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The Zapatista irruption of 1 January 1994: new internationalism and political redefinitions

31 January 2024, by **Jose Rostier**

The radical left was then at a critical moment in terms of programme and strategy. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 definitively ended the period of the so-called “real communism” model of the former Soviet bloc. Neo-liberalism seemed to be triumphant and, despite its absurdity, the theory of the “end of history” predicting an omnipresent modern capitalist model under the American banner was invading the intellectual space.

The date chosen by the Zapatistas was directly linked to this neoliberal offensive, since it marked the entry into force of NAFTA, the great common market of North America desired by George Bush, with the anchoring of Mexico to American expansionism. As in Colombia, the last Mexican guerrillas only appeared as instruments of desperate self-defence for overexploited rural populations in the face of authoritarian states and the paramilitary militias linked to them.

Mexico, governed for 65 years by the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) and long considered a “perfect dictatorship”, nevertheless, since the 1985 earthquake, no longer had the stability that had previously characterized it. Traumatized by state

inaction during this catastrophe, Mexican civil society had progressed in self-organization and self-confidence, while political alternatives (the PRD, social-democrat, and the PAN, ultra-liberal) seemed possible.

The opening of a new political space

It was this framework, appearing closed to revolutionary alternatives, that the EZLN exploded.

Militarily, however, only a few thousand poorly armed fighters “declared war” on the Mexican head of state and stood up to his army for a few days, before withdrawing into the Chiapas forests. The objective was not a seizure of power by arms, considered by the Zapatistas as both impossible and politically harmful (“We believe that he who conquers power by arms should never govern, because he risks governing by arms and by force” wrote Subcomandante Marcos), but the appeal to Mexican society. They pulled it off: faced with the state’s counter-offensive, it was the massive mobilization of the Mexican social movement and international solidarity that would tip

the scales and transform the insurrection into a national movement with global repercussions. A million people demonstrated in Mexico City, imposing a ceasefire on January 12 and forcing the state to abandon any immediate crushing of the rebellion.

The EZLN, through its “Lacandon forest declarations”, proposed forms and slogans of struggle going beyond Chiapas, around the essential demands of “work, land, housing, food, health, education, independence, freedom , democracy, justice and peace.” The EZLN very quickly announced that it would renounce the use of weapons and build a movement of autonomy from the state. This would be reduced to setting up a “low intensity” war with periods of political negotiations (San Andrés Accords of 1996, not respected by the Mexican state). The EZLN took the opportunity to enter into a rich dialogue with the rest of Mexican society, experimenting with various tactics by constantly relying on the always mobilized and extremely politicized Zapatista rural communities.

In 1996, an attempt at a national political front (the FZLN) was made, without much success. Several Zapatista “caravans” crisscrossed the

country, relying on civil society and the Mexican indigenous movement, powerfully revived by the San Andrés Accords, of which the recognition of indigenous rights was a key point.

In March 2001, to defend these rights, 23 Zapatista commanders travelled across the country in a “march of the colour of the earth” to go to Mexico City, welcomed by massive popular support. Commander Esther was able to speak at the Mexican Congress, a powerful image of an indigenous woman addressing the entire country, before the government ceased all dialogue and resumed the military offensive .

“From the mountains of the Mexican South-East”, at the heart of political debates

At the same time, the Zapatistas were strengthening the autonomy of communities already living partially in self-sufficiency, over an area the size of Belgium, and bringing together around 200,000 inhabitants in Zapatista “support bases”. State institutions, colonialist, corrupt and of poor quality, were rejected. Education (emancipatory), health (with respect for the traditions of the population), electrification: it was autonomously and with the help of international solidarity that the Zapatista Indian populations would now manage their daily lives while fighting against the paramilitary militias, the oppressive presence of the army, and “major projects” of ecocidal development such as the Puebla Panama Plan aimed at economic “development” of Central America, in particular through the capitalist grabbing of peasant lands.

These autonomous spaces, in permanent exchange with the country’s indigenous and urban activists and the international revolutionary movement, thus became places of politicization and democratic experimentation, enriching through practice the ideological bases of the

EZLN. These bases, a mixture of Marxist, libertarian and anti-colonialist Amerindian ideas, would in turn irrigate the global left.

Beyond the media influence of Subcomandante Marcos and his political-poetic texts, the Zapatistas popularized critical examination of ideas and experiences coming from anti-capitalism, political anti-racism, anti-colonialism, ecology, internationalism and feminism. The affirmation of respect for homosexual rights was a striking example of the capacity of this society struggling, although very influenced by Catholicism, to place itself at the forefront of emancipatory thought. Accused of homosexuality by the government in 1996, Marcos responded with a scathing text: “Yes, Marcos is gay. Marcos is a gay man in San Francisco, a black man in South Africa [...] a woman alone on the subway at 10 p.m. [...] Marcos is all the untolerated, oppressed minorities who resist, explode and say: “Enough is enough !”

The Zapatista experience thus placed itself early on at the heart of the redefinition of an alternative and unifying project in the global left, concretely integrating progressive experiments: revolutionary women’s law, restorative and non-carceral justice, system of emancipatory education...

The birth certificate of alter-globalization

International support for the Zapatista struggle was vital in its confrontation with the Mexican state. But it reciprocally encouraged a new concrete internationalism which would largely fuel the following struggles. Since 1994, peace “observers” have been appearing in Zapatista communities to prevent military and paramilitary interventions. Encouraged by the appeals of the Zapatistas, welcomed by a local associative network and concretely sharing the daily life of indigenous populations in struggle, tens of thousands of activists, often young,

discovered international solidarity in concrete terms, the violence of racism and colonialism, the difficulties and the richness of the construction of a democratic and political power, autonomous from the state.

In 1996, the EZLN organized the Intergalactic Meetings for humanity and against neo-liberalism in the middle of the autonomous zone, where 5,000 activists gathered. from 42 countries. This early “world social forum” was followed by other meetings on the scale of the Mexican, indigenous, or international social movement (Meetings of the Zapatista peoples with the peoples of the world in 2006 and 2007). Although the Zapatista call for a new International (the “Sexta”) did not have any convincing results, Chiapas nevertheless became a place of convergence and development for an entire generation of activists: the generation that would later define itself around the internationalist “alter-globalization” wave by opposing the summits of the capitalist powers, sometimes successfully, as during the G7 in Seattle in 1999, and proposing its own counter-summits, the first in Porto Alegre in 2001.

An experience still alive but facing new challenges

The Mexican state has, thirty years after the insurrection, failed to put an end to the autonomy of the Zapatista communities, despite numerous rises in tension and sometimes fatal attacks, often carried out by paramilitaries, as during the assassination of Commander Galeano in 2014. To nourish internationalism, fight against any isolation and strengthen the education of its cadres and their capacity for development, the Zapatistas organized “voyages for life” in 2023. Not hesitating to take a stand in favour of peoples in struggle (recently in support of Gaza), the EZLN nevertheless hammers home to those who wished to support them a simple message: to best support our struggle, mobilize to build revolutionary movements in your own country.

But in a Mexico increasingly plagued by violence and drug cartels, new challenges have arisen for resistance communities in Chiapas, subject to increasingly frequent attacks. After suspending their public activities last

November, the Zapatistas are preparing to address their supporters on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of their insurrection. Like our planet in crisis, Zapatism needs new momentum linked to the

international dynamics that our struggles must urgently build.

January 23, 2024

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Greenland has lost 20 per cent more ice than expected

30 January 2024, by **Yves Sciama**

How can we explain this failure, in one of the areas of the planet that mobilizes the most climatologists? Simply by the difficulty of accurately following the fluctuating course of the 250 or so peripheral glaciers through which this immense ice cap, three times the size of France, flows towards the sea.

Until now, researchers have focused on either the thickness of this ice monster (1.7 km on average!), the reduction of which can be measured by so-called altimetry techniques; or on its total weight, estimated by another technology called gravimetry.

The NASA team, for its part, has focused on an aspect that has been neglected until now, namely its exact extent, in other words the precise length of these glaciers, defined by the position of the line that separates them from the sea, where at the end of their course they float and then melt. Revealing that 5,000 km² of ice has disappeared in the last twenty years.

"We have compiled some 65,000 manual plots of these lines from satellite photos. This is often difficult, because the surface of the sea sometimes freezes, in whole or in part, there are icebergs passing by, and it can be saturated with small pieces of ice - in the end we see mostly white on white! So you need a lot of expertise to correctly interpret the images," Chad Greene, from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, told *Mediapart*.

The team then used these processed images to train an artificial intelligence, which reviewed about 173,000 other available images. Result? "We're seeing a clear shortening of these glaciers, which have been receding for about 20 years, which hasn't been measured before, in part because of the high seasonal variability," Greene said. Glaciers, in fact, fluctuate constantly, shortening in the summer and then lengthening in the winter.

Researchers are struggling to explain the details of these fluctuations, which vary greatly from one glacier to another: they do not seem to be directly determined by the thickness or shape of the glacier, nor by the temperature of the sea or that of the air... "Further studies will be needed to understand the precise local drivers of melting, which will help us understand the points of fragility in the ice sheet," says Greene.

"For now, our results suggest that it is the glaciers that fluctuate the most with the seasons and are also the most vulnerable to global warming," he adds. This is not really reassuring, since the largest glaciers on the island, including the famous Jakobshavn, a monster more than 65 km long, which produces 10 per cent of Greenland's icebergs, are among those that fluctuate the most...

This work is praised by Aurélien Quiquet, a specialist in the Greenland ice sheet at the Laboratory of Climate

and Environmental Sciences (LSCE), at the University of Paris-Saclay, who did not participate in the study. "These colleagues have made a major effort to compile data that had not been accomplished until now, using a methodology that appears robust and taking advantage of mature artificial intelligence methods," he says.

Disruptions to ocean circulation

The French researcher emphasizes that the study is particularly interesting because it concerns a strategic area for the global climate. The Greenland region is in fact one of the most powerful engines of ocean circulation, a set of currents often referred to as an "ocean conveyor belt", which carries excess heat accumulated between the tropics towards the cold seas, and therefore carries out a valuable work of planetary thermal rebalancing. In the Atlantic, this circulation takes the name "Amoc", an acronym for "Atlantic meridional overturning circulation", and includes the famous Gulf Stream, which we know brings northward the warm water accumulated particularly in the Caribbean.

The Amoc is driven by a fascinating phenomenon that occurs every winter in the icy waters of Greenland. When darkness arrives and sea ice forms, the salt in the surface water is expelled, because ice is still made of

fresh water.

"It's a physical process that then begins", Chad Greene explains. "The water just under the ice, which is already very cold, is suddenly enriched with salt: it then flows to the deep sea, because the cold and salt make it denser, and therefore heavier. These millions of cubic metres that sink then create a kind of "suction", which "pulls" the waters of the Atlantic northwards."

The future of this AMOC is one of the most pressing concerns and controversies in the climate community. In theory, warming, which is particularly rapid in the polar region, could stop it completely: if freezing is less and less strong, the surface water will be less salty and cold, and above a certain threshold it

will no longer flow, stopping the "conveyor belt". This would result in an even faster warming of the world's warm regions, and a possible cooling of cold regions - a real catastrophic scenario.

Alas! no one knows where the said threshold is, but a slowdown in this plunge of the waters already seems to be observed, with a study in *Nature* dated 2021 indicating that it was at its lowest point in a millennium. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) considers that a shutdown of the AMOC during the twenty-first century is unlikely, while conversely, a number of specialists believe the risk is real and imminent, with an article in *Nature* in July 2023 predicting it even for the middle of the century, with the current emissions trajectory.

"This debate about the possible shutdown of the AMOC is very complex and I don't want to take sides," Greene said. "But what is certain is that if billions of tons of additional fresh water arrive in the ocean from melting glaciers, it could upset an already fragile balance, since fresh water, by diluting the salt, slows down the sinking of the waters."

Suffice it to say that researchers will continue to scrutinize Greenland's ice like water on fire, and that the temperature record broken by the planet in 2023 is not likely to reassure them.

18 January 2024

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North and South Korea at a turning point after 70 years

29 January 2024, by **Karen Yamanaka**

The danger of war on the Korean peninsula is growing, and we have entered a transition era that will fundamentally change the relationship between North and South Korea. Over the past 70 years, the two countries have improved their relations through dialogue, even in times of crisis. In the last few years, however, this dialog has disappeared and the crises have become a routine. On November 24 last year, North Korea announced that it would completely abrogate the 2018 inter-Korean agreement to reduce tensions and restore all military activities. Currently, an accidental clash between North and South Korea could lead to a resumption of the cease-fired Korean War.

Conference held

amid crisis since ceasefire

Last September, without prior notice, North Korea enshrined its "advanced nuclear weapons" policy in its constitution. The Supreme People's Assembly [1] on January 15 focused on what military policies the country will pursue as it continues to accelerate its nuclear and missile programs to achieve its five-year national defense plan, now in its fourth year of implementation. In his January 15 speech to the Supreme People's Assembly, Kim Jong-un expressed his intention to occupy South Korea. He described South Korea as "the most hostile state and unchangeable principal enemy" and enshrined it in the constitution. He also clarified that the phrase "independence, peaceful reunification and great national unity" would be deleted from the

constitution. The final conclusion was that unification with South Korea was no longer possible for North Korea.

In response, Kim Jong-un said that South Koreans should no longer be called compatriots and called for an end to all contact between North and South Korea by destroying reunification monuments in Pyongyang. It is a more concrete expression of the decision of the 9th Enlarged Plenum of 8th WPK Central Committee held last December 26-30 to regard relations with South Korea not as inter-ethnic relations but as state-to-state relations, even hostile state-to-state relations.

Declaration of war against the

“hostile state”

Not only that, but Kim Jong-un has been spewing declaration-level language toward South Korea. Kim Jong-un said that the danger of the outbreak of a war through expansion by physical conflict with the Republic of Korea (ROK) [2], the country's main enemy, has greatly increased and reached a dangerous stage, and that if a war breaks out, the ROK will be completely occupied, leveled and incorporated into the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) [3].

These words of North Korea's supreme leader nullify the “peaceful reunification” that has been handed down since the time of Kim Il-sung and suggest reunification by force. They also represent a major change from Kim Il-sung's October 1980 proposal for founding “the Democratic Federal Republic of Koryo (DFRK)”, which calls for unification under “one nation, one state, two institutions and two governments”. This marks a critical turning point in the nearly 70 years since the division of North and South Korea. As if to symbolize this, recent SNS letters written by North Koreans are so full of slanderous words against “ROK” that they make us dizzy. This atmosphere is quite different from the traditional one: “uri minjok kiri” (achieving unification by the Koreans themselves).

Broadcasting stopped after 74 years

The Supreme People's Assembly also decided to abolish three organizations responsible for dialogue and exchanges with South Korea, including the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea (CPRK), after declaring war on the “enemy state”. In addition, the organizations that had existed for the improvement of inter-Korean relations and peaceful reunification, such as the All-Korean Committee for Implementation of the June 15 Joint Declaration, which was set up in response to the 2000 inter-Korean summit, have all been reorganized.

On January 12, three days before Kim Jong-un's statement, the Pyongyang Broadcasting Station (PBS), a propaganda and incitement broadcast mainly for South Koreans, suddenly stopped broadcasting for the first time in 74 years. This incident symbolizes a major turning point since the division of North and South Korea. The PBS is characterized by its call to “fellow countrymen” and the fact that it targets overseas Koreans living in South Korea and other countries. [4] In addition to the suspension of the PBS broadcast, several propaganda sites against South Korea, including the Pyongyang Broadcasting Station (PBS) website, are no longer available. The “VOH: Voice of Hope”, ostensibly a “nonpartisan civilian station” that was in fact operated by the DPRK, was also abolished with the elimination of the DPRK. And the “Unified News”, which had been described as a “nonpartisan representative newspaper”, also ceased publication after its January 6 issue.

Unusual events in a crisis and stable China-North Korea relations

As the crisis situation on the Korean peninsula continues, a surprising event has occurred. Kim Jong-un sent a message of sympathy to Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida over a powerful earthquake that struck central Japan on January 1 of this year.

In the March-11 earthquake of 2011, only a sympathy message was sent from the Red Cross Society of North Korea to the Japanese Red Cross Society. It is also the first time that a North Korean leader has sent a message to the Japanese prime minister. It is possible that Pyongyang, in response to the low approval ratings of Japan's Kishida cabinet, has begun to push the Japanese government toward progress in Japan-North Korea relations. [5] The intent cannot be determined at this time, but should be judged in conjunction with future trends.

China-North Korea relations have been stable since March 2018, when North Korea curbed its nuclear tests and Kim Jong-un and Xi Jinping held their first summit. The *Rodong Sinmun* of January 6 this year carried a congratulatory message between the leaders of China and North Korea. [6] Both countries have designated this year as the “China-North Korea year of good will” to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations and reaffirm their friendly relations.

Return to “socialism”

Nevertheless, the historical distrust of China among ethnic Koreans is significant. [7] This is due to China's long history of dark oppression against Korea, which goes back hundreds of years. It is different in character from the history of Japan's 36-year colonial rule of the Korean peninsula.

Ostensibly, China is a friendly country to North Korea. In reality, however, the Korean people's feelings toward China are complex. Ethnic minorities oppressed by the Chinese government in recent years include Chinese Koreans living in the border region with North Korea. In particular, the Chinese government's policy of language suppression has been strongly criticized by Koreans living not only in China but also abroad. And many Chinese Koreans lost their lives during the Cultural Revolution on suspicion of espionage. North Korea may not be a true friend of China. And the country may only pay ostensible lip service to North Korea's push for a return to “socialism”.

Since the collapse of the 1990 North Korea-US summit in Hanoi, North Korea has been pushing ahead with its return to “socialism”. The country is also crying out for a return to “communism”, a slogan increasingly used to control the population. Its political orientation is the exact opposite of democratization. Under these circumstances, Kim Jong-un formalized the “two Koreas” policy. At the same time, he formalized South Korea as the “principal enemy” and a

belligerent. The country is pursuing further nuclear development as it advances its nuclear and missile programs. The overall upgrading of nuclear and missile weapons in North Korea will continue in the future.

In this situation, Japan is trying to develop an underground shelter in the capital in case of a missile attack. [8] Military tensions of an unprecedented nature are permeating the public sphere in East Asia. The Kim Jong-un regime, which is tightening its

"socialist" control, is expected to use these tensions to further tighten its domestic control.

This year means a lot to North Korea this year. *Rodong Sinmun* reported that Putin expressed his willingness to visit North Korea "at an early date" on January 21. And also with the US presidential election in November and the South Korean parliamentary elections in April, the diplomatic environment will change significantly going forward. Both the North and South Korean governments have also

taken a hard line, referring to nuclear weapons rather than conventional weapons. This has given the future escalation of tensions between North and South Korea a different meaning than in the past. And this escalation of tensions may make the East Asian region more tense than ever. In this sense, this spring's joint US-South Korean military exercises will have a different character from conventional ones.

30 January 2024

Mass mobilization against the far-right AfD party in Germany

28 January 2024, by Jakob Schaefer

Although the party later declared that the meeting was not a party meeting and that "remigration" was not part of its programme, leading party representatives have publicly defended this slogan on several occasions, including at the last party congress. The Executive Committee has never denied these statements. Today, with the publicised meeting with a well-known fascist, the Austrian co-founder of the identitarian movement Martin Sellner, a very large public has suddenly become aware of the ideas found within the AfD.

In the space of a few days, tens of thousands of people took to the streets in dozens of towns to demonstrate against the AfD. In total, more than a million people turned out in less than a week, and the mobilization continues. It is encouraging to see how many people are taking to the streets to oppose this inhumane project of the fascist right.

However, not all of these people are free of xenophobia, far from it. Many support the government's repressive policy against refugees. The government supports the EU's refugee policy and has - even during the rise of this movement against the AfD -

adopted new tougher measures against refugees. These include more possibilities for the police to search people (when looking for their documents), arresting people at night, extending detention for deportation to up to 28 days, and so on. At the height of the current movement, the federal government has no hesitation in announcing that it is going to conclude readmission agreements with six other countries in order to be able to expel more refugees (last year, 16430 refugees were expelled).

Unfortunately, this policy is supported by the majority of German citizens. So it's not surprising that the main speakers at many of the demonstrations in recent days have been politicians from the parties that now form the federal government (e.g. the minister-presidents of Lower Saxony, Hamburg and Rhineland-Palatinate, the mayors of major cities, etc.). Anti-fascists and revolutionaries who criticize the government's refugee policy form a small minority.

Parallel to these demonstrations, two activities have been stepped up, which we revolutionary Marxists are following with mixed feelings:

A.) Many are calling for a ban on the AfD, but this will do no good, as this party now has 40,000 members and has at least 20% of the electorate behind it (even more so in East Germany). These right-wing ideas cannot be banned; they must be fought by left-wing politics and mobilisation, particularly through successful progressive resistance to the policies of the rulers, especially at the social level.

A ban would give the party a martyr's role and make the political struggle against it more difficult. After all, it is the government's repressive policy against refugees that vindicates the xenophobic ideas of the far right. What's more, banning a party would certainly be associated with the "fight against extremism" and therefore with a more repressive policy towards class struggle activists.

B.) The initiative to deprive Björn Höcke, leader of the AfD's openly fascist wing, of certain fundamental political rights under Article 18 of the Constitution is making us feel less sick to our stomachs. A petition to this effect addressed to the government and parliament has so far (20 January) been signed by 1.5 million people.

Historic public sector strike in NI as a UK local government crisis looms

27 January 2024, by **Phil Hearse**

An unprecedented strike took place in Northern Ireland on January 16 with 170,000 public sector workers from 15 unions, angry at the refusal of the UK government to pay them parity wages with other UK workers.

This crisis stems from the refusal of the Democratic Unionist Party to sanction a new power-sharing government, a refusal that has lasted for two years. An order from the devolved government executive would normally be needed to pay wage increases, and this is being cynically used by the London Conservative government that has spied an opportunity to simply sit on the money, depriving NI public sector workers of the wage increases enjoyed by workers in other parts of the UK.

The DUP is refusing to allow a new power-sharing government because it objects to post-Brexit agreements that effectively integrate the NI economy with that of the Irish Republic.

But this objection is a smokescreen for something much bigger. A new power-sharing administration would be one run by Sinn Féin.

This would be a major defeat for Six County Unionism and an omen of bigger defeats for Unionism on the horizon.

Pay differentials with the rest of the

UK are becoming very pronounced. One example: a newly qualified teacher in Scotland earns £32,000, while a new teacher in Northern Ireland earns £24,000. Given the cost of living crisis, this is an absurd situation. Official figures show that between April 2022 and April 2023, public sector pay, adjusted for inflation, fell by an astonishing 7.7%. [9]

This major display of trade union strength comes after the revelation that dozens of local councils in England are nearing declaring themselves bankrupt under Section 144 of the 1988 Local Government Act. Section 144 declarations effectively hand over financial control to the government, which can then dictate cuts, redundancies, privatisation, and service closures. There have been seven recent Section 144 declarations, three of them by Birmingham, which has announced 600 redundancies. Birmingham, the largest local authority in Europe, had been caught by a historic equal pay judgement in which its own failures on equal pay are coming back to bite it. Other factors have included declining government support at a time of rising demand, the product of an ageing population, and sharply increased levels of poverty.

In an election year, the biggest local

government union, Unison, closely aligned with the Kier Starmer Labour leadership, is unlikely to want to sanction local government or NHS strikes. As far as the Tory leadership is concerned, a 2024 general election based on slamming public sector strikes while Rishi Sunak wraps himself in the Union Jack of growing militarism (thanks to Putin and Netanyahu) would not be unwelcome.

This is an attempted re-run of 1983, when Margaret Thatcher won an unexpected victory based on her Falklands War victory. But the circumstances are different. In 1993, Thatcher was not burdened by 13 years of austerity nor by a massive anti-war movement such as exists today in the many hundreds of thousands who have taken to the streets in solidarity with Palestine.

Labour may suffer from the refusal of many Muslim voters to vote Labour again, given its appalling position on the Gaza crisis.

The winding down of several major 2022-23 pay settlements does not resolve the 2023-4 claims that must now be dealt with in health, local government, and education. Watch this space.

25 January 2024

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

Why Many Blacks Turn on Biden Over

Palestine

26 January 2024, by **Malik Miah**

Biden refuses to tell the state of Israel to end its genocidal war in Gaza. He repeats all the lies of the Israeli regime.

For many young Black people who believe the Democratic Party takes their support for granted, his foreign policy of war mongering and empire building is a signal that Biden can't be counted on to fight racism at home either. Some will stay home or vote for independent candidates — or even vote for Trump as the lesser evil in the 2024 presidential election.

Meanwhile Conservative Democrats have joined with the pro-Israel lobby to target elected officials in their own party who call for a permanent ceasefire and humanitarian aid. The number one target is Detroit Congresswoman, Rashida Tlaib, the only Palestinian American ever elected to Congress.

Voices Speak Up on Common Struggle

Many mainstream news outlets are reporting on these shifting views. A December 17 Associated Press story is an example:

"Cydney Wallace, a Black Jewish community activist, never felt compelled to travel to Israel, though 'Next year in Jerusalem; was a constant refrain at her Chicago synagogue.

"The 39-year-old said she had plenty to focus on at home, where she frequently gives talks on addressing anti-Black sentiment in the American Jewish community and dismantling white supremacy in the U.S.

"I know what I'm fighting for here," she said.

"That all changed when she visited Israel and the West Bank at the invitation of a Palestinian American community organizer from Chicago's south side, along with two dozen other Black Americans and Muslim, Jewish and Christian faith leaders."

The trip abruptly ended because of the Hamas attack inside Israel on October 7.

But the trip had a big impact on Wallace's views. She, and a growing number of Black Americans, see the Palestinian struggle reflecting their own fight for racial equality and civil rights. The recent rise of protest movements against police brutality and the structure of white supremacy and institutional racism that plagues nearly every facet of life has connected Black and Palestinian activists under a common cause.

Demetrius Briscoe had voted for Joe Biden in 2020, but the senior at Bowie State University, a historically Black university in Maryland, is on the fence about whether he will support the president next year.

Briscoe told USA Today that he "doesn't think many of his peers will vote for Biden because he hasn't demanded a cease-fire.

"He's really putting a stain on his presidency that I don't think will be easily washed away," said Briscoe, adding, "If the Democrats call for a cease-fire it may save the Democratic Party from, I think, a wave of young people not voting for them."

At a ceasefire rally in October at Howard University, Delaney Leonard, a 19-year-old sophomore who helped organize the rally, remarked that she has no intention of voting for Biden. She doesn't think she's alone.

"It's definitely going to play a factor into people making their voting

decisions," Leonard said.

Keesha Middlemass, an associate professor of political science at Howard University, noted "Young people are finally seeing the impact of America's war machine." They are deeply concerned about Biden's blind loyalty to Israel, without any consideration of Palestinians' right to exist.

Solidarity and Mutual Support

Khadirah Muhammad, a senior at Georgia State University, remembers seeing on social media the Black Lives Matter murals in Gaza and watching Palestinians demonstrating during the 2020 George Floyd protests. For her these were symbols of solidarity.

"I just feel like it's necessary to speak up when things are wrong," said Muhammad, 22, who joined a pro-Palestinian rally on campus in October. "It's really heartbreaking."

While many Jewish faith leaders, students and activists were key supporters of Martin Luther King Jr and the Civil Rights Movement, translating that into support for Israel shifted in the 1960s with the Black Power wing of the Black Freedom struggle, said Michael R. Fischbach, professor of history at Randolph-Macon College and author of "Black Power and Palestine Transnational Countries of Color."

Fischbach said he's not surprised younger African Americans feel empathy for Palestinians. Several factors connect them, including a sense of kinship in this "global gated community," a pushback against what they believe is settler colonialism and shared experiences of living in segregated communities.

He pointed out that “A lot of young people, notably of color in this country, can instinctively identify with Palestinians because it resembles, again, the experience that they’re seeing at home.”

Polling Reflects Sentiments

For decades segments of the African American community have expressed strong support for Palestinian. This is now growing particularly among African American youth. Polls now reveal that Blacks are more critical of U.S. policy in the Middle East.

There were 2,357 pro-Palestinian protests, rallies, demonstrations, vigils and other actions in the United States between October 7 and December 10, according to the Crowds Counting Consortium, an initiative of the Nonviolent Action Lab at Harvard University.

Of those, 652 or nearly 28% were on college campuses. (The consortium recorded 450 pro-Israel actions during the same period.)

A poll conducted in November by GenForward, operated by the University of Chicago, found that 63% of Black voters plan to vote for Biden in 2024, compared to 17% who said they will vote for Trump if he is the nominee. Biden carried Black voters by a 92%-8% margin over Trump in 2020. Despite the strong support for Biden, this growing disaffection threatens Biden’s path to re-election.

In the same poll, 16% of Black voters said they are more sympathetic of Palestinians than Israelis in the conflict, compared to 13% of Black voters who said they are more sympathetic to Israelis. Thirty-nine percent of Black voters said they are

sympathetic to both groups; 32% said they did not know.

Muhammad, who has voted for Democrats in the past, said she doesn’t feel pressed to support Democrats, whom she called “weak willed.”

“Not that I want to see a Donald Trump presidency again,” she said. “But honestly, a Joe Biden presidency, I can’t see myself voting for him.”

Muhammad said she’s looking at alternatives. “I like to vote with integrity,” she said.

Malcolm X in Gaza

Her concern is a reminder of what Malcolm X said in 1964 after the Palestinian Liberation Organization was established. (The PLO was a response to the displacement and dispossession of Palestinians following the creation of Israel in 1948. The PLO aimed to represent the Palestinian people in their desire for self-determination. It also sought Arab unity.)

Malcolm X traveled to Gaza in 1964 when it was still Egyptian territory (later seized by Israel after the 1967 Six Day War). He wrote and published in the Egyptian Gazette the seminal essay “Zionist Logic.”

As a strong opponent of colonialism and exploitation in its various forms, Malcolm X was critical of how Judaism, Zionism, and colonialism were mixing to continue a dangerous precedent. explaining:

If the “religious” claim of the Zionists is true that they were to be led to the promised land by their messiah, and Israel’s present occupation of Arab Palestine is the fulfillment of that prophesy: where is their messiah whom their prophets said would get

the credit for leading them there? It was [United Nations mediator] Ralph Bunche who “negotiated” the Zionists into possession of Occupied Palestine! Is Ralph Bunche the messiah of Zionism? If Ralph Bunche is not their messiah, and their messiah has not yet come, then what are they doing in Palestine ahead of their messiah?

Did the Zionists have the legal or moral right to invade Arab Palestine, uproot its Arab citizens from their homes and seize all Arab property for themselves just based on the “religious” claim that their forefathers lived there thousands of years ago? Only a thousand years ago the Moors lived in Spain. Would this give the Moors of today the legal and moral right to invade the Iberian Peninsula, drive out its Spanish citizens, and then set up a new Moroccan nation...where Spain used to be, as the European Zionists have done to our Arab brothers and sisters in Palestine?

In short, the Zionist argument to justify Israel’s present occupation of Arab Palestine has no intelligent or legal basis in history...not even in their own religion. Where is their Messiah?

Three decades later, Nelson Mandela, the South African revolutionary leader and first president of a free South Africa, said in a 1997 speech on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People what still resonates today among a vast majority of people in the Global South:

“We know too well that our freedom [as South Africans] is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.”

The intensity of support for Palestine is only getting stronger among young African Americans.

Source: [*Against the Current*](#).

Bangladesh and the BKF, an overview:

history, political situation, peasant struggles...

24 January 2024, by **Badrul Alam, Pierre Rousset**

Pierre Rousset - Could you present Bangladesh, the country, for readers who know little about it?

Badrul Alam - Bangladesh achieved its national independence in 1971 through an all-out people's war against the Pakistani army and its collaborators in Bangladesh. 3 million people sacrificed their lives and 200,000 (two hundred thousand) women (mostly mothers and sisters) lost their chastity.

Formerly, Bangladesh was part of India during the British rule. British occupied undivided Bengal in the mid-18th century and continued occupying the entire India gradually. Concretely, the then British East India Company (EIC) took over power in 1757, killing Siraj ud-Doula who was the Nawab of Bengal (Governor of a particular region: Bangla-Bihar-Odisha). It pillaged Bengal, destroyed the economic resources of the rural population. Famine became widespread between 1769 and 1773, causing the deaths of maybe up to 10 million people. Soon, Britain became the virtual ruler of Bangla-Bihar-Odisha. In 1857, widespread unrest led to a mass uprising against the EIC's rule and the authority of the British Crown. In 1857-1858, one hundred years later, Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India. The struggles for independence in the subcontinent were crushed in bloodshed. Queen Victoria established its direct colony and ruled for 190 years (including the company's 100 years' rules). In 1947, at the end of the WWII, the British handed over the power to native political entity dividing India into two countries -- India and Pakistan.

East Bangla became part of Pakistan with the new name of East Pakistan - as a province of Pakistan, even if the

two parts of the newly formed Pakistan State were separated by some 1700 kilometres, had a different history and did not speak the same language. British empire divided India on the basis of religion. They handed Pakistan to Muslim leaders and India to Hindus leaders. In this way, the greater Bengal or Bangla was split, its eastern part being included in Pakistan. After partition, West Pakistan started off with imposing a colonial style of rule on the eastern part. In every step they began to neglect Bengali people living in East Pakistan or East Bengal.

In order to strengthen their power and rule, they hatched a conspiracy against Bengali offering Urdu as one and only state language in the whole of Pakistan in 1948, just 8 months after the partition. Bengali people did not welcome their proposal; rather they strongly resisted any step in this regard. As a result, there was a blood shedding incident taking place in Bangladesh that claims several people's lives because of the shooting of Pakistani law and order forces in 1952. It was called "language moment".

In the following course of events, Bengali people built the hope of independence in their heart, resulting in many movements and struggles. They were people's uprising in 1969, when the Iron Man Field Marshal Ayub Khan, then President of Pakistan, was forced to quit power. Moreover, in a national election in 1970, Bangladesh bagged majority seats with a landslide victory but, unfortunately, the power was not handed over to the elected representatives. In the course of time, in 1971 Bangladesh declared the independence of the country, rejecting Pakistan. Consequently, Pakistan invaded Bangladesh on 26 March

1971 in the name of Operation Search Light. Actually, they brutally committed genocide on Bengali people. The Bengali people did not sit idle, they started guerrilla fight against the well-equipped army of Pakistan. Through a nine-month tough struggle Pakistani army were defeated, and forced to surrender and leave the country on 16 December 1971. On 3 December 1971, the Indian army had joined their forces with the freedom fighter to accelerate the victory. Bangladesh gained a place as a new independent country in the world map.

Now Bangladesh has completed 53 years of its independence. It is still a low-income group country, with the identity of poor economic performance, although there is a propaganda campaign, from the ruling class, according to which Bangladesh is getting up and will be developed country by 2041.

Bangladesh has big potential agricultural sector, which claims great nursing/attention for its actual development, but this sector is always neglected and the people who are engaged within this sector (peasants) are also neglected. Poverty, pauperization, marginalization, malnutrition and exclusion are common phenomenon in the rural agricultural area. Basically, the development of the country is rested on how importance is laid on agriculture.

Whereas all ruling governments since the independence laid emphasis on the structural development of the country, which always brings sufferings to the lives and livelihood of the ordinary people.

Geography: Located in South Asia, to the north of the Gulf of Bangalore, it is virtually landlocked within India, sharing a small border with Burma. Most of the country is taken up by the Ganges delta, a fertile plain, but very flat and prone to tropical cyclones, floods and monsoons, and threatened by rising sea levels due to global warming.

Demographics: With a surface area of 147,570 km² and a population of 170 million, it is one of the most densely populated countries in the world (1,286 inhabitants/km²).

Language: Bengali

Independence: 1971

Capital: Dhaka



*Geography of Bangladesh - Wikipedia.
en.wikipedia.org*

Let's start with the evolution of the situation in Bangladesh...

The bourgeoisie election campaign is going on. This election is going to be controversial, as before, as the major opposition parties will not join the election. It will be a monolithic election, somehow. The opposition is still in the street, demanding that the elections be under the responsibility

of a caretaker government. More than 5000 people have been put in jail by the government, calling them obstacles to the elections. The ruling party will hold the election at any cost.

The election commission called off all political activities until election is over. We have 2 or 3 activities during this period. We are wondering how to perform those.

Last year, Bangladesh experienced a major political crisis. The situation of the ruling party was very precarious. The onslaught of monetary and price inflation made life miserable for the population. The price of basic necessities soared. People couldn't eat the food they needed and wanted. The poor, the lower-middle class and the middle class were forced to cut their family expenses drastically. Since the start of COVID 19 in 2020, ordinary people's incomes have fallen, and this is still the case today. The number of poor people has risen alarmingly. However, the government claims that a person's average income per year is US\$2,800, which is not true. It makes propaganda about its structural development projects, such as building bridges, subways and elevated expressways, but it doesn't think about people's concrete lives, their suffering, their problems of life and death.

Health crisis is still with us. The dengue and cold situation have become an issue of concern in the country. About 2000 people died in 2023 already. Every day people are dying of dengue.



*Bangladesh Krishok Federation
Kurigram District Unit General
Secretary Mokaddes
Hossain gave away warm cloth to poor
people*

Last year, the social situation was not

very good either. There were numerous cases of child abuse, repression of women, murder and enforced disappearance throughout the country.

Many emigrant workers returned home from Middle Eastern countries, and many emigrant women returned with empty pockets, as they were unable to tolerate the sexual torture inflicted on them by male family members there. Women work mainly as domestic servants in the Middle East.

How would you characterize the present political regime?

Last two terms, it came to power by electoral manoeuvring and engineering. They are also going to hold a same type of election this year, with no participation of major opposition groups. The regime is already branded as a fascist-like one by many. With this election it will not get rid of this brand. Rather it will be possible to call it fascists in a way people have not ever seen before.

Presently, the party in power is called the Bangladesh Awami League. It led the country's liberation war in 1971. Sheikh Hasina is the Prime Minister, with executive power. She is the daughter of the veteran leader Bango Bandhu (title given by the people before the independence of the country) Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was the key leader of the Awami League during and after the independence struggle.

In effect, after the independence, Sheikh Muzibur Rahaman wanted to concentrate all power in his hand, forming a new party which was to be the only party, banning all other political parties in the country. The regime also banned all dailies except for four newspapers.

This one-party system rule and the killing of freedom of expression were not accepted by the then standing forces, religious groups and some leftist groups as well. Consequently, conspiracy started at national and international level that resulted in the pathetic history of Muzib's family. He was killed with his family members, except for his daughters, Sheikh Hasina

and Sheik Rehana.

On top of that, twice, martial law was declared. One was declared in 1976 by General Ziaur Rahman, who as the husband of the opposition leader Begum Khaleda Zia, and another by General Ershad in 1982. Since 1991, a bourgeois democratic system became more functional, with all its weakness, after the collapse of Ershad regime. Till to date, bourgeoisie governance with a parliamentary system is in effect with general elections. Therefore, in short, it can be said that the characteristic of the government in Bangladesh is bourgeois till now.

What has been the social responses to the crisis?

The last couple of years, several movements were built to control the prices of basic necessities, but nothing changed. The main bourgeois opposition tried to overthrow the current government, but failed. In order to oust the government, they resorted to various actions. All their efforts went in vain. Different people's organizations and social movements also raised their voice, especially against price increases.

The government is always suppressing people's movement. Most of the time, it takes stern measures against protesters. Arrest, torture, confinement, false case are the tools of the government to suppress the movements. Forced disappearance of opposition has also become part of its political culture.

Despite receiving a huge financial stimulation from the government, the biggest industrial sector, the garment one, has become vulnerable due to COVID 19 and different adverse measures taken by the importing countries. As a result, there is an unstable situation in the garment industries around the question of increase in salary of the workers, who are mostly women. The garment workers would get paid with 8300/- as a monthly salary. They claimed 23000/- in view of price inflation, increase in living standard, etc. In face of such a strong movement, the government was compelled to concede the demands, but it approved only a 12500/- monthly wage. The

representatives of garments' organisation got frustrated by the government decision, but accepted it for the time being. However, many garments organisation rejected the decisions, telling it unrealistic. Whatever, the government decision came into effect.

The money laundering has become a big issue in the country. Quite a number of people who are rich and super rich siphoned off incredible amount of money to different countries using so called tax haven countries. They built luxurious houses and other establishments in Canada, Malaysia, UAE (United Arab Emirate), and so on. The last couple of years people have raised their voice very strongly, demanding to stop illicit capital flight, which is against the people's interest.

After every national election, there are attacks against the minority groups in Bangladesh. The miscreants and criminals set fire to, and vandalize the houses and properties of the minority. They torture, injure and kill minority people. Sometimes, they create such a situation of panic that minority people are forced to leave their homestead and land property. It took place hundreds of times since independence in 1971. However, the minority people never got justice.

What is the state of the Left?

The left-wing Marxist-Leninist forces [which in Bangladesh means non-Maoist] have remained poorly organized. They have come together in different platforms with different strategies. Some Marxist-Leninist-Maoist parties are still part of the ruling party alliance. There are some groups of leftists who are trying to get organized with the commitment of people's uprising but they are very weak in happening that.

The Trotskyist party has organized various street actions against the corruption of bureaucrats and business leaders.

It is true that there is an ebb tide in the left movement in the country, but the positive side, a source of optimism, is that they still exist in a country where religious

fundamentalism is always active to destabilize left forces. According to fundamentalists Left people are Kafer (anti-religion). They should not have a right to living in a Muslim country like Bangladesh. They might feel happy if they could kill the leftist people. They target not only the political left, but also the progressive intellectuals.

Leftist political parties and groups are financially very poor in Bangladesh. This is because of the fact that they cannot raise funding from the public owing to the Anti-extortionist Act, which is being used by the government randomly. Moreover, the poor people are the main force of the leftist people and they have lost their capacity to give dues to the party, although they have still real support to give.

Some leftist people left politics for their very survival and joined different NGOs. Some were engaged in business, though it is very challenging for them as a political activist. Some left politics for ever from the ground frustration. Now they have a very negative attitude to the left politics and socialism as well as communism.

By the way, in spite of all impediments it can be pointed out that the left politics are still alive and bit by bit it is trying to make space in the national politic to become mainstream.

Could you present your organisation, the Bangladesh Krishok Federation

The Bangladesh Krishok Federation (BKF, Bangladesh Peasant Federation), as a grassroots organisation, has a long history of working on behalf of the peasantry in Bangladesh. Although its main focus is on land-related issues, it also gives importance to many other issues such as the environment, ecology, agriculture/agroecology, food sovereignty, climate change, land reform, genetically modified organisms, the commons, tax justice, water, water bodies and gender, etc.

When it was founded in 1976, the Bangladesh Krishok Federation began its activities by raising just one very concrete issue: that of the land that should be distributed to landless

peasants and smallholders who were suffering a subhuman lifestyle in our society. Right from the start, this issue gained momentum, supported by local chapters. The BKF then focused on land which is mainly Khaschar (small islands without owners surrounded by water which emerged from the river bed) and which is not subject to any particular property rights. In principle, the land belongs to the government. The BKF mobilized the landless, agricultural workers and peasants to raise their voices to assert their right to land, drawing the attention of all the other organizations working on the same issue, in order to strengthen the movement.

Although these Khaschars were left uncultivated, they were not left unattended. Local influential groups and henchmen wanted to keep these lands illegally. That's why the idea was to dislodge them through a movement, a mass mobilization. In early 1992, this movement met with real success, thanks to a vast occupation of land by the landless. Previously, in 1980, huge tracts of land had been occupied, but there had been a setback. The landless were unable to keep the land, as the then government declared the occupation illegal. The main leaders of the BKF were then arrested and imprisoned. Subsequently, the BKF carried out an assessment of the movement's setback. Two findings came up as a problem: 1. The lack of legal documents in the interest of the landless; 2. The low participation of women in the movement.

During the 1992 movement, these two conditions were fully met. That is why the occupation was maintained. Nothing could dislodge the landless peasants from their possession of the land. Of course, there were battles between the landless peasants and influential local interest groups. There have been many victims and bogus court cases against landless peasant leaders. However, all the cases were dealt with effectively and efficiently in the lower and higher courts by the organisation. Based on this success, further land occupations have taken place in many other parts of the country. To date, 76600 acres of Khasland have been distributed to over 100,000 landless people across

the country. Among them are 22 small islands in the south of the country, 9 shrimp-growing centers in the southwest and 12.5 kilometres long abandoned Khasland on the railroad built by the British regime in northern Bangladesh.

In 2022, we faced a major challenge, namely the occupation and colonization of new Khasland lands. A small area of Khasland close to an existing occupied island was taken over by the landless and the land was distributed among 41 new landless families. These families have become dignified owners of a plot of land that guarantees them food sovereignty. They were able to build their homes, cultivate the land and raise cows, buffalo and poultry. Around the issue of land and food sovereignty, we ran 13 mobilization, training and national consultation campaigns. Through these programs, we have raised awareness among peasants and landless people of the legal aspects of action and the right of landless peasants to the government's Khasland.

We have linked the issue of food sovereignty to that of the land movement, because they are complementary. No food sovereignty can be guaranteed without land. And the central concept of food sovereignty [superior to that of food security] is in fact the right of peasants to land. We first came into contact with the concept of food sovereignty in 1996, at the World Food Summit in Rome, Italy. Since then, we've been developing the idea from a Bangladeshi perspective. We were also the first to promote and disseminate the idea in Bangladesh. We have also repeatedly pushed the government to incorporate food sovereignty as a principle in national agricultural policy, even though it has opted for the traditional concept of food security.

As part of this campaign, we endeavoured to convince peasants to use local seeds on their arable land, to grow culturally accepted foods and food for human consumption, and not to cede their lands to land grabbers. The farmers were able to understand the importance of food sovereignty. The people who joined the program

also remembered the great caravan campaigns of 2011 and 2014, in which food sovereignty was one of the main themes. So, our sustained campaign on food sovereignty has at least succeeded in popularizing the issue. People can understand what food sovereignty is. Previously, they only knew the concept of food security, which is a major international program. Under this campaign, the international communities have not been able to eradicate hunger and poverty in the world, which is the main objective of the food security concept. Rather, it is the implementation of food sovereignty through mobilizations that could optimally eliminate hunger and poverty in rural areas.



Seminar on 'What is the relationship between land movement and food sovereignty?', October 15, 2022 organized by Bangladesh Krishok Federation

We have also set up various agitation programs on agroecology, the environment, ecology and climate change. Our country has a Ministry of the Environment, Forestry and Climate Change. So, the state is concerned about climate, the environment and forests. It is not concerned with agroecology and ecology. Agroecology is a very recent concept promoted by the FAO and the UN. Agroecology enables people to obtain food that is healthy, nutritious and free from toxicity. It is a simple and scientific agricultural method. It is not a one-way approach; rather a diversified one with a holistic approach. There are many agroecological practices in different parts of the world. These are practices that respect the environment and ecology, and help combat climate change.

Bangladesh is an agricultural country. Its agriculture began converting to chemical farming in the mid-sixties under the name of the "green

revolution". This method initially led to a considerable increase in production, but we gradually lost the fertility of our soils, our plantations, our greenery, our fish, our health, our environment, our ecology and the micro-organisms present in the soil. To save the whole agriculture, which is our culture and heritage, we need to adopt agroecology.

Bangladesh is a front-line victim of global climate change. Consequently, the rich industrialized countries of the North, which have been emitting carbon for 250 years since the Industrial Revolution, owe an ecological and historical debt to countries like Bangladesh, which are vulnerable to climate change. We shifted the focus of our ongoing campaign on climate change last year, concentrating on this issue of reparation. The issue of ecology and environment is also included. The campaign was conducted in 13 points of the country's 64 districts. During our campaign, we demanded reparations from the countries responsible for climate change resulting from greenhouse gas emissions. We also demanded compensation for the losses and damage suffered by the countries affected. We demanded legal protection within the framework of the United Nations for migrants forced to emigrate by the climate crisis.



October 30, 2023, at 12 noon in the organization of North Char Shahjalal landless families in Dashmina Upazila of Patuakhali district, with the cooperation of Bangladesh Krishok Federation and Bangladesh Kishani Sabha

Bangladesh is a country where the available land is small relative to its population. The current population is 170 million. To feed this large population, well-organized land management is essential. What is needed, therefore, is a comprehensive

and genuine land and agrarian reform that would give landless peasants the right to cultivate the fields as first choice. This reform would be distributive and redistributive in nature. The State's initiative will be indispensable for this. We have been campaigning for real reform for a long time. The idea of agrarian reform is not new. It appeared officially after the independence of India and Pakistan from British rule in 1947, but never materialized. It has always remained on paper. Even at the time of the creation of Bangladesh [formerly East Pakistan], after the war of independence in 1971, there was no progress on reform issues, although they were discussed on several occasions. There is also a controversial land ownership system. Last year, we prioritized this issue as part of our movement and campaign.

Like land, water and water bodies are our source of sustenance. Unfortunately, water and water bodies are being monopolized by national and international transnational corporations. This happens in the name of purchasing, housing, urbanization, export processing zones, industrialization, eco-parks and so on. Most of the time, this happens in areas populated predominantly by indigenous people [Adivasi], who are evicted from their homes. Our partner organisation, Bangladesh Adivasi Samity, remains very active against illegal encroachment on indigenous customary land ownership. It also fights against illegal logging and proliferation by the Forest Department. Together, we are fighting against land, water and lake grabbers. In 2022, we set up a program to protect our common property rights which were gradually being privatized. The government's privatization policy, prescribed by the World Bank and IMF, is at the root cause of this phenomenon.

Last year, we focused a lot on the issue of tax justice. We have raised this issue both nationally and internationally. Basically, we have a very regressive tax system from which our population suffers greatly. The universal VAT (value-added tax) hits the poor hardest. It's an indirect tax imposed on the population. In addition, the income and corporate tax

system is also inequitable. Large corporations benefit from tax exemptions, tax cuts and so on. They also evade taxes and send money to other countries via tax havens. They also embezzle money through over- and under-invoicing. In addition, some of the super-rich have smuggled billions of BDT [the national currency] from Bangladesh to various countries to settle their families. The government should bring this money back home and use it for the cause of the poor. To rationalize the tax system, the administration must propose a progressive taxation system. That's why, last year, we worked hard on tax justice. We organized human chains, rallies, demonstrations with flags, festoons, banners, placards, etc. at national level.

The Bangladesh Krishok Federation has a broad mass base nationwide, 30% of whom are women. We're trying to increase this number to 50%. The LGBTQI issue is very sensitive in our country, which is primarily Muslim. We organize seminars/workshops on this issue, but we don't try to identify them, as this is not accepted by society and could put them in danger. However, transgender people are automatically exposed and they are the poorest of the poor in society. They can join our organisation openly. Our main gender issue is to establish women's rights in society. We have a long history of women's movement in Bangladesh, based on the 14 points of demands raised by our sister organisation called Bangladesh Kishani Sabha (BKS), which is an organisation made up of 100% peasant women. In addition, our organisation is especially involved in the land occupation movement to establish women's right to land. The gender issue was seriously explained and highlighted in the 2022 campaign.

In 2022, we carried out numerous humanitarian actions. There were deaths and serious injuries on an island occupied by our organisation. The peasant leader Bakul Begum was killed and her sister Mukul Begum is still alive, but seriously injured. She had to stay in hospital for over three months. Being unable to move about, she required considerable medical support. Complaints have been lodged with the police station. These cases

are still pending.



Leaders of Civil Society in the press conference protesting the killing of Bakul Begum on 6 December 2022



Bakul Begum

Another executive member had to undergo brain surgery. She also

received partial support. A patient suffering from a serious kidney disease whose kidney was transplanted was also supported on several occasions by our organisation as a senior member.

In 2022 and 2023, we provided humanitarian aid to those affected by the climate disaster, and also helped those affected by Cyclone and Corona to recover.

In addition, we organized numerous regular programs, such as various celebrations of national and international days.

Source: **Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières (ESSF).**

The galaxy of fascist organizations in Italy

23 January 2024, by **Checchino Antonini**

Their actions are used to fight for hegemony in the political arena. Their history is made up of splits and reshuffles that are also determined by the pull of the two main parties, with a turnstile mechanism that allows troubling characters to circulate in the two spheres of intervention of the far right: institutional and “social”. The latter refers to the occupation of the political scene using typical squadrist methods. The relationship with the underworld, including organized crime and the narco-mafias, and with the transnational sectors of finance and business is historic and consolidated. In addition, a fascist spirit has long permeated football fans and much of the ultra movement.

Casa Pound and Forza Nuova's

strategy of hegemonic conquest

The two main groups, which maintain close links with their European counterparts, are Casa Pound Italia (CPI) and Forza Nuova (FN). With a few thousand members and supporters throughout Italy and a good entrepreneurial capacity, CPI seems to be the livelier organisation: it owns a brand of clothing for young people (Pivert), runs restaurants, a publishing house and other activities, and, with its occupation of certain “unconventional social centres” (akin to squats), imitates the social aggregation methods of the extreme left.

Less robust, Forza Nuova was founded thirty years ago by the followers of Terza Posizione, an armed group that

was all the rage in the 1970s and from which FN is said to have recovered its resources. It also owns various companies that revolve around Meeting Point, a London holding company that manages, among other things, hundreds of flats for young foreign students.

Forza Nuova is more fundamentalist than the CPI and has also been riding the wave of No Vax protests. In October 2021, it stormed the national headquarters of the CGIL trade union. The trial at first instance in December 2023 handed down seven sentences of more than eight years' imprisonment to each of its leaders, including Roberto Fiore, a former MEP in 2004.

Immobilism of the centre-left and the

unions

On the question of anti-fascism, it is surprising that the CGIL, which, along with the PD (Democratic Party), is content to call for the outlawing of neo-fascist organizations, has not moved. This is an almost impossible solution in practice (in fact, the few groups that have been disbanded over the years were immediately reconstituted under other names) and which only works for the needs of the centre-left's electoral campaigns.

Unable to offer a real alternative to each other, the two Italian political camps engage in exhausting squabbles, especially in the media, over sometimes very concrete issues (immigration, minimum wage, LGBT

rights, anti-fascism), but always over marginal and symbolic aspects of these issues. The repression of migrants and social movements, to take just one example, has been exacerbated for decades by the relentless work of governments of all stripes.

The breeding ground for extreme right-wing groups is made up of both the affluent classes of the upper classes and sectors of an increasingly precarious, pulverized and disorientated proletariat in the suburbs. The latter have been attracted for decades by recipes of security, nationalism and xenophobia. The historic defeat of the workers' movement can also be measured from here, by the lack of understanding of

working-class neighbourhoods and the desertification of the rallying points of the radical left.

In this context, banning neo-fascist acronyms by law will certainly not be enough to rebuild practices and the social fabric of solidarity. Anti-fascism cannot be limited to the preservation of historical memory and a presence on the ground. It must equip itself with the social and political tools to rebuild class consciousness and overturn the balance of power. The alternative to fascism is not post-democracy, but a society that puts an end to the exploitation of human beings and the environment.

23 January 2024

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from *[l'Anticapitaliste](#)*.

Trump Wins in Iowa; Money in American Politics

22 January 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

While Trump's victory is largely due to his charisma and the loyalty of his base, money plays an enormous role in American elections. Republican candidates spent \$124 million on the Iowa election, most of it on television advertising, and social media such as Facebook, and Google. Trump's organization, Make America Great Again Inc., broadcasted around 21,000 TV ads. But money was not decisive in Iowa. Haley, who spent the most, came in last.

Iowa has 2,083,979 registered Republican voters, but only 15% or 110,000 showed up for the caucuses, the form their primary takes, with meetings held in the state's 99 counties. The \$124 million spent represents \$1,112 per voter. Iowa's population is 87.9% white and the Republican party is 95% white. In this primary, Iowa elects only 40 out of 2,500 Republican convention delegates, under 2%, but because it comes first, it can set the tone for the

entire primary election. Democrats no longer hold their first primary there because they believe it gives inordinate weight to a largely white and rural population that is not representative of the country.

The next Republican primary takes place on January 23 in New Hampshire which is 88.9% white. That primary will choose 22 delegates to the Republican convention, less than 1% of the total. The state Democrats will also hold an unofficial primary election on the same day, though the name of President Joe Biden the presumptive nominee will not be on the ballot.

In all of the primary and later general elections money will play a key role in determining the winner. The 2010 Supreme court case Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission overturned long-standing election regulations, allowing wealthy individuals, corporations, unions and

others to spend unlimited amounts of money on elections.

This led to the creation of "super-PACS" (political action committees) that can accept unlimited contributions from corporations, unions, and other groups and spend it for or against candidates. It is estimated that 55% of corporate contributions go to Republicans, 45% go to Democrats. Republicans also receive funds from many conservative groups, such as the Evangelical Christians who contributed \$2.3 billion to the 2020 election, almost all to Republicans. Democrats also receive funds from labor unions, Black, Latino, women's, and LGBT organizations. Unions contributed \$1.8 billion, nearly all of it to Democrats in the 2020 election.

The Occupy Wall Street movement of 2011 demanded that corporate money be removed from politics. Bernie Sanders took up that cry in 2016 when

he ran for president. As Nina Turner, the co-chair of Sanders' campaign said, "The overflow of big money in politics drowns out the voices of everyday people. That is part of the conundrum in America: The more money you have the more speech you have. That leaves everyday people out

of the equation."

The American left in the broad sense agrees that money allows the corporations to buy the government they want, so that it becomes in the words of Karl Marx, "the executive committee of the ruling class." The

alternative is the building of a mass movement of working class and oppressed people who can use both their social and political power to create a more democratic socially progressive country.

21 January 2024

Pakistan Iran border attacks: in historic perspectives

21 January 2024, by **Farooq Tariq**

For the time being, there is a complete lull at present on 20th January, as both countries seem taken revenge from their "enemies" taking refuge in each other country. Both have been able to kill some of those claimed by them as terrorist groups, the Jaish al Adl (army of justice) in Pakistan and the Baloch separatist in Iran.

Iran claimed that they targeted two bases of the Jaish al Adl armed group in Pakistan. The group had claimed responsibility for a police station attack on Iranian town of Rask in the Southern border province of Sistan-Baluchistan which killed 11 Iranian security personnel. The attack was condemned by Pakistan.

Whosoever attacks each other, the Baloch people are the target on both sides. Some fighting the "Pakistan atrocities" and others fighting the Iranian colonial occupation of part of Balochistan. After the First World War, the Western Balochistan was gifted to Iran by British Imperialism.

Pakistani attack on "Balochistan separatist camps" in Iran took place at a time when many hundreds of Baloch activists are camping in Islamabad to recover missing Baloch activists and stop extrajudicial killings. They came to Islamabad from Turbat district of Balochistan in a long march that caught the attention of many internationally.

The escalation of border tension turning into missile attacks inside Pakistan and Iran has to be seen in the background of Israel's genocide of Palestinians. This has been the first time that there was an air strike and missile attack by Pakistan inside IRAN. The American imperialism would be very happy if Iran is kept busy defending from the attacks of Pakistan instead of helping the Palestinians though mainly through proxy organizations.

There is a long history of conflict between the two countries. There was a guerilla war in Balochistan during the first Bhutto government. This took place after an elected provincial government of National Awami Party (NAP) in opposition to Pakistan People's Party federal government was overthrown by Bhutto at the instigation of Shah of Iran in 1973. Many Baloch youths went into the mountains to fight back and many migrated to Afghanistan and Iran.

During this decade, Iran tried to bring in other tribes into the neighbouring province of Sestan-Baluchestan to change the majority of Baloch people into minority, same as Israel did with Palestinians.

The Shah of Iran was so terrified with the growing resistance of Baloch inside Iran that he asked Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto to take action against the provincial government of NAP. Bhutto did this brutally to crush the Baloch

resistance with the help of army operation inside Balochistan. Shah of Iran was afraid of the fact that if Eastern Balochistan becomes independent, the Western Balochistan inside the Iranian territory would become part of it. Baloch were targeted since then on both sides, but the resistance in many forms continues till today.

Both countries blame each other for harbouring the "terrorists" in their countries, the religious groups in Pakistan and nationalist groups in Iran.

If the war escalates, which seems not the case at present, it would damage both countries' economies to a level never seen before. The oil supplies to Pakistan can be hit hard by Iranians. The trade between the two countries would be halted. Already Iran benefits the "smuggling" of Iranian oil in bulk into Pakistan at present.

It is important to note that trade activities between Pakistan and Iran continued as usual, as both countries kept all their crossing points open despite the airspace violation by Iranian forces and the subsequent retaliatory strike by Pakistani forces. Trade activities are continuing along the border towns including Taftan, Gwader, Kech, Panjgor and Washuk.

Earlier in August 2023, the foreign ministers of both countries met in Islamabad to formulate a trade for a

five-year trade plan aiming to achieve a trade goal of \$5 billion.

The threat of a full fledged war is over at present, it seems, as both the foreign ministers of Iran and Pakistan have spoken to each other and emphasized "brotherly" relation. This

is just an interval between the two so-called brother Islamic countries, who are waiting a better time to strike again once their internal crisis escalates.

The women's movement against the Islamic Republic of Iran in recent years, and the long march of Baloch

activists in Pakistan, are the real hope for progressive movements in both countries and internationally. The kidnappings and murders of Baluchis by both the Pakistani and Iranian governments must stop.

January 20, 2024

Impact of Israeli Genocidal War in Gaza on the Middle East

20 January 2024, by **Joseph Daher**

The 2.4 million inhabitants of the Gaza Strip are living under a constant Israeli bombardment of unprecedented violence. By mid-January 2024, according to the lowest estimates, over 24,000 Palestinian have been killed by Israeli strikes. The vast majority of victims are women and children. This is without forgetting the 10,000 others missing under the rubble, presumed dead. More than 1.9 million Palestinians are displaced within the Gaza Strip, representing over 85% of its total population. In many ways this is a new Nakba. The 1948 Nakba resulted in over 700,000 Palestinians being driven out by force from their homes, becoming refugees. This process has continued until today.



As of now regional tensions continue to intensify without transforming (yet)

into a wide and violent war, although tensions have increased dramatically since the beginning of January. Faced with the violence of the Israeli occupying army and supported by its Western imperialist allies, the people of Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon face the growing risks of a more deadly regional conflagration.

Syria

Since October 7th Israel has repeatedly targeted Syria with targeted assassinations of significant personalities. South of Damascus, Israeli missiles assassinated Brigadier General Razi Mousavi, a key commander of the Quds Force, the foreign operations branch and elite unit of the Revolutionary Guards (the ideological army of the Islamic Republic of Iran). Iranian leaders have promised a response to the December 25th assassination. A few days later, on January 8, Hassan Akkacha, a Hamas member responsible for firing Hamas rockets from Syria towards Israel, was killed by the Israeli occupation army operating in Beit Jinn, an Israeli town located southwest of Damascus. Between October 12 and January 8, no less than 18 Israeli strikes repeatedly targeted the Damascus and Aleppo airports. They also struck positions and installations of Hezbollah and pro-Iranian forces in the Damascus region.

Although dictator Bashar al-Assad has rhetorically declared solidarity with the [Palestinians](#), the Syrian regime seems to possess neither interest nor capacity to directly participate in a response to the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip. This is historically in line with the Syrian regime's policy since 1974 to try avoiding any significant and direct confrontation with Israel. Further, condemnation by Syrian officials of the Israeli war will not lead to any form of military or political support for Hamas. There will be no strengthening of relations between the two actors, no return to the pre-2011 set-up, which was cut after the Palestinian movement voiced its support for the Syrian uprising.

While the Syrian regime restored ties with Hamas in summer 2022, that took place through Hezbollah mediation. Future relations between Syria and Hamas will be mainly governed through interests structured by and connected to Iran and Hezbollah.

Meanwhile there has been an intensification of violence in the north of Syria. Northwestern Syria has become a focal point of conflict marked by a surge in bombing by Russia and Syria. This escalation follows a devastating attack on a military academy graduation ceremony in the city of Homs, claiming the lives of at least [89 individuals](#). The incident, involving

explosive-laden drones, probably originating from neighboring areas controlled by the Turkish authorities or Hayat Tahrir Sham (HTS), has set the stage for a series of heightened bombardments.

The attack in Homs served as a pretext for the Syrian regime and its Russian ally to escalate military actions in the region and has led to severe humanitarian consequences. Since early October, more than 100 people have been killed — almost 40 percent of them children — and over 400 others have been injured. Because of the shelling and bombing by Damascus and Moscow's armed forces, 120,000 people have been forced to flee their homes, according to the [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#).

The Turkish military has expanded its operations, targeting areas controlled by the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES). This strategic move came in the aftermath of a suicide attack on October 1st at the entrance to the Interior Ministry in Ankara; two policemen were injured. A group affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) claimed responsibility. This prompted swift and decisive action by the Turkish government. Notably, on [October 17th](#) Turkey's parliament voted to extend its mandate, allowing their armed forces to launch cross-border operations in Syria and Iraq for two additional years.

Numerous airstrikes and drone attacks since October 2023 have deprived large segments of the population in the northeast of electricity, water, heating, and related services, whether temporarily or throughout the coming cold winter months. By the end of December, Turkish warplanes and drones launched a series of airstrikes on northeast Syria, targeting oil sites and vital infrastructure facilities. The attacks led to power outages in several cities and in the countryside of Jazeera Canton, reducing the production capacity of electrical stations by 50%. The Turkish attacks have killed at least [176 civilians](#) and injured 272 others in 2023. By mid-January, Turkey carried out a new series of airstrikes against the

northeast of Syria and northern Iraq.

This overall escalation of bombing in northern Syria is intricately tied to an effort to exploit the ongoing international focus on the Israeli war on Gaza. Key state actors involved — including Turkey, Russia and the Syrian regime — are strategically capitalizing on the heightened global attention garnered by the Israeli war. This calculated maneuver allows them to operate with a perceived degree of impunity in the northern theatre.

Exploiting the chaos, U.S. military bases in Syria — and Iraq -- have become targets of increased drone and rocket attacks orchestrated by Iranian-affiliated groups. The U.S. Department of Defense announced on January 10th that U.S. troops and bases in Syria and Iraq have been attacked [127 times](#) since October 17th. These heightened attacks have been a direct response to Washington's support for Israel's military action in the Gaza Strip. It is a way for them to further both their political and local objectives. Since the end of October, U.S. airstrikes have been systematically targeting several facilities utilized by pro-Iranian militias and Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in eastern Syria.

Iraq

In Iraq, tensions have also arisen between U.S. armed forces and pro-Iranian militias. U.S. forces struck an Iraqi security headquarters in the heart of the capital, Baghdad, on January 4th. This killed two members of the al-Noujouba faction of the pro-Iranian militia group Hashd al-Chaabi. Among the militiamen murdered, Commander Abou Taqwa, was accused by Washington of being actively involved in attacks against U.S. military bases in Iraq. As Hashd al-Shaabi is officially integrated into the Iraqi national army, the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly condemned the attack.

The office of Prime Minister Mohammad Chia al-Soudani, for its part, described the January 4th strike as a dangerous escalation. It announced the formation of a bilateral

committee responsible for taking steps to definitively end the presence of the international coalition forces (led by the United States).

This is not the first time that the Iraqi ruling political class has called for the departure of U.S. forces. After the 2020 U.S. assassination of Kassem Soleimani, head of the Iranian al-Quds force of the Revolutionary Guards in Baghdad, interim Prime Minister Adel Abdel-Mahdi had asked Washington to establish a plan to withdraw its troops. That request was categorically rejected by the U.S. State Department.

The Iraqi Parliament had also formulated a bill requiring U.S. withdrawal, but the resolution was non-binding. Officially, the 2,500 U.S. soldiers in Iraq provide assistance, advice and training to the Iraqi armed forces. Their presence was at the invitation of the Iraqi government, which had requested assistance to combat the so-called Islamic State (IS) jihadist group in 2014, but it was also part of the strategic agreement signed in 2008 between the former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki -- now part of the pro-Iranian Shia Coordination Framework -- and Washington. The deal was then approved by the Iraqi Parliament. For its part, Washington wants to maintain its military presence in both in Iraq and Syria.

Yemen

Likewise, on the Yemeni side, tensions have been mounting between the Yemeni political and armed movement of the Houthis and the U.S. armed forces and its allies. Since October 7, in solidarity with the Palestinians, the Houthis have increased attacks in the Red Sea against ships considered linked to Israel. For instance, on November 19, they seized a merchant ship, the Galaxy Leader, owned by an Israeli businessman, with its 25 crew members. The Houthis have stated on numerous occasions that they will stop these attacks only with the end of the Israeli war against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Faced with this situation, at the beginning of December Washington set up a multinational naval force to

protect merchant ships in the Red Sea, through which 12% of world trade passes. The main objective is to guarantee one of the most essential shipping corridors for international trade. On the last day of 2023, ten Houthi militants were killed when the U.S. military claimed to have sunk three ships in response to attacks on a Danish carrier's container ship. It was the first deadly strike against the Houthis since the multinational naval force was set up. A few days afterward, the United States and the United Kingdom carried out a new series of airstrikes against the Houthis. Additionally, Washington imposed sanctions targeting the Houthis' financing circuits, targeting several people and entities in Yemen and Turkey. Between November 18 and January 13, more than 27 commercial boats traveling in the southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden have been attacked by the Houthis.

Lebanon

While Lebanon has been the target of Israeli missiles since the beginning of the Israeli war on Gaza, risks of a larger confrontation between Hezbollah and Tel Aviv has increased after the Israeli assassination of Saleh al-Aroui, the number two person on the Hamas political bureau and a founder of its military wing, the al-Qassam Brigades. This occurred in the southern suburbs of Beirut on January 2nd. Two other Hamas officials, Samir Fandi and Azzam al-Akrra, as well as four others affiliated with the movement — but also with the Lebanese Jamaa Islamiya (a branch of the Muslim Brotherhoods in Lebanon) — were also killed in this attack.

Hamas leader Aroui had been based in Lebanon since 2018. Imprisoned twice, he spent a dozen years in Israeli jails before being released in April 2010. He was one of the privileged interlocutors of Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary general of Hezbollah.

Next to be assassinated by an Israeli drone in south Lebanon was Wissam Tawil, a commander of the Al-Radwan Force, a military unit of Hezbollah. He was the most senior Hezbollah military official killed since October 8. In reaction, Hezbollah targeted

military bases in the north of Israel.

Israeli attacks have caused the deaths of around 160 Hezbollah members between October 8 and mid-January 2023. Air and drone strikes by the Israeli occupation army on villages in southern Lebanon have also led to the forced displacement of more than 76,000 people from their homes as well as damaging large areas of agricultural land.

For the time being the assassinations of Aroui and Hezbollah commander Tawil have not altered the position of the Lebanese Islamic party nor its main sponsor, Iran. Reluctance to launch a more intense military response to the Israeli war comes from their desire to preserve their own political and geopolitical interests. Hezbollah continues to serve as a "pressure front" against Tel Aviv, as expressed in speeches by Hassan Nasrallah. Similarly, Iran does not want its crown jewel, Hezbollah, to be weakened. Iran's geopolitical objective is not to liberate the Palestinians but to use these groups as leverage, particularly in its relations with the United States. In this context, Hezbollah is sticking to "calculated and proportional reactions" against Israeli attacks.

The threat lies in the probability that Israel will continue its assassinations and attacks on Lebanese territories. A section of the Israeli ruling class wants, through the Israeli war on Gaza, to force Hezbollah to withdraw 10 kilometers from the border, that is, north of the Litani river. This would represent a political and military gain for Israel.

The escalation of Israeli attacks in Lebanon is connected to Israel's new military phase. Withdrawing five brigades, composed mostly of reserve soldiers, from Gaza at the beginning of the year is part of Israeli strategy of "low-intensity war." The objectives include tightening control over most of the Gaza Strip that has fallen under its sway, destroying the network of underground tunnels and eradicating all remaining resistance. The increased threats and attacks in Lebanon reveal Hezbollah's missed opportunity to force Israel to fight on two fronts. This is turning against

them.

Conclusion

While the genocidal war against Palestinians locked into the Gaza Strip continues unabated. Israeli government leaders have announced that the war will continue "throughout" 2024. Israeli impunity is a permanent threat to the regional working classes and continues to increase the dangers of a regional war. Similarly, U.S. led Western imperialisms is only deepening the misery of local popular classes through support to Israel, regional authoritarian states and continued bombings.

In this situation, what can the left and progressive actors do?

It is important to reiterate our opposition to the Apartheid, colonial and racist Israeli state while continuing to defend the right of Palestinians to resist against such a criminal regime. Indeed, like any other population facing the same threats, Palestinians have such rights, including by military means. Similarly, Lebanese have the right to resist Israeli military aggression and war. This should not be confused with support for the political perspectives and orientations of the various Palestinian and Lebanese political parties, including Hamas and Hezbollah. That is also true for all kinds of military actions these actors might take. That is particularly true of actions that lead to the indiscriminate killing of civilians.

The main task for the left remains developing a strategy based on a regional solidarity from below. That means opposing the Western states and Israel on the one side while also opposing regional authoritarian states (whether Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar, UAE, etc.) and the political forces linked to them. Based on class struggle from below, this strategy is the only way to win liberation from these regimes and their imperialist backers (whether the United States, China or Russia). Through that struggle, Palestinians, Lebanese and those in other countries must also embrace the demands of all those that

suffer national oppression — like the Kurds and others who suffer forms of ethnic, sectarian, and social oppression.
January 15, 2024

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One month of Milei's government in Argentina: radical liberalism and anti-democratic attacks

19 January 2024, by **Martin N.**

The main measure taken was to sharply devalue the currency and free up prices. The result was inflation of 25% in December, with no sign of it abating in the coming months. A single example illustrates the point: the increase in fuel prices at the end of December will set off a new inflationary spiral and may force a further devaluation, triggering a third round of price rises. Yet his government could have negotiated with the small handful of oil companies to at least stagger the increase. But his liberal dogmatism leads him to avoid any state intervention, even if this means moderating the impact of his measures and jeopardising the success of his economic plan. His plan loses a measure of internal coherence, while retaining its unfairness.

Milei's plan: to change the country forever

However, Milei was not content with short-term measures. In the process, he is trying to change the country forever: privatisation of all public companies, exemptions from nature protection laws, deregulation of all economic sectors, to name but the highlights. In all, hundreds of legal changes with a mega-bill and a

presidential decree.

These now have to go through the Assembly. It's still not clear what the Radical Party (now centre-right) and the Peronists not aligned with Kirchnerism will do. As far as the decree is concerned, at first they were against it, but today their opposition is increasingly lukewarm. Nevertheless, certain aspects of the decree, notably the reform of labour law, have been temporarily suspended by the courts, representing an initial setback for the government. The Supreme Court of Justice is due to rule on the constitutionality of the decree.

The bill has been under debate since 9 January. Initially, the government did not want to negotiate anything, but in order to get at least a significant part of it approved, they were forced to propose amendments. The deregulation of fishing has been modified in the face of pressure from the sector, and the article requiring authorisation for any public gathering of more than three people will be withdrawn. Even the electoral reform concerning the legislative elections will be modified or even stopped. The latter was heavily criticised for moving from direct proportional representation by region to single-member constituencies. Another point of major criticism is the declaration of economic emergency, which gives the President full powers for at least two

years, i.e. more powers and for longer than during the coronavirus pandemic.

National strike on 24 January and international solidarity

The legislative and judicial outcome is uncertain. It is the streets that will change the situation. There have been a number of demonstrations, albeit modest, since the decree was announced, and in some districts of the capital, people's assemblies (like those held in 2001) are beginning to spring up. But the most important thing is the national strike on 24 January. The union bureaucracy (much more powerful than the French) seems to be waking up from a four-year slumber and is calling for a one-day general strike, while calling on the Peronists (in particular former president Cristina Kirchner and the losing candidate in the last presidential election, Sergio Massa) to take action. This one-day strike and mobilisation could be the start of a solid social opposition to Milei's liberal policies.

18 January 2024

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

Private universities out of the question in Greece!

18 January 2024, by **Andreas Sartzekis**

In spite of the break-up of labour law, university diplomas are still important, especially as entry to university is organized around national examinations, the “panellinies”, where a high mark enables you to obtain the section and place of study you have chosen as a priority.

Commodification and exclusion

A strict selective system, often crammed into small private crammers, but which has given a large number of young people access to studies that are, if not free, at least less expensive than in many European countries. For several years now, this has been seriously undermined by a process of commercialization of education, with the existence of private, and therefore paying, “higher” institutions, known as “colleges”, linked to foreign universities (around 18,000 students).

The former Minister for Education introduced professional equivalence between their diplomas and those of the state education system. Three years ago, a minimum grade was introduced for admission to university. This system has already turned 38,000

young people away from university, leaving them with the choice of either going to college if they are rich, or looking for a job (in a precarious situation). There is also the continuing weakening of universities, with funding falling (by 18% between 2008 and 2021) and the number of university staff falling (by 33% over the same period). The average number of students per teacher is 47 (the European average is 13).

Mitsotakis therefore believes that the fruit is ripe and that he can try to circumvent Article 16. He is also relying on opinion polls (59% of the population would not be against private colleges...) and on a reformist opposition that is not ready for a central struggle.

A promising start to student mobilisation

Students have clearly understood the project: a frontal attack on public and free universities, a challenge to their diplomas and the possibility of studying!

Far from the “private university will help public university to improve” propaganda, they reject private university as an accelerator of the destruction of public university (less funding, closure of departments, etc.). And after information and discussions at general assemblies, 120 union sections (1 section in each university department) across the country called for the first national mobilization.

On Thursday 11 January, thousands of young people took to the streets, including at least 5,000 in Athens, along with dozens of teachers and hundreds of high school students aware of the threat.

Proof of the government’s fear was the heavy police presence, which was unable to prevent the action from being a general success. The movement is looking to expand, with general assemblies, occupations, links with the workers’ unions and a forthcoming mobilization on Thursday 18 January. An encouraging determination that needs strong solidarity!

Athens, 14 January 2024

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l’Anticapitaliste](#).*

The bubble, the state, and the crooked-mouthed monk: the Chinese property crisis and its culprits

17 January 2024, by **Au Loong-Yu**

We have already seen Evergrande, the biggest developer, back in court again in Hong Kong at the end of October, after its creditors filed a winding-up petition due to its failure to pay back loans. The property giant began its slow-motion collapse in 2021 when it could not pay its 2.43 trillion RMB (US\$340 billion) liabilities. This has been followed by another giant, Country Garden, also now struggling to pay its debts and to get new loans just to finish its projects. And many households have already made down payments and mortgage payments on these projects.

Listed developers now owe the people US\$960 billion in unbuilt homes, according to the Economist, comprising roughly 40% of all purchased but uncompleted homes. Since 2021, many developers no longer have the money to keep their construction projects going, because their sales have been plummeting. According to the *South China Morning Post*, the 100 largest developers in Mainland China saw their sales down by 41.3% in 2022 (nationally they dropped 26%). In July 2023 they fell a further 33.1% year-on-year.

Bloomberg gave us a glimpse of the potential knock-on effect of the crisis when it reported that, “an analysis of China’s 186 listed developers shows that about 48% of total borrowing is held by companies that either already defaulted on public bonds... or are at ‘significant’ risk of missing repayment”. This amounts to 13.6 trillion yuan of debt being at risk of default, or 12% of China’s GDP.

The stakes are very high. According to a Project Syndicate report, “the value of China’s housing market is four times the country’s GDP, compared to 1.6 in the US and 2.1 in Japan. It accounts for more than one-quarter of all economic activity and two-thirds of household wealth”. It would be catastrophic if the crisis is not contained in time, not just for China but also for the world economy.

It is true that the government has been vigilant in not raising a lot of foreign loans, and official statistics show a low level of foreign debt. But the problem is that there are a lot of hidden foreign debts -local

government and corporations have borrowed a lot from foreign banks or by issuing bonds. The Financial Times tells us that Evergrande alone was estimated to have \$19 billion in overseas liabilities. No one knows the actual figure of China’s foreign debt, but Evergrande’s default is enough to deal another blow to the already weak confidence of foreign investors in China’s market.

There are multiple factors behind the fall in prices and sales, but the fundamental driving force is the excessive supply and over expansion of the market. The housing vacancy rate is 25%. Since 2009, so many new flats have been built that they are enough to house 250 million residents, in a country where 600 million live on a monthly income of 1,000RMB (US\$140). No wonder that, “70% of homes sold since 2018 were bought by people who already owned one”. Xi Jinping certainly had a point when he said “houses are for living in, not for speculation”. He has again proved that he is good at promoting slogans, but only slogans.

Who are the culprits?

Who is responsible for the property crisis? Michael Roberts, a leftist economist, rebutted the Western mainstream’s narrative (for instance, the *Financial Times*). This blamed the government for its heavy-handed or inappropriate regulations and for its failure to raise the level of consumption which is too low. His article argued that it is the fault of the capitalist market and the private sector, and that more Chinese state ownership and state intervention would be a remedy to market chaos.

I have no sympathy for the *Financial Times*’ recipes, but I think Roberts’ thesis is misinformed, to say the least. The fact that in general it is capitalist forces which created this crisis should not blind us to the other side of the coin - it has always been the state which has pushed for more capitalism, with Chinese characteristics - a crony, state-led capitalism. The top tier predator of this ponzi scheme is none other than the central government,

followed by the collusion between local government and the developers (known as the “white gloves” of local officials). The three formed an unholy ponzi scheme alliance which has eventually led to the downfall of the property market.

The central government laid the groundwork for this ponzi property scheme from the very beginning of the economic programme “reform and open”. The 1982 constitution stipulated that urban land belongs to the state and explicitly prohibited its sale. This was soon revised in 1988 to allow the sale of the right to land use for a certain period of time (50-70 years). This openly followed the example of colonial Hong Kong’s practice of land tender, in the midst of the party’s call for “learn from Hong Kong!” (to get rich).

Municipal governments and even small towns would soon massively *quandi* (圈地, enclose land) for *kaifagu* (开发, development areas), from theme parks to real estate. Many of these eventually went bust. This would further extend to rural land as well - with a stroke of the pen local officials could always change “agricultural land” to “non-agricultural land”.

In response, the central government tightened control again - for a while. But its fundamental policy of allowing the commercialisation and speculation of state-owned land has never changed at all, paving the way for more rounds of enclosures and building booms in later periods. The 1994 tax reform gave local government a second opportunity to promote another round of property boom.

This was followed by the 2008-9 global financial crisis, which created conditions for a third wave building boom: central government handed out matching funds of 30% to local municipalities to build more infrastructure, so as to boost domestic demand and save the economy. The municipalities raised the rest of the money from their LGFVs (Local Government Financial Vehicles), borrowing from the banks or issuing bonds to fund these projects. These huge infrastructure investments usually came with development plans

for residential areas or industrial parks/commercial hubs etc. By then, local municipalities had made themselves increasingly dependent on land sales and the property market – ultimately accounting for one third of their revenue.

The fourth wave was again provided by the central government when it rolled out its 2013 “new model of urbanisation” policy. This further pushed up house prices, with no regard to the bubble which was already forming. Some of them would eventually become “ghost towns” or lanweilou (烂楼, unfinished buildings).

The other side of the story was that a lot of people lost their homes in the midst of massive land grabbing all over the country and across both rural and urban land. There was also strong resistance, the most famous of which was the Wukan struggle.

Mainland and Hong Kong - a comparison

This leads us to the issue of corruption with Chinese characteristics. Why were ghost towns possible? Didn't the municipal governments and developers study the projects' feasibility before launching them? Why would developers be allowed to sell off-plan properties (properties that had not yet been built) when China was still far from being a rich country, and when even Xi Jinping recognised the seriousness of China's corruption? While the government is such a control freak concerning the people, why couldn't it assert equally effective control over the developers and the mad financialisation of the property market? Especially when urban land is state-owned (which implies that the government can always unilaterally set the terms)?

In colonial Hong Kong, all undeveloped land was also under state ownership, or “crown land”. While the colonial government did allow the developers to unjustly enrich themselves immensely, since the 1970s it was also able to provide affordable public housing to half of the

population there. By contrast, the mainland's mega property bubble was only possible after the party finally officially discarded the physical distribution of houses to workers in state-owned or collectively owned enterprises (of which most small and medium ones were privatised) in the late 1990s.

Looking back over the whole period of “reform and open”, it is clear that the CCP was tilted from the very beginning towards enriching local officials, developers and the upper middle class, at the expense of the lower middle class and the poor.

There are of course all kinds of housing projects to help the poor, but how they are implemented is the biggest problem and also a carefully guarded secret, not to mention that their scale is small. In a state where the officials are entirely free from any kind of scrutiny from the people, they can always make the policies work for their own enrichment. No wonder the reports about public housing or accessible housing for the poor often ending up in the hands of local officials. The National Audit Office found that 30% of 290,000 rented public flats were “violating the rules” and were “abused”. In the “old” Hong Kong period, when it still enjoyed autonomy, its media often ran reports like this – a township Vice Party Secretary alone would own 192 units of housing. It's not clear how many were public or private houses, but the number is staggering.

The state as a part of the problem

It does not matter at all to the bureaucrats if the newly built towns are not eventually completed – local municipalities got their revenue from land sales, corrupt officials got their commission or a share of the booty, the developers got revenue from selling the flats and with the help of local officials also their loans from state banks.

This leads us to another facet of the bureaucracy – its dysfunction caused by the constant conflict between official rules and the terrible

corruption within the hierarchy of the bureaucracy. The case of the Qinling illegal villas allows us a glimpse of the tug of war between local bureaucrats and the central government and with... Xi Jinping. The local bureaucrats broke the law to build their villas in an environmentally protected area. When this was reported to Xi he ordered their demolition in 2014. But the local officials resisted stubbornly for four years, through lies and tricks, before they finally did their jobs when hard pressed. But Xi had to issue six instructions before it was done.

On top of the complete degeneration of party bureaucrats into a bourgeoisified bureaucracy, there is also the factor of a particular political culture – or the lack of it – in the party. The practice of diyibashou (一把手, the top party leader or the bosses of their respective departments) making irresponsible decisions over “economic development”, often in defiance of professional advice or dissident party leaders, has been innate to the CCP since 1949. The most horrible example is the Great Leap Forward.

When these two factors coincide, the scale of corruption becomes unimaginable. The toxic environment within the party state also prompts corrupt officials to make big money as soon as possible (and many will move their money abroad afterwards), lest the party leadership suddenly changes course again and closes down their window for graft. This is reflected in the jingle “the communist party is similar to the moon, whose shape is constantly changing”. Fundamentally speaking, the culprit of this man-made crisis is nothing else but the party state. We should not forget that Beijing's capitalist roader has been assisted by Wall street all along the way. Without the latter's help in promoting Chinese corporations' IPO in Hong Kong or the Wall street they would not have grown into such giants in so short period of time. But China is no regular banana country. It has been the party's conscious choice and in its own interest that it has turned China into a fiercely capitalist state all the way through.

When Roberts sees a remedy in the

party state, he forgets that it is never neutral; instead the bureaucrats have long hijacked the state for their own material interests, and consciously pursued more, through larger and larger dosages of privatisation and commercialisation of land use. Far from being a part of the remedy, the party state is a big part of the problem. Another Chinese jingle (quite

popular during Mao's rule) gives us a more accurate picture of the party bureaucrats than Roberts' narrative – waizui heshang nian wajing (嘴歪心斜, crooked-mouthed monk chants scriptures crookedly). Buddhism may be the Truth, but you cannot rely on a wry-mouthed monk to chant its scripture. State intervention could be useful, but you can't rely on a

corrupted party to implement a good policy. You may get the opposite of what you wish for.

December 2023

(Note: This article is first published in the South African journal **Amandla**, issue 90-91, December 2023, p. 43. It was slightly edited by the author for this reposting.

Italian workers at GKN in Florence continue 3 year exemplary struggle

16 January 2024, by **Dave Kellaway**

Although the current Meloni government has made some demagogic statements about finding a solution, there is a direct political link between the current owner, Francesco Borgomeo, and the prime minister's office. Professor Gaetano Caputi is the head of Meloni's office but is tied up financially with one of the companies involved with the current owner.

The workers have reached out for international solidarity and to make contact with workers elsewhere carrying out similar struggles. They held an international meeting with them on 5 November 2023. Representatives came from the Spanish state, France, Greece, Argentina, and Chile, as well as cooperative organisations, ethical banks, and Fuorimercato (exchanges outside the capitalist market).

Progress is good on the one million euro cooperative share launch; 600,000 has been raised. You can directly send money to the Insorgiamo website, but the minimum unit is 500 euros. Individuals can group together to buy one unit or more.

The campaign to raise funds to facilitate a reopening of the factory through agreements with local and regional authorities is very important since it is clear that the current owner sees the opportunities for lucrative

property developments on the site.

You can keep in touch with the GKN workers at www.insorgiamo.org, and also at <https://www.facebook.com/coordinamentognfirenze>.

Latest Statement from the GKN workers (January 2024)

On 9 July 2021, Melrose Industries announced the closure of its GKN Driveline (formerly FIAT) factory of car axles in Campi di Bisenzio, Florence, and the layoff of its workers (more than 400). In many such cases, the workers and unions settled for negotiating enhanced redundancy benefits, but the GKN Factory Collective took over the plants and kick-started a long struggle against decommissioning. However, what makes the ex-GKN Florence dispute really unique is the strategy adopted by the workers. They sealed an alliance with the climate justice movement by drafting a conversion

plan for sustainable public transport.

Such a strategy led to a cycle of broad mobilisations, repeatedly bringing tens of thousands to the streets, so that the dispute is still open. The permanent sit-in at the factory remains active. The workers were meant to be finally dismissed on 1 January 2024. The GKN Factory Collective had thus turned New Year's Eve into a final call to action to defend their conversion plan. Such pressure from below probably played a role in the labour court's decision, announced on 27 December 2023, to overturn the layoffs for the second time.

The 31 December 2023, concert in the factory and the subsequent nocturnal march across Campi Bisenzio's industrial area became a mass mobilisation to relaunch the workers' current plan to set up a cooperative for the production of cargo bikes and solar panels, as part of a broader vision for a worker-led ecological transition.

This project needs material solidarity now – over 600,000 euros have been collected by the popular shareholding campaign to launch the co-operative, moving closer and closer to the target of one million euros. All information on how to contribute, individually or as an organisation, can be found at the website www.insorgiamo.org.

As Biden Expands the War in the Middle East, His Opposition Grows

15 January 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

Last week Biden, joined by the British and others, ordered hundreds of missiles to be fired at dozens of targets in Yemen in retaliation for Houthi attacks on merchant vessels in the Red Sea. Democrats in Congress are furious with their party's leader for failure to abide by the U.S. Constitution, which gives Congress the power to declare war, and the War Powers Act, passed to restrain presidential power in 1973 after President Richard Nixon unilaterally extended the Vietnam War to Cambodia.

Pramila Jayapal, the leader of the Progressive Caucus in the House of Representatives, called the weapons launched at the Houthis in Yemen an "unacceptable violation of the Constitution." Democratic Congresswoman Cori Bush, who is also a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, said, "The people do not want more of our taxpayer dollars going to endless war and the killing of civilians. Stop the bombing and do better by us." Also condemning the unconstitutional war-making were Democratic representatives Rashida Tlaib, Mark Pocan and Ro Khanna. Most Republicans supported Biden's action, but a few also complained of his failure to seek Congressional

approval.

Biden argues that these actions are not part of a widening Middle East war sparked by Israel's genocidal bombing of Gaza, but he has also authorized strikes on Hezbollah Kataib, a pro-Iran, Shiite militia in Iraq, and a weapons storage warehouse of an Iranian-allied group in Syria. The Houthis, Hezbollah, and Iraqi militias may hope, in supporting their ally Hamas, to deter Israel's bombing campaign and to put more pressure on the United States, but they risk triggering a war involving Iran, Israel and the United States. As do Israeli and U.S. responses to them.

The Middle East is an armed American military camp. The United States currently maintains 2,500 troops in Iraq and 900 in Syria—where Russia also has troops—and has about three thousand troops each in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, 8,000 in Qatar, 9,000 in Bahrain, and 13,500 in Kuwait. In the last several days the U.S. deployed a team of intelligence officers to help Israel with targeting, ostensibly to reduce the horrific toll on human life in Gaza. In Middle Eastern waters there are also a dozen U.S. warships with their crews and some 2,000 U.S. Marines.

Meanwhile in Gaza, Israel continues its bombing and attacks that have now killed 27,000 Palestinians, 10,000 of them children, with over 7,000 believed to be buried under the rubble. Some 60,300 have been wounded, many of them maimed. Oxfam says that the rate of death is higher than in any other twentieth century conflict. All of this has moved South Africa to accuse Israel of genocide in Gaza, leading to a hearing before the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Activists in the United States have signed petitions and participated in protests in support of South Africa's case.

So, while Biden maybe trying to prevent an expansion of the war, he opposes a ceasefire and continues to support Israel's war on the Palestinians, as well as military actions in Yemen, Iraq, and Syria. Not only Israel, but also its sponsor and benefactor, the United States should be on trial for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. So say millions around the world who are appalled by the current atrocities, fearful of a broader and larger war, and who demand a ceasefire and justice for Palestine.

14 January 2024

Priming the Philippines for a "globalized NATO"

Consequently, the top echelon of the Philippines' foreign policy apparatus is steering the country along a militarist course. This dangerous policy is Manila's deliberate answer to the acute global shifts threatening southeast Asia's general stability. And as it aligns its interests with the core strategic aims of the U.S., the Philippine government blatantly bolsters U.S. war-mongering against the People's Republic of China.

Global dynamics

More than three decades since the Cold War ended, the imperialist world system has now entered a new phase in its history. Over the past year alone, the capitalist global order's innate contradictions generated systemic and complex crises. All of these predicaments—economic, social, political, ecological—severely combined to exacerbate an already volatile world environment. Accordingly, this shifting international milieu categorically shapes Manila's global outlook and frames its external policy logic.

Certainly, the current list of worldwide crises conditions includes the following: a) a continuing downturn in the international economy due to persistent [global inflationary pressures](#), with a projected slower global growth rate of less than 3 percent by 2024; b) [sharpening class struggles worldwide](#) amid combined oppressive economic policies and repressive government measures; c) [an escalation of open diplomatic clashes](#) between the rival blocs of the imperialist great powers within major international forums, especially in the United Nations Security Council; d) [a worsening of the global climate change emergency](#), with October 2023 being the hottest October on record; e) [an acknowledgement-[regarding-the-coronavirus-disease-\(covid-19\)-pandemic\] by the World Health Organization concerning "remaining uncertainties posted by potential evolution of SARS-CoV-2"; and f\) \[lasting fallout\]\(#\)s resulting from the current wars inside Ukraine \(between Russia and the U.S.-led NATO\) and in Zionist-occupied Palestine \(between Israel and the oppressed Palestinian nation\).](https://www.who.int/news/item/05-05-2023-statement-on-the-fifteenth-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-(2005)-emergency-committee-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

In this context, the U.S. and China remain locked in a fierce contest for global hegemony despite the U.S. being the top superpower with significant military superiority.

And in actively pursuing their national interests abroad, Washington and Beijing are guided by their respective foreign policy frameworks.

The U.S.-led alliances

The U.S. seeks to effectively degrade China's "comprehensive national power." As such, Washington's integrated foreign policy/national security parameters—expressed in its [2022 National Security Strategy \(NSS\)](#)—commits the U.S. to counteract China as the "pacing challenge," i.e., its top priority. As the U.S.'s up-to-date strategic guidance doctrine, the 2022 NSS openly describes how, "to outmaneuver our geopolitical competitors," so as, "to win the competition for the 21st century."

To concentrate its preeminent might upon China, the U.S. constantly fortifies its security alliances—from Western Europe to East Asia, and around central Eurasia (covering Russia).

Viewed through the lens of this modern-day grand strategy, the U.S. deems the Eurasia-Indo-Pacific area as "important for NATO." This is the reason why Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea have already become NATO's Asia-based

"Global Partners." Similarly, Washington is enticing countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to join the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad/comprising Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S.)—in harmonization with the Australia-U.K.-U.S. (AUKUS) regional security mechanism. Concurrently, the U.S. and its allies are pushing for the creation of NATO liaison offices within Asian states, specifically in Japan and Jordan. These schemes are undoubtedly geared toward globalizing NATO's political-military scope and influence throughout the Eastern Hemisphere.

NATO has lately confirmed such an approach. This was clearly imparted at the 2023 NATO Vilnius Summit last July. As a main strategic premise, it was stressed in [NATO's post-summit communiqué](#):

The Indo-Pacific is important for NATO, given that developments in that region can directly affect Euro-Atlantic security. We welcome the contribution of our partners in the Asia-Pacific region—Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea—to security in the Euro-Atlantic, including their commitment to supporting Ukraine.

So, the expansion to the Asia-Pacific region is one of NATO's major policy trajectories.

In the first week of September 2023, during the forty-third ASEAN Summit in Jakarta, Southeast Asia's premier regional bloc acquiesced to the U.S.'s foreign policy overtures once again.

Indeed, U.S. imperialism is forcefully deploying its brand of obstinate international leadership and utmost resources to assure its global predominance, including the Asia-Pacific region, in the period ahead.

Chinese policy in the region

Conversely, to negate the belligerence of the United States toward it, China just freshly passed its 2023 Foreign Relations Law (FRL) last June. This is Beijing's foreign policy framework to principally foil Washington's anti-China offensive.

China's 2023 FRL distinctly proposes three major diplomatic initiatives: Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilization Initiative. This signifies a robust external relations agenda counterposed to the U.S.'s supercilious narrative of upholding a "rules-based international order" (also known as, "Protecting the post-1991 imperialist world system for the global advantage of the United States"). In this manner, Beijing's 2023 FRL is unquestionably a proactive foreign policy instrument set to impede Washington's policies in major international arenas and domains.

In truth, the content of China's present-day foreign policy course already displays an emergent form of Chinese imperialism—a result of its potent capitalist development—that is prepared to contest the United States as the world's paramount imperialist power in order to reshape the global order to benefit Beijing's long-range strategic interests.

It is beyond doubt that China has had an astonishingly steady capitalist economic growth since 1978. This change began not long after Chairman Mao Zedong's death. In the wake of the Communist Party of China's (CPC) 12th National Congress in August 1977, China firmly pivoted onto the "capitalist road" by joining the twin instruments of international capital in 1980—the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank—to reintegrate into the global capitalist economy.

Soon afterward, the CPC dropped its promise to the Chinese working class of guaranteed jobs for life. Throughout this starting phase, Chinese society was reintroduced to the rule of the law of value to boost the profit-motive for

economic growth. China replaced an economic orientation of production-for-use with that of production-for-exchange.

The CPC embarked upon a second phase of stronger bourgeois-oriented economic reforms in 1992. This came after the Party's 14th National Congress resolved to solidify China's state-capitalism under the banner of "Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics." These policies further destroyed China's organized proletarian base. Moreover, it unleashed even greater contradictions resulting from the emergence of a 'new bourgeoisie' entrenched along the Party-State nexus.

By the time of its 15th National Congress in September 1997, the Party decided to transform Chinese state-owned enterprises into profit-driven firms. As a result, nearly all public companies were refitted along capitalist lines to fast-track China's global competitiveness. The devastating consequence, however, was that many historic working-class gains were wiped out almost overnight. In fact, between 1998 and 2002, it was estimated that more than 25 million Chinese workers had lost their jobs inside China's state-capitalist apparatus.

Additionally, the continuing direction taken by the last three CPC national congresses (in 2012, 2017, and 2022), under the leadership of Xi Jinping, merely solidified China's imperialist track.

Given these national conditions, China has by now definitely attained greater economic and material advantages which essentially validate Lenin's "five principal features" of imperialism: a) the public sector's transformation from state-monopoly capitalism into private monopoly; b) the new state-capitalist bourgeoisie, having a dominant position within the Party-State process, ensures unified control over industrial and bank capital; c) China became a net capital exporting country in 2014 through its supranational financial giant, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and was able to export up to \$1.2 billion in major overseas direct investments starting in 2016; d)

Beijing-led regional and transregional monopoly projects, like the AIIB, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and the Belt and Road Initiative, are all aimed at enhancing external market-access objectives; and, e) China continues to actively carve out [new spheres of influence](#) and domination across Europe, South America, the Caribbean, Africa, West Asia, Central Asia, and the Asia-Indo-Pacific area.

Still, China's amplified regional military superiority enables Beijing to immensely project force well beyond its frontier zone to protect its national interests. At the same time, the PRC's deepened strategic depth remains highly fortified with huge economic resources to match its rising strategic contention with U.S. imperialism. This is already the developing situation within the Southeast Asian Sea (also known as the South China Sea).

China's capitalist road to development has unquestionably led it onto an imperialist trajectory. It is a fast-rising imperialist global power with regional hegemonic clout across most of the Asia-Pacific. And through this path, Beijing is clearly forcing a redivision upon the world market.

Economically, China's growing process of capital export, via its phenomenal Belt and Road Initiative across Eurasia, is absolutely extending its sphere of influence—in direct confrontation with the existing U.S. sphere of influence. This material undertaking helps to expand Beijing's political and diplomatic sway around and beyond its immediate frontiers. With an ever-increasing number of foreign governments enhancing their external relations with Beijing, China's hegemonic pull becomes even greater.

In this way, Beijing is further transformed into a strategic center of global power with its own set of national values, goals and objectives. And to guarantee its uniquely developing imperialist project—even as it shares similar basic features with the historic imperialist powers of the twentieth century—China is compelled to project its respective military prowess within its immediate regional security environment. So, and in this regard, the U.S. military's proximate

presence within the area is assessed not just as a clear and present danger. But even more, the U.S. is seen as an existential threat to China's national well-being, not least in relation to Taiwan, which is understood as an integral part of the Chinese nation.

Therefore, the existence of U.S. military bases on Philippine soil leads to China's hardening national security posture in its immediate regional security environment—just like the U.S. reaction to Cuba in October 1962, and Russia's toward Ukraine in February 2022. This is mainly because the Philippines is geographically the closest U.S. client state to Taiwan; U.S.-controlled military bases are in the northernmost province of Cagayan (approximately 613 kilometers south of Taiwan). In contrast, U.S. military bases on Okinawa, Japan are still further in distance (approximately 716 kilometers away from Taiwan). And so, this significantly explains why Chinese military forces have ramped up their level of aggressiveness against Philippine aircraft and maritime vessels in the Southeast Asian Sea over the past decade.

Within this emergent global context, the Philippines under Marcos Jr. is determined to integrate itself into a "Globalized NATO."

The following factors are, therefore, priming Manila into pursuing this reckless and perilous foreign policy track:

- Manila sees a series of bilateral military and security agreements with the U.S. as sacrosanct [for example, the [1951 Republic of the Philippines-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty \(MDT\)](#)—including the [1947 R.P.-U.S. Military Assistance Agreement \(MAA\)](#), [1998 R.P.-U.S. Visiting Forces Agreement \(VFA\)](#), [2002 R.P.-U.S. Mutual Logistics Support Agreement \(MLSA\)](#), and the [2014 R.P.-U.S. Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement \(EDCA\)](#)];
- Manila continually enlarges the United States' military presence within the Philippines through basing schemes. In practice, this directly involves the creation of U.S.-controlled military bases on Philippine soil. At present, there are already nine American military bases within the

Philippines—with more being considered for the future;

- The Philippines remains a [Major Non-NATO Ally \(MNNA\)](#). The MNNA status is a U.S.-designated term for non-NATO countries that have close security relations with Washington;
- All six U.S. partners (including the Philippines) belonging to the San Francisco System (the U.S.-led "hub and spokes" regional security architecture in the Asia-Pacific) are either MNNAs and/or NATO's Global Partners;
- Manila endlessly conducts combined Philippines-U.S. military exercises;
- The Philippines maintains a bilateral defense arrangement with the United Kingdom (the latter is the leading power of the [Five Power Defence Arrangements/FPDA](#) in East Asia). The FPDA is a military alliance that also contains Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Singapore;
- The Philippines recently inked a [Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership](#) agreement with Australia as an integral military support component of the AUKUS-Quad regional security infrastructure to further augment the U.S. 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy framework;
- Manila also joined the [2023 U.S.-Japan-Philippines trilateral security framework](#) to further boost the above-mentioned U.S. imperialist-driven initiatives;
- Manila incessantly bolsters the interoperability arrangements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines for its easy assimilation into the U.S. globalized military structure;
- The Philippines affirms chief aspects of the U.S.'s [2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy \(IPS\) framework](#) document thru the [2019 ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific \(AOIP\)](#) framework. The 2022 IPS is a regional security agenda to "bolster Indo-Pacific security", while the 2019 AOIP is an initiative to enhance existing regional mechanisms, including those led by the U.S.;
- The Philippines, together with its fellow ASEAN member states, just recently adopted and signed an [ASEAN-Japan "joint vision" agreement](#) in December 2023 emphasizing stronger security cooperation between the two;
- The Philippines champions the [2022 ASEAN-U.S. Comprehensive Strategic](#)

[Partnership](#). This CSP is geared to further strengthen strategic relations between Southeast Asia's top regional body and the U.S., especially in the realm of economic and security cooperation; and

- Manila [fully promotes](#) Washington's foreign policy mantra of a "rules-based international order" guarantees "freedom of navigation operations" for U.S. military forces worldwide. In practice, this really means that all U.S. military forces must be granted unimpeded access to all the seas and oceans of planet Earth in order to permanently preserve and protect the strategic interests of U.S. imperialism anywhere in the world.

These facts and conditions basically expose Manila's "ironclad loyalty" to Washington's uber-bellacose foreign policy. They reveal how the Philippines perpetually aggravates its tense regional security environment—to privilege the U.S.—but to the detriment of Southeast Asia's neighborhood. The interests of the people of the Philippines, not to mention the international working class, would best be served by an alignment with neither Washington or Beijing. Toward this direction, the Philippines has to crucially consider the option of "Strategic Non-Alignment" as a principled foreign policy alternative.

The ensuing elements are vital: a) Permanently uphold cooperative amity in the field of external relations; b) Actively advance internationalist solidarity with oppressed nations and peoples; c) Unwaveringly defend the core non-alignment principles of both the 1955 Bandung Conference and the 1966 Havana Tricontinental Conference; and d) Always maintain a progressive posture on critical issues and concerns in global affairs.

This general stance of Strategic Non-Alignment would serve the Philippines in being able to help enrich international amity, transregional cooperation and global solidarity in a profoundly changing world. Humanity truly deserves this future—not imperialist wars of aggression. [S]ocialists in the Philippines must resolutely struggle to reforge a socialist and worker-led anti-imperialist/anti-fascist united front.

And to help achieve this goal—and even beyond—socialists in the Philippines must resolutely struggle to reforge a socialist and worker-led anti-imperialist/anti-fascist united front. Such a revolutionary socialist project has to encompass the broadest layers of the Filipino working-class masses—from the grassroots, and upward to the national level. One of its priority aims should be to immediately scrap the Philippines-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty—plus its four attached bilateral military agreements.

This anti-imperialist resistance fight has to be waged in order to expel all

U.S. imperialist troops from Philippine soil once and for all. By successfully doing so, a key chain-link underpinning U.S. imperialism in East Asia can be broken. And hopefully, this will further diminish the United States' malign power within the region.

Moreover, a region-wide movement of anti-imperialist mass campaign networks, actively involving revolutionary Left forces (and other progressive formations) representing the Eurasia-Indo-Pacific, has to be effectively organized. A regionally

coordinated mass-based political offensive against U.S. imperialism can largely help to blunt and undermine Washington's belligerent onslaught across the area. Truly, for this common effort to have any significant impact and resonance, the campaign's central calls should basically be: "No to a 'Globalized NATO'! Shut Down the AUKUS-Quad Axis of Aggression! U.S. Imperialist Troops Out of Asia Now! Neither Washington nor Beijing!"

4 January 2024

Source [Tempest magazine](#) .

Tshisekedi or the demagogic Republic of Congo

13 January 2024, by **Paul Martial**

The result was overwhelming for the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Félix Tshisekedi, who took almost 73% of the vote, well ahead of Moïse Katumbi, who obtained 18%. Martin Fayulu, considered by many to be the winner of the 2018 elections, obtained just over 5%. Other candidates, such as Denis Mukwege, scored less than 1%.

Questionable electoral victory

The opposition protested and spoke of a sham election. The poll, which also included provincial legislative and municipal elections, was chaotic. Nearly 8,000 incidents were recorded by the Catholic and Protestant churches, which deployed thousands of observers. Their report indicates that one candidate, whom they did not name, won a large majority of the votes. This lends credence to the outgoing president's victory, even though his result must have been greatly inflated by fraud.

Tshisekedi's repressive policy during

the elections and the use of state resources to conduct his campaign enabled him to occupy a large part of the field, with daily coverage by the government media.

During his term in office, he also managed to strengthen the presidential camp by appointing two deputy prime ministers: Vital Kamerhe, who has a strong presence in the east of the country and is guilty of corruption, and Jean-Pierre Bemba, a prominent figure from Equateur province whose militia was involved in war crimes in the Central African Republic.

Félix Tshisekedi has pulled off a tour de force. He used his failure on security issues in the east of the country to focus criticism on Rwandan leader Paul Kagamé, who supports the M23 armed militia that terrorises the people of Kivu. By focusing his campaign on this theme, he benefited from the patriotic feelings of the Congolese people.

The personal egos of the opposition

As a good politician, the outgoing president took advantage of the recurring debate on "Congolese-ness" to discredit his main challenger Moïse Katumbi on the grounds that he was not a true Congolese because of his father's Greek nationality. Another candidate to fall victim to xenophobic remarks is Denis Mukwege. He has been accused of being a foreigner's candidate because he was endorsed by the West when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his ongoing work on behalf of women victims of sexual violence by armed militias.

With a plethora of presidential candidates with healthy egos and a lack of a real political programme, the opposition was unable to present an alternative to Tshisekedi, whose record is not particularly impressive.

The new winner now has a free hand to step up political repression, or even use the "Congolese-ness" issue to promote a change to the Constitution.

This would allow him to run for a third term in office, following in the footsteps of most of his fellow

potentates on the continent.

11 January 2024

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

The European Union, capitalism's class offensive

12 January 2024, by **Roseline Vacchetta**

Two decisions were to make this Europe possible. In 1945, Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin signed the Yalta agreement. They wanted to reorganize Europe after Germany's capitulation, divide up the occupation of its territory, redraw the borders of several European states and guarantee the stability of the new international order. The victors shared the world.

In 1947, the Marshall Plan formalized an American loan of 16 billion dollars for European reconstruction, on condition that American equipment and products were imported in equal amounts. This was in the double interest of American capitalism: to sell off the surpluses of a flourishing economy and to establish its companies on European soil. Truman, President of the USA, wanted to contain communism, so he facilitated the creation of a capitalist Europe, which was supposed to be more desirable to the people than the Soviet planned economy.

Right from the start of Europe, the people were ignored and kept out of the decisions that would affect them.

The construction of capitalist Europe

The creation of European law was based on treaties signed between states, in the service of capitalist

interests.

In 1951, the Europe of Six (Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) came into being with the creation of the ECSC (Economic Coal and Steel Community) for a period of fifty years. The aim was to reconcile France and Germany around a common interest to ensure peace and economic prosperity between the European states.

In 1957, two Treaties of Rome were signed. One created EURATOM, for an unlimited period, to coordinate research into the rapid development of civil nuclear energy. The other created the EEC (European Economic Community) to launch the common European market. Several common policies were established. The funds allocated to these policies initially went to the agri-food and production industries.

In 1986, the Single European Act extended the scope of goods to all public services. Free and undistorted competition became compulsory, leading to a huge wave of liberalization. The transposition of directives in each Member State led to major privatisations of all public services (transport, postal services, telecoms, electricity, gas, then health and education). It also saw the dismantling of labour regulations and social protection.

In 1993, the Maastricht Treaty established the European Union (EU).

This marked the completion of economic union, with the free movement of capital, goods, people and services. And the introduction of the single currency. The European Central Bank, which is completely independent, manages the euro and the stability of the currency. The famous "Maastricht criteria" provided a drastic framework for national budgets. The authoritarian turn was strengthened: common European security policy (CFSP) and police and judicial cooperation.

The Treaties of Amsterdam (1997) and Lisbon (2007) - the latter establishing the European Constitution that was defeated in France in the 2005 referendum, but ratified by Sarkozy in 2008 with Hollande's approval - aim for full employment, gender equality, respect for human rights and security. Only the security aspect has been achieved. Frontex's budget has exploded: from 6 million when it was created in 2005 to 845 million in 2023! Its primary mission is to turn back migrants.

With the destruction of public services, the deregulation of all social gains and murderous xenophobia, Europe (27 States to date since the withdrawal of the United Kingdom in 2020) is a generous windfall for capitalists and a mortal danger for peoples.

11 January 2024

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

Constitutional shipwreck for the far right in Chile

11 January 2024, by **Karina Nohales**

It should be remembered that between October 2020 and September 2022, the first constitutional process took place, which originally dates back to the agreement signed in November 2019 by the political parties with parliamentary representation - with the exception of the Communist Party - as an institutional solution agreed as a response to the gigantic social revolt that was taking place at that time in Chile and which challenged the entire political system and party representations of the last three decades.

In this first process, there was an initial plebiscite to consult the population on whether or not they wanted a new constitution and, if so, what kind of body should draft it. With about 80% of the votes, the "Apruebo" (a new constitution) and the choice of a 100% elected body to write it prevailed. This body, elected a few months later, was integrated in a parity and plurinational manner and with the participation of popular representatives of historically excluded social sectors; who for the first time participated in the drafting of a proposed constitution, imbuing it with a marked anti-neoliberal orientation. This proposal was rejected in the plebiscite on 4 September 2022, with an overwhelming vote of 62% against.

In a context of electoral defeat, post-pandemic pandemic and demoralization of organized social contingents, the country's president, Gabriel Boric, decided to convene a new constitutional process, this time of a mixed nature: the proposal for a new constitution would be drafted by a small committee of experts appointed by Congress, and an elected body could modify and sanction it. This second process was, in every possible sense, a negation of the

previous process. The elected body was made up mostly of right-wing parties, with hegemony of the far right, who made the proposal a sort of return to the original version of Pinochet's 1980 constitution, stripping it of various modifications that it has undergone since 1990 to date, during the so-called democratic transition.

The process took place in a climate of general popular disaffection, reinforced both by a thematic saturation - which various analysts have called "constitutional fatigue" - and by a strong feeling of discredit with respect to "politicians" in general. This state of mind was as decisive, if not more so, than the actual content of the proposed new constitution. However, the content of course also played a part. Although the text contained a host of alarmingly regressive norms, such as granting infra-constitutional hierarchy to international human rights treaties, the social debate focused on some more or less limited norms, with those relating to feminist demands occupying a central place.

Among them, the norm that enshrined the protection of the life of the unborn, and that which enshrined the inappropriability of individual pension savings by the state, were disseminated with a special sense of alarm. If the proposed constitution is approved, the first of these norms would entail the certain risk that abortion would be declared unconstitutional on three grounds, repealed in 1989 by the Pinochet dictatorship and reconquered only in 2017 in Chile. The approval of the second of these norms entailed the certain risk that the 2022 alimony payment law, which empowers family courts to order the payment of alimony owed from the debtor's individual pension savings, would be

unconstitutional.

Both profoundly patriarchal norms, which constituted a frontal attack on the economic, bodily and life project autonomy of women and the pregnant, were decisive for the failure of the extreme right's proposal. In fact, the vote against the new constitution, which won with 55.7% of the votes, reached 70% among women voters under 34 years of age. This is a social segment whose experience of politicization occurred in the heat of the mass feminist cycle since 2016 in Chile and whose power continues to radiate at these junctures.

The institutional forces have recently put forward their own interpretations of the result. On the one hand, President Gabriel Boric closed any new attempt at constitutional change in the two years remaining in his term, saying that, with the failure of the two constitutional proposals - one anti-neoliberal and one neo-Pinochet - the citizenry has rejected polarization and division. A dangerous reading, which tends to equate both constitutional proposals as expressions of "two extremes," in circumstances where one of them conformed to the elementary parameter of the international human rights framework, while the other dispensed with it. Incidentally, a reading that suppresses the class nature that fundamentally differentiated both processes and both constitutional proposals, in the name of an alleged and fallacious impartiality.

On the other hand, the parties of the right and the extreme right were the big losers. The far right because it was their proposal, drafted by their majority. The traditional right, because it made it its own and once again stood behind the far right. Together, they had all the economic

resources and all the communicational hegemony to win. They ran alone and came in second. In their attempt to conceal the defeat, they have outlined the narrative that, in this latest plebiscite, the citizenry has ratified Pinochet's constitution for the second time, grossly omitting the fact that Chile has already voted against the current constitution, thereby renewing its illegitimacy of origin as well as popular adherence. This result hurts them. In the immediate, the calculations of electoral alliances are tense within them and the presidential chances that the leader of the ultra-right, José Antonio Kast, was counting on have suffered a blow.

In the 17 December vote, the popular layers did not have a project to

defend, but they did have the task of resisting the right-wing onslaught at an institutional level that compromised lasting and structural magnitudes. It was vital to make them lose, and this was achieved. Within the social field, feminism once again played a key role. This fact alone serves to discredit those sectors that, on the left and the right, tried to attribute the defeat of the plebiscite of 4 September 2022 to the alleged "identity excesses" of feminism due to norms such as the constitutional enshrinement of abortion on demand. On the right, fearful, all sectors had to lie publicly and declare that their proposed constitution did not intend to repeal abortion on three grounds. On the left, with the exception of feminist organizations and sexual and

gender dissident organizations, very few social sectors had the capacity to deploy and sustain a campaign with issues that impacted more or less broad segments.

However, the closure of the constitutional cycle decreed by the government does not in any way close the cycle of political crisis opened with the social revolt of 2019. None of the urgent and heartfelt demands of diverse and broad layers of the population have so far been resolved and met. The scenario of instability established remains open.

9 January 2024

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **Punto de Vista Internacional**.

NHS Junior Doctors fight on after longest strike

10 January 2024, by **Dave Kellaway**

These medics have completed five years of medical school. They then undergo an average of another ten years before they become a consultant who is a specialist with protected tenure and superior salary. Junior doctors, even after all their training, start in hospitals on around £14 an hour, which is only a few pounds above the official minimum wage. They do nearly all the day to day work in hospitals and often work hours beyond their normal shifts. The effects of their recent actions shows the NHS cannot run properly without their work and commitment.

Over the past year nurses, ambulance drivers, consultants and other NHS staff have taken many days of strike action. Last Sunday on the BBC Rishi Sunak, the Tory Prime Minister, wrongly stated that he had resolved all the disputes in the NHS. Further ballots for strike action are being planned by nurses and doctors. There are also legal challenges pending.

The essential problem behind the Junior doctors and other disputes is the severe underfunding of the NHS. Rising numbers of older people with health needs as well as the effects of the Covid pandemic means the NHS needs above-inflation increases just to stand still. Inflation has hit higher levels (11.2% plus) in Britain than in the rest of Europe. Today it is still above 5%. Over the years Junior doctor pay awards have been well below inflation, that is why they are demanding a 35% salary adjustment to restore their salaries to what they used to be.

From the point of view of people wanting to access medical care the situation is complete crisis. Ambulances have to queue up with patients outside the hospitals to wait for a bed to be available. Patients are being taken in and kept in corridors. Britain has fewer beds per head of population than France or Germany. Beds in hospitals are blocked -

occupied by elderly people who cannot be safely discharged from hospitals because there are no places available for them in a residential or nursing home. The care sector for older people - along with residential accommodation for all people with special needs - is now increasingly privatised and run for profit. Even hedge funds are now investing in groups of homes regionally and nationally. Care systems are fragmented and operate outside of any rational plan. Quality is very uneven as revealed in the regular scandals of abuse exposed by the press and TV.

The failure of government to curtail the food and catering industry in its production and distribution of sugar/salt rich, ultra-processed foods contributes to an obesity and diabetes epidemic that is also putting pressure on NHS resources. Generally both Tory and Labour governments have failed to do anything to prevent the growing social inequality and poverty

in Britain. A recent report from the Institute of Health Equity at University College London led by Sir Michael Marmot calculated that austerity policies from 2010 onwards have produced at least one million unnecessary, premature deaths.

Consequently junior doctors' struggle for a decent, fair wage is also part of a more general campaign to build an NHS that is fit for purpose and that can respond to all these growing needs. 2024 is an election year and it is most likely that Keir Starmer's Labour Party will become the next government in the autumn. It has pledged to cut waiting lists for elective care (= not emergency) that are currently at a staggering 7.7 million and growing.

The crisis in the NHS means that increasingly people are turning to

private medical care. Private care has increased from 11% to 13% from 2020 to 2022. Personally, I know a number of people who are totally against private care and want to be treated on the NHS but are forced to pay otherwise their pain will remain for a year or more.

Labour has publicly stated that it will not meet the junior doctors' 35% restoration claim and has proposed only limited increases in funding - totally inadequate for the need that exists. Starmer has stopped any of his shadow cabinet from standing on health workers' picket lines. As can be seen in the photos many local activists from the unions, left groups and the Labour party have defied this edict.

Labour has long given up actually challenging the private health services that operates inside NHS facilities and cherry picks those procedures that are

profitable. Failure to pay the Junior doctors will mean many will opt for working in private practice. Wes Streeting, Labour Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has recently questioned whether the annual cries of alarm from NHS doctors about the dangerous winter crisis is really just crying wolf and that there is a internal complacency about "reforming" the NHS. He has already said that increasing the role of the private sector would not be a problem for Labour.

The junior doctors have mobilised strikers very effectively and, despite the government's refusal to negotiate, are planning more strike action. Only by supporting the junior doctors and campaigning for a much better NHS, funded by redistributive taxation, can the NHS crisis be resolved.

9 January 2023

Biden and Trump Accuse Each other of Ending American Democracy

9 January 2024, by Dan La Botz

In his first real attack on Trump as his likely rival in this campaign, Biden, taking advantage of the third anniversary of the January 6 insurrection and attempted coup at the U.S. capitol in 2021, and with Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, the bivouac of George Washington's army in the American Revolutionary War as the venue, made a blistering speech in which he accused Trump of attempting to destroy the fundamental institutions of American democracy.

"Today we are here to answer the most important of questions: Is democracy still America's sacred cause" Biden said. "This isn't rhetorical, academic, or hypothetical. Whether democracy is still America's sacred cause is the most urgent question of our time. It is what the 2024 election is all about.

"We must be clear," Mr. Biden asserted. "Democracy is on the ballot. Your freedom is on the ballot."

Trump responded by accusing Biden of "fearmongering." He claims that Biden is the "true danger to democracy." Trump accuses Biden of using the Justice Department to persecute him, with the former president now accused of felonies in several federal and state cases. Trump warns that if the Democrats can do this to him, they can do it to anyone. He defends the January 6th insurrection as a legitimate protest, praising the convicted and imprisoned as heroes, and still claims that the 2020 election was stolen from him by Biden and the "deep state."

Trump continues to lead other candidates in the Republican primary by as much as 30 points and the latest

polls show Trump and Biden neck and neck. Trump's principal argument is that "crooked" Biden is "corrupt and incompetent," especially failing to control immigration at the southern border. In words like those of Adolf Hitler in *Mein Kampf*, he says, "Illegal immigration is poisoning the blood of our nation. They're coming from prisons, from mental institutions — from all over the world." In his speeches he praises authoritarian leaders like Kim Jong Un is "very nice." And he quotes Vladimir Putin to the effect that Biden is persecuting him.

So far, the candidate of other parties or those running as independents, from Jill Stein of the Green Party to independents Cornel West and Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. haven't received much coverage in the media or support from the public. Though, according to a

recent Gallup poll, 63% of Americans say we need a new third party. But the leaders of the unions, the major Black and Latino organizations, and women's groups remain loyal to the Democrats, and there is so far no sign

of a crack. With the holidays behind us, the Biden-Trump contest will dominate the news throughout 2024.

While couched in terms of a struggle over democracy, in reality, this is a

contest between Biden, the head of the party of the corporate, neoliberal plutocracy and Trump the leader of an authoritarian quasi-fascist movement.

7 January 2024

Kamel Aïssat acquitted! Solidarity and mobilization won the day

8 January 2024, by **Collective**

In a system of democratic freedoms, citizenship - in other words, the participation of citizens in the construction of the public sphere, but also their determination to defend their rights - is the essential criterion for the system to function. In a regime of dictatorship or authoritarianism, citizenship embodies subversion, a troublemaker for those in power.

Is this the case in our country, given the harassment suffered Kamel Aïssat, whose verdict has just acquitted him of mind-boggling and senseless charges of "undermining the national interest" and "undermining national unity"? He was a patriot of all nations and oppressed peoples.

What has he done? No offence, no misdemeanour, no crime. Better still, he tried to do what his duty as a citizen dictates, as proclaimed by the constitution and the laws of the land.

Kamel Aïssat is accused of having expressed his expert opinion on the quality of the "impact study" drawn up by the ENVICONSULT consultancy (in 2020) for WMZ (the operating company). Professor Aïssat expressed serious reservations in two key areas (the environment and the law).

On the environmental front, he criticized the impact study for ignoring the scientifically and historically proven risks of imminent heavy metal poisoning for the population. He criticized the study for ignoring the risks to the Soummam water table, which supports the region's agri-food industry and

supplies the entire national market and beyond.

In legal terms, he criticized the impact study for ignoring the laws of the Republic, namely the Law on the Environment, one of whose aims is to prevent any form of pollution or harm to the environment by guaranteeing the protection of its components; wali decree no. 13/1000 of 06/05/2013, which confers on the Soummam valley the status of a wetland of international importance protected by the RAMSAR convention, which Algeria has ratified (decree 82/439 of 11 September 1982); but also, and above all, the mining law, article 3 of which "prohibits all mining activity on sites protected by international conventions and/or legal texts".

Since the president has made the mining sector one of the key areas for economic development, the authorities in charge of the Tala-Hamza/Amizour mine are acting as if they were exempt from all principles of prevention and respect for the laws of the Republic. At the Council of Ministers meeting on 24 April 2022, the Head of State himself "insisted on the imperative need to take the required environmental standards into account"?

As a reminder, in 2012, the Minister for Energy and Mines, Youcef Yousfi, on a visit to Béjaïa, indicated that "the study presented by Terramin was not satisfactory". Two months later, in an interview with *Le Quotidien d'Oran*,

he said of Terramin that "small companies have come in to try to do good business, but they don't have the technical resources to develop these mines rationally and in a way that will 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 Article 3, all mining activities on sites protected by international conventions and/or by legislation".

In the current context, given society's heightened ecological awareness, it is clear that Kamel Aïssat's struggle is receiving the attention it deserves, thanks to the court ruling that has just been given in his favour and to the fight waged by the hundreds of citizens who have expressed their rejection of this project and petitioned against the mine's development.

It was popular mobilization that led to Kamel Aïssat's acquittal: this, with the participation of local residents, social movement organizations, associations, independent trade unions and the UGTA, showed where legitimacy lies, even though the public prosecutor had asked for three years imprisonment. This is an encouragement for the mobilization against the mine and for the environmental and anti-imperialist struggles. For all the victims of repression, particularly since the Hirak, it is formidable proof that the struggle, combining legal and militant action, can achieve success.

7 January 2024

Racism deliberately concealed for 100 years

7 January 2024, by **Karen Yamanaka**

Although the killings were targeted at Koreans, the victims included Chinese, Japanese who were mistaken for Koreans, and Communists. These groundless rumors were deliberately spread by the Japanese government at that time. The reason for this was the discrimination and prejudice against Koreans in Japanese society. However, these rumors were amplified by the Japanese citizens, the state, and the newspapers, which escalated the murderous acts of the Koreans. The killings were carried out by the police, the military, and the vigilante groups formed by Japanese citizens who believed the rumors and armed themselves with Japanese swords, hunting rifles, and other weapons.

Today, we cannot dismiss this tragedy as “something that happened 100 years ago.” This is because every time disaster occurs, the rumors similar to “Koreans poisoned the well” circulate in the affected areas threaten the lives of foreigners and minorities.

Japan is one of the most earthquake-prone countries in the world, with approximately 20 per cent of the world’s earthquakes of magnitude 6 or greater occurring near Japan. This country has experienced major earthquakes every few years or decades. Such a tragedy can occur at any time in the country when the society is highly stressed not only by earthquakes but also by non-seismic disasters such as the Covid-19 crisis.

In the past decade, we have witnessed many incidents caused by racism, which is deeply rooted in Japan. The targets of racist attacks in the disaster were all the oppressed people. Foreigners and minorities were also the main targets of attacks during the March-11 earthquake of 2011. Following the magnitude 7.6 earthquake of New Year’s Day that hit Japan near the Noto Peninsula in the Ishikawa Prefecture, the Internet is already littered with groundless

rumors attacking others. Rumors are already circulating openly on the Internet, as if sexual minorities were potential criminals in the disaster area. Their rhetoric is very similar to that of xenophobic nationalism.

Attacks against foreigners and minorities in disasters

Similar vicious rumors against foreigners and minorities like “Koreans poisoned the well” still circulate after every major disaster. When the March-11 earthquake occurred in 2011, the following rumors were spread in the disaster area: “Foreign theft groups are rampant” and “Foreigners are stealing money and goods from the dead bodies”. [10] And not long after that, there were calls on the Internet for the formation of neighborhood vigilante groups.

In response, the Japanese authorities were forced to deny the rumors by distributing flyers stating that there was no such fact. Surprisingly, the survey of 944 people in the disaster area and Tokyo showed that about 50% of the respondents had “heard” the groundless rumor that “foreigners are committing crimes”. And more than 80% of respondents said they “‘largely’ or ‘somewhat’ believed” them. [11] At the time of the 2016 Kumamoto earthquake, there were also posts on social networking sites that Koreans living in Kumamoto had poisoned wells. In disasters, the present writer always feels rather uncomfortable. This is when we hear the following words from the media or officials of educational institutions during disasters: “The Japanese are behaving in an orderly fashion.”

Behind the groundless rumors “foreigners are committing crimes” that have been circulating in the disaster areas is the Japanese sense of “being chosen people”. However, foreigners and minorities who are subject to the whims of the Japanese would rather have their lives threatened by racism. It is also extremely difficult to counter misinformation once it has been spread, especially in disaster areas where the communications infrastructure has been destroyed.

Outlet for frustration increased by the Covid-19 crisis

Attacks against the oppressed people have also intensified in the Covid-19 crisis since late 2019. Yokohama Chinatown, one of Japan’s leading Chinatowns, has received an endless stream of slanderous phone calls, letters, e-mails, and graffiti since the infection began to spread throughout Japan. They said, “The Chinese must leave Japan as soon as possible” and “Stop spreading the virus”.

In the years that followed, countless vicious rumors about foreigners and minorities living in Japan also circulated on social networking sites. Attacks on Koreans in Japan (Korean-Japanese) [12], who have traditionally been the targets of the most racist attacks in Japan, were also fierce. The endless hate speech that denies human dignity and even threatens lives has made foreigners living in Japan tremble with fear. Comparing Japanese and Chinese/Korean surnames, most of the former are composed of two Chinese characters, while most of the latter are composed of a single Chinese character. At that time, many of my foreign friends with

one-character surnames tried to remove or hide the nameplates on the gates of their houses. Then an incident happened. The fears of these foreigners in Japan became reality.

In 2021, a Japanese racist set fire to empty houses in a community of Korean residents in Kyoto Prefecture. Seven houses and other buildings were destroyed by arson. The perpetrator who was arrested and charged had committed the crime just 10 days after reading a rumor on the Internet that Koreans in the area were illegally occupying the land. The perpetrator said that he had been forced to quit his job just before the incident because of the Covid-19 crisis, and that he set the fire to distract himself from his worries about his job. At that time, the impact of this incident on those involved was enormous. This was because this incident targeted places where Koreans lived, which was fundamentally different from the traditional targeting of landmarks such as ethnic Korean groups and banks.

Racist violence fueled by “justice”

Most of the above attacks on the oppressed people were provoked by racism that is deeply rooted in Japanese society. Incidents in recent disasters such as the earthquakes and the Covid-19 crisis have all been accompanied by intense anxiety, fear, and unrest, and anger directed at foreigners and other minorities. We have to admit that Japanese society is burdened with the same aggression toward foreigners and minorities that was common to the tragedy of a century ago. However, the scenes of racists attacking were not only seen in disaster situations.

For the past decade, far-right racists have marched in the Japanese capital and other cities shouting “Kill both good and bad Koreans”. There are also

far-right forces that praise the persecution of Jews. At first, there were demonstrations of hate. Later, the hatred turned into mass violence. What made ordinary Japanese youths say, “I will kill Koreans,” is reactionary madness of racism. Racism causes the worst violence. And their words and actions are based on a kind of “justice”. The worst racism and violence have been instigated by seemingly plausible racist “justice” such as “protecting women and children” and “protecting Japanese society”. The official name of Zaitokukai, a leading racist organization in Japan, is “Association of Citizens against the Special Privileges of the Zainichi”. [13]

But it is the Koreans, an oppressed ethnic minority, who have been subjected to violence by their oppressors in Japan. And there is no such thing as “the Special Privileges”. With the establishment of a relationship of oppression, violence has already begun. Never in history has violence been initiated by the oppressed. [14]

We are against racism, discrimination and xenophobia toward all the oppressed

Racism is only visible when there is a social norm of anti-racism in contrast. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, which spread around the world in 2020, made the presence of racism in American society visible. It is unnecessary to say that racism has always existed in Japan. Discrimination against Koreans, Ainu, and Okinawa is all racism. All of those discriminations have been officially recognized as racial discrimination by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which has recommended the enactment of a

comprehensive anti-discrimination law.

However, racism in Japanese society has been deliberately concealed by successive right-wing and conservative governments. Japanese governments have deliberately failed to investigate or even keep proper statistics on the frequent incidents of racial discrimination in Japan. This is very different from countries like the US and the UK where the government publishes hate crime statistics. In addition, there have been no social norms to fight against discrimination in the country. And there is no democratic rule in the country. Laws that should exist as a matter of course to prohibit discrimination are strongly opposed and not enacted. Protecting the rights of victims and prohibiting discriminatory acts are closely connected with each other in combating discrimination. It is only because anti-racism denies the perpetrators’ “freedom to discriminate” as social justice that it can counter the “justice of racism”. There is no social justice that can counter racism in a society that seeks to protect the human rights of victims only to the extent that it protects the perpetrators’ “freedom to discriminate”.

In the country, the united front movement against racism was built almost exclusively by ethnic minorities such as Koreans with very weak financial bases. However, it is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors. The latter, as an oppressive class, can free neither others nor themselves. It is therefore essential that the oppressed wage the struggle to resolve the contradiction in which they are caught. [15] All the oppressed must unite and stand together to fight racism for our own liberation. Confronting racism and eradicating xenophobic discrimination from society is an urgent task for populations in Japan today.

7 January 2024

Chiapas: thirty years of insurrection!

6 January 2024, by **Louison le Guen**

At zero hour, NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, came into force, bringing Mexico into line with its powerful neighbours to the north. As the saying goes, “poor Mexico, so far from God and so close to the United States of America”. And so the small farmers of Central America, including a large proportion of the Indian communities of Chiapas, were condemned to even greater misery, forced into exile and/or employment in the *maquiladoras* along the border!

At half past midnight, just when everything seemed to be going well for capital, an army of the poor took over the largest towns in Chiapas, including the highly symbolic San Cristobal de las Casas! The Mexican government then had to remember the territory and its inhabitants, try to resolve the issue... and negotiate with the EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional)!

Autonomy, democracy, good government!

Of course, the government gave in to the temptation of militarism, which led

to the deaths of more than 500 people. Except that... taking military action in the Chiapaneco forest to dislodge an invisible enemy, indistinguishable from an indigenous population largely committed to the cause, immediately supported by all the progressive forces in Mexico at the time, surrounded by international solidarity that was only too eager to support these armed revolutionaries in balaclavas, proved to be a challenge beyond the reach of an already fragile government.

So the San Andrés Accords (1996) had to be negotiated. Even if they were never implemented, it was a resounding victory for what became the FZLN, which was able to boldly combine armed appearances, a foothold in the real society of indigenous and non-indigenous people in the poorest areas and political demonstrations of strength in the very heart of the capital.

Then, in the face of government procrastination, military pressure and paramilitary violence, the FZLN decided to implement directly what it could not legislate for. It set up democratic and egalitarian political structures in the areas under its control, which *Le Monde diplomatique* described in 2017 as “on this scale

and for this length of time, the Zapatista adventure is the most important experiment in collective self-government in modern history”.

A different kind of globalization, one based on struggle!

If the mantra of the Zapatistas - “Mandar obedeciendo!” (command by obeying) - is still relevant today, if the desire to change the world without taking power persists, the commitment to enlist the support of progressive people from all over the world has never wavered, from the first Intercontinental Meeting for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism in 1996 bringing together 5,000 people from 42 countries, right up to the recent European tour by a Zapatista delegation - present at Notre-Dame-des-Landes among other places - to meet up with the continent’s resistances and rebellions, in order to weave the planetary network of struggles to which the Zapatistas have long been calling “in defence of life”.

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

March 2024: the “Calm” in the Middle of the Storm

5 January 2024, by **Vitaly Bovar**

Russia will hold presidential elections in March 2024. In liberal democracies, one would probably say that there is an obvious front-runner, namely

Vladimir Putin. However, these elections are a sham: there will be no candidates competing to win them, or political forces that seriously criticize

the current president. That’s why, in Russian public discourse, elections are occasionally referred to as “electoral procedures.” This term emphasizes

how utterly devoid of competition they are. However, I would prefer to characterize them as a plebiscite to gauge trust in President Vladimir Putin.

These elections will occur amid an unprecedented purge of the Russian political arena, where most opposition politicians have either emigrated, been imprisoned, or compelled to curtail their activities to a minimum. Nevertheless, few doubt that the results will be falsified. In some regions, such as Moscow, where the elections pose a challenge for the authorities, the ultimate weapon, the Remote Electronic Voting (REV) system, will be deployed. The thing is, overt falsification of results can serve as a catalyst for mass protests. The Kremlin first grasped this in 2011 and was further convinced by the protests in Belarus in 2020. The authorities are resolute in avoiding such occurrences and other surprises in regions with high protest potential, and the REV system can help ensure “accurate” results.

From an external standpoint, dictatorships appear so monolithic that elections seem superfluous. Can't the president simply decree perpetual rule and proceed with planning the next phase of the invasion? We can see that this is not the case. Moreover, the political leadership of the Russian Federation is meticulously managing the situation hour by hour. What impact will these elections have on Russian society? What is the most valuable aspect of these elections for the Kremlin? Why are these elections simultaneously crucial and perilous for the Russian authorities?

I don't want to hide my position behind words: I think it is necessary to take part in the March elections, even if they are fake. For over a month now, there has been a lively discussion on this issue in Russian opposition circles. One of the most important parts of it is Alexei Navalny's public open poll on election strategies in March 2024.

I have no intention of listing the arguments of all sides; there are numerous, and one can find one to suit any taste. I would simply like to highlight that Russia's political

leadership has established an elaborate system of bureaucratic control over elections, designed to produce results desired by the regime. In essence, it is crucial for this system that the ballot boxes contain the maximum number of “For” and the minimum number of “Against” ballots. Everything else — voter turnout, the number of candidates and their personalities, ballot box stuffing, and manipulation — is technicalities. This must be considered in any prospective opposition plan for March 2024, but it does not determine the answer to the question of whether opponents of Vladimir Putin should participate in the polls.

In a recent commentary for a New York Times article, Dmitry Peskov stated that presidential elections in Russia are not democracy but rather a “costly bureaucracy.” The reasons behind his statement are not essential; the perspectives of President Putin's press secretary hold limited significance at this juncture. Let's refrain from delving into the subtext or hidden meaning of his words, leaving that to experts in “signals to the elite” and political technology. We'll assume that his statement is a fragment of a relatively comprehensive understanding of the political system of the Russian Federation. In this reconstruction, it is a form of administrative control intended to prevent democracy from inadvertently occurring in the country — a political regime in which the masses' opinions could disrupt the plans of the ruling groups.

Democratic processes, even in liberal, constrained democracies, presume an upward dynamic within society: NGOs are established and disbanded, parties and political movements compete, radicals revolt and the police try to control them. This sums up political life and politicization when we look at citizen engagement. Elections are only a part of this process. An important one, because they determine the balance of power and resources for a specific period, but not the only one. It is precisely the social dynamics within Russian society that Vladimir Putin has intentionally targeted since he became president. Hence, we can assert that depoliticization has been a calculated domestic strategy of the

Kremlin in recent decades.

The first thing officials tell any public group or local protesters is not a flat-out rejection of their demands. Instead, it is a phrase that has been Putin's mantra throughout his rule: “Let's not make this political.” This saying carries three messages: discussions about social issues should be kept to a minimum, upset citizens should not dig into the reasons for their discontent, and efforts should be made to limit the involvement of political parties and socio-political movements in championing their interests. Deputies at all levels often struggle to grasp the purpose of their work, as they're mostly occupied with approving bills handed to them by the executive branch, i.e., the bureaucracy. The prevailing belief across the Russian ruling class is that there are no political problems, just glitches in the bureaucratic machinery.

Depoliticization is achieved by breaking the connection between words, actions, and outcomes. I want to highlight the importance of the link between words and actions, as it presents the most significant challenge in the intricate framework of contemporary Russian political governance. At the same time, it's crucial to bear in mind that words can also serve as actions. Take, for instance, a vote in an election. If it influences the election results, it is, undoubtedly, a straightforward form of action through words. We cast a vote, and the act of voting, in itself, carries tangible meaning and influences the political landscape.

After the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the majority of Russian opposition politicians relocated abroad, with the most resourceful among them launching substantial YouTube channels. In this setting, they are compelled to provide information on one hand and entertain their audiences on the other — that's how media functions, that's how words function. Undoubtedly, some actions indeed prove to be valuable and significant for those opposing Putin's regime. Recently, prominent opposition media platforms organized a marathon fundraiser in support of political prisoners, entitled “You Are

Not Alone,” which collected 34.4 million rubles.

However, the daily videos and hourly broadcasts represent an unending marathon of content production in a fiercely competitive landscape for audiences. This ceaseless generation of words is intended to fill the void of action, but it has not achieved a performative effect and cannot be assessed. Admittedly, one might argue that there is a struggle for the minds, hearts, and moods of Russians. But, to be frank, in the second year of the invasion, it's hard to believe that the issue is solely a lack of information and supposed political ignorance. Many opposition media editorial offices have been rescued and expanded, new media outlets have emerged, and the majority of politicians wishing to leave the country have been able to do so. It appears that the emergency plan has been executed. However, the connection between words and deeds has ultimately been broken, creating operational space for the Kremlin to finalize the project of depoliticizing society. The harsh reality is that you can talk, but transforming words into action is impossible under these circumstances. Alternatively, you can take some limited action, but then keep silent. For instance, numerous announcements of events, innocent by the old standard, come with the prefix “only for distribution in small chat rooms.”

It is this challenge, the breakdown of the possibility of being a political actor whose words transform into actions, that forms the central intrigue of the 2024 presidential election. In these circumstances, is dissent possible, even if only in theory? After all, participating in an election is a performative act; one can genuinely execute a minimal political action with a word that represents the name of a candidate. The potency of this straightforward connection brought tens of thousands of people onto the streets of Moscow in 2011-12. Nothing is as straightforward as the accurate counting of ballots. A paper ballot is tangible; you can see and touch it. If the ballots are in a stack in the ballot box, you don't need digital tokens to understand which box has a checkmark or tick. Each ballot is marked by a person you have seen and verified by a member of the election commission. It is this instinctive comprehensibility that enables the performative impact of voting, turning participation in elections into an accessible political action.

In this scenario, REV is the perfect depoliticization machine. When Peskov mentions costly bureaucracy, he undoubtedly refers to the REV factor, which could minimize the bureaucratic efforts in the years ahead. With electronic voting in place there is no need to worry about troublesome regions, people organizing themselves, forming watch groups, or careless heads of election

commissions pushing ballot packages into the ballot boxes with hairbrushes. None of that will happen; the power will be efficient, discreet, and controlled.

Contemporary society is heavily geared toward the production of content. Frankly, what one does matters less and less than the content one produces. The content of Putinism, the social feeling it constantly reproduces, revolves around the sensation of complete solitude for the individual in the face of the reality of the world. The ideal citizen of Putin's Russia is lonely, and the REV certainly contributes to making every citizen politically isolated. The continuous reproduction of frustration and irritation with fellow citizens is the technological foundation and strategic choice of the Russian authorities. However, there are also non-ideal citizens in this Russia. They come together in communities, attempt to engage in politics, monitoring, and mutual aid. They create pockets of politicization. Their activity undermines Putinism. We must be very clear that it is not the election results on the scoreboard that destroy it, as the scoreboard is entirely controlled. It can result from social processes leading to increased cooperation among citizens and their politicization.

13 December 2023

Source/ [Posle media](#).

Urgent appeal for solidarity

4 January 2024, by Mykhailo Volynets

Every day, residents of our peaceful cities die at the hands of Russia, with hundreds of people injured and acquiring disabilities. We are forced to live and work in a state of permanent stress and anxiety. Today, Ukrainians are paying a high price for freedom and for peace in Europe.

The Confederation of Free Trade

Unions of Ukraine, as the voice of Ukrainian workers – miners, metallurgists, energy workers, teachers, doctors, entrepreneurs, and others – draws attention to the need to take decisive measures to protect Ukraine and to deter the intentions of the aggressor country Russia from rewriting international law and redrawing the map of modern Europe.

We appeal to the governments of countries and the international community to speed up the provision of military aid to our country, including the provision of additional air defense systems, long-range missiles, drones, etc. International partners, by providing weapons, save thousands of lives during missile attacks by Russian troops.

We also call on international partners:

- To continue providing economic and humanitarian aid to Ukraine.
- To strengthen sanctions against the terrorist regime of Russia, as this can significantly limit the financial resources and export of technology necessary for the continuation of the bloody war.
- To ensure the possibility of using frozen Russian assets to direct them to help Ukraine.
- To isolate and remove from work in international organizations Russian political, public, and trade union

figures, as representatives of a country that carries out terrorist activities against sovereign, independent Ukraine and its citizens.

We call on representatives of the international and European trade union community to call the governments of your countries to continue providing humanitarian aid and military aid to Ukraine.

We would like to thank everyone who supports and provides assistance to Ukraine in this difficult time for the Ukrainian people.

We believe that joint efforts will help stop Russian aggression, which is not only destroying Ukraine, but also undermining economic, energy, ecological, and food stability both in Europe and around the world.

Mykhailo Volynets,

Chairperson of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine

3 January 2404

Source: [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign](#).

Will Trump Be Disqualified from Running for Office?

3 January 2024, by Dan La Botz

The 14th Amendment was passed in 1868 following the end of the U.S Civil War. Section 3 was intended to keep former political and military figures who had engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the United States from running for office if they had previously sworn an oath to uphold the U.S. Constitution. The Amendment has rarely been used since and never against a presidential candidate.

Trump's lawyers argue that he didn't engage in any insurrection, that there was no insurrection on January 6, and that he was engaged in the exercise of free speech when he called upon his backers to go to the capitol and "fight like hell." The challenges to Trump appearing on state ballots have come from dissident Republicans, Democrats, and independents. All of Trump's Republican rivals stated that they opposed Trump's name being removed from the ballot, arguing that the voters should decide.

President Joe Biden and other leading Democrats have not been directly involved in these legal challenges to

Trump. Biden said, let the courts decide. David Axelrod, a former close advisor to president Barak Obama said he believed that a decision to keep Trump off the ballot would rip the country apart and that the Democrats should concentrate on beating him in the election.

The Supreme Court has not yet indicated its plan to deal with the issue, but would presumably do so before March 5, Super Tuesday, when 16 states will hold their primary elections and will choose about one-third of all delegates to party conventions. The Court's decision on Trump's eligibility would likely determine the matter for all states and for both the primary and general election. Many believe that the conservative Court will not want to disqualify him for office because it would lead to widespread opposition and perhaps violence from his millions of supporters.

While these expensive legal battles take place in the states and head for

the Supreme Court, the left has been involved in the revitalized union strikes, the movement calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, and in supporting state resolutions to defend abortion rights. The left is divided three ways. First, there are those who will support Joe Biden's presidential campaign in order to defeat Trump, but their numbers have been reduced because of Biden's continued support for Israel as it reduces Gaza to ruins and a vast cemetery under them and by his right turn on immigration as he seeks to turn away would be asylees. Second, there are those who will either support the Green Party candidate Jill Stein or independent Cornel West. Finally, others hating Trump and disappointed and angry with Biden, and seeing no hope in the small third parties, will simply sit this one out.

It seems like this will be a rerun of 2020, Trump v. Biden. Still, much could change in this new year, 2024 in the court cases and in the social movements.

31 December 2023

Russian troops out—Stop the genocide

2 January 2024, by **Fred Leplat**

There is no ceasefire in Ukraine, just like there is no ceasefire in Palestine. On 24 February, it will be two years since the brutal invasion of Ukraine. The situation is grim, with little gain in pushing back the Russian occupation. Despite the massive destruction and the huge number of casualties and refugees, Ukrainians are still “rallying around the flag” and overwhelmingly continue to trust Zelensky. Ukrainians have no choice but to continue fighting for the liberation of their country because Putin’s objectives remain the same as they were two years ago, namely to “de-nazify and demilitarise the country.” Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov confirmed this when, just after Christmas, he said that Israel’s goals in its war against Hamas in Gaza are “nearly identical to Moscow’s in its campaign against the Ukrainian government.”

Like Israel in Gaza, Russia is systematically destroying the basic infrastructure of the country, killing civilians, and abducting children. The difference is that Ukraine is able to defend itself because it has an army with tanks, artillery, and air defence systems, so the scale of the genocide is not as great as it is in Gaza. That’s why Ukraine is not calling for a ceasefire, unlike the Palestinians, who are crying out for one. Zelensky, however, has backed Israel in its war on Gaza in order to demonstrate his allegiance to Western interests—a move that Ukraine’s left has condemned and for which it has expressed its solidarity with Palestinians.

Ukraine could make much greater gains against the Russian army if it

were supplied with the weapons it needs. The war is lasting too long and has had an impact on economies. The far-right in the US and Europe are blocking aid packages to Ukraine as they push their nationalist and isolationist agenda. If it is right for Ukraine to defend itself against imperialist intervention, then it should have the means to do so. But the West and NATO, who cynically saw this as an opportunity to rebrand themselves as guarantors of democracy, are now starting to get cold feet. Western imperialism and NATO have always preferred to back brutal regimes like Israel or Saudi Arabia that are loyal to their interests rather than the people fighting against oppression and for democracy and independence. In Britain, Starmer has made it clear that if Labour is elected, he will continue down that road, declaring that “Labour’s commitment to NATO is unshakeable.” Zelenskyy understood the cynical role of Western imperialism when he told the Economist a month into the war: “There are those in the West who don’t mind a long war because it would mean exhausting Russia, even if this means the demise of Ukraine and comes at the cost of Ukrainian lives. This is definitely in the interests of some countries. For other countries, it would be better if the war ended quickly, because Russia’s market is a big one and their economies are suffering as a result of the war.”

Ukraine could do much better in the war if it adopted a “war economy” like the US and Britain did in World War Two, which put private companies under state control to produce tanks and planes rather than cars. Instead, Zelensky has adopted a neo-liberal

approach, encouraging “start-ups” to produce drones in small workshops and preparing the country for integration into the EU. Ukraine has been parading itself at reconstruction conferences where it offers to open up the country to transnational capitalist corporations rather than demanding the abolition of its debt and a plan for a socially just reconstruction. Inside the country, the government has been trying to “reform” labour laws and marginalise existing unions. Nevertheless, there have been successful struggles by trade unions and social movements, in particular nurses, who have been fighting for the payment of wage arrears.

A brutal, imperialist, and expansionist regime is destroying Ukraine. Putin can continue to produce weapons at a greater rate than Ukraine is using and to throw soldiers into the meat grinder. It is estimated that 315,000 Russians have been killed or injured, which is close to the 350,000 Russian troops that invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022. These are dangerous times for the people of Ukraine, with whom we should be in solidarity and support their struggle for liberation, in spite of the Zelensky government. There are simple and practical solidarity measures that show that the people of Ukraine have not been forgotten, such as making direct links with trade unions and the left in Ukraine, raising money for medical aid, and campaigning to cancel the debt. As the second year of the war approaches on the 24 February, we still call for Russian Troops Out Now.

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

Election 2024 Deform & Dysfunction

1 January 2024, by **Against the Current** Editors

Such a prospect, along with Trump's criminal trials and Biden's policy stumbles, may help explain a peculiar popular climate of simultaneous political agitation and apathy. Many millions of voters including working-class people (aside from Trump cult loyalists) will find themselves voting for presidential candidates and political parties they despise the least, not for choices they actually like.

This malaise, rather than any hopeful excitement, also accounts for why the anti-vax and racist certified crackpot candidate Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. is polling as high as 24% as an independent, or why the rightwing Democratic Senator Joe Manchin might undertake a "No Labels" third-party campaign to "mobilize the middle" that could throw the election any which way.

No one should underestimate what a revived Trump presidency might mean — with his operatives' overt, already promised concentration/deportation camps to be constructed for asylum seekers, forced removals of students for pro-Palestinian activism, targeted attacks on the press, mass firings of government employees to be replaced by regime loyalists, wholesale pardons for the January 6 aspiring insurrectionists, and who-knows-what chaos in imperialist global management.

The campaign of Trump's emerging leading Republican rival Nikki Haley has been endorsed (purchased) by the Koch Brothers' "Americans for Prosperity" (Plutocracy) outlet. This represents an attempt to consolidate a grossly reactionary, but more establishment neoconservative alternative to the runaway criminality of Trump and his prospective second term. That option would surely have appeal to much of the U.S. capitalist ruling class. (One rightwing commentator, Nolan Finley in the Detroit News, urges that Haley

become the "No Labels" candidate.)

Activism and Ironies

To avoid a one-sided overly bleak portrayal, we should cite positive cases of social action that have made a difference. First, as we've discussed frequently, is the labor activist revival, culminating in union contracts with big gains for auto workers, at UPS, and steps forward in organizing places like Tesla and Amazon.

Second, at the present critical moment, is the outpouring in the streets demanding a ceasefire in Israel's war against Gaza and Palestine, which we discussed in our previous issue (ATC 227, "Catastrophe in Palestine and Israel: Apartheid on the Road to Genocide") and continue our coverage in the present issue.

Third is the continuing popular revulsion against the cynical and deeply evil anti-abortion extremism of the right wing, which is prepared to sacrifice women's lives to the "pro-life" cause, along with book bans and state-level voter suppression measures.

Such examples show that class and social movements continue — as also shown by myriad state, local and community struggles, including around abortion, trans and housing justice among other issues. The fact that these are not generating much positive energy at the level of national electoral politics is one indication of a deformed and dysfunctional political system.

In this space we will not attempt to prognosticate, or chew over polling data, or (for the moment) seriously approach the prospects of an independent progressive alternative. The latter, critically important

possibility must be a topic for future in-depth discussion. Here we want to explore some of the multiple ironies at the beginning of the electoral season.

If there's one policy arena where Biden-Harris administration should get at least passing marks and maybe some plaudits, it would be the general health of the post-pandemic economy. Yet that is exactly where polls show "greater confidence in the Republicans" — whose policies have been the most blatantly to enrich-the-rich, impoverish-the-poor, and run-up deficits while pretending to be fiscally responsible.

It's an astonishing public-relations triumph of plutocracy posing as populism. Democratic pundits and operatives are visibly distressed that "Bidenomics" fails to garner the approval it deserves. The reasons for this apparent anomaly go far beyond its mediocre "messaging."

It's true that this administration came in with a Build Back Better program that had some inspiring, even transformative potential (even if much of it came cloaked in nationalist rhetoric about countering the rise of China). As it emerged from the desk of Bernie Sanders and the ambitions of Green New Dealers, the program included some serious federal spending — on infrastructure and energy transition — amounting to something like half the annual military budget.

Thanks to Senator Manchin among others, the best part of the program was trimmed back to what became the Inflation Reduction Act. For example, pandemic-relief subsidies that cut U.S. childhood poverty in half — a very significant accomplishment in this brutally unequal society! — ran out. Thus in Manchin's own state — according to official Census Bureau's estimates, West Virginia's child poverty rate — the highest in the nation — increased

from 20.7% to 25.0% between 2021 and 2022.

Most important, the measurable benefits of the recovery flow overwhelmingly to the high-income layers of the population, who need them the least. Folks at lower-middle income or less levels see very little if any difference in their daily lives.

Inflation levels are well down from their brief eight-percent high point, but that still leaves prices of basic necessities far higher than they were — while the Federal Reserve's interest-rate hikes that were ostensibly needed to "curb inflation" have themselves exacerbated a housing crisis that especially afflicts young people (and many limited-income senior citizens too).

The cumulative result is that macroeconomic statistics for the moment look reasonably good, but for many tens of millions of people the real-life economy doesn't feel that way. That hurts the electoral prospects for an incumbent administration, i.e. for Biden in 2024 as it did for Trump in 2020.

Further Irony: Demographics

If there's one factor that should be pushing the Republican Party toward permanent marginality even as it hurtles toward extreme-right lunacy, it's that the United States is demographically becoming no longer a "white" country, and that younger generations are each more diverse than the previous one.

It's precisely young, African American and other nonwhite and immigrant communities, and the LGBT and non-binary population, who are the front-line targets of white-supremacist, Christian-nationalist and religious-right ideologies that thoroughly dominate today's Republican Party — including of course the Trump cult but not only that sector.

Yet it's precisely those younger, less white and less affluent sectors where the Democrats' presumptively overwhelming majorities are

narrowing. Polls are showing nearly a quarter of African Americans preferring Trump over Biden, an astonishing (even if it turns out to be short-lived) index of disillusionment.

What's happened? Mainly, we think it's that the Democrats have overpromised and under-delivered real change — in terms of racial justice, student debt relief, immigration reform, tackling climate change, and more. Partly too, it was only a matter of time until the feeling of relief from the (first) Trump nightmare wore off.

To some extent, also, Biden's age and immovability present a bad look. But on key issues that are really hurting the Democrats' prospects in 2024, it's not Biden that's senile, but American policy.

This is particularly illustrated in the present Israeli genocidal war on Gaza. The crucial young sector of the Democrats' voter base is increasingly sympathetic to Palestine, alienated from the party's traditional unquestioning support of Israel, and no longer duped by feeble bleats about a long-dead "two-state solution." The December 1 resumption of the full-scale Israeli offensive, along with escalating murderous military and settler violence, accelerates that deepening and absolutely necessary disgust with Washington's active complicity in the massacre.

As for the Arab American and Palestinian communities, the fury over "Genocide Joe" Biden is difficult to describe if you haven't witnessed it. Leaders in communities like Dearborn, Michigan, a key to the Democratic success in 2020, are openly vowing "we will never vote for Biden again even if the alternative is worse." It's impossible to say right now how this feeling will translate into votes or non-votes next November — keeping in mind the maxim that "all politics are local" — but the Democrats are willfully blind if they underestimate its importance.

Another factor that will require close further attention is the flood of bipartisan money from AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) and rightwing sources to

defeat progressive, pro-Palestinian congressional representatives like Rashida Tlaib (MI), Cori Bush (MO) and Ilhan Omar (MN) in their primaries. AIPAC has been promising to throw \$20 million toward any candidate who'll challenge Tlaib. Any Democratic leadership connivance in these efforts could have fatal electoral consequences.

Immigration Crisis

Another issue bedeviling the Biden administration, clearly, is the immigration and asylum crisis. This is a powerful case of imperialism creating a problem it can't solve. The numbers of desperate refugees and asylum applicants seeking entry at the southern border are overwhelming U.S. and northern Mexican cities, towns and support networks attempting to shelter and feed them.

The refugee crisis is a thoroughly bipartisan product of decades of destructive policies that we've discussed in these pages: decades of "free trade" that's wiped out much of family farming in Mexico, genocidal counterrevolutionary wars in Central America, economic sanctions that greatly contribute to the unraveling of Venezuela as well as Cuba, serial catastrophic interventions in Haiti, and more.

Worst of all, 50 years of an insane U.S. "war on drugs" could not have been more brilliantly designed to turn the drug trade over to violent criminal cartels while shattering lives and communities in North America. On top of all this, the escalating effects of climate change are wiping out means of subsistence such as, for example, coffee crops in Honduras. We've noted before that desperate immigration journeys and calamities are global in scope, as the miseries in the Mediterranean and cruelties of the Italian, British and other European governments illustrate.

This crisis eats away at domestic confidence in the Biden administration's grip on policy, even though it's not of their making — and even though the "alternative" is the outright sadism of the Republicans.

A freshly passed Texas law enables local police to arrest suspected “illegals” on any or no pretext, and local courts to initiate detentions and deportations. In usurping clear federal jurisdiction over immigration, this law is so blatantly unconstitutional in its application, and so fascistic in its implications, that only the prevailing White Supremacy Court of the United States (WSCOTUS) majority would seem likely to uphold it. (The ACLU is mounting court challenges before the law takes effect in February.)

There remains one area where the right wing and the Republican Party

seem determined to self-destruct: their drive to complete the banning and criminalizing of abortion in the United States. In one state after another, where the right to abortion comes to a choice by voters, it wins — decisively. The horrific implications of a Republican sweep of the White House and Congress will keep not only women but a big slice of the entire electorate on side with the Democrats. The Republican determination to continue a losing anti-abortion crusade is rooted in the centrality of that issue to the overall “culture war” assault on gender, racial and social literacy — in libraries, schools, college

campuses, and everywhere else.

That specter might, just barely, preserve the Democrats’ grip on power after a looming 2024 election choice that hardly anyone outside the Trump cult actually wants. That’s a pretty weak reed to grasp, and certainly nothing for a progressive left to bank on. The struggle for an alternative must look elsewhere, beginning with the rising activism we’ve seen for labor, for Palestine, for immigration and reproductive justice!

Source: January-February 2024, ATC 228.