country. How should we understand China’s status today?**

The issue is that for the past three decades China has not been a regular Third World country. From a largely peasant-populated country 40 years

ago, today it is 60% urbanised and fully industrialised. Its manufacturing rolls out both low and high end products. As a result, China has crossed the threshold to become an upper-middle income country according to the World Bank. Yet, at the same time, 600 million Chinese have a monthly income of only US\$140.

China simultaneously contains many

elements, making it very unique. Simply looking at GDP per capita or monthly income might lead you to believe that China is part of the Global South. But no single metric or economic indicator can provide us with a definitive answer on China's status. Today's China still has elements of being a Third World country, but the significance of these elements has diminished over time. We can't dismiss them, but they remain just elements in defining China's status. To draw any useful conclusion on China, we have to look at the country as a whole, taking into consideration all its elements.

**But if China is no longer a regular developing country, does this automatically mean we should characterise it as imperialist?**

China's status is complicated and messy. There is no clear cut yes or no answer; rather the answer is yes and no. I describe China as an emerging imperialist country — a very strong regional power with a global reach. It possesses the intention and potential to dominate lesser countries but has not yet consolidated its position in the world.

Why this definition? Well, let's start with the basic criteria for imperialism. [Vladimir] Lenin's analysis needs a lot of updating, especially since the postwar decolonisation period. But if we take Lenin as our starting point, he refers to the degree of monopoly, the merger of industrial and bank capital, the formation of financial capital and the level of capital export as defining features of imperialism. If we apply these criteria to China, they are all present in a very significant manner.

For example, right now we are witnessing the Chinese property market bubble bursting once again. People often overlook the fact that it is only thanks to the privatisation of state-owned urban land (or more correctly the sale of the right of land-use) that the mega-bubble in the property market exists. The "state-owned land" regime also determines the main players in the market: municipal governments, banks (mostly state-owned) and developers. Together, they have formed an alliance of land-based financial capital

to facilitate the enrichment of the bureaucracy and its crony private partners.

Whereas in other parts of the world imperialist logic is driven by private capital with support from the state, in China the state and state capital are the major players. This is despite the fact that the private sector accounts for more than half of the economy. Some might respond: "If the commanding heights of the economy are heavily monopolised by state enterprises, then they are under social ownership or public ownership, which is a feature of socialism or, at a minimum, state ownership is a bulwark against profit-seeking private capital." This is to forget that long ago, Friedrich Engels mocked those who thought Bismarck's state ownership schemes were a feature of socialism. In reality, state ownership and social ownership are two very different things.

China's state is a predatory state entirely controlled by an exploiting class whose core is Chinese Communist Party (CCP) party bureaucrats. I refer to this exploiting class as a bourgeoisified state bureaucracy. This means that we have in China a kind of state capitalism, but one deserving its own name. In my view bureaucratic capitalism is the most appropriate term for China because it captures the most important feature of China's capitalism: the central role of the bureaucracy, not only in transforming the state (from one hostile to capitalist logic — though never genuinely committed to socialism — to one thoroughly capitalist), but also in enriching itself by fusing the power of coercion and the power of money.

This fusion gave new impetus to the bureaucracy's drive towards industrialisation and state-led investment in infrastructure. That is why China's capitalist restoration, driven by the state and CCP, was accompanied by rapid industrialisation, in contrast to the fall of the Soviet Union. It is also why China's state-owned enterprises are in practice controlled by the party bureaucracy. Through its grip on state power, it continuously denies the working class basic rights to organise.

On the operational level, these companies are "owned" by different sections and cliques of the bureaucracy, often via highly secret arrangements.

It is worth remembering two things. First, Imperial China was also characterised by its bureaucracy, to the extent that some sociologists consider China a "bureaucratic society". The absolutism of the empire was possible only because it successfully replaced the noble class with loyal bureaucrats administering the state. When tensions arose between the bureaucracy and the emperor, the emperor won certain battles but the bureaucracy won the war, turning the emperor into its nominal head. Second, it is also worth remembering Imperial China's long history of state-owned and state-run enterprises. Much of the wealth generated by these enterprises went into the pockets of the bureaucrats who managed them. This bourgeoisification of a section of the bureaucracy was visible in Imperial China; it was present during the rule of the Kuomintang (KMT); and reappeared under the CCP after 1979, eventually becoming a dominant feature of Chinese capitalism.

**Does China's state also exhibit expansionist features, which is a common characteristic of imperialist powers?**

As a strong bureaucratic capitalist state, it necessarily carries a strong expansionist imperative that is not just economic but political. Consider this: China's extensive capital export, which often takes the form of long-term investments, means Beijing necessarily requires global political leverages to protect its economic interest. This objectively encourages an imperialist logic to dominate lesser countries and compete with leading imperialist countries.

But there is also a political expansionist logic. China's century-long "national humiliation" under colonialism between 1840-1949, led CCP ruling elites to vow to strengthen the country at all cost. [President] Xi [Jinping]'s dream for China should be interpreted in light of Mao Zedong's dream of chaoyingganmei (超越英美),

surpassing Britain and catching up with the United States). While the slogan should not be interpreted literally, China's ultra-nationalist rulers will not accept China remaining a second-rate power for another century. This ambition, born from China's contemporary history and the party's great Han Chinese nationalism, has led Beijing to seek global political influence. It will also, sooner or later, lead them to seek global military power — if China can consolidate its status in the coming period.

Any discussion about China and imperialism cannot just focus on economic aspects; on the contrary, it must also take into account this political side. China's contemporary rulers, from the KMT to CCP, have all wanted to restore the territory and influence that Imperial China had under the Qing Dynasty. Long before Beijing made its nine-dash line claim over the South China Sea, the KMT had already rolled out its "eleven-dash line" claim over the same area. In this sense, the CCP is following in the not-so-successful imperial footsteps of the KMT — only this time it has, so far, worked out much better for them.

**Focusing for a moment on the economic aspects, does this mean China offers no kind of alternative to US imperialism for Global South countries, as advocates of a multipolar world seem to suggest?**

I do not agree with the notion that China is some kind of alternative for the Global South. Just look at what it did to Sri Lanka when the latter could not pay back its loan: China made Sri Lanka hand over greater control of its Hambantota port. China's corporations, including those that are state-owned, generally perform no better — or worse — than the companies of any other imperialist country.

But we need to analyse this question on two levels. China, like the US, maintains relations with most countries in the world. No sweeping generalisation is capable of explaining each and every relationship these two countries have with others. This is even more so for China because it is not yet a global empire. A general

critique of Chinese expansionism should not preclude us from carrying out a concrete analysis of each relationship. Whenever we are confronted with a specific case, we should be sceptical of China's actions — and those of all great powers — but also analyse the specific relationship, paying special attention to the voices and interests of local people. Only by weighing up both the general and the specific can we, as outsiders, judge whether what China is doing is right or wrong.

Take, for example, the Belt and Road Initiative. It is possible that some of China's overseas investments via this project may benefit other countries, or at least cause more good than harm. Here, the voices of local peoples can provide us with the most relevant information we need. But this does not mean we should drop our general criticisms of the Belt and Road Initiative. Whatever good a specific project may bring, it remains the case that in general, the Belt and Road Initiative is driven by the logic of profit and the geopolitical interests of the CCP's monolithic regime. A win-win scenario might emerge in specific cases, but it is highly improbable that this will be the case for most host countries, regardless of whether the BRI ultimately ends up a success or failure for China.

Overall, China's going global strategy, which it embarked on at the start of the century, represents a clear regression in China's foreign policy: from relatively progressive Third-Worldism to prioritising Chinese companies' commercial interests and Beijing's global influence. Even if China's performance in developing countries is not as bad as that of Western countries, this qualitative change from promoting autonomous development in the Third World (as advocated by Mao) to seeking to profit from the Third World is clearly a backwards step. Moreover, China's entrance into competition with the West for markets and resources necessarily accelerates the race to the bottom for labour rights and environmental protection.

**Given all this, could you summarise your view on China's status today?**

Taking all this and more into consideration, I think we can say that China is an emerging imperialist country. It is far from consolidated as an imperialist power, but it has the potential to achieve this status if left unchallenged from within and without for long enough.

In my opinion, the term emerging imperialism allows us to avoid certain errors. For example, some argue that since China and the US are not on a par, therefore China can not be imperialist, and that the label of "developing country" continues to apply. This argument fails to capture the constantly changing situation within China and globally. For example, China's spectacular rise to become an industrialised nation in less than 50 years is unprecedented in contemporary history.

That is why we must be able to grasp both the universal and the particularities when it comes to China. Its potential to develop into an imperialist power is immense. It is also the first emerging imperialist country to have previously been a semi-colonial country. On top of this, China has to confront the issue of its backwardness. These factors may have in part contributed to its rise, but certain aspects also continue to cripple its capacity to develop efficiently enough and, more importantly, in a more balanced way.

The CCP will have to overcome some fundamental obstacles before it can consolidate China as a stable and sustainable imperialist country. Xi's clique knows that before China can achieve its imperial ambition it has to overcome the burden of colonial legacy and China's backwardness. That is why Beijing sees "taking back" Taiwan as strategic to its national security. The fact that Taiwan has remained separated from mainland China ever since Japan took it in 1895 haunts the CCP.

Here, once again, sweeping generalisations do not help us when dealing with China's "colonial legacy". Instead we need concrete analysis. Not all of China's colonial legacy is a burden for its development. Take the case of Hong Kong. Hong Kong's autonomy allows the city to preserve

its British legal system, which is no doubt a colonial legacy. China is attacking the city's legal system in the name of maintaining national security and "patriotism". Yet from the people's point of view, no matter how flawed the British legal system is, it is still much better than China's. Furthermore, smashing it would harm the collective interest of bureaucratic capitalism. It is precisely this colonial legacy that allowed the city to evolve into the financial centre that China depends on even today — half of China's foreign direct investment goes through the city. Xi can not achieve his dream for China without Hong Kong's autonomous capitalism, at least for the coming period.

This brings us to the most glaring contradiction in China today. Xi wants China to take a great leap forward in terms of modernisation. But he simply does not have the knowledge or enough pragmatism to turn his dream into coherent and feasible plans that can be implemented. The foolish act of shooting one's own foot when it comes to Hong Kong reflects the party's cultural backwardness; its failure to establish a stable succession of power is another example. If we factor in the party's failure to modernise its political culture of personal loyalty and cult leaders, we can see why China's ability to consolidate its position at the table of imperialist powers faces difficulties.

**What can you tell us about China's actions in the South China Sea and how, if at all, they have contributed to rising tensions and militarisation in the Asia Pacific?**

China's nine-dash line claim over the South China Sea was a fundamental turning point, because it represented the start of China's overseas expansion, politically and militarily. First, because its claim is entirely illegitimate. China, for example, also claims the Senkaku Island, which Japan disputes. There you can at least say China has a stronger case for its claim while Japan has no basis, either under so-called international law or from a leftist point of view. It is simply an imperialist claim by Japan, in alliance with the US. By contrast, China has never effectively ruled the whole area of the nine-dash line its

claim (excepting some islands, such as the Paracel Island). Its claim over most of the South China Sea is not only not justified, it is a pronouncement of its hegemonic ambitions in Asia, which run parallel with its global economic ambitions represented by the BRI.

**Some would respond that China's actions in the South China Sea are largely defensive and aimed at creating a buffer against US militarisation in the region. How legitimate is this argument?**

I think that was true of China's actions prior to its nine-dash line claim. Even if we accept that China continues to act defensively and is simply responding to US aggression, you do not do this by invading huge territories that never belonged to China and which surrounding countries have claims over — including some who were victims of Imperial China's aggression for hundreds of years. This is an invasion of the maritime economic zones of several countries in Southeast Asia. It can no longer be deemed to be defensive.

It is also worth noting that there is no Great Wall separating defensive from offensive actions, especially when we consider how rapidly the context has changed in China and internationally. Today, Beijing has both the intention and capacity to kick start a global contest with the US. From the point of view of the collective interest of the bureaucracy, it is clear that Xi prematurely dropped Deng Xiaoping's advice of "keep a low profile and bide one's time".

Of course, we must continue to oppose US imperialism and militarisation in the region, but this should not mean supporting or remaining silent about China's emerging imperialism. Just how close or far China is to being on a par with the US empire is not the decisive issue in this regard.

**How does Taiwan fit into US-China tensions?**

The fundamental issue here is that China's claim over Taiwan has never factored in the wishes of the Taiwanese people. This is the most

important point. There is also the secondary issue of US-China tensions. But these tensions have no direct bearing on the fundamental issue.

Taiwanese people have a historic right to self-determination. The reason is simple: due to their distinct history, Taiwanese people are very different from those of mainland China. Ethnically speaking, most Taiwanese are Chinese. But there are ethnic minorities, known as Austronesian peoples, who have inhabited large parts of Southeast Asia including Taiwan for thousands of years. The CCP never mentions this fact; it pretends that Taiwan was always Chinese-occupied. This is not true: indigenous peoples have existed in Taiwan for much longer and their rights must be respected.

As for those who are ethnically Chinese, we are really dealing with two distinct groups. About 15%, an absolute minority, only moved to Taiwan in 1949 after the Chinese revolution. The majority have descendants who have been living in Taiwan for up to 400 years. This is very different to Hong Kong, where a big chunk of the population is composed of mainland Chinese who have relatives in mainland China and still view mainland Chinese as their homeland. In Taiwan, most Chinese have no such connection to mainland China — any such connections were broken hundreds of years ago. Taiwan has been a separate nation for many years. It therefore has a historic right to self-determination.

The situation is not entirely comparable, but I would also say that the same applies for Hong Kong. We should not forget that for 150 years, Hong Kong's historical trajectory was also very different to that of mainland China: no one can deny that, or our right to self-determination. Any Western leftist who denies this is either uninformed or their claim to being a socialist is quite debatable.

Of course, it is true that all this is now entangled with US-China tensions. In this sense it is similar to the Ukrainian situation. In that case too, there are those who support Russia or hold a neutral position. In my opinion, they are wrong. There is no doubt that the



US is a global empire that pursues its agenda everywhere. I understand that some Western leftists do not want to be seen as aligning with their own imperialist governments. But our support for smaller nations' right to self-determination — as long as we conduct it independently — has nothing to do with the US, or China for that matter.

We support these struggles based on our principle of opposing national oppression. Our principles should not be compromised just because our stand may occasionally coincide with the US' agenda. Opposing your own ruling class should not mean prioritising your hatred of it over peoples' resistance to foreign oppression in other parts of the world. To see politics this way largely reflects one's arrogance and, at the same time, sense of helplessness in relation to their own ruling class.

**What kind of solidarity campaigns should the left focus on when it comes to Taiwan or the South China Sea?**

Any solidarity campaigning on these two areas — to which I would add Hong Kong — should consist of at least three points: respecting the Taiwanese and Hong Kong peoples' right to self-determination; accepting that China's nine-dash line claim in the South China Sea has no basis; and acknowledging that agency for opposing China's stance lies, first and foremost, with the peoples of these three areas and surrounding countries. As far as the US is concerned, we should remain sceptical of its motivations but, again, when it comes to particular issues we have to weigh up all the pros and cons in a concrete way, and especially take into consideration the wishes of the people.

For example, the issue of Taiwan

buying arms from the US: we need to be aware that all war games scenarios suggest that Taiwan would not be able to resist a Chinese invasion for more than a week and, in worst case scenarios, for more than a few days. It is obvious that Taiwan needs to buy arms from the US. None of this means that we support US rights over Taiwan. Agency must lie with those directly affected — the people in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and in and around the South China Sea.

**As part of their war drive on China, Western leaders have sought to stoke nationalism and anti-Chinese racism. In response, some on the left have sought to mute their criticisms of China in order to not contribute to their government's reactionary campaign. What are your thoughts on how the left in Western countries can oppose their own government's propaganda without becoming uncritical supporters of China?**

The crux of the matter is that the campist notion of "anti-imperialism" is not only half-hearted, in that they only target old imperialisms while overlooking emerging imperialisms, but also state-centred. Their concerns are always about this or that state. They forget that we should never prioritise states over working people, where agency must lie — and this extends even to "worker states".

Genuine socialists should be people-centred. If someone refuses to see how the CCP treats Chinese working people, and is content with repeating Beijing's propaganda or refuses to listen to the voices of working people, then I would say they are not genuinely socialists. They just look up to certain states, viewing them as some kind of bulwark against their own imperialist government. Their

powerlessness leads them to applaud any foreign state at odds with their ruling class and to abandon those facing repression, simply to fulfil their own psychological yearnings.

But you will never defeat your own nationalism by supporting or tolerating Han Chinese nationalism. We can support, within certain boundaries, the nationalism of oppressed nations. But, today, Han Chinese are not oppressed by any foreign nation; on the contrary, they are oppressed by their own government. Hence Han Chinese nationalism has no progressive value.

Furthermore, the CCP's version of "patriotism" is a kind of ethno-nationalism, which makes it even more reactionary. It seeks a kind of dayitong (大同great unification) not dissimilar to that practised by fascism, in which people's thoughts must be brought under the control of the government and books not promoting official values banned. To be silent on this version of Han Chinese nationalism is to forget the immense tragedy of the Han Chinese — now oppressed by their own rulers to the point that they mock themselves as being little more than "Chinese leeks" waiting to be harvested by the party on a regular bases — and the brutal repression of minorities.

By supporting or refraining from criticising a totalitarian state such as China, we are digging our own graves. It is a betrayal of basic internationalism and discredits the left. Internationalism is, first and foremost, solidarity with working people of different nations, not with states, and it is on this basis that we should judge relationships between states, not vice versa.

2 December 2023

Source [Links](#)

## A Europe of the peoples or of capital?

## 8 December 2023, by **Bea (Naná) Whitaker**

It is no coincidence that the French Interior Minister responded in an interview with *Journal du Dimanche* on 22 October to questions concerning his condemnation by the European Convention on Human Rights to pay a fine for expulsion of two Chechens, that he does not sit on the ECHR. On the question of whether the two fields of European jurisprudence and the French Constitution are legitimate, the minister replies that “there is no taboo question” and that “the ECHR does not excessively prevent me from doing my work as Interior Minister.”

In the name of the fight against illegal immigration, in 2008 the EU, for the first time, patrolled the Strait of Sicily to prevent the crossing of boats full of migrants coming from the African coasts to Italy or Malta. This is a joint operation with Libyan border guards. The cooperation of the latter is a novelty which will serve as an example later. At the same time, migrants are sent back to Mauritania or are kept in Libya, where they will be victims of ill-treatment, torture, rape, or trafficking.

In 2016, the EU negotiated a joint action plan “which will bring order to migratory flows and contribute to stemming irregular migration” with Turkey’s president Erdogan, following the influx of Syrian refugees onto the continent through Greece or Italy. The agreement provided for the return to Turkey of migrants rejected as asylum seekers. This agreement cost European taxpayers 6 billion euros delivered in two instalments to Turkey. EU payment delays to the Turkish president are causing him to encourage migrants to stay in Greece in 2020, which in turn hosts them in deplorable conditions. Once again, the EU undertakes to pay 700 million euros to the Greek government so that it can take care of the distribution of minors to voluntary EU countries, which has not prevented increased returns of migrants at sea.

Since then, this defined subcontracting of “outsourcing” of asylum seekers and refugees of all

kinds has multiplied, as have bilateral agreements carefully managed in the form of commercial, financial aid and so on with third party countries. At the same time, the measures concerning refugees, adopted since its creation, reveal the exponential erosion of human rights guaranteed by international conventions, signed by most EU countries.

In 2021, the social-democratic government of Denmark legislated the return of asylum seekers to Rwanda, under the pretext of dissuading migrants from returning to the EU area.

In the United Kingdom, Boris Johnson, then Prime Minister in 2022, launched the idea of sending asylum seekers back to East Africa. These transfers of migrants arriving via the Channel crossing were to be sent to Rwanda under the Rishi Sunak government, but the Supreme Court unanimously blocked his intentions, in line with United Nations reports on human rights and refugee rights.

In Italy, Giorgia Meloni signed an agreement last November with Albania for the reception of 39,000 migrants who survived shipwrecks at sea to detention centres, with the exception of women and children whose asylum requests would be dealt with by Italian agents, but on Albanian soil.

In France, the government is trying to tighten its regulation of migrants, already very discriminatory, based on the general orientation founded on the potential dangerousness of refugees, selection of arrivals, suppression and discrimination of certain rights to health, to work, and so on, echoing the proto-fascist speeches of Marine Le Pen’s National Rally.

Germany has closed a relatively open chapter towards migrants with the reduction of aid, extension of police extensions concerning deportation to the borders followed by the tightening of control, an accelerated process of requests for authorization and like its

French neighbour, the government wants to move towards a “significant and lasting reduction in illegal immigration” while, like the British, it is starting negotiations with countries in Africa.

In the Spanish state, the Canary Islands are the gateway to Europe for those who risk their lives with often fatal consequences. This situation led the Interior Minister of the Socialist government to try to convince the government of Senegal to tighten control of the country’s coasts, which was refused.

Last July, the EU concluded an agreement worth 150 million euros with the government of the racist Tunisian president Kaïs Saïed to “save the country’s finances” and 100 million euros to “fight against illegal immigration”. In fact, the government returned 60 million euros, in the person of its Minister of Foreign Affairs, due to European accusations that Tunis had shown “negligence in the fight against smugglers”. However, this did not break down relations between this country and the EU.

During the session of the Permanent People’s Tribunal in Paris January 2018, their indictment demonstrated that the EU and its member states systematically violate fundamental rights and freedoms in matters of immigration and asylum policy, despite the countless condemnations of some of their countries.

Despite accusations from human rights organizations in the EU, its officials continue to insist that the Union “defends its values”. We wonder what values are at stake in the Europe which despises, which rejects, which mistreats, which discriminates against, a part of humanity.

## **The motivations**

## for a racist policy

The ideological chasms between human rights defenders and nationalists or sovereignists seem to be narrowing as the gaps between wealth and poverty increase, either locally or globally.

This is not surprising because the need for capital accumulation is inherent to the very existence of the system. It is therefore normal that its representatives seek not to disrupt this dynamic. And one of the ways to consolidate it is to create myths, scapegoats, stigmatization of undesirable individuals produced by systemic fantasies.

The reality is that European taxpayers find themselves victims of a great scam by the representatives of capital. The justification for the colossal expenditure for maintaining the policy of Fortress Europe not only proves useless, but also reveals limitless hypocrisy because the authors of the countless security measures of control, repression, registration, retention and so on know perfectly well that their implementations are in vain. In reality, their policy allows the continuity of the economic cycle of capital, in continuous renewal with the panoply of products to ensure the hypothetical closure of borders and the impossibility of entry onto EU soil.

In 2015, *La Tribune* published material based on a study by a consortium of European journalists on the cost of the policy against so-called illegal immigration for taxpayers.

The cost of expulsions of illegal migrants carried out by the 28 member countries and the four other non-EU countries (Norway, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Iceland) is 11.3 billion euros from

2000 to 2015. Then, the cost of coordinating efforts Europeans of almost 1 billion euros, including 226 million for the purchase of border control equipment. Satellites, robot dogs, radar barbed wire, facial recognition, drones, high-speed boats, cameras, night vision binoculars, make up the landscape of the EU borders.

The ever more sophisticated effort of surveillance and rescues involved during this period 230 million euros of investments in research and development, especially in aeronautics and the arms industry. In 2022, this market, estimated at 29 billion euros in Europe, has stimulated the race of the entire military industry towards the civilian arms industry. Currently, Russia's invasion of Ukraine is changing the role of the arms industry, which can only benefit from the expansion of the quantitative volume of orders, but also their objectives.

Border "protections" cost European taxpayers just as much. 77 million euros for separation walls in Greece, Spain, Bulgaria, and others, have since followed: Hungary, Austria, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, to the immense joy of the barbed wire producers, reinforced concrete walls.

The creation of the European border guard agency, Frontex, deserves a separate chapter. Not only by its prerogatives, but also by what it represents in terms of spending. The border "security" provided by the agency cost 19 million euros in 2006, and during the period 2021-2027 its budget increases to 900 million euros per year. Spending ranges from military and security equipment to control and surveillance technologies, easily financed with taxpayer money. This agency, subjected to countless accusations from human rights organizations, acts with complete

structural impunity in non-respect of the right to asylum, mistreatment of refugees and so on.

In 2017, satellites, ships, planes, walls, robot dogs, barbed wire, radars, facial recognition, drones, and cameras make up the landscape of the EU borders. This market, estimated at 29 billion euros in Europe in 2022, is stimulating the race of the entire military industry towards the civilian sector. Construction is also expanding into the EU with border walls. In addition to the human or financial cost of people, these activities have an ecological cost due to the intense consumption of fuel and pollutants from the machines.

It is not wrong to assert that EU policy regarding immigration is mainly aimed at satisfying the interests of groups expanding the military security arsenal, such as Airbus, NEC, Atos, IDEMIA, Jenetric, Secunet for aeronautics and defence groups and others. Ultimately, it is not so serious these colossal expenses are taken out of the pockets of the people on the continent, provided that the continuity of the system is guaranteed.

Such a policy only comforts racist or proto-fascist candidates, who benefit from the anchoring of an ideology that they will be able to secure in their future positions of responsibility. We should not be surprised by the reactionary, conservative, discriminatory turn of the latest electoral results in EU member countries.

When will the hundreds of millions of European citizens decide to no longer trust and even less, spend more than 2,000 billion euros to barricade the EU border, to support an inhumane, suicidal and criminal policy?

4 December 2023

## The Political Labyrinth and the Crossroads of the Left in the Spanish State

## 7 December 2023, by Manuel Garí

After these state-level elections, it was possible to confirm the existence of a precarious and catastrophic institutional tie between the reactionary bloc of the Spanish ultra-nationalist right and the self-styled “progressive” bloc composed of the alliance of the PSOE with Sumar, the name under which a conglomerate of diverse political figures and groups located slightly to the left of the socialist party is grouped. It should be noted however that the balance of institutional weight has tipped in favour of the reactionary PP which obtained an absolute majority in the Senate and was the most popular list in Congress, but without enough votes in the Chamber of Deputies to be able to form a government, so its leader Alberto Núñez Feijóo failed in his attempt to be named president of the government by parliament despite the support of the party far-right Vox.

Both elections show that, in some way, there is a return to the two-party formula (albeit incomplete) that has presided over the Spanish political system since the beginning of the post-Franco transition and the years of the reform regime that emerged after the social and constitutional pacts in 1978. The elections took place in the context of a profound demobilisation and passivity of the mass movement, particularly the trade unions, and a “demonisation” of many organisations of the social movements around the Sánchez government without real independence in the face of the PSOE’s policy of compassionate neoliberalism and option for “green growth.” The political left, for the most part, is only aware of its institutional positioning and has given up on promoting popular organization and mobilization.

In a context of inflation and loss of purchasing power of the working class and record profits in companies in the textile sector (due to the increase in their transnational businesses) and banks (thanks to the rise in interest rates) and enormous profits for energy companies (despite the crisis

associated with the war in Ukraine), the reformist left, whose weight is decisive, is not organizing social resistance to the high cost of living and for wage increases and the anti-capitalists are too weak to do so. This social situation is accompanied by the endemic problem of access to housing (owned or rented) and by the progressive deterioration of public health and education to the benefit of the expansion of the private sector in both cases. Meanwhile the effects of the failure and repression of the Catalan nationalist democratic movement are still lingering. This failure is shown in the almost total absence of mobilizations in favour of amnesty in Catalonia.

All this has generated an increase in social unrest, but unrest and street occupations are increasingly being channelled by right-wing and ultra-right-wing populist, neoliberal and reactionary currents representing a Spanish nationalism close to the neo-Francoist anti-democratic discourse. It is no coincidence that Vox’s youth is called *Revolta*.

### The reactionary bloc

The reactionary bloc had already in the previous legislature adopted an increasingly Trumpist discourse against Sánchez’s coalition government, which it described as illegal and illegitimate. In an absolutely hyperbolic way, they branded it as unconstitutional, when it is a fact that the 1978 Constitution - the product of the pact between Francoists and major left-wing parties - has had as its main supporter precisely the socialist party, guarantor of the regime and the stability of the monarchy.

Currently the great issue of confrontation for the Spanish right is - as in the recent past it was the “Basque question” - the “Catalan question,” especially after the referendum of 1 October 2017 in

Catalonia. The members of the Vox-PP tandem represent different tones of authoritarian neoliberalism and in both cases their great hallmark is the defence of an exclusionary, homogenizing and punitive Spanish nationalism.

The discourse is not new, as they inherited it from their Francoist origins, what is new is that the extreme right forces compete with each other to hegemonize that electoral field and both have fed a social polarization that permeates broad sectors of society in a transversal way, affecting significant numbers of working people. Along the way, they have found an echo and support in an important part of the old guard and the traditional Socialist electorate. The identity of the PP and Vox is built - while concealing the agenda of their economic and social proposals - around the identity and imaginary of “the Spanish” as opposed to Catalonia and the Basque Country.

That is the reason why when Pedro Sánchez (secretary general of the PSOE), after the failure of the PP leader, presented his candidacy to form a coalition government and, in addition to a sweetened catalogue of previously unfulfilled social proposals, agreed with the Catalan nationalist parties *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (ERC) and *Junts* the amnesty for prisoners and defendants in the events of 1 October 2017 and then in 2019.

The amnesty is inadmissible for the Spanish right, which has launched a general and continuous mobilization against the measure. An offensive that has the active collaboration of the judicial system inherited from the Franco regime (school of “lawfare”) and other bodies of civil servants absolutely unrelated to the issue, as well as pronouncements from the Spanish Confederation of Business Organizations. And what is also dangerous, they have the sympathy of broad sections in the army, police forces and the media.



The arguments of these sectors are as exaggerated as they are fallacious when judging the “concessions” made by the PSOE to the nationalist parties that they characterise as a “coup d’état” similar to that attempted in February 1981, “dictatorship”, “abolition of the rule of law”. In their ideological coating of their criticisms, they assimilate amnesty or other measures of relationship between the central state and the Communities as an attack on the “equality of all Spaniards,” ignoring that their liberticidal and austerity policies, wherever they are applied, are the ones that are reinforcing the real inequality that pre-exists in capitalist class society. Their arguments support two previous ideas: “Spain is breaking up” and “illegitimate government.”

They don’t respond to the truth; they are mere fake news. Nor do they correspond to the real content of the Socialist Party’s agreements with the nationalist parties, but they have generated a parallel truth that drives a “civil war” political climate. But beware, the arguments of the right hide less “patriotic” purposes: they are preparing a new reactionary cycle against the rights of the working class, the political and civil rights of the popular classes and new attacks against feminism, migrants and LGTBI, as we have already seen in one of the regions they govern: Madrid.

The PP has promoted significant mass mobilizations, but above all the leaders of Vox have supported forms of radical street struggle with the active presence of Nazi and fascist organizations before the headquarters of the socialist party. Perfectly prepared and organized actions that included calls from the leader of Vox, Santiago Abascal, for the police disobedience so that they do not act against the demonstrators. And the institutional left is absent from the streets, calling for order and citizens’ peace: the worst of scenarios.

How can we characterize this situation generated by the PP and Vox? As stated in the statement from *Anticapitalistas* “Before the investiture old and new problems” of last 14 November: “Despite the inflammatory rhetoric of the right, a change of regime or a fascist coup is not on the

table, as certain sectors seem to insinuate. Rather, the right assumes a strategy of erosion based on setting the agenda around an exacerbated Spanishism, which hides the real problems suffered by the working class, while the judicial-police party radicalizes the authoritarian turn of the state apparatuses.”

## End of cycle and the new government

On the side of the “progressive” bloc, we can see the electoral setback in the general elections as well as in the local and regional elections of the political organizations that emerged after the movement of the rebels of 15 M, as is the case with Podemos. And it is becoming increasingly clear that Sánchez has achieved a renewed strengthening of the neoliberal social pole in the context of the Spanish left.

Podemos and Izquierda Unida (IU) are experiencing a process of internal crisis and loss of affiliation that is very significant. Their political irrelevance after the change of cycle is palpable, as is the failure of their option to govern at all costs despite the manifest hegemony of the PSOE in the previous coalition government. This party imposed its agenda both on internal political issues such as the end of the repressive legislation of the social movement and freedom of expression (“Gag Law”) or the inhumane policy against migration, as well as on most social issues (the anti-worker employment reform of the previous governments has not been repealed) and foreign policy (abandonment of the Saharawi people in the former Spanish colony whose territory was annexed by Morocco).

The new formula of regroupment to the left of the PSOE, Sumar, headed by Yolanda Díaz is only going to aggravate the crisis due to its character as an opportunist companion of the Socialist party and for the moment it is not supposing a “resurrection” of the left-wing space, but is an expression of its weakness and its inability to organize democratic parties with

transformative programs. Sumar is a conglomerate of parties and individuals in which, given that there is no leadership elected by those who support it, decisions are taken in a caudillo manner by its leader and a small team appointed by her, whether it is a question of programmatic issues such as the preparation of electoral lists or the appointment of its “quota” of ministers.

We are facing a government of continuity. Of the 22 ministers, 5 correspond to Sumar and the rest to the Socialist Party. The representatives of Podemos have been evicted from it. In other words, we are facing a re-edition of a government based on compassionate neoliberalism and nothing points to it breaking with the economic policy of the European Union when the austerity rules are restored.

Social issues that directly affect the living conditions of the working class have been totally absent from this investiture debate. Sumar has given its support to the PSOE, putting on the table a series of generic issues linked to social dialogue with employers. The important thing for Sumar is to continue maintaining its presence in the ministries, even at the cost of lying about the scope of the “employment reform” carried out by the Ministry of Employment in the hands of Yolanda Díaz or the non-repeal of the Gag Law, issues in which all those who were part of the first coalition government were complicit. The great absentee in the second coalition government, Podemos, has not made a self-critical assessment of its time in the previous executive cabinet and we have been able to verify that his confrontation with Sumar does not lie in differences of project or program as much as with its loss of leadership in the field of the post-15 M left.

This government has support for Sánchez’s investiture as president of the cabinet from other left-wing forces, specifically the nationalist Galician Nationalist Bloc (BNG) and Bildu, a Basque pro-independence organisation. Both formations, immersed in a policy of programmatic moderation and homologation as possible government parties in the coming regional elections in Galicia

and the Basque Community, will very possibly remain loyal allies of the government in the main decisions, particularly the budgetary ones.

In addition, Sánchez has had the support of the two Catalan pro-independence parties ERC and Junts, both forces that compete for the same electorate in Catalonia. The first is a formation linked to the interests of the Catalan petty bourgeoisie, the second directly a party behind which the interests of a part of the traditional Catalan bourgeoisie are hidden. The latter formation, Junts, is experiencing a major internal crisis and trouble with part of its social base due to the document signed on 9 November with the Socialist party in which they express agreements and differences, but little practical translation into immediate real politics that surpass the agreements already reached a few days earlier by ERC that substantiate specific issues: amnesty, transfer of powers, fiscal measures and so on.

He also had the support for the investiture of the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), a force linked to the interests of the industrial business community of the Basque Country. Likewise, the only deputy of a very opportunist regionalist party from the Canary Islands, Coalición Canaria, has voted in favour of the investiture. In

these cases, Sánchez has made several promises of government actions in favour of the territories in which these parties operate or of the transfer of competences from the central state to the Autonomous Communities in the management of infrastructures or taxes.

But the difference in votes in parliament between the bloc that supports Sánchez's investiture and those of the reactionary bloc is very narrow. On the other hand, support for the investiture does not imply guaranteed support for the set of government decisions, laws or draft state budgets. This marks the beginning of an institutional period of high instability both in the Senate (with a reactionary majority) and in Parliament, as well as in the relations between the central government and several of the regional governments and many of the country's city councils. This, together with the surely hostile actions of a large part of the judicial magistracy and other powers of the state and the inevitable mobilization and street activity of the right, constitute a complicated horizon for governability.

At the heart of the investiture pact is the amnesty for all those who suffered reprisals around the mobilizations and proclamations of 1 October 2017,

those of 2019 in Catalonia, which affects 50 judicial processes, 3,500 reprisals, 44 imprisoned and 6 exiled. At the moment we do not know if the amnesty will be applied to others repressed for political reasons other than those of the Catalan process, I fear not. On the other hand, and despite the right-wing propaganda, a new referendum on national self-determination in Catalonia is not assured. On the contrary, any move in this direction is linked to strict compliance with the 1978 Constitution, which is the same as refusing to hold a referendum.

Once again, in the Spanish labyrinth, class contradictions and positions and identities around the national question are intertwined. The best way to confront the reactionary right and pro-business progressivism is to generate a dynamic of autonomous mobilization, which lays the foundations for a reconstruction of an independent political field from the working class and the oppressed. The ongoing experience of solidarity with Palestine shows the usefulness of "doing without waiting" that has connected with a significant part of the majority of left-wing people and forced Sánchez to go beyond what he planned to do.

*28 November 2023*

# The Zionist Genocidal War and Its Accomplices

**6 December 2023, by Gilbert Achcar**

We sometimes hear from those who wish to mitigate the impact of what the State of Israel has been doing since Operation Al-Aqsa Flood that it was committing daily crimes and waging periodic wars anyway, so that its new onslaught on Gaza is nothing but a continuation of this old, permanent pattern. It is true, of course, that crime and aggression are two fundamental pillars of the Zionist state as a settler-colonial state based

on war and "ethnic cleansing". Nevertheless, downplaying the current aggression against Gaza and denying that it is qualitatively distinct from all previous tragedies that the people of Palestine have suffered since the Nakba until this day, converges with the fallacies that the Zionists and their supporters are trying to spread in pretending that the death toll numbers coming from Gaza are exaggerated for the purpose of

propaganda.

The truth is that the current aggression against Gaza constitutes, in the clearest possible form, a genocidal war that includes mass murder and "ethnic cleansing", two crimes against humanity in the classification of international law. These crimes exceed qualitatively everything committed by the Zionist armed forces since 1949 until today

and are comparable to what happened during the Nakba. They even exceed the latter in terms of intensity of killing, destruction, and displacement. The Nakba of 1947-1949 was a war aimed at seizing the land of Palestine and practicing "ethnic cleansing" over it, whereby the overwhelming majority of the population of the occupied territory were turned into refugees, while a number of them estimated at more than 11,000 were killed, out of approximately 1.3 million of Arab inhabitants of Palestine at that time.

As for the current aggression against Gaza, it has so far, in less than seven weeks, caused approximately 15,000 deaths, at the very least, out of approximately 2.4 million inhabitants of the Gaza Strip, with more than half of them displaced from the north of the strip to its south in preparation for their displacement out of Palestine, as far-right Zionist circles wish, or at least their gathering on the Egyptian border in refugee camps that would serve as concentration camps under the supervision of the Israeli army. And these are only the results of the first phase of the Zionist aggression, which targeted the northern part of the Gaza Strip, and should be followed by a second phase focused on its southern part, which would greatly exacerbate the number of casualties.

This is happening through a killing and destruction madness that exceeds anything witnessed in the world's wars since the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan in 1945. The matter has reached such a point that the New York Times has revealed the horror of what is occurring, even though the US government is directly complicit in the aggression. This was in an article by Lauren Leatherby, published on the 25th of this month, under the title, "The civilian population of Gaza, under an Israeli barrage of fire, is being killed at a historic rate". The author of the report explained that the issue is not only related to the pace of the bombing, which amounted to 15,000 strikes until the present truce,

but also to its quality, as Israel has been extensively using 2,000-pound bombs (900 kilograms), rarely used since World War II and the Korean and Vietnam wars.

The report quotes US military officials as saying that they have almost never used such a calibre in the present century, and that they have avoided using even 500-pound bombs because they are too large to be dropped on populated urban areas, such as Mosul in Iraq or Raqqa in Syria during the war against ISIS. During the battle of Mosul, which began in October 2016 and lasted nine months, about 10,000 people were killed between victims of ISIS and victims of the US-led international coalition, that is, two-thirds of the number of those killed by the Israeli campaign in Gaza in less than seven weeks.

What makes these numbers even more dangerous and horrific is that about 70% of those claimed by the Zionist genocidal machine in Gaza are women and children, a huge percentage unparalleled in any contemporary war. The New York Times report states that the number of children who died under the barrage of Israeli bombs in Gaza during the past seven weeks exceeds the total number of children killed last year in all the wars taking place in various global arenas, including the Ukraine war that began in February 2022.

Another report published by the Washington Post on the 13th of this month stated that the number of children killed by Israel in Gaza during the first month of its insane bombing exceeded the number of children killed in the wars in Yemen and Iraq, and amounted to a third of the number of children killed during ten years of war in Syria. The newspaper compared the 4,125 children killed in Gaza in one month with the following average numbers of children killed in one month of fighting in Iraq (19), Yemen (41), Afghanistan (56), and Syria (100). It is

no secret that the killing of children, in particular, is a blatant feature of genocide as it expresses the will to annihilate the targeted people.

All of these data demonstrate the great gravity of the genocidal war waged by the Zionist state against the people of Gaza since Operation Al-Aqsa Flood. This is not surprising, as the extreme thirst of revenge generated among Israeli Jews combined with the presence of the Zionist far right in power, made such insane violence very predictable. The matter was easy to anticipate, and hence the gravity of the support lent by Western governments to the Zionist onslaught under the pretext of Israel's alleged right to "self-defence" (the number of those it has killed so far has exceeded ten times those it lost as a result of Al-Aqsa Flood)—a support that went as far as rejecting the call for a ceasefire, in addition to the United States, Germany, and others sending military reinforcements to Israel and to the eastern Mediterranean in support of Israel's onslaught—is truly immense. This is the first time since the middle of the past century that these governments have openly supported a genocidal war. What is even more serious is the complicity of the governments of Arab countries, which have so far refrained from weaponizing oil despite their awareness that it constitutes the strongest means of pressure in their possession that can help the people of Palestine. That is because Western countries today fear the return of oil prices to the rise, not only for economic reasons but also and primarily because this would serve Russia's interest in financing its war on Ukraine, at a time when it is facing difficulties in this regard.

29 November 2023

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# Changing dynamics of world politics after the Hamas attack on Israel

5 December 2023, by **Karen Yamanaka**

In particular, the Israel-Hamas war has caused further upheaval in a world order already fraught with tension and confrontation. In times of conflict and confrontation, political dynamics are still undergoing significant changes. The post-Cold War opposition to Russian expansion (or "West vs. Russia"), the US-China confrontation, and the "War on Terror" are all going on simultaneously. The US is involved in all of them. The "War on Terror" is not over. The US and other Western nations are once again beginning to engage in war crimes in the name of the "War on Terror". These countries are complicit with Israel.

On the other hand, the political and economic influence of the US and China, which have played major roles in each of the global warfare structures, is diminishing. Not to mention the withdrawal of the presence of another military power, Russia. The internal and external troubles of these three countries will make it difficult for them to expand their influence in the future. The world is moving from the era of confrontation between military powers to an era of multipolarity and nonpolarity. In such a global situation, Joe Biden and Xi Jinping met in the US for the first time in a year on November 15. The meeting eased tensions between the US and China to some extent. Meanwhile, the conflict between China and its neighbors has become quite serious, which could increase the geopolitical risks in South Asia.

## Conflicts continuing after

### the Second World War

The Israel-Palestine conflict is one of the world's major conflict issues that has been going on since the Second World War. Throughout the Muslim world, there has been a great deal of interest from concerned parties. This conflict continued during the Cold War, with a complex relationship to the confrontational structure of the US and the Soviet Union. The situation in the Middle East has also had a significant impact on the power game among the major powers in distant North-East Asia. One of the reasons why the North Korean crisis of 2017-2018 did not lead to a catastrophic escalation was the unclear Middle East policy of the Trump administration after the Syrian civil war, which began in 2011.

The Israel-Hamas war contains elements that will change the dynamics of the Middle East for the first time since the Gulf War. If Israel and the West continue their confrontation with Hamas and other powers, the new structure of war could have repercussions beyond the Middle East and affect conflict issues around the world as the "War on Terror" worldwide. Islamic extremist forces in the African region have historically operated primarily in the East African region, which is close to the Middle East. In recent years, however, their powers have spread across the African continent. The structures of government in the countries of the Sahel region of West Africa have been weakened and there have been coups d'état. The "War on Terror" is still trying to draw us into the structure of war on several major global scales. It will be necessary to place current international trends,

such as the Israel-Hamas war, in the context of the new political dynamics in the world.

### Retreat of the influences of the three military powers

How does the current world situation correlate with Russia's military invasion of Ukraine? Russia's military invasion, which began on 24 February 2022, is the result of the following factors.

The first is the decline of Russian power. Economic sanctions imposed by the international community have made it difficult for Russia to import parts and products that use advanced technologies, such as semiconductors. In the process of squandering so much of its national power in Ukraine, Russia's influence in neighboring Azerbaijan and Armenia has diminished considerably.

The second is the declining influence of the two world powers, the US and China. The US remains the world's largest military and economic power, and many people have the impression that the country retains overwhelming influence in the international community. At the same time, however, the three previous US administrations, including the current Biden administration, have successively retreated in their external influence. The withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan by the Biden administration in August 2021 underscored the retreat of the US influence. The US's post-9/11 military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq ended with a withdrawal that cost the US great human and financial



sacrifice, as well as "political prestige".

Meanwhile, the Chinese regime of Xi Jinping has been in place for a decade. The propaganda to make the country "Xi Jinping-oriented" as during the Cultural Revolution launched by Mao Zedong or to create "enthusiasm" among the people during the Yan'an period is becoming even stronger. The Xi Jinping regime, which has continued to block freedom of speech beyond the period of the Cultural Revolution, has been monitoring and restricting people's behavior with a three-year zero Covid policy. In China, where people are forced to live inhuman lives and a sense of social impasse is growing, political and

economic stagnation is remarkable. The discourse of "The increasing economic and political influence of China" is an illusion. In addition, China has not even overcome the problem of domestic poverty. [46]

At the G20 summit in New Delhi, China's president was absent for the first time. When the world's most powerful leaders gathered in New Delhi in September, it was strange to see that China's Xi Jinping wasn't among them, having never missed a G20 summit since coming to power in 2012. [48]

The rise of the Global South, primarily advocated by India, is the expansion of

the influence of regional powers. The Indo-Pacific region, with the most dynamic economic growth in the world (like it or not), will continue to be an inescapable part of the "rules-based international order". The hitherto oppressed Global South and regional powers are no longer powerless to be swept aside by the arrogance of military powers. In the context of a changing world order, the dynamics of world politics are shifting from an era of confrontation between military powers to an era of multipolarity and nonpolarity. Also, in times like these, the term "non-aligned" will be used more to describe the new trend in international politics.

27 November 2023

## U.S Makes Big Promises at COP28—Will They Be Fulfilled?

4 December 2023, by **Dan La Botz**

The meeting of leaders from 197 nations was from the beginning ambiguous. Though its goal is to reduce fossil fuels and their carbon emissions, it was held in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), an oil-producing nation. The president of COP28, Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber is the head of both Masdar, the government sponsored renewable energy corporation, and of Andoc, the UAE's national oil company. Participants in the conference were warned beforehand by the authoritarian state not to "criticize Islam, the government, corporations or individuals" nor to protest.

Advising Al Jaber was McKinsey & Company, a U.S. consultant to America's ExxonMobil and Saudi Arabia's Aramco. McKinsey's draft for COP28 called for \$2.7 trillion a year in new oil and gas investment until 2050 in complete contradiction of environmentalists' goals of ending fossil fuels.

Harris led the U.S. delegation that

also included special climate envoy John Kerry. Harris told the assembly, "This is a pivotal moment - our action collectively, or worse our inaction, will impact billions of people for decades to come."

The U.S. put forward some important proposals. First, Harris announced that the U.S. would contribute \$3 billion to the Green Climate Fund for renewable energy and climate resiliency worldwide. But the U.S. Congress has yet to pass such a contribution and the Republicans who control the House oppose virtually any action on climate. So, the contribution might never be made.

The U.S. also supported COP28's principal resolution, Oil and Gas Decarbonization Charter, which involved pledges by 50 of the world's oil and gas companies to tighten up their methane systems to prevent leaks. Methane is more powerful than carbon dioxide in the production of the greenhouse gasses that raise global temperatures. As Kerry said,

"It's mostly plumbing, simple, tightening the screws, shutting off leaks, stopping the flaring, stopping the venting, which is just wasting gas, burning it off in the atmosphere and doing damage." The question is, can the oil companies be counted on to do this voluntarily?

At the same time, Harris announced the United States would adopt new regulations to reduce methane by 80% from levels that would be expected without the new rules. Oil companies will no doubt challenge any new regulations in court. So, this is another promise that might not be fulfilled.

The U.S.'s role in the COP28 decisions has had the qualified backing of the Environmental Defense Fund, the most powerful U.S. environmental group. But some climate activists are not so satisfied. They have criticized Biden for failing to attend and ridiculed America's puny contribution of only \$17.5 million to the Loss and Damage Fund. Through this fund

wealthy and high greenhouse gas producing nations help developing countries, that produce little greenhouse gas but are harmed by climate change, with the rebuilding of communities and economies, ecological restoration, and even relocation.

Others criticized the Biden administration for signing more leases permitting companies to drill for oil,

for example at Willow, Alaska. Even Gore, who praised Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, involving progressive environmental legislation and the U.S. and COP methane accords, noted, "Of course the continued leasing of oil and gas drilling rights on public lands is a concern."

According to Climate Action Tracker, since signing of the Paris Climate

Accord in 2015, not one of the 194 signing nations has been in compliance. And the latest U.N. report says the world is failing to meet its climate goals. The COP28 conference may represent some progress, but we face a global catastrophe, and it will take more powerful social movements and political action to stop the use of fossil fuels and end the climate crisis.

3 December 2023

## Feminist tide engulfs Italy on 25 November

3 December 2023, by **Marta Autore**

While it is true that for years the demonstrations called by Non Una Di Meno for the international day against male violence against women and gender violence have seen lively and significant participation, the numbers and determination seen in the streets this year seem to mark a change of pace, a possible new explosion of movement, a powerful and overbearing irruption on the public scene of the issues of feminism.

The reasons for this irruption are to be found in a context of structural violence against women, only formally and demagogically opposed by the Meloni government, instrumentalizing rapes and feminicides to toughen penalties and militarize the country.

Already last summer, two cases of gang rape of young girls had shaken public opinion, in Caivano and Palermo. Then on 11 November, a 22-year-old girl, Giulia Cecchettin, disappeared with her ex-boyfriend from her village in north-eastern Italy. For a week, the two were not found. And, while some journalists speculated in the press about unreal romantic escapades, the bitter awareness was growing that the story would end with yet another feminicide. Number 107 in 2023. The girl was found dead seven days later, near a lake, having bled to death after being stabbed 26 times. Her murderer, 22-year-old ex-boyfriend Filippo Turetta, was caught in Germany a few days later. [49]

Grief, frustration and anger spread, especially among the very young. A story whose ending was already written, in a society deeply marked by patriarchal violence. This was made crystal clear by Elena Cecchettin, Giulia's sister, in an explosive interview, in which she stated:

Turetta is often described as a monster, but he's not a monster. A monster is an exception, a person who's outside society, a person for whom society doesn't need to take responsibility.. Instead, there is responsibility. "Monsters" are not sick, they are healthy sons of the patriarchy and rape culture. Rape culture is what legitimizes all behaviour that harms women, starting with the things that are sometimes not even considered important, but which are very important, such as control, possessiveness, catcalling. Every man is privileged by this culture.

It is often said "not all men". All men are not, but they are still men. No man is good if he does nothing to dismantle the society that gives them so much privilege. It is the responsibility of men in this patriarchal society given their privilege and power to educate and call out friends and colleagues as soon as they hear the slightest hint of sexist violence. Tell that friend

who checks out his girlfriend, tell that colleague who catcalls passers-by, make yourself hostile to such behaviour accepted by society, which is nothing but the prelude to feminicide.

Femicide is a state murder because the state does not protect us. Femicide is not a crime of passion, it is a crime of power. We need widespread sexual and emotional education, we need to teach that love is not possession. We need to fund anti-violence centres and we need to give those in need the opportunity to ask for help. For Giulia don't hold a moment of silence, for Giulia burn everything.

(Letter to *Corriere della Sera*, 20 November 2023)

"Don't hold a minute's silence, burn everything", "He was your *good lad*". The phrases resonate on the social networks of the very young and not only, on the walls of cities, underlining a rebellion against the narrative of the violent man as a sick monster. Instead, there are too many connections that every woman feels with this story of possession, jealousy, psychological blackmail.

Thus when the Minister of Education, Valditara, proposed a minute's silence

in every school to remember Giulia and the other victims, in many schools there was instead a minute's noise: shouting, banging on doors, shaking keys to symbolize on the one hand that the feminicide has the keys to the house too often, and on the other that we no longer want to have to make noise to make ourselves courageous as we walk home alone. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9quZBf1jfl>)

Crowded assemblies, spontaneous night marches, school occupations, initiatives outside of newspaper offices...The week that followed was a succession of mobilizations throughout the country.

On 25 November, hundreds of buses were on the move from the morning to

go to the rallies in Rome and Messina, and the requests to participate were so large that in many cities other processions were called to give everyone the opportunity to demonstrate.

In Rome, anyone who left home to go to the Circo Massimo, found themselves on public transport full of people heading towards the same goal, there were practically parallel marches flowing towards the main march, and the sight for those arriving in the square was impressive.

The largest demonstration in recent years flooded the streets of the city in a disorderly and determined manner, spontaneously encircling the Colosseum, leaving its mark on the shutters of the Pro Vita headquarters,

bringing its solidarity to the Palestinian people, shouting loudly about the need to finance Anti-Violence Centres, to establish sexual and relationship education programmes in schools of all levels, making the voices of so many women and gender minorities who struggle daily against male violence resound.

A historic day for the feminist movement, one that frightens the Meloni government, so far little challenged by social movements. A day that gives the movement a great responsibility: to feed this anger, to continue to insist on the structural dimension of patriarchal violence, to identify concrete goals, to build a real feminist strike on 8 March.

*3 December 2023*

## COP 28- what is at stake?

**2 December 2023, by Alan Thornett**

COP28 (along with planet Earth) is faced with "an absolutely gobsmackingly bananas increase in the global temperature"

COP28, the annual UN global summit on global warming, is taking place from November 30 until December 12 under the auspices of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was launched in 1992 to protect the planet against "dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system," which now takes place annually. It is the 28th UN climate change summit since 1992 and will take place in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

COP28, along with other recent such summits, faces a deadly, and indeed existential, contradiction between the relentless acceleration of global warming—i.e., the average global surface temperature of the planet—and the inability of the COP process to bring it under control or even hold it to a maximum increase of 1.5°C in line with the 2015 Paris

Agreement.

It became clear in August that 2023 would be of a different order of magnitude in terms of temperature when July turned out to be the world's hottest month ever recorded.

The UN Secretary General António Guterres, the most influential figure the UN has had on climate change, responded rightly by declaring that this meant that "the era of global warming had ended, and the era of global boiling has arrived." It meant, he said, that "climate change is here; it is terrifying, and it is just the beginning. It is still possible to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C (above pre-industrial levels) and avoid the very worst of climate change, he said, but only with dramatic, immediate climate action."

The September figure, however, was a whole lot worse. It was a staggering 0.5°C above the previous such record. The Guardian's environmental editor Damian Carrington quoted climate scientist Zeke Hausfather, who had

tweeted that: "This month was, in my professional opinion as a climate scientist, absolutely gobsmackingly bananas. It beat the prior monthly temperature record by over 0.5°C and was around 1.8°C warmer than preindustrial levels." He noted that datasets from European and Japanese scientists confirmed the leap.

It's worth noting that the difference in the average global temperature between now and the depths of the last ice age when these islands were under a kilometre of ice is around 5.0°C.

In mid-November, Guterres went further, warning that:

present trends are racing our planet down a dead-end 3C temperature rise. This is a failure of leadership, a betrayal of the vulnerable, and a massive missed opportunity. Renewables have never been cheaper or more accessible. We know it is still

possible to make the 1.5-degree limit a reality. It requires tearing out the poisoned root of the climate crisis: fossil fuels.

He added:

Leaders must drastically up their game now, with record ambition, record action, and record emissions reductions. No more greenwashing. No more foot-dragging.

## The UK's sell-out

One member state that has not upped its game scandalously is the UK under Sunak's Tory government, which has gone in exactly the opposite direction. In order to exploit a reactionary backlash from car drivers against Labour in a recent byelection, Sunak has delayed the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030 to 2035, deprioritising the transition to electric vehicles. He has also announced that a ban on the sale of fossil-fuel boilers from 2035 would be watered down and extra exemptions introduced.

Most significantly, he has issued a new generation of oil and gas licences for the North Sea and given the go-ahead for a new oil and gas field. It is a monumental stab in the back for the whole COP decarbonisation process.

Sunak insists (ludicrously) that none of this will affect the ability of Britain to still reach its 2050 net zero target. The UN has strongly protested.

## The venue

The venue of this COP is a major problem, of course. Few countries could be less suitable for such a summit than the UEA. It is not only the 7th biggest oil producer in the world at 3,250,000 barrels a day. It also holds the 7th largest proven reserves of natural gas in the world, at over 215 trillion cubic feet. It is also yet another host nation, following

Sharm El-Sheikh, with an appalling history of human rights abuses and an economy based on fossil fuel exports, and the president of the COP will be Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, who is the Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology of the UAE and the managing director and group CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company.

As a result of this, many campaigners will not travel to Dubai in person but will mount their protests at home or via the global day of action, which has already been called for the last day of the summit, which is December 12. However, the shocking revelation that the UEA has been using COP meetings to sell off oil and gas on the side has made the issue worse. Guterres has denounced it as a serious breach of the standards of conduct expected of a COP president.

It would be a mistake, however, to allow the venue problem to dominate our response. It is difficult for the UN to exclude a member state from the presidency when they are seeking to take their 193 member states together towards net zero and when hosting a COP often has a positive effect on the host nation in terms of its own record.

In any case, the primary role of a COP summit in pushing the member states to meet their commitments takes place between COP meetings rather than at them, when the die has often been cast, and also to plan actions and interventions for the following year. In the end, the COP process has to be bigger than this since it is dealing with a global existential emergence with a short time line for its conclusion.

The COP conferences, however, urgently need democratisation in order to give the climate movement a lot more space and severely restrict corporate lobbying access to them given to the petrochemical industry.

The aim of the climate movement should be to maximise mobilisations around every COP summit, and where it is not possible at the venue, it should be done at the international level. This is important both in order to mobilise the movement and also because it is the best opportunity we have to put demands on the global

elites at an international level.

Meanwhile, Al Jaber, COP president on behalf of the UAE, told the Guardian in an exclusive interview on the eve of the conference that he thought that the world could agree on a "robust roadmap" of cuts in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 that would meet scientific advice.

We shall see.

## Key challenges in Dubai

The principal responsibility of each COP is to conduct a global stocktake of the carbon reduction targets—or "nationally determined contributions"—to which each member state is pledged as a part of the so-called "ratcheting up process" adopted at COP21 in Paris in 2015. This requires each member state to set its own carbon reduction targets and then review and enhance them annually at implementation conferences such as COP27 and now COP28.

In this situation, every member state must adhere to the commitments it made at COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh and adopt new ones that are more stringently enforced and backed by a solid implementation strategy. The stocktake that took place last year at COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh revealed a disastrous situation, and this could be even worse.

## The loss and damage fund

The other massive issue that will rear its head again—and rightly so—is the matter of a so-called "loss and damage fund."

This fund was agreed upon in principle in Sharm El-Sheikh after a long and heated debate. It would provide a mechanism by which the rich countries, which are most responsible for climate change, would be required to pay into a fund that could mitigate the impact of climate change on the poor countries, who are



the least responsible for climate change, and help them with a just transition to renewable energy. There was no agreement, however, as to how much money should be paid into it, who should pay it, or on what basis. The UN's International Panel on Climate Change (the IPCC) was, therefore, asked to prepare a recommendation, particularly on the size of the fund for the COP28 in Dubai.

For more than 30 years, the rich countries had prevented the creation of such a fund, and it was only this year that pressure from the poor (or developing) countries themselves forced it onto the agenda. Prior to COP27, Guterres had argued strongly for such an agreement, warning that unless there is what he called a "historic pact" between the rich and poor countries on this issue, the planet could already be doomed. In other words, without a serious loss and damage fund to provide a social and economic transition, the UN will eventually and inevitably fail.

This issue was given a substantial boost on the eve of the summit when 70 international figures led by Gordon Brown, including former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, sent a letter to the COP calling for the massive revenues of oil-producing states to be subject to a \$25 billion levy to help pay for the impact of climate disasters on the world's poorest and most vulnerable people.

Brown told the *Guardian*:

The deadlock on climate finance has to be broken if Cop28 is to succeed. After more than a decade of broken promises, a \$25 billion oil and gas levy paid by the petrol states and proposed by the UAE as chair of Cop would kickstart finance for mitigation [reduction of greenhouse gas emissions] and adaptation in the global south.

Such a levy, he said, would shave off only a small fraction of the bonanza that oil-producing countries have made in recent years, but it would

help to fill the "loss and damage" to poor countries afflicted by the impacts of the climate crisis.

## The role of the UN

The state of the climate struggle today can be seen from the following harsh realities:

- Even though the scientific community frequently understates it, the science is still unchallengeable.
- The time available to reach net zero is rapidly running out.
- The limitations of the COP process become ever more apparent.
- Anthropogenic global warming is accelerating at an unprecedented rate, and dangerous tipping points are fast approaching—some have already arrived.
- The COP process has to be made to work because there is no alternative.

It is a pivotal moment for the UN since, faced with such contradictions, its entire carbon reduction project is falling apart, leaving the global climate to spin out of control and causing more tipping points to trigger, which would be catastrophic for both the UN and the planet.

Many on the radical left argue that this failure was and is inevitable because the UN is a capitalist institution and, as such, is dedicated to the preservation of the fossil industry and prepared to use as much "greenwash" as necessary in order to do so, and it is time for the left (however defined) to go it alone. There have been numerous proposals in recent years for the left to denounce the COP process as a roadblock and withdraw from it.

This would be a big mistake. The UN is, of course, a capitalist institution. It is comprised of 193 capitalist countries; how could it be otherwise? To its great credit, however, it recognised the danger of anthropogenic climate change as early as 1992, when the radical left still regarded the environment as a middle class diversion. Since then, the COP process it established has been a battleground between the majority, who recognise the problem and are prepared to decarbonise at least to

some extent, and those who simply defend their own self-interest or who reject the concept of anthropogenic global warming on ideological grounds, i.e., the climate change deniers.

In the event that the UN, along with its subdivisions such as the IPCC, were not only successful in defeating the climate deniers, despite the massive backing they received from the fossil fuel producers, but in winning the scientific community over to the climate struggle, without which we would be nowhere today, it has also been instrumental, along with the intensification of the climate crisis itself, in transforming global awareness as to the dangers of climate change.

Today we are facing an existential climate emergency, which only the UN or something with a comparable global reach and authority can successfully confront.

This is important since although the struggle against climate change must include individual responsibility, in the end it is only governmental action—and ultimately governments that are prepared to go on a war footing to do so—that can make the structural changes necessary to stop global warming in the few years that science is giving us to do it.

## The role of the radical left

To the extent that the radical left in particular had or has a strategic approach to global warming and climate change, it is the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, though how clearly this has been thought through is not always clear. To be relevant to global warming, however, it would have to happen within this decade since nothing can be built on a dead planet.

The actual task we are faced with today, therefore, is not whether global capitalism can be abolished within 10 years, but whether it can be forced to take action to halt global warming.

as a part of a struggle for its eventual

overturn and its replacement by ecosocialism. If we are unable to build the kind of movement capable of forcing major change under capitalism, how are we going to build a movement capable of overturning it? It is what I would call a transitional approach.

It is not true, as some on the left imply, that capitalism cannot be forced to make major changes that are contrary to the logic of its existence. In fact, it was already making concessions to this when it agreed under extreme pressure to support a maximum global temperature increase of 1.5°C in Paris and when it agreed to end the use of fossil fuels in Glasgow.

In my view, capitalism would also be prepared, given the existential implications involved, to carry through decarbonisation itself rather than see societal collapse, since to do so would meet with massive resistance. It would do so completely in its own self-interest and with extreme brutality. We cannot assume, in any case, that global warming will be halted incrementally—or indeed peacefully—before runaway climate chaos along with societal and ecological breakdowns, and if so, ultra-right and fascist forces will be waiting in the wings.

Mass movements will emerge spontaneously under such conditions; the problem, however, will be which

class interests they represent. They are already flexing their muscles in relation to environmental issues, regardless of whether progressive forces (including the left) or ultra-right populists with a reactionary agenda are in charge.

A major task of the radical left today—as well as being involved in every aspect of the struggle—implies conscious preparation for such an eventuality, which could already happen at any time.

Meanwhile, the most effective way to cut carbon emissions quickly and democratically is by making fossil fuels much more expensive than renewable energy, by means that are socially just, economically redistributive, and capable of commanding popular support—and in the two or three decades that remain to us.

The UN COP process remains a crucial forum in the struggle for such demands. It is the best forum through which the global climate movement can place demands on the global elites and the forum around which we can build the kind of mass movement that can force them to take effective action.

Key carbon reduction issues

- The global average surface temperature is below a 5°C increase.
- Demand net zero by 2030

- The polluters must be made to pay.
- Global biodiversity must be defended.
- There must be a rapid transition to renewables, including solar, on-shore and off-shore wind, tidal, and hydro, carried out on a 'war footing'. (In the UK, Labour must maintain its commitment to £28 billion a year on renewables.)
- The 2030 deadline for selling fossil fuel cars must be maintained.
- SUVs must be banned other than in specialised circumstances.
- Adequate production facilities for EV batteries must be established.
- There must be a major extension of public transportation and fewer cars.
- The national grid must be upgraded.

There must be a massive programme of home (and building) insulation. All new homes must meet strict environmental standards.

- LTNs and 15-minute cities must be introduced to cut carbon emissions and clean up the air we breathe.
- Decarbonise agriculture, ban deforestation, and reduce meat production and consumption. End the ploughing of fields.
- Stop the pollution of land, sea, and rivers.
- Protect wetlands
- Far better recycling and the detoxification of waste disposal
- No to nuclear energy

Source *Anti\*Capitalist Resistance*.

## A new deal in Mali

1 December 2023, by **Paul Martial**

After more than ten years of control by Tuareg rebel movements, the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA), accompanied by Wagner mercenaries, entered Kidal a fortnight ago.

### The capture of

### Kidal

The Malian authorities deployed considerable resources to capture the town in the north-west of the country. Air attacks by the air force and the use of recently acquired Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 drones were decisive. While the government in Bamako congratulates itself on this victory, it

is careful not to mention the dozens of dead and wounded civilians, including children, who fell victim to the bombardments. The FAMA have penetrated a town largely deserted by the population.

As for the rebel forces of the Cadre Stratégique Permanent pour la Paix, la Sécurité et le Développement (CSP-PSD), which brings together a large

number of Tuareg organisations, most of them have returned to the Adrar Tigharghar mountain range.

## End of the peace agreement

This is undoubtedly a victory for the Malian junta. The junta, through its president Assimi Goïta, had constantly asserted its determination to defend national sovereignty by recovering the entire territory.

As a direct consequence, the 2015 Algeria peace agreement between armed movements and the Malian authorities has been shattered. Although this agreement was never really applied on the ground, it did have the advantage of being a

reference for all the belligerents.

The capture of Kidal was achieved at the expense of the fight against the jihadists of both the al-Qaeda-linked Groupe de soutien à l'islam et aux musulmans (GSIM) and the Islamic State, which is beginning to put down roots in the Ménaka region.

## A Pyrrhic victory?

The real challenge is not to conquer a town or territory, but to stay there and be able to provide security, administer it and implement state services. All the more so as the rebel forces are bound to wage a guerrilla war that is likely to aggravate the already tense relations between the FAMA, their Russian auxiliaries and the local population.

The junta's victory could be undermined by an alliance between the CSP-PSD and the GSIM. Although the political agendas of the two groups diverge, there could be rapprochement. Iyad Ag Ghali, the leader of the GSIM, is an early fighter for the Tuareg cause and as such is highly respected. What's more, the borders between armed movements remain permeable. So one option that is now becoming plausible is to see converging attacks by autonomist/separatist and Islamist groups, as was the case at the start of the Malian crisis in 2012. A ten-year flashback that bodes ill for the future.

*30 November 2023*

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