



## IV589 - February 2024

### What Genocide Looks Like

29 February 2024, by **Against the Current** Editors

The twentieth century saw at least five cases of acknowledged genocide, defined by the United Nations Convention as a crime committed with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, in whole or in part. The century started with the genocide of the Herero and Nama by German colonialists from 1904 to 1908 in what is today Namibia. This was followed by the Ottoman genocide of Armenians in 1915 and 1916, the Nazi holocaust of 1939-1945, and the Rwandan genocide of 1994. [1]

“As Israeli genocide in Gaza is livestreamed, the rules of warfare no longer apply, if they ever did, for Tel Aviv and Washington. There were more [civilian deaths](#) recorded in Gaza in the first two months of the conflict, nearly 20,000, than in the first 20 months of the Russia-Ukraine conflict [the full-scale 2022 Russian invasion —ed.] which took 9,614 civilian lives. [2]

In the popular imagination, “genocide” probably conjures up the Nazi industrial death apparatus of cattle cars and gas chambers, mass machine-gunning of victims forced to dig their own graves, Jewish ghetto populations earmarked for transport and extinction. But that ultimate 20th century horror doesn’t exhaust the

definition.

Article II of the United Nations “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” (1948) specifies “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

Four of these points, (a)-(d), were fully documented in South Africa’s submission to the International Court of Justice on Israel’s assault in Gaza. (The ICJ is a separate body from the International Criminal Court, which indicted Vladimir Putin on the fifth point, the kidnapping of Ukrainian children for “adoption” in Russia.)

If anything, “measures to prevent births within the group” stand out, with women and children making up over half the Gaza deaths, with medical collapse forcing women (50,000 are pregnant in Gaza) to give birth without prenatal or proper hospital care, and with malnutrition making nursing practically impossible

— all this before Israel’s pending invasion of Rafah, with close to 1.5 million displaced Gazans living in unspeakable conditions.

Frankly, in the eyes of the great majority of the world, calling this a genocide is not a close call. Israel’s rather pathetic rebuttal to the South African legal team’s submission did not refute a single factual point, and barely even tried. Stripped of rhetorical flourish, Israel basically raised two arguments: (1) We’re the Jewish State born from the Holocaust, how dare anyone accuse us of genocide? (2) Hamas committed mass atrocities on October 7, and Israel has “the sacred right and responsibility to defend itself.”

Of these, point (1) is a demand for permanent immunity. (Wouldn’t Donald Trump be proud?) And (2) is irrelevant to the case at the ICJ, which deals with charges against states. Leaders of Hamas, and Israel, could be charged at the International Criminal Court but Hamas as a non-state entity is not a party in ICJ proceedings.

Before probing the status of Israel’s “right of defense,” let’s be clear about basic facts, whatever ultimately emerges from many tangled claims about who killed how many people in Israel on October 7. The military wing of Hamas (whatever other parts of the organization, or Gazans in general,

may have wanted) carried out a terrorist attack on a terrorist state. It included killings of noncombatant civilians and, by credible reports, hideous and murderous sexual violence.

The ICJ case, however, is not about the character of the Hamas attack, but about whether Israel's state terrorism in Gaza amounts to "intent to destroy, in whole or in part," its population.

As a rough analogy, let's imagine that China — with or without some kind of provocation — were to wage a bombing campaign and ground invasion in Xinjiang province (the Uighur territory) and in just over three months killing one percent (an undercount) of the population, deliberately destroying almost all the hospitals and blasting ambulances with tank shells, killing over 100 journalists in what are clearly targeted attacks, instructing the civilians to move and bombing them as they flee, suggesting that the population might be "voluntarily" transferred, and openly saying the war will continue for a year.

It is not hard to imagine what the world, the U.S. government and media would call that. And what if, say, a power like Russia were supplying China with the bombs and artillery for the assault? That analogy suggests that the South African case at the ICJ had one shortcoming, in failing to call out the United States as a partner in the Gaza massacre, which Washington funds and supplies.

## Occupation and "Right of Defense"

Israel's right of self-defense against Hamas is so widely repeated, across the political and media spectrum, that it's taken as axiomatic. That's why it needs to be sharply interrogated.

Under principles of international law — even if in practice Israel ignores them, under the umbrella of the United States' protective dispensation — Gaza has the status of Israeli-occupied territory. The withdrawal of Israeli settlements in 2005, after it became too expensive to protect them,

didn't remove Israel's control of Gaza's economy, which it systematically underdeveloped and looted, and its control over what could come in and go out.

Since 2007 when Hamas took power in Gaza (following a failed U.S.-backed anti-Hamas coup), the Detroit-size strip of territory with 2.3 million people has been subject to a 16-year siege with food supplies allowed at just subsistence levels, punctuated by repeated episodes of Israeli bombing and infrastructure destruction.

There are established rules governing occupied territory taken in wartime (Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, August 1949: Section III, "Occupied Territories," Articles 47-78). These specify in detail that the occupying power bears responsibility for the well-being of the occupied population — which means that Israel's right of self-defense is constrained by the fact that it has no more right to bomb Gaza and its people than it has to bomb its own citizens.

Even apart from the monstrous disproportionality of the mass killing and destruction that Israel has inflicted, and its blatant lies about "minimizing civilian casualties" — when the opposite is obviously true — it simply had no right to launch such a military operation in the first place. Consequences of a Genocidal War

In reviewing the bare facts of the destruction as of the beginning of February, we're entirely aware that the statistics will be hugely outdated by the time we're in print. Even right now, the stated death toll of 27,000 in Gaza must be grossly understated.

With thousands of unrecovered bodies under destroyed buildings, the real number must be over 30,000, and that's before the almost inevitable rapid spread of epidemic disease from the collapse of health services, the bombing of almost all the hospitals, the absence of clean water, overcrowding and hunger verging on famine.

Well over half the structures in Gaza are rubble, to the extent that it's hard

to see how it can be made habitable again. In addition to this is deliberate cultural demolition — the Israeli army's destruction of universities and museums with priceless records and artifacts, rivaling what the Islamic State was doing in Syria and Iraq.

Leading Palestinian intellectuals have been targeted, along with more than 100 journalists, and over 300 medical workers. The Israeli army has killed 94 university professors, along with hundreds of teachers and thousands of students, as part of its ongoing assault on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, according to the Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor.

Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor stressed that "Israel's actions fall within the framework of its public policies of making the Gaza Strip uninhabitable and expelling its Palestinian residents...by establishing a coercive atmosphere devoid of basic services and necessities for survival, i.e. by destroying people's physical safety and psychological stability, which may ultimately force the Strip's inhabitants to evacuate."

The Geneva-based human rights organization stated that Israel "has [targeted](#) academic, scientific, and intellectual figures in the Strip in deliberate and specific air raids on their homes without prior notice." These horrific figures will be outdated within weeks, but they foreshadow further ugly consequences.

1) On the popular level in the Middle East and Muslim world, Israel will never be forgiven for what it has done to impose a second Nakba on Palestine — even though Saudi Arabia and other oil kingdoms happily intend to resume "normalization" of relations at the earliest opportunity.

2) In U.S. and global politics, the slaughter in Gaza has produced a hemorrhaging of Joe Biden's support base among Arab Americans as well as progressive and young Jewish voters. Meanwhile both Benjamin Netanyahu and Vladimir Putin are awaiting the U.S. election, in expectation of the return of Donald Trump — with all its implications for the United States, the world, and the global environmental catastrophe.

3) Even with incomplete reporting, it's clear that the Israeli military in Gaza and the West Bank is committing acts of sadistic savagery including executions of unarmed prisoners — recalling Russian army atrocities in Bucha and other Ukrainian towns — as well as blasting ambulances with tank shells, and random shootings on the street, about which we know mainly from the case where the victims turned out to be three escaped Israeli hostages.

This indicates a significant presence of the extremely racist far right within the Israeli Defense Force, which is going to feed back into Israel's volatile political crisis as it resurfaces. The obscene celebratory "Settlement Brings Security and Victory" conference for the depopulation and Israeli recolonization of Gaza shows that the fascist forces in the Israeli government no longer need to hide

their intentions. With the Netanyahu coalition in increasing peril from both the far right and the general disillusionment of the populace, the struggle inside Israel threatens to see more violence both against Palestinian communities and between Israeli-Jewish political forces.

4) The danger of a much wider regional war, whether in Lebanon with Hezbollah or potentially with direct U.S. and Iranian involvement, is growing as the Gaza massacre continues, although it is difficult to assess the level of the threat.

5) We don't know at this writing what's happening in the semi-secret talks over an extended two-month "pause" and hostage/prisoner exchange. Nor will we know, if such a deal materializes, what the secret clauses might be. What's clear for the pro-Palestinian and peace movement

is that if such a pause comes about, it will be imperative to intensify the struggle for an immediate and permanent ceasefire to a point where it becomes politically impossible for the U.S. government to allow Israel to resume the massacre.

As we go to press, the Israeli military says its full-scale assault on Rafah will proceed unless all hostages are released by the start of Ramadan. Meanwhile, even though U.S. mainstream media are showing much less than what most of the world sees, the daily livestream of the destruction of Gaza and Palestine continues. So in the year 2024, we can now say that "this is what genocide looks like" — and that we will be living with the consequences for decades.

March-April 2024, [ATC 229  
<https://againstthecurrent.org/atc229/what-genocide-looks-like/>].

## Charges of antisemitism weaponized

28 February 2024, by **Peter Hudis**

In some respects, it is even more dangerous than the McCarthyism of the 1950s, which tended to target well-known figures in government, entertainment and education. The effort to stifle expressions of solidarity with Palestine and condemnation of the Zionist project is now reaching into all levels of society, placing potentially anyone in the position of being silenced and dehumanized.

Central to this effort is the weaponization of the charge of antisemitism against critics of Israeli imperialism. This is of course not new: the effort to smear critics of Zionism with antisemitism has been a staple for supporters of the Israeli state for many years. Yet since Hamas' brutal attack of October 7, 2023 it has reached a whole new level.

What is new today is the coalescence of two seemingly opposed political tendencies that both work to demonize critics of Israel: far-Right Populists

driven by a clearly racist agenda, and left-of-center neoliberals who present themselves as fair-minded democrats defending diversity and inclusivity.

### Coalescence of Attacks

The Republican Right is consumed with purging schools of curricula that critically analyze race, gender and sexuality as part of an effort to counter the heightened social consciousness produced by the massive protests for Black lives in 2020. It is now extending this to penalize anyone in the academy who criticizes Israel — and it is being joined in this effort by many Democrats.

The coalescence of Republicans aiming to shut down critical discourse and mainstream Democrats (including many liberal ones) trying to suppress

criticism of Zionism places the liberals in a difficult position — the last thing they want to be accused of is being indifferent to DEI initiatives or facilitating the far-Right's effort to destroy what is left of U.S. democracy.

Yet this is precisely what they are doing in accepting the premise that attacking Zionism and the genocidal policies of the Israeli state are inherently antisemitic.

The irony here is that it is no secret that the far-Right's fervent defense of Israel is often accompanied by antisemitic stereotypes — from the notion that the world economy is governed by a cabal of "East Coast elites" (often with Jewish names) to the belief of many rightwing Evangelicals that the second coming of Christ will occur once the last Jew abandons her faith and embraces Christianity.

What Nazi ideologue Joseph Goebbels

decried as “exaggerated Jewish cosmopolitanism” is exactly what the far Right has been railing against under a different name for years — with the new wrinkle that it is now coupled with total support for an Israeli state that massacres Muslims and Palestinians while acting as U.S. imperialism’s closest ally.

A striking example of this was the “Take Our Border Back” rally in Texas on February 2, which included Sarah Palin, Ted Nugent and Christian nationalist Lara Logan as speakers. Michael Yon, a regular guest on Steven Bannon’s “War Room” podcast, also addressed the crowd, stating: “These immigrants flooding over our border is being funded by Jewish money — Jewish, that’s right — by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, they are funding the people to come here and shout ‘Allahu Akbar.’” [3]

Robert Bowers, who murdered 11 Jews at the Tree of Life Synagogue in 2018 in the bloodiest antisemitic attack in recent U.S. history, justified his act by expressing animus for the HIAS’s support for immigrant rights.

No force in the United States today poses a graver threat to Jewish lives than the racist far-Right. Yet one would never know this from listening to Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, whose accusations of antisemitism against the Presidents of Harvard University and the University of Pennsylvania led both to lose their jobs — even though Stefanik has befriended Nick Fuentes, an avowed antisemite and friend of her new-found mentor Donald Trump (she is a leading choice to be chosen to run as his Vice President).

Nor would one know this from the ranks of Nancy Pelosi, who has called students denouncing Israel’s murderous assault on Gaza paid agents of Russia — an odd charge, given that Putin’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov recently declared, “Israel has similar objectives [in Gaza] to those of Russia” in Ukraine.

## Antisemitism in

## Reality

The attack on leftwing critics of Zionism by left-of-center Democrats plays directly into the racist narrative of the far Right — regardless of how much they try to convince themselves of the contrary.

Some forces opposed to Israel are antisemitic, as in the Yemeni Houthi militia’s slogan, “Death to America, Death to Israel, a Curse Upon the Jews.” That does not justify the United States and its allies bombing Houthi bases in Yemen, showing they are more invested in the free movement of capital through the Red Sea than in lifting a finger to force Israel to halt its destruction of Gaza and its attacks on the West Bank.

Some leftists also harbor antisemitic views. If that were not the case, August Bebel wouldn’t have had to call popular antisemitism “the socialism of fools” 150 years ago. It is antisemitic to claim that all Jews by nature support Zionism or that all Israelis, regardless of their background or political beliefs, are accomplices in the genocidal acts of their government.

That there are two worlds in every country is a basic principle of Marxism — one that racists of all stripes virulently oppose. But there is no evidence that such antisemitic views characterize the outburst of protests against Israel by the new generation of activists that have flooded the streets in the past four months.

## Muslims and Palestinians Under Attack

I reside in Chicago, home to the largest number of Palestinians of any U.S. city. Massive protests have been held by Palestinian and Muslim organizations protesting Israel’s genocide, often involving tens of thousands on a weekly basis. Organizations like Jewish Voice for Peace, Not in My Name, and IfNotNow (as well as large numbers of unaffiliated Jews) have been integrally

involved in virtually all of them.

This culminated in a mass rally and sit-in on January 31 that led the City Council to approve a resolution, by 24 to 23 — Mayor Brandon Johnson cast the deciding vote — calling for a ceasefire and end to hostilities. It is the largest U.S. city to have done so. At none of these rallies and events were Jews made to feel unwelcome.

Alvin Tillery, director of the Center for the Study of Diversity and Democracy at Northwestern University, recently stated, “No Jewish students have really been subjected to violence on most of the campuses” — with the exception of an assault on an Israeli student at Columbia University and a bomb threat at a Jewish center at Cornell University (which turned out to come from a single unaffiliated disturbed student).

Tillery added, “There’s a huge generational divide on campuses, and young Jews are in the movement to support Gaza,” since they know “the Republicans all serve a master in Donald Trump, who is quoting Hitler in his speeches; people see through that.”

Nevertheless, Virginia Fox, a Republican Congresswoman from North Carolina and Chairwoman of the Education and Workforce Committee that has held hearings on antisemitism on college campuses, stated: “We want students to feel safe on their campuses, our number one issue is that Jewish students have not felt safe.” [4]

I have seen no evidence of this at the college where I teach at — which has campuses in both Des Plaines and Skokie, the latter a historically Jewish area that is now also home to many Muslims and Palestinians.

A short drive from my college is Plainfield, where Wadea al-Fayoume, a six-year-old Palestinian-American, was murdered in a hate crime on October 14. Some of my students attended his funeral.

While no overt harassment against Muslims that I knew of occurred at our college, several students told me that they were being harassed by their



neighbors and verbally abused for being “terrorists.”

Many Palestinian youth are keeping a low profile and staying silent as a way to protect themselves — except when they join in the demonstrations. If any group has the right to say they don’t feel safe given the current political climate, it is Palestinians.

The most egregious aspect of this new McCarthyism is not the high-profile figures such as university presidents — tragic as that is. Worse is the silencing, the sense that one can’t say what one feels about the present moment out of fear of being tarnished with the smear of antisemitism.

This fear is ubiquitous in academia, on an assortment of levels. It impacts faculty as well, especially those without tenure or who work part time (over 70 percent of those teaching at public colleges in Illinois are adjuncts with little or no job protection).

## Fanon on Antisemitism

To combat this effort to silence critical thought, discussion, and action it is important to keep in mind what defines antisemitism. One thinker who had a lot to say about this was Frantz Fanon, the outstanding theorist of race and racism.

In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) Fanon made the following observation:

“At first thought it may seem strange that the anti-Semite’s outlook should be related to that of the Negrophobe. It was my philosophy professor, a native of the Antilles, who recalled the fact to me one day: ‘Whenever you hear anyone abuse the Jews, pay attention, because he is talking about you.’ And I found that he was universally right — by which I meant that I was answerable in my body and in my heart for what was done to my brother. Later I realized that he meant, quite simply, an anti-Semite is inevitably anti-Negro.” [5]

Fanon’s point was that all forms of racism, whether directed against Jews, Blacks or Arabs, share “the same downfall, the same failure of man.”

His evocation of Aimé Césaire’s comment that those who hate Blacks invariably hate Jews is no mere casual observation. It is a philosophic insight into their shared structure. He argued that Jews and Blacks are victims of substitution, that is, they are objects of misdirected frustration on the part of those who refuse to face the reasons for their social and psychic distress.

Of course, these racisms are different: “The Black man represents the biological danger; the Jews, the intellectual danger.” (127)

Blacks are viewed as sub-social, biological and physical; Jews are viewed as supra-social, controlling the world through their intellect. They suffer from radically different forms of substitution, but the content of dehumanization — insofar as they are viewed as objects to the point of not really being “seen” at all — is the same.

Fanon is crystal clear on this in declaring,

“Colonial racism is no different from any other racism. Anti-Semitism hits me head-on: I am enraged, I am bled white by an appalling battle, I am deprived of the possibility of being a man. I cannot disassociate myself from the future that is proposed for my brother.” (65)

It goes without saying that Fanon was fervently anti-Zionist. He was a leading figure in the Algerian Revolution, which Israel actively worked to subvert. Yet it would never occur to him to conflate anti-Zionism with antisemitism, since his critique of white racism was on behalf of advancing a struggle for universal human emancipation that transcends any narrow nationalist approach.

Today, the conflation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism — whether by those on the Right or the Left — serves the purpose of rendering invisible the perspective of universal human emancipation, which Fanon referred to as a “New Humanism.”

## Clarity on Antisemitism

For this reason, it is worth noting a more recent document that tackles the issue of Zionism and anti-Semitism — the Jerusalem Declaration on Anti-Semitism, penned by figures in Jewish as well as Middle East studies in March 2021, in response to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s conflation of criticism of Israel with hatred of Jews.

The Jerusalem Declaration states that it is not antisemitic to “criticize or oppose Zionism as a form of nationalism, or... support arrangements that accord full equality to all inhabitants ‘between the river and the sea,’ whether in two states, a binational state, unitary democratic state, federal state, or in whatever form.”

Nor is it antisemitic, it states, to criticize “the conduct of Israel in the West Bank and Gaza, the role Israel plays in the region, or any other way in which, as a state, it influences events in the world. It is not anti-Semitic to point out its systematic racial discrimination” against Palestinians.

Moreover, “Criticism that some may see as excessive or contentious, or as reflecting a ‘double standard,’ is not, in and of itself, anti-Semitic.” [6]

Apologists for bourgeois society practice double standards all the time. The United States and European Union clearly do so in supporting Ukraine’s resistance to Russian imperialism while opposing Palestine’s struggle against Israeli imperialism. The same can be said for conservatives and liberals who rail against human rights abuses in China, Venezuela or Myanmar but have little or nothing to say about crimes committed by U.S.-allied regimes like Saudi Arabia, India or Guatemala.

The politics of the double standard also characterizes many leftists, as when Israel’s crimes against Palestine are correctly condemned while the Syrian regime’s murder of tens of thousands of civilians in Aleppo or

Russia's ethnic cleansing of the Ukrainian city Mariupol is not.

## Free Discussion Needed!

While some leftists who employ double standards might be motivated by antisemitism, it is obvious that the vast majority are not. They are motivated by bad politics — or what amounts to the same thing, the mindset that the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

The struggle against that mindset is one of the most important challenges facing the new generation of anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist activists. A viable alternative to all forms of capitalism-imperialism cannot emerge without it. That is all the more reason to counter the ongoing effort by supporters of Israel to shut down free discussion and debate.

The fact that increasing numbers of Jews no longer accept the mythology of Zionism and stand in support of the Palestinian right for self-determination is driving the Zionists into fits of apoplectic frenzy.

Since they equate Israel's continued existence as an imperialist-apartheid state with the maintenance their power and privilege, the last thing they want is for their lies to be exposed by those they claim to represent.

Weaponization of charges of antisemitism is therefore increasingly a cudgel to silence the views of leftwing and independent-thinking Jews. I leave that up to the reader to judge — is not such weaponization itself antisemitic.

[Against the Current](#)

# AI-powered decision is not final in the socialist society

27 February 2024, by **Yong-hui Hong**

On the other hand, a number of issues have been raised, such as racial discrimination through "Crime Nabi" and gender discrimination through AI recruiting tools and AI-based credit scoring. Other AI-based applications also sometimes discriminate on the basis of gender, and sometimes on the basis of race, religion, wealth, or health status. How should we deal with AI in a reality where AI chatbots routinely spew racist rhetoric online? [7]

Needless to say, techno-optimism that overestimates the benefits of AI is a major detriment to our lives. Moreover, AI is always unpredictable. The conclusions drawn by the AI can hardly be externally verified, and humans cannot understand why such conclusions were drawn.

If an AI makes a bad decision, no one can explain why, making it difficult to hold it accountable. AI also has inherent dangers such as unpredictability, lack of transparency and accountability, and bias due to skewed data, and many problems can be expected in its military applications. Today, the military use of

AI is already well advanced, making it extremely difficult to stop.

## AI and Big Data

AI is generally considered to be a technology or system that allows machines to replace human intellectual abilities. Human intellectual abilities include, for example, the perceptual ability to distinguish objects, the linguistic ability, and the ability to reason and make decisions. AI improves these abilities through a function called machine learning, which is based on large amounts of data.

With the recent development of a new machine learning technology called deep learning, AI has already become a familiar part of our daily lives. For example, voice assistants such as Apple's Siri and Amazon's Alexa are also enabled by AI technology. Big Data plays a complementary role to AI.

Big Data is a vast and diverse collection of data that continues to grow in real time. The decision-

making process of AI technology requires large amounts of data (Big Data) to make certain decisions. A portion of the Big Data is then divided into subsets and labeled by humans as training data according to the output target. While there are many benefits to the using this combination of AI and Big Data, there are also many problems that have been pointed out.

## Problems with AI

Cases of the inadvertent operation of AI that have led to the violation of human rights and the invasion of privacy have often been highlighted. The effective use of AI and big data requires people who can handle data appropriately and effectively. However, there is a global shortage of IT professionals with data science and related skills.

In this context, there have been many AI-related incidents in the past. In 2014, several biases were discovered in the algorithms of Amazon's AI recruiting system, resulting in gender discrimination against job seekers.

In 2016, Microsoft's AI chatbot Tay was released to the public. However, shortly after its release, Tay went on a racist tirade and the service was shut down, as mentioned above. In 2019, Goldman Sachs received significant public criticism when it was discovered that women were unfairly given lower scores when calculating users' credit scores, resulting in a gender gap in the services the company provided to its users.

In 2020, a predictive grading system used by the UK's exams regulator, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), was found to disadvantage working-class and minority students, leading to protests against the agency. In profit-oriented capitalist societies, no drastic measures were taken to address these problems, and they continued to recur.

AI, on the other hand, as an authoritarian technology, has expanded its influence to promote its alternative model of governance. For example, China has used the power of machine learning to increase surveillance of its population, cracking down and controlling the Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities. The use of AI-based technological devices runs the risk of creating situations that differentiate and categorize people.

## AI to increase and

## amplify hate

The many problems caused by AI mentioned in the previous section are just the tip of the iceberg. The more AI permeates society, the greater its negative impact on society. And in recent years, several countries have stepped up their legal and regulatory actions against AI.

In April 2021, the European Commission presented a comprehensive regulatory proposal for AI. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is also increasingly regulating AI in North America. The UNESCO 2020 survey results clearly show the impact of racial ideology on AI [9]

In Lenin's time, electrification was considered an innovative technology and the technological basis of socialist society. After the October Revolution, it was declared that socialism would be realized only when all industries were rebuilt on the basis of electrification. Lenin considered electrification at the energy level as the technological basis of socialist society. However, historical results show that electrification alone cannot make the economy of a socialist society successful. So what is the technological basis of modern socialist society?

Lenin's thesis called for technologies

at the energy level, including communication technologies. On the other hand, today's economy in a socialist society requires advanced technologies at the level of information processing, and AI is one of them. At present, however, AI cannot be the technological basis of socialist society. Technology must at least be socially controlled, not capital controlled. And the current controls on AI are inadequate in this respect. AI is also unpredictable, lacks transparency and accountability, and carries many risks of bias due to distorted data. This unpredictable technology should not be used in an area where decisions are made to take human lives.

We are facing a society in which machines linked to AI automatically take human lives. At the same time, the digital colonialism and surveillance capitalism created by AI has reached a level that threatens human dignity. The technology of surveillance power that creates such class discrimination requires strong regulation. The technological basis of a socialist society must be under the control and supervision of democratic empowerment of the working class, with the dignity of life as the primary consideration for gender equality, sexual freedom, and desirable relationships with nature.

16 February 2024

# Alabama Supreme Court Rules that Embryos are Children; The Right's Latest Attack on Women

26 February 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

IVF, the process by which a woman's eggs and a man's sperm are united in a petri dish and then implanted in a woman's womb, is used by couples having trouble conceiving, by women facing cancer treatment, and by gay male couples who want children

working with a surrogate mother. There are in the United States about 750,000 IVF births each year and since IVF began in the United States in 1978 there have been about 12 million such births. Scientifically sound and popular with the public, the

court's decision led the University of Alabama at Birmingham health system, the state's largest hospital and fertility clinics to pause their work while both Democratic and Republican politicians hurried to pass legislation to protect IVF.

Tom Parker, the Alabama Supreme Court justice who concurred in the decision, is an Evangelical Christian who quoted the Bible repeatedly. "Human life cannot be wrongfully destroyed without incurring the wrath of a holy God," wrote Parker. He and his court have been responsible for many other reactionary, anti-woman decisions.

While Trump quickly came out supporting IVF and called upon the Alabama state legislature to protect it, his opponent Nikki Haley said, "Embryos, to me, are babies." Most Republican politicians, recognizing the Alabama decision could hurt them in the November election, came out in support of IVF.

Alabama, whose state motto is "We protect our rights," has done more to restrict women's reproductive rights than any other state, since the Supreme Court in the Dobbs decision

of June 22, 2022 overturned Roe v. Wade, which had protected women's right to abortion. On June 24, 2022, Alabama began enforcing a total abortion ban, prohibiting abortion at all stages of pregnancy. The state constitution "acknowledges, declares, and affirms that it is the public policy of this state to recognize and support the sanctity of unborn life and the rights of unborn children, including the right to life."

Many fear that Evangelical Christians or Catholics using the courts or legislation could also attempt to outlaw contraception.

The American Society for Reproductive Medicine declared, "the Alabama Supreme Court made a decision that flies in the face of medical reality and the needs of the citizens of Alabama." Planned Parenthood, the largest and most

important organization providing reproductive healthcare to women, wrote, "We should all be able to build the families and the futures we want, without interference from courts or politicians. This ruling by the Alabama Supreme Court is the result of years of attacks on reproductive freedom, and efforts to restrict access to health care, including IVF."

Progressive Democrat Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez posted: "Throw this whole woman-hating party and their propaganda network in the trash. They've earned themselves a spot in the dustbin of US political history." While Senator Bernie Sanders posted, "Let me be as clear as possible: The courts, government, and church have no business interfering with the very personal decision about how or whether to have children."

25 February 2024

## Russia turns Ukraine's occupied areas into an armed camp

25 February 2024, by **Simon Pirani**

Russia is turning the parts of Ukraine it has occupied into a giant military buffer zone, from which further assaults may be launched, the Eastern Human Rights Group (EHRG) has warned.

The expansion of military combat, training and transport infrastructure, and the forced mobilisation of local men, was documented in a recent report by the group, which champions labour and civil rights in the occupied areas.

While military institutions multiply, industry across the occupied territories stagnates. Russian passports are forced on young and old, imperial dogma on school pupils. A reign of terror continues against all forms of protest.

Here I try to outline the situation in the occupied areas, as the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine goes into its third year, with links to more sources. (See Note at the end for a reminder of the territories occupied.)

### Militarisation

□ The establishment of four new military units in occupied parts of Luhansk, Donetsk and Zaporizhzhya regions.

Signs of the [military build-up](#) noted in the EHRG report, published last month, include:

□ The expansion of paramilitary higher education institutions, including the setting-up last year of a branch of the Nakhimov Naval School

in Mariupol, the southern Ukrainian city where thousands of civilians were killed by Russian military action in 2022.

□ The opening of enormous urban warfare training facilities: the 27-hectare Zoryanyi 8th combined military training ground in Donetsk, with a capacity for training 3-4000 troops at any one time, and a second facility in Luhansk. Three more are planned.

Vera Yastrebova of the EHRG told [the NV.Ua web site](#): "It is not the industrial development of occupied areas that is important for the Kremlin but rather strategic, military development: training soldiers and immediately throwing them into battle against Ukraine."



□ The opening of four military commissariats that are conducting forced mobilisation of local men.

□ The incorporation of the occupied territories into Russia's Southern Military District, and the formation of a Federal Security Service (FSB) unit in Donetsk, and two Russian National Guard units. These services are tasked with monitoring the local population; the EHRG says they can also be used as blocking units to curb desertions and retreats by Russian troops on the front line.

□ The establishment of a new railway company, Novorossiysk Railways. Its priorities will be to build two lines: from Rostov-on-Don in southern Russia, through occupied Ukraine, to Crimea; and from Taganrog to Mariupol, Volnovakha and Donetsk. These would improve Russian military logistics and reduce Crimea's dependence on the Kerch strait bridge, which has been damaged by Ukrainian shelling.

Pavlo Lysyansky of the EHRG said: "This is systematic work by the invaders to turn Ukraine's occupied areas into a militarised zone. Military units based there will constantly threaten the rest of Ukraine's territory. There will be no normal life in the occupied areas."

## Forcible Russianisation

Pressure is mounting on Ukrainian citizens of the occupied areas to accept Russian citizenship. From 1 January 2024, health care has been denied to those without Russian passports. The authorities are also making plans to require Russian passports for internet use, and for those without heating who need gas heaters.

Bosses in local firms have started a renewed effort to compel employees to accept Russian passports, the EHRG reported. "For example, in a mine, the personnel department will write out masses of declarations on employees' behalf, and send them to the ministry of internal affairs. School managements, universities and

childrens' homes write them out on behalf of parents."

The campaign to force people to abandon their Ukrainian nationality began in Donetsk and Luhansk in 2019, and in Zaporizhzhya and Kherson after the 2022 invasion. Threats soon multiplied against those who refused. By May last year Russian prime minister Mikhail Mishustin said 1.5 million passports had been handed out, and the total has kept on rising since then.

Russianisation provides cannon fodder. The inclusion of the occupied territories in Russia's annual call-up in October last year meant that men aged between 18 and 27 were "subjected to conscription [...] into an armed force at war with their own country", a report from the UN Human Rights High Commissioner's office stated - one of Russia's numerous breaches of the Geneva Conventions.

Children don't escape, either. From September, 14-18 year olds will have to do a course on "security and defending the motherland", including military training. And bandits are turned into heroes: to the "youth army" (Yunarmia), a 29,000-strong movement that imparts military training and imperial ideology to teenagers, a unit was added in December named after Kirill Stremousov, an official in Kherson who collaborated enthusiastically with the occupation before his death in November 2022.

And of course, the forced deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia continues. Sergei Mironov, leader of one of the tame "opposition" parties in the Russian parliament, has illegally adopted one of them.

Passports are also a means of controlling dissent. The occupation authorities have prepared paperwork for depriving people of citizenship and making them stateless, on the FSB's recommendation. This will be used against the "rising mood of protest under occupation, caused by social and economic problems", the EHRG warned.

Ukraine's official position is to support

those in or from the occupied territories who want to retain Ukrainian citizenship. But a mass of red tape threatens to strangle anyone whose case is less straightforward. A report in Commons, the socialist journal, told how people who left occupied Donbass as children, and are now adults, have been forced into a stateless vicious circle, largely thanks to Ukraine's State Migration Service.

## Industrial ruin

Water shortages and hazardous pollution in reservoirs and rivers is a growing problem in the occupied territories. The main source of pollution, the EHRG warns, is illegal mining - mostly small-scale open-cast operations, 900 (including abandoned sites) at a recent count. The group charges the illegal mine owners with responsibility for 64 deaths during 2023, mainly of workers employed with little or no safety procedures.

The illegal mines have grown on the ruins of the Donbass coalfield, not long ago one of the largest in Europe. When the war began in 2014, there were more than 100 mines in the Russian-supported "republics" of Donetsk and Luhansk. At least 49 of these have been closed by flooding, according to a recent research assessment.

In 2022, the "republics" sent miners to the front in large numbers: 58% of the underground workforce in Luhansk, according to the occupation authorities there. This winter, the Donetsk authorities pleaded with Russia to send workers to keep the mines open - while homes in pit villages that were supplied with heat from mines went cold when work stopped.

Given the lack of safety standards, environmentalists are especially concerned about pollution from two long-closed mines: the Oleksandr-Zakhid mine, which has stored hazardous wastes since 1989, and the Yunyi Komunar mine, in which the Soviet authorities used a nuclear explosion to facilitate release of methane in 1979, and which has been closed since 2002.

The steel industry, once Ukraine's prime export business, has also been trashed. Of the big steelworks in Russian-controlled territory, the Azovstal plant at Mariupol, once Europe's biggest, has been destroyed by Russian bombing. The Alchevsk plant, that regularly produced 4 million tonnes per year, now does about half that amount.

The steel industry in government-controlled territory, whose exports have been stymied by Russian bombing in the Black Sea, is [also struggling](#). After the 2008-09 financial crisis, Ukraine's annual steel output fell from about 40 million tonnes to about 30 million. The outbreak of war in 2014 cut it to about 20 million; last year it was about 6 million.

## Terror and repression

As Russian forces entered southern Ukraine in 2022, civilians were terrorised with heavy aerial bombing. The scale of devastation, which Russia did its best to conceal, is becoming clearer: in Mariupol, estimates of the civilian death toll range from [8000 to 25,000 or more](#).

A [report published this month by Human Rights Watch and others](#) details damage to several hundred high-rise blocks of flats, hospitals, schools and electricity and water infrastructure. It shows how the occupation forces resisted evacuation attempts and aid deliveries.

An investigation by the Financial Times shows that Russian media film of the city's reconstruction is falsified window-dressing. Many of the 100,000 people who remain in Mariupol – less than a quarter of the pre-invasion population – are in ruined flats without heat, water and other necessities.

Bombing paved the way for brutal structures of repression. Elected local officials and journalists were targeted for arrest as the Russian army arrived: some, including [Ihor Kolykhaev](#), the mayor of Kherson, are still being held. Most of those released had been

subject to [torture](#) or ill-treatment, the UN Human Rights Commissioner's office [reports](#).

The attacks on civil rights are relentless. Russian courts staffed by Russian judges have been introduced, in contravention of international law. Cases that concerned the UN included the conviction of a woman for posting on social media a video of popular Ukrainian songs and a retroactive conviction of a man for a protest held on Ukrainian territory in 2016.

In the territories occupied in 2014, repression of political activists is especially severe in [Crimea](#). Dozens have been locked up on trumped-up charges, in a manner reminiscent of the repressive machinery in Russia itself.

In classic colonial style, the Russian authorities are [attempting](#) – against local resistance – to drive the Ukrainian language out of schools. All religions except the Russian Orthodox church face persecution: not only have Jehovah's witnesses, various Protestant and Islamic communities been targeted, but also the Ukrainian Orthodox church, human rights defenders explained at a [press conference](#) last month.

Resistance to the invasion persists. The most recent [report](#) by the Luhansk Regional Human Rights Centre, Alternative, includes dozens of examples of small-scale, individual protests. In Crimea alone, up until December last year there were [590 prosecutions](#) for "discrediting" the occupation forces. In Zaporizhzhya, the FSB claimed to have arrested three teenage members of a group named "Black Sabotage" for attacking occupation forces.

## Comment

The Russian occupation of Ukrainian territories has much in common with other imperialist occupations down the centuries. It is accompanied by strong Russian nationalist rhetoric and by attempts to erase the language, religion and culture of Ukraine – historically, Russia's largest colony.

The occupation is underpinned by terror, starting with the aerial war on defenceless civilians – many of them, in the south and east of the country, those Russian speakers that the invaders claimed to be protecting.

Even now, two years after the invasion, we in the European labour movement who support Ukrainians' right to defend themselves against this onslaught are often rebuked, not only by Putin apologists but by "pacifists", who claim that the primary purpose of Russia's action is to defend itself from aggression by NATO powers.

The character of the occupation, and the militarisation of the occupied territories with a view to further attacks on Ukraine, further discredits this deeply flawed logic. SP, 21 February 2024.

Note: the Russian-occupied territories

About 18% of Ukrainian territory is occupied by the Russian armed forces, including:

(i) the autonomous republic of Crimea, annexed by the Russian federation in 2014.

(ii) parts of Donetsk region and most of Luhansk region, controlled from 2014 by Russian-supported separatists who established unrecognised "people's republics". These included most of the Donbass coal- and iron-producing industrial region. In 2014-17 the population is estimated to have fallen by half, mainly due to migration to other parts of Ukraine and to Russia. In February 2022, two days prior to the all-out invasion, these "republics" were recognised by Russia.

(iii) parts of Kherson, Mykolayiv, and Zaporizhzhya regions that were invaded in 2022.

In September 2022 the Russian government claimed to have annexed the whole of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya, including the former "republics" and areas still under Ukrainian control.

[People and Nature](#)

# “Stop the War” Means “Death to the Dictatorship”

24 February 2024, by **Russian Socialist Movement (RSD)**

Two years ago, Vladimir Putin launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This decision by Russia's leaders was not a response to any military threat posed by Ukraine or NATO—it was an attempt to subjugate a neighboring country that Putin simply believes should not exist.

Putin's original plan in Ukraine seems to have been for a “special operation” of regime change: troops would swiftly occupy the country's main cities, the Russian National Guard would suppress “nationalist” protests, and the majority of the population would greet their long-awaited Russian “brothers” with flowers.

But instead of flowers and fanfare, the Russian army was met with stubborn resistance from the Ukrainians, and instead of “gangs,” they found a well-trained and highly motivated army. The “special operation” turned into a real war.

The primary victim of Russia's aggression is Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. Over 10,000 civilians have been killed, with over 18,500 wounded. 6.3 million have sought refuge abroad, and 3.7 million have been displaced within the country. Over the course of the war, hundreds of thousands of medical, housing, educational, and sports facilities have been destroyed. Ecosystems have been subject to ecocide.

The damage to Ukraine's economy, estimated at over \$300 billion, will affect the well-being of its citizens for years to come, making life harder for its poorest in particular.

Russian society is undergoing a painful transformation as well. Leon Trotsky once wrote that “It is not

consciousness that governs war, but war that governs consciousness.” War has its own logic and alters human plans. Instead of a “special operation,” Putin has committed to the exact opposite—a long, bloody, exhausting war to ultimately erode Ukraine's resources and force the West to withhold its aid. This scenario will require enormous sacrifices from Russia for which neither its population nor its economy were prepared.

Drawn into this long war, Putin's state has changed from within: it needs to force society to accept such losses. This has been achieved through political repression and a climate of fear.

According to OVD Info, 1,980 people have been detained for opposing the war since it began, and 825 of them face criminal charges; at least half a million people have left the country for moral and political reasons or to escape the draft. And, the war has not become a rallying point, a “WWII 2.0” for most Russians—ideological supporters of Putin's aggression are still in the minority, even though only they are allowed to voice their views. <https://www.bbc.com/english/news-64764949>

## The Causes and Nature of the War

The goal of the current war is clearly not to protect Ukraine's Russian-speaking population, which has suffered the most at the hands of the occupiers, nor is it to counter Western expansion, as the Kremlin shares a long history of mutual enrichment with the West.

The Kremlin's real motive for the invasion is its desire to further entrench its political, economic, and military domination over Russian

society and the societies of other post-Soviet countries, to which Moscow claims to be “historically entitled.”

## Democratic Popular Movements of the Last Decade

As part of their conspiratorial worldview, Putin and his entourage consider the Maidan (2014) in Ukraine, uprisings in Belarus (2020) and Kazakhstan (2021), and the waves of mass protests in Russia itself since 2012 part of a “hybrid war” waged against Russia by the West.

“Combating Western hegemony” as Putin sees it has nothing to do with resisting the exploitative policies of American and European elites on the world stage. On the contrary, the Kremlin accepts and welcomes Western policies that come with no ethical strings attached.

The only “alien Western values” that Russia is fighting against are human rights, freedom of speech, gender equality, sustainable development, and so on. In this sense, Putinism is the vanguard of a far-right international that threatens democracy and progressive movements around the world, including Trump and his supporters in the US, the AfD in Germany, the Erdogan regime in Turkey, Orbán in Hungary, and others.

The main goal of the war is to protect the Putin regime and its autocratic vassal states, like the Lukashenko dictatorship in Belarus, from the threat of revolution.

This goal coincides perfectly with the elite's dreams of rebuilding the Russian Empire, which requires enslaving Ukraine but Russian expansion will not end there.

It also lines up with their hopes for a “multipolar world”—a world in which dictators and oligarchs enjoy complete freedom to plunder their subjects, repress dissenters, and divide up the world with no regard for international law.

That’s why, today, “Stop the War” has to mean “End Putin’s Dictatorship.” Demanding peace means demanding the abolition of the social hierarchies at the core of Russia’s regime today: political authoritarianism; vast wealth inequality; conservative, patriarchal norms; and a colonial, imperial model of inter-ethnic relations.

## Fighting for Peace or Forcing Negotiations?

2023 was a year of trench warfare for Ukraine. Despite heavy casualties, neither the Ukrainian nor the Russian army managed to make significant progress on the battlefield. This has increased war fatigue, including among Ukraine’s allies.

In this context, the ideas of peace talks and opposition to arms transfers to the conflict zone—voiced by both the extreme right and some left wing forces—have become increasingly popular.

Of course, all wars foster militarism and nationalism, welfare cuts, infringement on civil liberties, and more in all countries party to the conflict. That is true for Russia, Ukraine, and the West.

It is also obvious that all wars end in negotiations, and it would be pointless to oppose this demand in principle.

But hoping for negotiations at this stage of the war is naive, as is the conviction that unilateral disarmament by the victim of aggression will bring peace.

Sponsors of such proposals do not take into account the Putin regime’s evolution over the past few years. Putin’s legitimacy today is that of a wartime leader; thus, he cannot hold on to power without waging wars.

He is now counting on the West ending its support for Ukraine after the American elections and making a deal—on the Kremlin’s terms, of course. However, such a deal (for the partition of Ukraine? regime change in Kiev? the recognition of Russia’s “new territories”?) will not change Putinism’s essential attitude towards war, which is now its only mode of existence.

Putin’s regime can no longer exit the state of war, as the only way to maintain its system is to escalate the international situation and intensify political repression within Russia.

That is why any negotiations with Putin now would bring, at best, a brief respite, not a genuine peace.

A victory for Russia would be evidence of the West’s weakness and openness to redrawing its spheres of influence, above all in the post-Soviet space. Moldova and the Baltic States could be the next victims of aggression. A defeat for the regime, on the other hand, would be tantamount to its collapse.

Only the Ukrainian people have the right to decide when and under what conditions to make peace. As long as Ukrainians show a will to resist and the Putin regime remains unchanged in its expansionist goals, any coercion of Ukraine into negotiations is a step towards an imperialist “deal” at the expense of Ukrainian independence.

That imperialist “peace deal” would mean a return to the practice of the “great powers” partitioning the rest of the world, that is, to the conditions that gave birth to the First and Second World Wars.

The main obstacle to peace is certainly not Zelensky’s “unwillingness to compromise,” nor is it Biden’s or Scholz’s “hawkishness”: it is Putin’s unwillingness to even discuss deoccupying the Ukrainian territories seized after February 24, 2022. And it is the aggressor, not the victim, who must be forced to negotiate.

We, the Russian Socialist Movement, believe that under such circumstances the international left should demand:

- A just peace for the Ukrainian

people, including the withdrawal of Russian troops from the internationally recognized territory of Ukraine

- The cancellation of Ukraine’s public debt

- Increased sanctions pressure on Putin’s elite and ruling class

- Increased pressure on various companies still doing business with Russia

- Increased humanitarian assistance to Ukrainian refugees and Russian political exiles, including those fleeing the draft

- An equitable post-war reconstruction of Ukraine, led by Ukrainians themselves along social justice lines, not by investment companies and hedge funds following austerity principles

- Direct support for left-wing volunteer and trade union organizations in Ukraine

- Platforms for Ukrainians and anti-war Russians to speak out

- The release of Russian political prisoners and an end to the repression of the political opposition in Russia

Today’s world is shifting to the right, and politicians increasingly choose to use discrimination and wars of aggression to solve their problems, from Netanyahu’s genocidal Western-backed military campaign in Gaza to Azerbaijan’s attacks on Nagorno Karabakh (with which the international community is complicit) and the anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies espoused by mainstream parties in Germany, Finland, the Netherlands, France and the United States. Given this global context, the left must combat rising imperialist, militarist, and nationalist tendencies—not through utopian peacebuilding efforts, but by preventing new outbreaks of aggression and stopping kindred fascist forces sympathetic to Putin (Trump, the AfD, etc.) from coming to power.

***Stop the war!***



24 February 2024

# Arguments for a “left agenda” faced with the war in Ukraine

23 February 2024, by **Catherine Samary**

Member of the Ukrainian organization Sotsialnyi Rukh, [10] Oleksandr Kyselov first of all reminds us of an essential characteristic ignored by many left-wing movements: what the massive popular mobilization was in the face of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Faced with the difficulty of maintaining this level of mobilization in the context of a murderous war which continues and of the social attacks from the Zelensky regime, Kyselov then underlines a double question at stake, democratic and social. This is the substance of what he describes as an “agenda for the left” which we must understand, by listening to what the Ukrainian left and the organizations of this society directly affected by this war are expressing.

This has been and remains the orientation of the network created in the spring of 2022, the European Network in Solidarity with Ukraine (ENSU) [11]: its platform expresses support for Ukrainian popular resistance against the Russian invasion, in rejection of all colonialism and on bases independent of all governments. This orientation was distinct from various other anti-war agendas of currents claiming to be on the left, in particular those which put Ukraine and Russia on the same level, as countries where oligarchic capitalism dominated, because their internationalism was blind to the relations of neocolonial and imperial domination of Russia. We criticized the postures that ignored the essential dimension of the national liberation struggle of Ukraine against Russian occupation. Which also led them to ignore or denigrate the key role of

Ukraine’s armed and unarmed resistance, considered as a simple “proxy” for the interests of Western powers. They could certainly feel sorry for the fate of the Ukrainian population doomed to being nothing but cannon fodder for a foreign cause (the aims of Western imperialism), a passive victim in whose name they arrogated to themselves the right to decree that they had to stop fighting. Two variants were grafted onto this position: if the existence of Russian imperialism was recognized, the war was denounced as “inter-imperialist”, with the United States and NATO competing with Russia for control of Ukraine. But other currents considered the Russian arguments justified (even if they found the invasion abusive): they then made NATO the cause of a war launched by Russia to protect itself, also taking up the vision of the fall of Ukrainian President Yanukovich, said to be pro-Russian, in 2014, as “a fascist coup”, anti-Russian and supported by NATO [12] for this reason, while obviously sharing support for Russian pacifist feminists. In criticism of this Manifesto, the ENSU feminist workshop contacted Ukrainian women and supported “[The right to resist. A feminist manifesto](#).” [13]. This was the first international action illustrating the left-wing agenda that was defended, for an independent and democratic Ukraine, also expressed by numerous fundraising initiatives and union convoys connecting directly with Ukrainian civil society organizations.

## Make visible the causes of the war and Ukrainian resistance

Various characteristics of this war explain - without justifying - the dominant tendency on the left to obscure Ukraine and its popular resistance to a Russian imperial invasion. We can put them down to the difficulty of existing “on the left” in Ukraine itself, having to fight on several fronts [14]: dissociating ourselves from the Stalinist past praised by Putin; opposing the invasion and the desire for Great Russian domination while contesting the social attacks of Zelensky’s neoliberal regime and its ideological positions, all the more apologetic for the “values” of the West as the country had a vital need for its financial and military aid in the face of Russian power; the fact that the war consolidated NATO and favoured the militarization of budgets.

But we must add to these difficulties an essential ideological and political factor in the positioning on the left on this war: how were “national questions” in general [15], and the Ukrainian question in particular, among Marxists and more broadly within orientations defining themselves as movements of emancipation? Was the defence of Ukrainianness “reactionary” or “petty-bourgeois” in essence? On the eve of the February 2022 invasion, Putin claimed to be Stalin against Lenin, who allegedly “invented” Ukraine - a

narrative that Hanna Perekhoda forcefully contests. [16] Ukraine, on the other hand, was undoubtedly for the evolution of Lenin's thinking what Ireland had been for Marx [17] in the rejection of a pseudo-proletarian universalism calling itself Marxist, blind to the relationships of domination and oppression combining with class relationships. The recognition of the right of peoples to self-determination, therefore of the reality of a national liberation struggle, was essential, and remains deeply relevant against the Russian imperial invasion of Ukraine. [18]

The left-wing agenda defended here therefore has an essential task: to verify/demonstrate the reality of Ukrainian popular resistance to the war. Laurent Vogel, member of the Belgian ENSU collective, underlines "how global the resistance is: on the front against the occupier, at the rear for a more equal and democratic society. In a certain number of small businesses, forms of self-management have appeared [...]. For all essential activities such as health, education, transport, the creativity of work groups had to improvise emergency solutions which demonstrated greater efficiency than what was proposed by management". [19]

The fragilities of the popular resistance are real after two years, analyses Oksana Dutchak, member of the editorial board of the Ukrainian journal *Common*. [20] She evokes a feeling of "injustice in relation to the mobilization process, where questions of wealth and/or corruption lead to the mobilization of the majority (but not exclusively) of the popular classes, which goes against the ideal image of the "people's war" in which the whole of society participates. [...] [T]his does not mean that society as a whole has decided to refrain from fighting Russian aggression, quite the contrary: most understand the bleak prospects that would be imposed by an occupation or frozen conflict, which could intensify with [Russia's] renewed efforts. While the majority opposes and may even dislike many of the government's actions (a traditional attitude in Ukraine's political reality for decades), opposition to the Russian invasion and distrust of any possible "peace" agreement with the Russian

government (which has violated and continues to violate everything from bilateral agreements to international law and international humanitarian law) are stronger and there is very little chance this will change in the future. However, a socially just view of wartime policies and post-war reconstruction is a prerequisite for channelling individual struggles for survival into a conscious effort of communal and social struggle – against invasion, for socio-economic justice."

## **The struggle on several fronts, against all campisms**

It is such a struggle on several fronts that gives our left agenda avenues for social and trade-union action to help the Ukrainian resistance. But it is also with this logic that we must address in a concrete manner the question of the enlargement of the EU to Ukraine and support for the Ukrainian armed struggle, sources of the main differences. [21] This should help to overcome various "campisms" or choice of a "main enemy" leading to supporting the "enemy of my enemy" by keeping silent about its own reactionary policies. [22]

We are not only confronted with Western, historical imperialism, notably embodied by the United States and NATO. In Eastern Europe, the aggressor or direct threat is Putin's Russian imperialism [23]. The impact of its propaganda on the left or on populations far from Russia lies in its denunciation of the hegemonist pretensions of Western imperialism; this also applies to the other reactionary autocrats at the head of BRICS+. What they actually reject from the West is not the politics of imperialist domination but the Western monopoly on such relations. What they denounce from the West is not everything that obscures the gaps between recognized freedoms and rights (for women, LGBT+, etc.) and realities, it is these rights themselves..

But we must also challenge an "anti-

Russian" campism, apologetic of the West. This is not the logic of the ENSU platform. On the other hand, broad fronts of solidarity with Ukraine can include – and this is important – an "anti-Russian" Ukrainian immigration supporting neoliberal policies like those of Zelensky, and uncritical of the EU and NATO. It is essential to work towards respecting pluralism within these fronts, allowing the autonomy of expression of ENSU and trade-union movements. But we must also push forward the debates within left-wing currents on how to advance an alternative to the practical "solutions" offered to the Ukrainian population to protect themselves from Great-Russian threats.

## **From the EU to NATO, what egalitarian and solidarity-based Europe?**

The concrete, solidarity-based responses from below to the attacks suffered by Ukrainian society are often supplanted on the left by pseudo-orientations which are reduced to describing the EU and NATO as capitalist and accusing any adhesion of Ukraine to these institutions as "pro" (pro-EU or pro-NATO). However, the same left-wing currents are for the most part in member countries of these institutions, and we do not hear them leading campaigns to leave them anytime soon. Which does not mean that they have given up analysing and fighting them. But how to do it?

Regardless of the war in Ukraine and its effects, the anti-capitalist left has in fact, for decades, been confronted with the necessity of a critical analysis of these institutions, without it being possible or effective to campaign to "leave", independently of a context of crises affecting them.

On the EU side, Brexit is far from having embodied or enabled a convincing left-wing orientation, any more than Tsipras's capitulation to the diktats of the European Commission.

We must build a logic of propaganda and struggle within/against/outside the EU [24]

, with its “transitional” tactical dimensions, to be updated in variable contexts. The EU is facing contradictions, which have become even more acute in the face of the Covid crisis, environmental emergencies and the war in Ukraine: let’s analyse them and debate them concretely. Instead of refusing Ukraine’s membership, as Jean-Luc Mélenchon dramatically expresses it, we must put forward at the European level the same battles as those waged by the Ukrainian left: for social and environmental justice, for democracy and solidarity in the management of the “commons”, and the defeat of any relationship of neocolonial domination.

The popular aspirations expressed in Ukraine, widely shared by European populations, must serve to question the “governance” of the EU, which is ready to expand, with the objective of advancing a progressive alternative across the whole continent. Let us therefore take stock of the neoliberal policies of fiscal and social dumping which accompanied previous enlargements and which are being imposed in Ukraine: are they capable of making possible the defeat of the Russian invasion as well as an efficient and united functioning of the EU? Or are they a source of disunity, widening gaps, and explosive failures?

Victory against the Russian invasion cannot be simply “military”, but it cannot do without weapons. However, these are sorely lacking to protect civilian populations, the country’s infrastructure, and the possibility of exporting through the Black Sea. But peace is only possible if it is just because it is decolonial, respecting the right of peoples to self-determination, and therefore also the aspirations for equality and dignity. This is why the choice of building a union extended to Ukraine and the other candidate countries can be associated with a radical questioning of policies based on market competition and privatization. Priority public funding must go to the extension of public services (national and European, in transport, education,

health), particularly on the basis of “enlargement funds”. They demand another “governance” of the Union and an overhaul of the Treaties to make an enlarged and more heterogeneous Union viable. This must also affect the “exit” from the war.

As regards NATO, the European left missed the moment of a campaign for its dissolution when this was on the agenda, in 1991. But it also locks itself into mythical scenarios. It was not against Russia, but to control German unification and the creation of the EU that the United States maintained NATO. It initially found itself without an “enemy” because it was Yeltsin himself who had dismantled the USSR and launched privatizations; and moreover the Russia of Yeltsin, then of Putin in its early days, was one of the “partners” of NATO, it shared the definition of its new enemy, “Islamism”, in the dirty wars waged in Chechnya...

It is the consolidation of a strong Russian state, both internally and externally, with its fear of “colour revolutions” and the “removal” of autocrats, which strained relations with Russia’s neighbouring countries and Western powers in the second half of the 2000s. These tensions did not eliminate the interdependencies between the EU and Russia on the energy, financial and trade levels, or even on the “security” level. At the same time, after the crises in Belarus and Kazakhstan in 2021-2022, Putin hoped to consolidate the Eurasian Union with Ukraine’s participation in trade with the EU, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, he intended to offer the West the services of the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) after the collapse of the United States and NATO in Afghanistan. NATO, led by the US, was therefore “brain dead” and not threatening on the eve of the Russian invasion. The United States and the Western powers expected, like Putin, a rapid fall of Zelensky.

But if the Ukraine of 2014 was polarized in its exchanges and proximity between the EU and Russia, its invasion radically deepened anti-Russian hatred, including in the most Russian-speaking regions, bombed

and occupied: the war gave back a “raison d’être” to NATO and the arms industries, and strengthened the weight of the United States in the EU.

However, nothing is stable: as evidenced by the divergent interests on energy issues as with China, the pressure from the NATO general staff to push Ukraine to stop the war and cede some territories, or even the uncertainties of the elections in the United States... The notion of “New Cold War” used by Gilbert Achcar [25] necessitates debate: if it is certain that the war in Ukraine has provoked a new arms race and that it has globalized effects, it is not a world war. The rise of BRICS+ does not coincide with cohesion without conflicts, including between Russia and China: it marks the end of a historic period of Western domination, but without eliminating the economic and financial interdependencies inherited from post-1989. Dependence on the United States and NATO’s weight in Europe will evolve according to future American elections, and they are not seen in the same way in the south of the EU and in the Central and Eastern European countries that are close to Russia.

## What anti-war movement?

The EU has become the largest contributor of financial, military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine, ahead of the United States. The largest contributions (1 to 1.5 per cent of the country’s GDP) come from the Baltic, Nordic and Central European countries most directly exposed to the Russian threat. Can we blame them for that? Certainly, this threat is hypocritically exploited to call into question the ecological and social criteria of European policies and increase military budgets. The way of evaluating contributions, the gap between promises and deliveries, as well as the share of defence budgets actually going to Ukraine, are anything but transparent: to counter the profit logic of the arms industries, this is what an anti-war movement in solidarity with the right of peoples to self-determination must tackle, which could defend aid to Ukraine at the

same time as general socialized control over the production and use of armaments. [26]

From Ukraine to Palestine, "occupation is a crime" [27]: this is what we can defend along with our Ukrainian comrades. A left-wing movement "For a Decolonial Peace" must tackle the commodification of weapons in order to control their use by calling into question the logic of profit blind to the recipients, such as Israel or reactionary autocracies. Likewise, we must concretely engage in a campaign to contest nuclear power and denounce all the nuclear

blackmail carried out by Putin.

The fact that Ukraine has turned to NATO and the EU to defend its sovereignty does not remove the reality of armed and unarmed popular resistance that must be supported: if Russia withdraws, there will be no more war. If Ukraine does not resist, regardless of the origin of the weapons it uses, there will no longer be an independent Ukraine. And other countries bordering Russia are threatened. The defeat of Russia through the development of popular resistance is a precondition for putting a different kind of European relations

on the agenda, a dissolution of all military blocs and the calling into question of any logic of sharing spheres of influence.

What anti-capitalist alternative, what vision of another Europe and another (ecosocialist) world can the left claim to offer if it accepts the Russian invasion and does not help popular resistance?

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## Is there a fascist danger in Italy?

22 February 2024, by **Franco Turigliatto**

This commemoration, which has been recurring every year but has so far been circumscribed, today takes on a particularly negative meaning because it takes place in the context of many similar and converging events and in a very different political and institutional context, which is that of the Meloni government and the extreme right of Fratelli d'Italia [FdI] and Salvini's Lega. [28]

### The risk of a new fascism

Is there a fascist danger in Italy? If we stick to the 1930s, of course not; But if we understand that fascism can also manifest itself in new forms, such as deep authoritarian involutions, the question is relevant. The danger of authoritarian excesses is real and, so far, the social and political forces of the moderate left have underestimated the Meloni government, which they interpret as a "normal" right-wing executive. The mistake is not to consider the qualitative leap represented by the heirs of the Italian Social Movement (MSI), itself heir to fascism, who came to rule the country, and by Ignazio La Russa who, while displaying a bust of Mussolini in his

office, occupies the second position of the state, that of President of the Senate.

The dangers are great because they are part of anti-democratic and reactionary processes that are sweeping through several European countries, produced by the contradictions of the capitalist system and decades of anti-popular neoliberal policies.

On the day she took office, Meloni made it very clear that her government would be the government of "God, Fatherland, Family and Business" and that the latter would enjoy maximum freedom of action.

### The poisonous cocktail of neoliberalism and the far right

This is why it has had no difficulty in continuing the work of the previous Draghi government in managing Brussels' neoliberal policies; today, the acceptance of the new European Stability Pact marks a complete return

to austerity policies, total alignment with the choices of the United States and participation in the arms race. Alongside other Western powers, Meloni's government fully supports the Israeli government and the massacre of Palestinians in Gaza. It has also produced a series of economic measures for the benefit of big capital while defending tooth and nail tax evasion and the privileges of the petty and middle bourgeoisie, which constitutes its main electoral base.

At the same time, it has pursued a policy of persecution and criminalization of the weakest sectors of society (the poor, the migrant, the unemployed), encouraging divisions and opposition among workers, well aware that the greatest danger could come not from the weak institutional opposition of the PD (Democratic Party) and the M5S (Five Star Movement), incapable of being in touch with the social forces, but of the workers' movement. To do this, Meloni had to rehabilitate all kinds of reactionary thinking, which has opened up a new space of action for the most extreme and violent forces of the right, increasingly covered and protected by the new political



personnel who have arrived in government.

## **Destruction of the gains of the Resistance**

This government has a specific mission: to destroy what has been a veritable "civil religion" in Italy, that is to say, that democratic, anti-fascist and progressive consciousness that permeated the history of the country after the victory of the Resistance against fascism, nourished at the time by the workers' struggles constituting a fortress for democracy. Greatly weakened by the pressure of the defeats suffered by the workers' movement, this "civil religion" is still present in large sections of society. For the heirs of the MSI, a motley band of unlikely but menacing leaders, this democratic ideology must be destroyed and replaced by the revaluation of all reactionary ideologies, patriotic myths, the false sacredness of the family and the rewriting of history. It is an action that is being carried out step by step, but with extreme determination, which is expressed in propaganda, in the media, but also in work in schools through Minister Valditara, who intends to make a clean sweep of the past in search of total revenge. The final objective, embodied in the plans for institutional upheaval, is the total overthrow of the Constitution that emerged from the Resistance. The old partisan and intellectual Gastone Cottino, in his last testimony, evokes: "the establishment, in a more or less authoritarian way, of what Gramsci called a mass reactionary regime. However, this reference is the same as that of the right wing of government today. You can see it in the characters, in what they say, in their desire to radically change the Constitution, in the climate that is being created. A climate in which we are not obliged to remain silent, but we remain silent because we no longer have knowledge, we no longer understand things, we no longer grasp them, we no longer have a sense of history. And at the same time, we are indoctrinated."

## **A dual strategy: institutionalization and links with fascist groups**

Giorgia Meloni and the staff she brought with her to the government didn't come out of nowhere; they are all people who have been trained in the MSI and its fascist ideology; Their appearance as quiet right-wing leaders is not new. Former MSI leaders also portrayed themselves as "fascists in suits and ties;" On the one hand, they sought institutional respectability, on the other hand, they maintained close relations with fascist thugs. Their history is intertwined with that of the terrible events of the time of the strategy of tension and the fascist massacres of the 1970s aimed at blocking the strength of the workers' movement.

Relations between the heirs of the MSI and the gangs that openly declare themselves to be fascists have never completely ceased. The latter now feel sure that they can act, that they are protected and that they can openly emerge from the sewers into which they have been pushed for decades by the workers' movement and its democratic momentum. This is why the gloomy commemoration of Acca Larenzia is a terrible warning for the future about how these forces could be used against workers' and social struggles, already weakened by the government's repressive laws.

## **The passivity of social democracy**

In this context, the calls of the opposition forces and the newspapers of the liberal bourgeoisie inviting Meloni and other ministers to make anti-fascist statements appear completely ridiculous. They have no possibility of acting as a brake on the authoritarian design of the FdI and the Lega, which are engaged in a violent competition within the coalition to see who will make the most noise to win or defend the reactionary and/or right-wing electorate. It is equally

ridiculous to propose a figure like Draghi and European neoliberal policies as an alternative to Meloni, when it is precisely the latter that have paved the way for the right. Finally, what is surprising is the passive and disoriented attitude of the intelligentsia, who had nevertheless played a key role in the past in terms of defending democracy and solidarity with the workers' movement.

The ultimate goal is the total overthrow of the Constitution. The plague - the differentiated autonomy of the League, which will lead to a total differentiation of wages and working conditions in the different regions, as will be the case for public health and schools - and cholera - the authoritarian presidentialism of the FdI - are linked and constitute a qualitative leap in the degeneration of bourgeois democracy itself that has been going on in Europe for some years. [29]

## **Against the "divide and rule" of fascist forces, unity and struggle of the working class**

Against this government, against the fascist political forces that compose it and that manage the interests of the bosses and poison society, the only effective antidote is working for a mass social mobilization defending wages, pensions, jobs and social and political rights, to unite that social class that the capitalists and rulers want to divide and fragment.

This is the task of all the political and social forces of the left, especially the big trade union organizations, starting with the CGIL, the largest mass organization in the country with more than five million members.

However, this was not the path followed by their leadership, who for months pursued a policy of passively waiting for the government's action, when from day one they should have sounded the alarm to warn workers of the danger that awaited them.

In recent days, the “cries” against the law on differentiated autonomy have multiplied, with Landini (secretary of the CGIL) in the lead: “More gaps and inequalities, fewer rights for workers and pensioners.... We will oppose this with all the tools that democracy puts at our disposal, to prevent the government from dividing the country and jeopardizing its future.” The secretary of the CGIL, in an interview with the daily *La Repubblica*, lists all the misdeeds of the government, on social security contributions, employment contracts, inflation, employment and poverty, industrial policies and privatizations, peremptorily inviting the government to “stop”... but once again renouncing the idea of proposing a real and coherent plan of struggle.

These uncertainties manifested themselves in the National Assembly of the CGIL, which mainly discussed the possible choices of a referendum for the repeal of a series of anti-social and neoliberal laws, including those on precarious work, but postponed to another meeting the choice of a path for the mobilization of workers. This would be all the more necessary since it is only in a climate of social effervescence and struggle that it will be possible to win a possible referendum to repeal the law on differentiated autonomy, thus avoiding a social disaster unprecedented in the post-war period.

The wage problems of millions of workers, struggling with inflation that has been close to 20% for the past two years, are enormous. At the same

time, the employment problems caused by the restructuring and relocation of companies, which are very disturbing, do not provoke public intervention on the part of the government to solve them. On the contrary, it is reviving privatizations, starting with the post office, to make cash. The major industrial crises culminate in the steel group (Mittal) and in the cars sector, i.e. Stellantis and the large related industries involved, affecting hundreds of other plants. Some 300,000 workers and their families are affected.

The combative and militant struggle of a factory in Florence, GKN, led by a very determined factory collective against relocation and to open a new phase of public intervention by planning productive reconversions aimed at the green transition, could have been an opportunity for the union leaderships to link all the companies involved in the restructuring, going beyond management of the crisis on a case-by-case basis with the explicit objective of relaunching action related to workers’ participation and control. That is not the choice that has been made.

## Building an alternative project to fascism

On the political level, the construction of an anti-fascist movement has so far been the prerogative of the forces of the radical left, the most militant trade

union currents and minority intellectual sectors. There is much to be done to build a mass social and democratic mobilization to fight against the dangers that threaten the future of the subaltern classes.

In the words of the old departed partisan: “We must also look at the present. A true anti-fascism must extend its commitment to the realization of a society opposed to the one that the new fascism - in continuity with the old one - proposes to us: a society that promotes participation and not the cult of the leader, that places common interests at the centre and not private ones, that concentrates its efforts on health and education, which seeks equality and acceptable living conditions for all “without distinction as to sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social condition” (as required by Article 3 of the Constitution). An open and supportive society, capable of welcoming and rejecting anti-migrant policies, which are the racial frontier of the new millennium.”

In other words, the only way to counter democratic involutions, social disasters and the fragmentation of the working class with real effectiveness and mass participation is the ability to combine the democratic battle with the social battle, wages and employment, within an alternative anti-capitalist project.

19 February 2024

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

# Alexei Navalny Taught Russia's Opposition How to Mobilize

21 February 2024, by **Ilya Budraitskis**

On Friday — unless it had already happened the day before — dissident politician Alexei Navalny was killed in a jail for high-risk prisoners in

Russia's far north. The true causes of his death continue to be hidden, and it is not even known where his body is, though his parents and wife are

unsuccessfully trying to get it back from authorities. Navalny may have died from a blow, from poison, or from the systematic torture to which he was

subjected throughout three years in prison. We haven't been told.

Many, including myself, still find it difficult to come to terms with the thought of Navalny's death. Yet it must be admitted that this has been the expected outcome since he returned to Russia in January 2021. Back then, after miraculously surviving an attempted poisoning by Russian special services — an event that saw him hospitalized in Berlin — he flew back from the German capital to Moscow, where he was immediately arrested upon arrival. The legal grounds for his imprisonment were senseless: first he was sentenced to three years in prison, but then authorities added on a nine-year sentence for another case, and then a third for a further nineteen years. Navalny understood perfectly well that on Russian territory, his life depended only on the will of one man. In this sense, he became like any other Russian.

Navalny spent more than 250 days, with short breaks, in the so-called punishment cell — a kind of prison within a prison, detaining him in extremely difficult conditions, including a complete ban on any contact with the outside world. Yet, until his last days, he took every opportunity to read and write. As we know from history, for many political prisoners, the jail cell becomes a place of deep — often, unfortunately, final — reflections on the reasons for the defeat of the movements to which they belonged, the lessons that can be learned, and the challenges for the future.

Last August, Navalny wrote probably one of his most significant messages of this kind. Reflecting on the reasons for the emergence of Vladimir Putin's dictatorship, he came to the conclusion that its roots go back to the 1990s, the time of Boris Yeltsin's rule and the so-called market reforms. Putin and his friends from the secret services did not come to power, "pushing the democratic reformers away from it," Navalny wrote: rather, these "reformers" "themselves called them in, they themselves taught them how to falsify elections, how to steal state property, how to lie to the mass media, how to forcibly suppress the

opposition, and even how to start idiotic wars." To maintain a tiny group of oligarchs' control over a vast property empire, the "democrats" of the 1990s destroyed Russia's fledgling democratic institutions and opened the way to authoritarianism. Understanding this genesis of Putinism, inextricably linked with the criminal history of the redistribution of former Soviet property, is, as Navalny noted, "the most important issue of political strategy for all supporters of democratic development of the country."

Navalny surely had to spend many years in Russian politics to come to this conclusion. In 2000, as a very young man, he joined the liberal Yabloko party, which he left a few years later, disillusioned with the dogmatism and elitism of the older generation of Russian liberals. His desire to build a broad opposition coalition led him to flirt with Russian nationalism and anti-immigrant rhetoric, which remains one of the most controversial moments of his political trajectory. In 2011, he launched the Anti-Corruption Foundation, an organization that proved able to absorb the energy of the younger generation that was sparked by mass protests against Putin's return for his third presidential term. This marked the beginning of the story of Navalny as the main and most dangerous opponent of the Putin government — the story of Navalny of the 2010s.

## Social Anger

Against the backdrop of increasing repression and the spread of apathy and conformity in Russian society, in an opaque electoral system manipulated from above, Navalny showed that even such elections can be used as a powerful expression of protest and politicization of broad layers of society. In 2013, he conducted an impressive campaign in the Moscow mayoral elections, challenging the Kremlin's protégé, and in 2018 he announced that he was running in the upcoming presidential elections. Although the authorities did not allow Navalny to stand, citing various far-fetched pretexts, his campaign in 2018 attracted 150,000

volunteers, and in fact became the most massive grassroots political organization in the history of post-Soviet Russia. Navalny's campaign headquarters, opened throughout the country, became centers for the politicization of youth. Debates were constantly held on all the topical issues of the country's life, and the generation of twenty-somethings discovered the world of political ideas (and note: some of them chose socialist ones).

Most importantly, Navalny's campaign showed tens of thousands of people that political participation is a real alternative to the narrow world of private interests and indifference into which the Putin government has so painstakingly pushed Russians for years. This success was possible because he realized that the standard set of liberal slogans — limited to demands for fair elections and guarantees of civil rights — cannot produce widespread political mobilization. He understood that in Putin's Russia, the colossal social inequality, the poverty of the majority, and the incredible wealth of the tiny minority were the main issues. The possibility of transition to real democracy depends on solving this problem. Navalny's investigations, which caused a huge public outcry, in fact spoke not only about corruption, but also about the criminal nature of the wealth of the political and economic elite as such. The social anger aroused by endless virtual tours of the secret palaces of Putin and his friends was, by and large, a class feeling.

During this period, the issue of social injustice began to occupy a key place in Navalny's rhetoric. He actively opposed Putin's neoliberal pension reform, pushing for the creation of independent unions of nurses and teachers, and criticized the government during the pandemic over the meager payments to people who had lost their incomes and jobs. Navalny was not led to these stances because he started from leftist ideas, but because of his experience of constant travel around the country and the ability to listen to very different people about their real problems. After 2018, when it finally became clear that he and his followers

would never be allowed to participate in either presidential or parliamentary elections, Navalny called for “smart voting” — support for the most promising candidate capable of winning against Putin’s United Russia party. This tactic has become a serious challenge to Putin’s system of “managed democracy,” in which all other parties exist as ornaments and are not intended to actually compete for power and political influence. The main actual beneficiary of “smart voting” was the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) — as the only force within the existing political system capable of accumulating votes that express social anger. With his call for tactical support of CPRF, Navalny not only attracted hundreds of thousands of young voters to the party, but contributed to a revival in the party itself, where dissatisfaction with the conservative and opportunistic course of the old leadership was growing.

By summer 2020, it became clear to the Kremlin: Navalny represented an existential problem that could only be solved by radical means. However, Navalny not only miraculously survived the poisoning, but also,

together with his team, conducted a brilliant investigation into his own failed murder, establishing the full list of the officers the Federal Security Service (successor to the KGB) who were involved in it. January 2021 became Navalny’s last battle. Tens of thousands took to the streets of major cities to demand his immediate release. These demonstrations were outlawed and harshly suppressed: hundreds were beaten and detained. At this point, Putin’s Russia was already well on its way to invading Ukraine, and the elimination of any potential opposition was an integral part of this preparation. The protests on the day the war began, February 24, 2022, were poorly organized and no longer reached the scale of the previous year. Russian society plunged into an atmosphere of fear and apathy, and Navalny could only learn news in his prison cell from propaganda TV programs and letters from his comrades.

## Not a Slave

Alexei Navalny was never a socialist. He fully believed in the possibility of a “normal” democracy for Russia, with the rule of law, freedom of the speech, a massive middle class, and a socially

oriented market. To the end Navalny took seriously such banal principles as “government of the people and by the people.” Following Alexander Radishchev, the first Russian dissident of the late eighteenth century and fighter for liberation, Navalny wanted every Russian to feel like “not a tree, not a slave, but a human being.” And now, after the murder of Navalny, and faced with the rise of authoritarian forms of capitalism around the world, we must remember that without basic freedom of speech and assembly, the Left and the oppressed have very little chance of winning anything.

If we find ourselves confronted with a repressive apparatus armed to the teeth, which is not restrained by any legal framework, then we are unlikely to be able to build a mass movement. The participants in the recent protests in Iran know this, as do the Palestinians and Kurds, who are tortured in their thousands in prisons. Russian socialist and anarchist political prisoners know this. Navalny not only understood these simple truths, but sacrificed his life for them. He didn’t do so in vain.

Source [Jacobin](#).

# ‘Optimism of the Will’: Ecosocialist Dreamin’

20 February 2024, by **Allan Todd**

However, the latest statistics and reports on the ever-worsening climate and ecological crises make it painfully clear that today’s generations—never mind “the next seven generations”—are not being considered by the fossil fuel giants or by the other big capitalist corporations. Or, indeed, by the governments that facilitate their Earth-destroying ‘business-as-usual’ projects. In January, the EU’s Copernicus Climate Change Service confirmed that earlier predictions—that 2023 would be the warmest year since records began—had been confirmed.

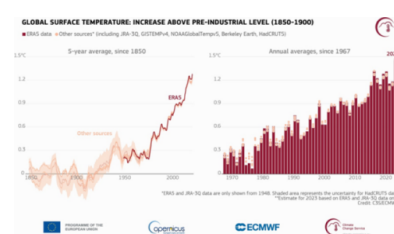


Fig. 1 - Saying ‘Goodbye’ to the Paris 2015 ‘target’ of “1.5C to Stay Alive!”

For the first time, global warming, or “global boiling,” as UN General Secretary António Guterres called it in July 2023, with the world experiencing a record number of record-breaking

extreme weather events, exceeded 1.5C every day across the entire year, compared to pre-industrial levels. And this month, Copernicus reported that January was the warmest January ever, even beating January 2023—and that this February was heading towards being the warmest February ever!

In addition, the Global Tipping Points Report for 2023 warned about the increasing risks of “irreversible change” as regards both climate change and nature loss. Their Report pointed out that of the Earth’s major tipping systems, 5 were already near



to crossing irreversible tipping points, and that this posed: “threats of a magnitude never faced by humanity.”

### THESE TIPPING POINTS POSE THREATS OF A MAGNITUDE NEVER BEFORE FACED BY HUMANITY

These threats could materialise in the coming decades, and at lower levels of global warming than previously thought. They could be catastrophic, including global-scale loss of capacity to grow major staple crops. Triggering one Earth system tipping point could trigger another, causing a domino effect of accelerating and unmanageable damage. Tipping points show that the overall threat posed by the climate and ecological crisis is far more severe than is commonly understood.

Fig. 2 - Latest warnings from Global Tipping Points

If these tipping points are passed, there will be such severe damage to Earth’s life-support systems that the stability of human societies will be under serious threat of collapse, something David Attenborough warned about in 2018.

Thus, it may seem perverse for the second part of this article’s title to reference The Mamas & The Papas’ song California Dreamin’, by speaking of ‘Ecosocialist Dreamin’. However, revolutionary dreams and hopes are what enable people to keep struggling for a better world. Although at present we are still a long way from seeing the global Earth-saving and Earth-healing climate and ecological strategies we need to see, ecosocialism is the approach that offers our best hope of getting out of the mess we are currently in and of ensuring that the Earth will continue to live and thrive.

## The importance of being Gramsci

The first part of the title, ‘optimism of the will’ – is the second element of a political approach the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci urged on his comrades during the 1920s and ‘30s, which is often summarised as: ‘Pessimism of the intellect, but optimism of the will’

Gramsci had become General Secretary of the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) in August 1924. By then, Mussolini had been prime minister of Italy for two years, and Fascist Party gangs had been terrorising and killing members of left wing groups for

several years. However, despite Mussolini’s increasingly repressive rule and despite Gramsci’s pessimistic analysis of the current trends, he rejected a fatalistic cynicism and instead remained optimistic about the possibility of a radical transformation into something better. In fact, as early as March 1924, in his article ‘Against Pessimism’, published in the PCI journal L’Ordine Nuovo (New Order), he had warned that: “the thick, dark cloud of pessimism... oppressing the most able and responsible militants... may in fact be the greatest danger we face at present. [30] In fact, ‘Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will’ soon became the motto of that journal.

There was certainly plenty to be pessimistic about when he wrote that article. By then, there were multiple crises of capitalism, in particular post-war austerity and the resultant mass poverty, and the rise of fascism. These crises were seen by many as the ‘monsters’ of a capitalist world order that was disintegrating but from which a new and better world was struggling—with considerable difficulty—to emerge. Gramsci described it thus: “The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear. [31]

For Gramsci—and for many others—things were to become even worse: in November 1926, he was arrested and imprisoned, remaining a prisoner until his death in 1937. During his imprisonment, the threats posed by capitalism’s ‘monsters’ and ‘morbid symptoms’ increased: the ‘Great Depression’, the coming to power of Hitler’s Nazi Party in Germany, and increasing signs of the approach of a new world war. Nonetheless, and despite his worsening health, he maintained that ‘optimism of the will’. In a ‘Letter from Prison’, dated December 1929, he wrote:

“I’m a pessimist because of intelligence, but an optimist because of will...Whatever the situation, I imagine the worst that could happen in order to summon

up all my reserves and will power to overcome every obstacle. [32]

Today, there are still ‘monsters’ – those Gramsci wrote about (including the spread of ‘creeping’ fascism around the globe), and the new existential crises of climate change, ecological destruction, pandemics, and several nasty imperialistic wars. To many, it seems as though this ‘old world is dying’ too.

## Dreaming is revolutionary!

That we need to free humanity from capitalism’s ‘morbid symptoms’, to create another, and better, world, is becoming increasingly clear to many. The urgent need for such a better world was underlined by the historian Eric Hobsbawm:

“If humanity is to have a recognizable future, it cannot be by prolonging the past or the present. If we try to build the third millennium on that basis, we shall fail. And the price of failure, that is to say, the alternative to a changed society, is darkness. [33]

More recently, Neil Faulkner put it thus:

“We believe that the old order is doomed and we must build a new one based on democracy, internationalism, ecosocialism, solidarity with the poor and the oppressed, and the total transformation of society to serve human need not private greed. [34]

By far the best hope for replacing today’s ‘old order’ with a new one along the lines Neil Faulkner envisaged lies with ecosocialism. Many—even some on the left—consider such ‘dreaming’ of a

better world impractical and unrevolutionary. Yet, in fact, such dreaming is very much 'in the spirit of Marx' and is based firmly on the possibilities seen in present-day realities. As early as the 1960s, Che Guevara argued—against his 'orthodox' communist critics—that his dreams of the possibilities for global emancipation were not divorced from the existing material circumstances and conditions of the time. Che believed: "revolutionary hope [is] necessary for revolutionary politics and practice." [35]

In fact, such hoping and dreaming are similar to what the Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch termed 'Real Possible' hope, which 'begins with the seed in which what is coming is inherent.' [36] Lenin, too, stressed the importance of dreaming a concrete vision of a better future. According to him, revolutionaries 'should dream!' – even if those dreams 'may run ahead of the natural march of events.' For him, 'If there is some connection between dreams and life then all is well.' [37] Thus, as Ernest Mandel argued: "hopes and dreams are... categories of revolutionary Realpolitik". [38]

For centuries, many revolutionaries like Lenin and Che have dreamed of abolishing exploitation, oppression, inequality, unfreedom, and alienation through the creation of a classless society. Then, however, it has been argued by some that material and cultural conditions had been insufficiently developed to allow such dreams to become reality. Thus, in that sense, such revolutionaries can indeed be seen as 'utopians', because their hopes were not fully based on the realities of their worlds, even though their rebellions were entirely justified as being part of the global struggle by humans against inhuman conditions. Nonetheless, those early utopians paved the way forward by developing dreams, ideals, and ways of thinking and acting that now finally make it possible to realise those hopes and dreams.

Thus, despite today's multiple crises—and the depth of many of those crises—there is more than a glimmer of hope. Because, as well as globalising its economic reach and

imposing its addictive fixation on perpetual growth in GDP and profits, capitalism has also, inadvertently but inevitably, created a vast global army of the disposed and exploited and an international environmental movement, which, between them, using Marx's term, have the potential to be the 'grave-diggers' of this hugely exploitative and ecologically destructive system. As Marx observed, humanity tends to set itself:

"only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation". [39]

And the solution that has by far the best potential for solving those multiple crises is... ecosocialism.

## Reasons to be hopeful

Before the start of this century, there were not many radical or revolutionary left organisations in the UK that specifically identified as ecosocialist. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a definite shift towards more left groups embracing ecosocialism. Most recently, in 2021, an Ecosocialist Alliance was formed, in which several ecosocialist groups have been cooperating to produce joint statements in preparation for G8 and COP meetings. Most recently, 2023 saw the launch of an exciting new 'Ecosocialism Conferences' project.

While it's difficult at times to maintain hope, especially when some things are going backward rather than progressing, it is essential to maintain Gramsci's 'optimism of the will', and to dream of the real possibility of creating an ecologically sustainable and economically just world. While the first chapter may, initially, merely confirm some in their depression about the chances of altering course, the hope is that, by the end of the

book, most will see that such hopes and dreams are not utopian or unrealistic. On the contrary, those hopes and dreams, along with a determination to keep on struggling, are essential 'For the Earth to Live'. In fact, if he were alive today, Ian Drury, who has been described as often being a 'voice for the disenfranchised', would (probably!) be singing that there are 'Reasons to Be Hopeful'.

It is increasingly clear to many that, with corporations, governments, and mainstream parties refusing to put climate protection before capitalist profits, the choice facing us and most of the other species on this heating-up planet is, quite simply, 'either ecosocialism or capitalist barbarism and extinction!' While it is necessary to fight hard for all the reforms, mitigations, and policies we can force from governments, ultimately we will have to make a decisive break with the logic of capitalism itself. As Marx would (probably!) have said if he were alive today: "People of the world unite, rise up, and ACT! You have a planet to save!

In 2018, Greta Thunberg underlined why it is vital to step up the climate struggle when she said to older generations – on behalf of younger generations: "Please treat the climate crisis like the acute crisis it is and give us a future. Our lives are in your hands. [40] As James Connolly, the revolutionary Irish republican, said: "The powerful only appear powerful because we are on our knees. Let us rise!

There are already plenty who have refused to let 'pessimism of the intellect' defeat their 'optimism of the will', and have thus risen from their knees to fight for current and future generations, including many thousands acting with Extinction Rebellion and Just Stop Oil, to name but two organizations. So let's come together and 'Unite to Survive!'

Finally, for those still struggling with maintaining hope, perhaps these words from the late and great Seamus Heaney will help tip the balance the right way:

History says, Don't hope  
On this side of the grave.

But then, once in a lifetime  
The longed-for tidal wave

Of justice can rise up,  
And hope and history rhyme. [41]

Source: [AntiCapitalist Resistance](#)

# From Ukraine to Palestine - Occupation is a Crime

19 February 2024, by **Sotsialnyi Rukh**

The actions of the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip are punitive against its entire population, about half of which are children. Israel has imposed a total siege on the Gaza Strip, which has been under an illegal Israeli-Egyptian blockade since 2007, preventing the supply of water, electricity, food and medicine to Gaza's more than 2 million people, turning it into "the world's largest open-air prison".

According to various data provided by international organizations, within a few weeks of this operation, up to 18,000 civilians, including 7,800 children were killed and another 50,000 people were injured; 85% of the nearly 2 million population of the Gaza Strip - were forced to flee their homes. More than 200 medical workers and more than 100 UN employees were among the dead. UN confirms that at least half of the population of Gaza is reduced to starvation. It seems unacceptable to justify the imposition of a humanitarian catastrophe and the terror of a powerful military machine against the civilian population under the pretext of a "war on terror", as the Russians did in Ichkeria/Chechnya or the Americans did in Iraq.

Israel's next military operation in the Gaza Strip is the exact opposite of an effective resolution of the conflict. Such a policy has been going on for decades, since the state of Israel, after confrontation with neighboring Arab countries, reinforced by British colonial policies, displaced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their land, after which millions of their descendants were doomed to flee (events known as the Nakba -

"catastrophe" in Arabic). The Israeli authorities continue to ignore numerous UN resolutions, the latest of which was adopted on October 27 by the votes of 120 of the 193 member states in the General Assembly and called for a ceasefire. Reports from the UN and human rights organizations have repeatedly compared the segregation of Palestinians practiced by Israel to the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Israeli settlers, many of them militant fanatics, continue their policy of colonization and violence against the Palestinian population in the West Bank with the connivance of the Israeli authorities, who carry out the daily humiliation, arbitrary detention and killing of Palestinian men and women *and children*?. Even before this year's events, according to the calculations of the Israeli human rights organization Bezelem, since 2000, Israelis have killed more than 10,000 Palestinian men and women. Moreover, the general rule is the disproportionality of violence on the part of Israel, with which it responds even to exclusively peaceful protests. For example, during the suppression of the Palestinian [Great March of Return] to the wall blocking Gaza Israeli security forces killed 195 Palestinians, including 41 minors [in a year since March 2018] (data from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs). And in terms of the number of Palestinians killed in the West Bank, 2023 became a record year for the entire time that the UN has been keeping statistics (and this is as of October, when Israeli security forces killed more than a hundred people in this part of Palestine, which does not have any Hamas bases). The

indifferent reaction of the world community, no more than "deep concern", led to the further despair of local residents in peaceful ways of resolving the conflict, which is what the fundamentalist forces are using.

The current Netanyahu government, also filled with reactionaries and religious fanatics who openly dehumanize the Palestinians and call for their murder and genocide, has gone even further than its predecessors. Israel itself at one time played a not insignificant role in supplanting the mainly secular and non-violent resistance to the occupation among the Palestinians of the time of the first Intifada with a more right-wing, violent and fundamentalist variety. Netanyahu and his officials admitted that they have encouraged the reactionaries and religious fanatics from Hamas, because that weakened the Palestinian Authority, introduced additional discord into the condition of Palestinians and sabotaged the prospects of building a sovereign state for them.

This reckless policy did not change even after Egyptian, but also Israeli intelligence, current and retired military ranks warned of possible escalation as a result of the blockade and colonial policy. Thus, the former head of the Israeli Navy and the Shabak secret service, Ami Ayalon, warned that "when Palestinians see us destroying their homes, fear, frustration and hatred grow. These are the reasons that push people to terrorist organizations."

Netanyahu, like other conservatives, constantly used the rhetoric of



"defence against threats" to justify their attacks on democratic freedoms and further build-up of the security apparatus, which, however, did not avert the attacks of Hamas from Gaza but instead was preoccupied with terrorizing the Palestinians in the West Bank. After all, the never-ending spiral of violence has not and will not increase security for anyone except extreme conservative-nationalist forces. Such an atmosphere has already led to the most right-wing Knesset and government in Israel's history. And the current war has provided an indulgence for the Netanyahu cabinet against which mass protests continued for most of 2023 (characteristically, a poll conducted on the eve of the escalation showed that the majority of the population of Gaza did not trust the Hamas movement, which more than a decade and a half ago after a civil conflict with Fatah established an authoritarian one-party government here).

At the same time, the mainstream of both leading parties of the main patron of Israel – the United States – demonstrated an immediate readiness to provide unconditional military and diplomatic support for almost all actions of the Israeli government. Here, both the contrast with the hesitation regarding arms supplies to Ukraine and the desire of the most reactionary circles of the American ruling class – the right wing of the Republican Party – to finance the ethnic cleansing and adventures of the Netanyahu government at the expense of depriving Ukrainians of aid are notable. In this, the Trumpists are similar to many other far-right forces in the West: having many anti-Semites in their ranks, such parties at the same time protect the ability of both Israeli and Russian security forces to kill residents of Palestine and Ukraine with impunity.

What's more, Washington itself contributed to the current rise in tensions, supporting Israel's encroachment on Jerusalem as its capital exclusively since the Trump administration. Now the US is vetoing initiatives in the UN Security Council, such as Brazil's proposed provision of humanitarian corridors or the latest

ceasefire resolution of December 8, which was voted for by 13 out of 15 members of the UN Security Council. As in the case of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, this once again proves that the permanent members of the UN should be deprived of their veto powers which paralyze the ability of the international community to stop the carnage.

Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine has increased the atmosphere of international tension and impunity, enabling the escalation of a series of conflicts that put entire communities on the brink of survival as already happened with the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh as a result of the aggressive actions of the Aliyev regime in September of this year. The current round of confrontation in the Middle East is of the same ilk and resulted in disturbing trends in the rest of the world, in particular, a surge in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia (up to attempted Jewish pogroms, such as in the North Caucasus controlled by Putin's Russia, armed attacks on Palestinians such as the students in Vermont, or the murder of people such as the Palestinian boy in Chicago or the police shooting of Jewish tourists and a local guide in Egypt).

Unfortunately, the reaction of the Ukrainian authorities also reveals an extremely biased and one-sided approach: rightly condemning the attacks on civilians in Israel and honouring the dead, it at the same time prefers to ignore the dead civilians in Palestine. Despite the fact that Ukrainian diplomacy at the UN has consistently condemned the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands and other violations by Israel in almost all cases, whose authorities take an ambivalent position on the Russian occupation and provide the latest precedents to follow. Instead, the shameful rhetoric of demonizing Palestinians, declaring all of them, from infants to the elderly, as "terrorists" prevails in the Ukrainian media.

Yes, one should be aware that for many of the self-proclaimed "friends" of Palestine, whether they are well-known Hamas partners and sponsors,

such as the authoritarian authorities of Qatar, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, or Russia (which maintained emphatically friendly relations with both the Netanyahu government and with Hamas), the tragedy of the Palestinian people is only a bargaining chip. But reducing the Palestinians to "proxies of Tehran and the Kremlin" in the domestic information space is as illiterate and outrageous a caricature as the "proxy" justification of Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Instead, it is in Ukraine that the suffering of the Palestinian people should be understood: there, too, the occupation by a state that possesses nuclear weapons and superiority in the armed forces continues, simply disregards UN resolutions and international law, denies the rights to subjectivity and resistance. The tragedy we are now experiencing should sharpen our sensitivity to similar human experiences in all corners of the world. The Ukrainian letter of solidarity with the Palestinian people, posted on the platform of the "Spilne" magazine website, demonstrated such alternative voices to the official one, which affirm the universal right to self-determination and resistance to the occupation.

"How lonely are you, our loneliness, when they win their wars," asked the Arab writer Hiba Kamal Abu Nada in her poem, when "your land is sold at auction, and the world is a free market... This is the age of ignorance, when no one will intercede for us." The 32-year-old poet became one of the thousands of civilian victims of Israeli airstrikes this year. The duty of the world is not to leave the oppressed alone, especially when faced with the threat of their physical extermination. Not to put up with bombs and rockets flying at their heads. Neither in Ukraine nor in Palestine.

Therefore, the "Social Movement" calls for an immediate ceasefire and the admission of humanitarian aid to the region, and also expresses its support for the Palestinian people in their legitimate desire for a just and lasting peace.

31 January 2024

Source: [Social Movement](#).



# Look each other in the eyes whilst building a path as you walk

18 February 2024, by **Gonzalo Donair**

For decades Europe lived off the profits of primitive capitalist and colonial accumulation. For years the EU pretended to be the good cop of blissful globalisation. But today the geopolitical board is moving under their feet and the European elites see their traditional global weight in danger. Old and new powers are vying for the throne and its scarce resources to confront the climatic collapse of late capitalism.

It is time to reinforce external aggressiveness on all fronts. It is time to speak the “hard language of power” to defend that “European garden” of which Josep Borrell, Vice President of the European Commission, spoke. Because the interests of the elites that govern European capitalism are not going to defend themselves. Because for electric cars to circulate in Berlin, Paris or Barcelona, pressure to mine in the Global South must increase. And surely new mines must open in European territory.

Attacks without limits against a territory and against those who inhabit it. Attacks that generate and will continue to generate popular responses. Resistance against a neo-extractivism painted green; against the attacks of capital disguised as a change in the productive model. Climate urgency as a critical background for those at the bottom and as an alibi for those at the top.

And meanwhile, the extreme neoliberal centre has been embracing the reactionary and xenophobic agenda of an extreme right that, along the way, has changed its traditional Europhobia for an ultra-conservative and chauvinist Euro-reformism. Why leave the EU if they can co-govern it as they already do in several Member States? Machismo, homophobia, racism, Islamophobia, criminalisation

of protest. The popular majorities, with all their diversity of dissidence, have become dangerous minorities. An open war against the world of work, public services and life in common. New battles in the war of capital against life.

Who has the right to have rights in this Europe of markets, war and barbed wire? Those above are clear about the question and its answer. How do we, of the anti-capitalist left, respond? The answer can only be in unison. But such unity requires spaces for meeting and discussion because international attacks require internationalist responses.

However, the absence of international and internationalist coordinating spaces in the radical left camp is a reality as palpable as it is worrying. There are the remains of the Party of the European Left on which part of the heritage of Eurocommunism pivoted. There are proto-electoral groupings around the new left that has emerged in recent years in several European countries. But none of these spaces have the intention of going beyond their own specific electoral and institutional frameworks. We need something more. And we are not the only ones. In addition to political organisations, there are dozens of social and union actors throughout Europe who advocate anti-capitalism and anti-militarist, eco-socialist, anti-colonial and feminist internationalism.

With the modest but determined intention of contributing to laying a stone on that long road, on February 3, Anticapitalists and the CUP (Candidatura d'Unitat Popular or Popular Unity Candidacy) convened and co-organised in Barcelona a European meeting of anti-capitalist and alternative left organisations to reflect together on the current

moment and debate about the alternatives that we can implement to change Europe at its core.

Delegations from 16 political organisations from 13 European territories [42] discussed with representatives of other nearby social organisations about the consequences of growing global militarisation and the role of the EU, as well as about possible eco-socialist responses to the project of green capitalism of the European elites. Two round tables where shared characterisations were updated, concrete proposals advanced and existing differences discussed, such as those that have revolved during the last period around the characterisation of the conflict in Ukraine after the Russian invasion. And perhaps the main conclusion is that more face-to-face spaces and camaraderie like the one generated there are necessary to continue the exchange without the cold and violent distance of social networks that do nothing to contribute to the debate between comrades.

And since struggles and resistance are not built in the abstract, but on shared agendas, the participating organisations picked up the baton of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement to promote, in the respective platforms of solidarity with Palestine in which they participate, the call for a demonstration on February 25 or during the surrounding days, with the aim of launching the initial experience of a day of protest on a European scale. Additionally, the European meeting of organisations in solidarity with Palestine that will be held in Barcelona on March 16 and 17 was reported to the meeting.

And just as important as the formal discussions were and always will be,

the informal exchanges that occurred during the meeting were also productive. The emotional and affective dimension of camaraderie is a pillar in the construction of revolutionary organisations. As is its potential international coordination. Navigating the permanent dialectical tension between ambition and

prudence, the participants of the European meeting came out a little closer to taking the next step towards a space for exchange and coordination between anti-capitalists from all over Europe that must continue growing, but that is already starting to walk. But, like the collapse of capitalism or

the old empires, it will not simply happen: it will depend on the militant push that those who participate in that space want to give it. Because the path is made by walking the walk.

*Translated by David Fagan for International Viewpoint from Punto de Vista Internacional.*

## Macky Sall is the gravedigger of democracy in Senegal

17 February 2024, by **Paul Martial**

True to the motto of African potentates: "You don't organize an election in order to lose it", President Macky Sall has undertaken a veritable constitutional coup by postponing the ballot until December 2024, just hours before the official election opening.

### Plan A fails

Following the revision of the Constitution in 2016, President Sall had attempted to run for a third term, but to no avail in the face of opposition both within the country and internationally. He therefore appointed his successor, current Prime Minister Amadou Ba. This solitary decision provoked discontent and opposition. The presidential camp was divided and weakened by the emergence of dissident candidates.

Although the outgoing president had prepared the ground by removing his main rival Ousmane Sonko from the electoral game, dissolving his PASTEF (Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité) party, imprisoning dozens of opponents and

muzzling the free press, his protégé's candidacy was not a success. And the imprisoned Bassirou Diomaye Faye, who is replacing Sonko, has a great chance of winning the election.

This is a real nightmare for the Senegalese elites, because PASTEF's programme aims to break all ties with the former colonial power, in particular by leaving the CFA franc, closing the French military base and adopting a policy independent of the hexagon [France].

### Plan B falls apart

Faced with such a situation, willy-nilly, Macky Sall had to incorporate the candidacy of Karim Wade, the son of the former president, into his plan. He was forced into exile for many years as a result of corruption scandals. But if for a time Sall and Wade were opposed, necessity being the law, their union against Sonko's supporters was sealed. But then the press revealed Wade's dual French and Senegalese nationality, leading to the cancellation

of his candidacy by the Constitutional Council. His party's MPs counter-attacked and demanded a commission of enquiry into allegations of corruption by two judges of the Constitutional Council. Secondly, the MPs from the President's camp voted in favour. Macky Sall took advantage of this situation, which his supporters had created, to talk of an institutional crisis and postpone the elections.

After having the opposition MPs removed by the gendarmerie, the majority of the National Assembly validated the new election date of 15 December and the presidential extension by the same amount. That's ten months, long enough to allow Macky Sall to reshuffle the deck so that the election results are in line with his wishes. Like a gambler cancelling a game because he has no trump cards left! From now on, anything is possible, including the streets overturning the table.

15 February 2024

*Translated by International Viewpoint from l'Anticapitaliste.*

## BDS movement more important than ever

## 16 February 2024, by **Hermann Dierkes**

The ceasefire demanded by South Africa was not decreed, although the measures taken together are practically impossible to implement without it. The Israeli government must report on its actions within a month and South Africa has the right to monitor them locally. The global protests against Israel's actions, which constitute outright and monstrous state terror and have stripped away even the last shred of respect for international law, are mobilizing hundreds of thousands, particularly in the global south, but also in the USA and major European cities. From an international law perspective, signatories to the Genocide Convention such as the USA, Britain and Germany are complicit because they supply Israel with weapons and provide financial and diplomatic support.

As part of the protests against the scorched earth campaign in Gaza, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, initiated in 2005 by over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations, has received new momentum and millions of support. It is directed against the Zionist apartheid and colonial settler state. The call applies until Israel fully complies with its obligations under international law and has nothing whatsoever to do with anti-Semitism. BDS is based on the fight against apartheid in South Africa. The core demands are the end of the occupation, apartheid in the Israeli sphere of influence and the colonization of the West Bank and in Gaza, the dismantling of the separation wall, the equal treatment of Palestinian citizens of Israel and the realization of the right of return of those displaced since 1948 (or their compensation), as it is UN Resolution 194 demands. It is therefore about enforcing the three essential legal positions for the Palestinians guaranteed by international law and numerous UN resolutions through institutional and consumer boycotts, regardless of nationality, ethnicity or political orientation.

Since 2008, the BDS movement has been coordinated by a broad alliance of civil society actors by the National BDS Committee (BNC). The best exposition of the goals and methods of BDS to date by the Palestinian author Omar Barghouti was published by Haymarket back in 2011. It is still valid. [43]

The supporters work within the framework of the principles on the BDS topics and with forms that they consider useful. BDS has already had numerous successes over the years, including against banks, pension funds, companies and corporations that profit from the occupation, both Israeli and US or European. BDS calls on consumers to avoid producers, supermarkets and fast food establishments that support the occupation, produce in illegal Israeli settlements and profit from it. These include McDonalds (which currently offers Israeli soldiers their hamburgers for free), Starbucks, H&M, the Israeli cosmetics company Ahava, which exploits raw materials from the West Bank, among others, KFC, Maggi, Domino and Hut Pizza, Carrefour, etc. Corporations like this are being called upon to divest Sportswear company Puma, which supports the Israeli football team, Veolia and the insurance company Axa. A number of pension funds - including those from Norway and the USA - have already withdrawn their investments from Israel, and Deutsche Bank has sold its shares in the largest Israeli defense company, Elbit. The prison company G4S has withdrawn from Israel. A number of security and spy software companies that develop their technology on the occupied Palestinians are also being boycotted. Many municipalities around the world, including Barcelona, have scaled down or severed their relations with Israel.

For years, BDS has been attacked as "anti-Semitic" by many Western governments, as a continuation of Israeli policy, and has been banned and criminalized. In the USA, numerous states have criminalized

BDS. In Germany, in 2018, the Bundestag passed - practically unanimously - a resolution that was not legally binding but had devastating undemocratic effects. Numerous Israeli intellectuals also protested against this at the time. Municipalities, public institutions, universities, museums, the Frankfurt Book Fair and artistic institutions such as the Essen Folkwang, the Kassel Documenta or the Weissenhof School in Berlin repeatedly refer to the Bundestag resolution to deal with disinvitations, refusal of space, bans on appearances, slander, dismissals and so on a host of other repressive measures against BDS supporters - or alleged BDS supporters. The denunciation often extends through the busy network of so-called Israel friends, who work in the style of block wardens closely with the German-Israeli Society, right-wing mainstream media (from Bild to Jerusalem Post), the federal and state commissioners against anti-Semitism and the Israeli embassy collaborate. However, many of these disgusting and absolutely undemocratic measures have often been overturned in court. The Bavarian Administrative Court ruled against it in the name of freedom of expression, as did the European Court of Human Rights.

This cowardly policy, which is dependent on Israel and informers, has particularly damaging effects in the German cultural and educational sector, where world-famous authors such as Annie Ernaux, Adana Shibli, Kamila Shamsi and rock stars such as Roger Waters are affected. Hundreds of academics, artists and cultural workers from all over the world have publicly protested against this and are now boycotting Germany, including many opposition Israelis and Jewish voices. Part of the BDS movement is PACBI, the Palestinian call for a cultural and academic boycott of Israel. PACBI assumes that "scientific and cultural institutions in Israel are integrated into a system that perpetuates the unequal treatment of the Palestinian population, molds it

into strategies and packages it into concepts, anchors it in laws and consolidates it in everyday practices" (Birgit Althaler) . The Israeli filmmaker Eyal Sivan and the French documentary producer Armelle Laborie have explained the goals and methods of PACBI in the book *Legitimer Protest*, which has been available in German translation since 2018 [44]

The software expert Ahmed Bashbash, who comes from Gaza and whose brother fell victim to Israeli bombs, has developed an app called NoThanks. [45] Together with BDS coordinators from Barcelona and Ramallah, he reported on Al Jazeera that he was able to record 190,000 downloads in a very short time. In Germany it is now important that the 2018 Bundestag resolution against BDS be consigned to the dustbin of history. However, if it is not overturned in court, it will probably be impossible to achieve success in the near future given the majority situation, a super coalition from the "Left" to AFD against BDS and the self-made trap of "Israel solidarity as a reason of state".

## The situation in the Gaza Strip

"Israel has declared war on an occupied people," said Palestinian politician Mustafa Barghouti. The regime is demonstratively refusing to comply with the requirements of the highest UN court. The right-wing radical government and the military want to continue "until Hamas is destroyed." The blockade of the Gaza Strip, which has been ongoing for over 16 years, was drastically tightened at the start of the war. And despite all the protests and efforts of aid organizations, the blockade of food, drinking water, medicine and energy at the two Israeli-controlled checkpoints has hardly been eased. Truckloads are repeatedly rejected under flimsy pretexts because the inspectors don't like something, e.g. tent poles. Literally everything is missing. Right-wing extremist Israelis have now appeared in front of the checkpoints and in Ashdod, Israel, and are hindering the transport of aid

supplies with the white and blue flag in their fists.

The continuous heavy bombing and shelling of densely populated areas by the air force, artillery and planned demolitions, which disregard all proportionality and constitute collective punishment, are in themselves serious war crimes. They have now completely or partially destroyed almost 360,000 residential buildings (70%) and reduced the entire infrastructure to rubble. The massive attacks do not spare hospitals and ambulances. Of the 35 hospitals, at best 13 are still partially operational and completely overcrowded. A number of people were ultimately ordered to evacuate by the Israeli occupying army. Doctors and staff work until they drop, have been chased away, kidnapped or killed by snipers. Medical materials, food and energy are hardly available anymore. 386 educational institutions, kindergartens and numerous UN facilities where people sought protection were destroyed. Over 150 UNWRA aid workers were killed, as were over 100 journalists - often along with their families. Numerous cultural assets and religious institutions were bombed, including ancient mosques, churches and libraries. All universities were bombed or deliberately blown up.

Since the Hague verdict, more than 1,000 people - most of them women and children - have been killed and many more injured, often seriously. The total number - including the thousands of missing people - is now estimated at well over 30,000, and thousands of bodies lie under the rubble in which people search for their loved ones with their bare hands. The number of wounded and seriously injured is more than twice as high. In the past 3 months, 85% of the population has been driven away and pushed together, often violently, into an ever-smaller southern tip of the Gaza Strip - from one supposedly "safe" spot to the next, which is then often bombed and shelled again. Even the primitive shelters made of plastic materials and food sacks around Rafah, where the people huddled together are exposed to seasonal rains, low temperatures and lakes of sewage, are now no longer spared

from shelling. The tents from the Red Crescent, the Red Cross, Arab states such as Qatar and UN organizations that arrived with aid deliveries are not at all sufficient in view of the 1.7 million internally displaced people. There is a risk that the Palestinians will be pushed into the Egyptian Sinai and thus experience further ethnic cleansing (Nakba).

Israeli warfare is becoming increasingly dirtier - the arsenal for this has been replenished by the past terrorist attacks and practices on Gaza in 2008/09, 2012, 2014 as well as the everyday terror of the army and settlers in the West Bank. But now it seems to be a sign that the war against the armed resistance groups of Hamas, Islamic Jihad or the PFLP is no longer winnable: collective executions of prisoners, arbitrary detention, disappearances, torture and humiliation of young people and men , even by doctors, shooting of fleeing women and children without hesitation, senseless destruction, and theft of private valuables and funds are the order of the day.

The Palestinian resistance groups are self-sacrificing and stubborn, making clever use of the extensive underground tunnels and the rubble landscape. You have to recognize that they are waging an anti-colonial struggle, although it does not mean uncritical solidarity with the politics of "Hamas". The Israeli army is now trying to flood tunnels with seawater, risking the death of the 136 hostages still in the hands of Palestinian resistance groups. Experts and environmentalists warn that things won't work again potential damage to groundwater stocks. There are indications that attempts have already been made to use poison gas. Very little is known about the resistance's casualties - which are likely to be high - and the Israeli army's droning numbers are not credible. It often has to admit its own losses in areas where it supposedly eliminated the partisans (terrorists for Israel).

## Scandalous



## policies of the federal government in Germany

The movement against the Israeli campaign of annihilation in Gaza, but also against the bloody terror of settlers and the army in the West Bank, must become much stronger. In Germany in particular, we cannot allow the government to welcome the large-scale mobilizations against the AFD's anti-migrant policies, but continue to collaborate undauntedly with the Israeli regime, which has been accused of genocide and has set itself the goal of further expulsion and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians has. The federal government must give up its illegal and harmful policy of

unconditional support for the Israeli regime and hostility to the peace movement, as summarized in an outrageous manner by Chancellor Scholz himself: "Israel adheres to international law, "its army is deeply moral," "I have no doubt about that," "Our place is on the side of Israel" and the like.

The scandalous attitude of the Berlin traffic light government recently reached a new, sad climax when, shortly after the Hague verdict, it fell for an informant maneuver by the Israeli government went and froze the funds for the UNRWA refugee agency - just after the USA and subsequently a wider range of countries. According to accusations that were once again made without any substantiated evidence, a dozen UNRWA employees are said to have taken part in the bloody Hamas attack on October 7th. It was impossible to wait for the UN

investigation to begin immediately. The US government stated that it had not been able to study Israel's alleged documents, but found Israel's claim to be "very convincing." So much for the rule of law in the "values-based" West!

Even the *Financial Times*, which has now been able to view the Israeli documents, does not attach any evidentiary value to them. For the Israeli government, this PR coup is about countering the ICJ ruling and - once again - weakening the UNRWA. It doesn't matter that the lives of hundreds of thousands in Gaza depend on aid deliveries and that an entire generation of children can no longer attend school. Once again proof of Israel's genocidal policies! BDS can also make a very important contribution against this depraved policy.

6 February 2024

## After two years of war, a Ukrainian feminist point of view

15 February 2024, by **Patrick Le Tréhondat**

Over the past two years, Ukrainian society has undergone dramatic changes in its lifestyle and visions. This transformation is also evident among feminist activists and women in general.

The war sparked a debate about whether feminist movements should be clearly anti-militarist. At a time when Ukrainians face the threat of physical annihilation, the anti-militarist stance of some Western feminists appears as a privilege, blind to the real threats and dangers that Ukrainian women face on a daily basis. Ukrainian feminists have adopted a key message in these difficult times: Ukraine needs weapons. It needs defensive weapons, such as air defence systems to protect its skies from constant Russian missile attacks that devastate Ukrainian cities and kill civilians, as well as offensive

weapons to retake occupied territories from the aggressor.

The war has affected everyone in Ukraine. While some areas appear "normal" and free of direct hostilities, rocket attacks and constant threats from Russia persist. Almost everyone has a loved one who serves in the military or has lost someone in those years. Ukrainians are being forced to overcome personal and collective trauma, uncertainty about the future, daily military threats and daily hardships while demonstrating resilience and calling for international support and assistance.

Unfortunately, over the past two years, the general interest in Ukraine has declined, while the challenges facing Ukrainian society have not diminished. These challenges continue to exist or evolve into new forms.

Issues range from meeting the needs of thousands of displaced people from frontline cities to providing electricity to cities during the bombing of energy infrastructure. Ukrainians must constantly be flexible, creative and resilient to face the new challenges posed by the war.

Feminists, like all Ukrainians, have been forced to adapt to the new roles and challenges brought about by large-scale war. Many feminists serve in the military or volunteer to meet the needs of the front lines. Feminist organizations in Ukraine are continuing their work, now also responding to needs arising from the war, such as helping internally displaced people and addressing other challenges. The needs of women in Ukrainian society have increased dramatically. Economic and social insecurity is on the rise, along with job

losses. Many women lost their homes and jobs and were left alone to deal with the situation when their husbands were mobilized to the front.

Ukraine still does not have a recognized voice in many international discussions. It is often deprived of the means to act by the international community and is seen as a zone of influence for NATO or Russia. Ukrainians must fight not only for their physical survival, but also for the right to represent themselves and defend their interests, continuously preserving their freedom of action. These issues also concern Ukrainian feminists, who must not only think about their survival and provide assistance in the country, but also face the misunderstandings and sometimes paternalistic attitudes of Western feminists.

However, positive changes have also taken place for Ukrainian feminist society. In June 2022, the Ukrainian government ratified the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. This has been one of the main demands of Ukrainian feminists for several years and a step towards greater integration of Ukraine into the EU. In addition, Ukrainian female soldiers are actively advocating for their rights in the military, which has led to changes in the military organization and adaptations to better meet the needs of women. The perception of feminism in Ukraine is changing. Society is no longer looking at it through stereotypes about women activists. A collective representation of women military activists, activists who open shelters and help solve humanitarian problems, and women volunteers, among others, is emerging. This shift helps to create new bonds with partners and change the overall perception of feminism.

**What is the situation of your**

**association and your projects?**

With the onset of the full-scale Russian invasion, the Feminist Workshop was forced to expand its scope of activities. Large-scale warfare has not only amplified existing social problems, but has also created new challenges, which have pushed us to implement new directions. Our team has opened Crisis Response, whose main task is to help women and children affected by war. One of the target audiences is internally displaced persons. We have seen that people forced to leave their homes need safety, support, communication, recreation, self-realization and development. These needs are fundamental and essential to human life. That's why we've created shelters - safe spaces that help build trust in the community, increase social cohesion, and engage displaced people in community life. Since their creation, the shelters have welcomed 80 people, some with their pets (three cats, two rats, two dogs). Initially, we created three shelters, and today one of them is still actively operating. We quickly realized that women and children affected by war not only needed housing, but also complex support to overcome their traumatic experiences and live their lives to the fullest. We also provide one-on-one assistance to solve the day-to-day problems faced by the residents of the shelter. Another important aspect of our support has been the organization of groups for the children of internally displaced women, a program to help low-income elderly women, digital literacy classes, and psychological support to the community. And this list is not complete.

Despite our organization's active efforts to deal with the challenges of a full-scale invasion, new challenges are bringing unforeseen expenses, such as the purchase of generators to run the

office during attacks on the country's energy infrastructure. Finding funding for our existing and new activities is not getting any easier. The unpredictability and complexity of planning our activities, the difficulty of meeting the demands of Western partners during a full-scale invasion, and the general exhaustion all contribute to making fundraising an additional challenge.

**What are your hopes for 2024?**

Hope is a privilege we cannot afford in a full-scale invasion. There are concrete actions and support that we need and demand. As Ukrainian feminist organizations working to defend human rights and help women overcome the consequences of the armed conflict, we have a deep understanding of the current context and needs of our audience, as well as the best ways to provide this assistance. Without financial, informational and humanitarian support, we will not be able to work systematically and create change. We don't just hope that the Feminist Workshop will continue its activities and have enough financial and human resources: we are constantly fighting for it. We are also tired of being left out of discussions about possible ways to help Ukrainian women. This year is crucial for us to amplify the voices of Ukrainian feminists on international platforms, advocating for their needs and claiming their right to speak in global discussions. In general, we just want to survive in 2024, in every sense of the word. And like all Ukrainians, we believe in our main goal and fight every day to achieve it: Ukraine's victory and an end to Russian aggression.

*Interview conducted by Patrick Le Tréhondat on 1 February 2024. Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **IPresse-toi à gauche**.*

## Europe: Crisis in the agricultural sector

# 14 February 2024, by Isa Álvarez Vispo

The first thing to note would be that there is not one rural world in the singular, but many rural worlds that are mobilizing. If a big multinational company were threatened with the cutting off of external supplies on which it depends, the whole company would be angry, but the situation of the owners of that company and that of the workers would be different. While the owners will be worried about not losing, the workers will be worried about surviving. The capacity to resist and face crises is not homogeneous and is traversed by multiple axes, starting with capital, the decision-making power and the power of manoeuvre that each has.

The rural environment and the European agricultural-livestock sector are not a multinational, but they have similar distances and inequalities of power. That is why, in some countries, such as France or Germany, farmers' organizations have been concerned with making it visible that in these mobilizations not everything is the same, that there are interests of large companies, the agrarian bosses, fighting not to lose and maintain macro-projects, while they seek to survive with dignified lives.

They stress that although they are mobilizing on the same dates and are all part of what is happening in the rural world, they do not go hand in hand. Thus, while they demand agrarian social security, decent incomes and food that sustains people and cools the planet, others seek the maintenance of a model that only feeds extractive interests and is sustained with public money. In addition, straddling the line between the big companies and the small farmers are other medium-sized productions that, without being giants, are no longer identified either as small or as farmers. They embraced the discourse of bigness as their goal, but that scale is nothing more than an illusion and their ability to manoeuvre is not that of those with great capital. They are productions that invoice a lot of euros, but slaves to the model,

heavily indebted and with little margin for decision-making.

In the midst of all this unrest, the right and extreme right are fishing and the big farming unions are seeking the lesser evil. Headlines emerge saying that ecology is to blame for everything, as if climate change did not exist and the EU's policies were environmentalist. The same EU that at the end of 2023 approved the continued use of glyphosate. The reality is that the sector's problems have their germ in an agricultural model and policies that have pushed it to the limit. A model that ignores the needs and capacities of the earth and ecosystems, generating illusions with the help of inputs. A model oriented to the global market and totally dependent on subsidies. Energy is no longer cheap either to produce or to transport products thousands of kilometres and even CAP numbers have limits.

The Mercosur treaty is one more drop in a very shaken glass. Climate change is shattering illusions and setting the limits on the artificialization of the environment. Droughts, torrential rains and/or anomalous temperatures cannot be managed with the stroke of a drone. While climate change is slapping the sector in the face and generating instability, the EU intends to dress in green and apply some measure that justifies talking about sustainability, but without a real plan to accompany a transition and sustain the transition in the meantime. All this generates anger, anger in the agribusiness that produces the inputs, anger in those who know they are dependent on them, and anger among those who do not depend so much on them, but who know that the cost of change always ends up being paid by the most vulnerable.

For all these reasons, it is realistic to think that the more or less extreme right can fish well among this discontent. Differences in models and sizes exist, but the reality is that all of them, especially the smaller ones and the rural environment in general, have

been ignored for years by all political spheres. From the positions of the left, there have been no forceful proposals that support the defence of the small and the transition to other models. In the more traditional progressive discourses that speak of workers' and/or class struggle, people always speak of the urban, of those who live and work on asphalt and rarely in the rural environment that is known to be peripheral. Farmers have not been identified as essential in the workers' struggle, even though without it they cannot, literally, feed themselves. This leaves the door open to those who suddenly look to the rural environment, perceive it as a suitable place for their benefit and adopt a discourse that, although with more noise than content, seem to cater to those who have never been addressed.

At this point it is also important to remember that beyond this rebellion, there are people in the rural world who have no opportunity to rebel and who are not named or made visible in these revolts. The countryside is being mobilized, with few exceptions, in the masculine singular or interested plural. The demands are mostly about the market. In the mobilizations we see many machines and few hands, even fewer hands for day labourers, we see beards and bald heads, mainly white, and few women putting a face, voice and needs to proposals and demands. If, under the urban heteropatriarchal gaze, the workers' struggle ignores those who feed it, the same happens with the primary sector, which seems to ignore all the free family help that makes the accounts balance, as well as the day labourers who, under conditions of semi-slavery in many cases, are essential for the chain to continue functioning. The core of the discourse seems to remain how to sustain the market and not how to sustain life. The most neglected continue to be neglected.

We don't hear these days the question of who will feed us - when it's the biggest question of all. Although there

are differences in the rural world, in the primary sector there are too many corporations, but not too many people. In a sector marked by neglect and ageing, the challenge is to generate transitions that can support paths towards more sustainable, equitable and exciting models, which can fairly sustain and feed people and the planet. Models that close cycles and that do not forget that feeding ourselves is part of care, formulas that are based on cooperation and not on competitive models that blame those at the bottom instead of fighting against those who drown them from

above.

We need to ask who decides about our food, talk about rights, raise food sovereignty, the right to decide about our food with criteria of social and environmental justice, as an umbrella under which to walk. The solutions to climate change will not come from unsustainable energy technologies, but from looking to the Earth and building coexistence between its needs and ours. It is time to design policies that accompany this transition, that truly sustain. We are

living in a complicated time, but also one of opportunity. Opportunity to see that other models are not only possible, but already exist. To be aware of the interdependence in the territory and to get out of the urban fantasy of self-sufficiency. It is urgent to value and emphasize the essentiality of those who feed the world and support transitions that sustain life.

3 February 2024``

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **Viento Sur**.*

## Ukraine: “Tensions are building... due to the neoliberal policies imposed by the government”

13 February 2024, by **Oksana Dutchak**

### **After 2 years of war, how do you see the situation in Ukraine?**

After two years of war, the situation is both the same and different. The war continues, but there are changes due to the context - both internal and external. All of these changes were foreseeable from the outset in a very likely scenario of a protracted war (which is not to say that many, me included, were not hoping for more positive but less likely scenarios).

We have witnessed the various tensions that are building up in Ukrainian society - most of them caused by predictable neoliberal policies, imposed by the government under the pretext of wartime. Using the justification of economic hardship and the ideology of “free market” capitalism, instead of supporting universal social rights, damaged by the economic crisis, the government is defending the interests of corporations at the expense of workers’ rights, the social support of the existing and the new and emerging disadvantaged groups.

These measures are completely at odds with the logic of all centralised and (to some extent) relatively socially oriented policies implemented elsewhere during wars.

As a result of these policies, which are the ideological continuation of previous years, the general mobilization of the efforts of the population and the relative unity of Ukrainian society are constantly eroding. After the first few months of mobilizing to defend their communities, many people are now hesitant (and some opposed) to risking their lives. There are many reasons for this, for example the relative localization of the Russian threat, the unrealistic expectation of a quick “victory” (promoted by part of the political establishment and some dominant influencers) and the resulting disappointment, and many contradictions of interests and the situations and choices of individuals in the structured chaos of a protracted war. However, the feeling of injustice plays a major role. On the one hand, there is the feeling of injustice in

relation to the mobilization process, where questions of wealth and/or corruption lead to the mobilization of the majority (but not exclusively) of the popular classes, which goes against the ideal image of the “people’s war” in which the whole of society participates. And in addition, there are a few cases of injustice within the army. On the other hand, the absence of a relatively attractive and socially just reality and prospects for the future plays an important role in individual choices of all kinds.

Of course, this does not mean that society as a whole has decided to refrain from fighting Russian aggression, quite the contrary: most understand the bleak prospects that would be imposed by an occupation or frozen conflict, which could intensify with [Russia’s] renewed efforts. While the majority opposes and may even dislike many of the government’s actions (a traditional attitude in Ukraine’s political reality for decades), opposition to the Russian invasion and distrust of any possible “peace” agreement with the Russian



government (which has violated and continues to violate everything from bilateral agreements to international law and international humanitarian law) are stronger and there is very little chance this will change in the future. However, a socially just view of wartime policies and post-war reconstruction is a prerequisite for channelling individual struggles for survival into a conscious effort of communal and social struggle – against invasion, for socio-economic justice.

The external context has also changed regularly. There have been further escalations in various parts of the globe, which are, like the Russian invasion, further symptoms of the “on fire” periphery caused by the decline of hegemony and resulting from a new race to struggle for “spheres of influence,” as well as in regional and international conflicts for both regional and global hegemony. These escalations, along with some major failures in Ukrainian diplomacy (e.g., rhetoric about “civilization,” which actually alienates people beyond the Western world) and right-wing populist tendencies in many countries, are having a negative impact on international support for Ukrainian society.

In light of this dynamic, it is extremely important to develop internally and externally support the workers’ movement and other progressive forces in Ukraine. It is also important for the Ukrainian progressive movement to establish links and mutual solidarities with liberation struggles, workers’ movements and other progressive struggles in other parts of the world. I do not believe that it is possible to reverse the tide of global imperialist and neocolonial renaissance or right-wing populism in the near future. But we need to develop a left-wing infrastructure for the struggles to come. We have arrived at this grim stage unprepared, and we must do our best to prevent such a scenario from happening again in the future.

### **What is the situation of *Commons* and what are your plans?**

We continue to work despite all these circumstances, including the most

painful one: the loss of an eminent economist, our editor-in-chief and friend Oleksandr Kravchuk, the loss of an eminent gonzo-anthropologist, our author and friend Evheny Osievsky and a few other friends, colleagues, comrades, some of whom were killed in action. In addition, some of our editors and authors have volunteered in the military, others are very busy raising funds and supplies for humanitarian needs and support for left-wing and anti-authoritarian volunteers. Still others are scattered across the country and across borders as internally displaced persons or refugees, managing their individual survival and sometimes being or becoming single mothers due to displacement and war.

In the first year of the full-scale invasion, we considered three important tasks for ourselves as a left-wing media outlet: engaging in left-wing debates about the Russian imperialist invasion, telling the realities of the war and its impact on the Ukrainian population and Ukrainian refugees abroad, intervening with a critical perspective on the policies and reforms underway and planned by the Ukrainian government. Over time, by the end of 2022, we felt that most people had made their choice, and few could be persuaded to change their position – although we are grateful to those who continue to intervene in this left-wing debate in solidarity with the Ukrainian people. For our part, we have summarized our positions in an issue, available online and in print (the proceeds from the sale go to Solidarity Collectives): a collection of the texts from our website, which we consider to be the most important.

We have rethought the flow of these debates and found the direction in which we have decided to focus our efforts. We felt that too few direct bridges were being built between the Ukrainian experience and the experiences of other peripheral countries facing wars, debt dependency, austerity and struggles against them. This is how the “Dialogues of the Peripheries” project was born, and some of our editors see it as our main objective in the near future. Of course, other topics remain, and we continue to write about the

problems and struggles in Ukraine, about history, culture, ecology and about different important issues. We continue to talk about the self-organisation of the people in Ukraine – either in the form of voluntary initiatives or in the form of trade unions. In 2023, we managed to do this in a series of “Watch this!” video reports and even made a short documentary about the nurses’ movement in Ukraine.

I must emphasize that all this would be impossible without our editorial staff and authors, as well as without the support of many left-wing organizations, initiatives and individuals.

### **What are your hopes for 2024?**

There are different levels of hope. I have my personal hopes. I also have a dream that I share with most Ukrainians: that the war ends in a way that is conducive to a democratic and socially just future in Ukraine, or at least in some way that does not prevent serious struggles for such a future. My personal hopes and overall dreams are of course linked. In the summer of 2023, I moved back from Germany to Kyiv, which I have considered my city for a few years now and I don’t want to go anywhere anymore. I am not naïve, and I understand that our dream of a favourable end to the war in 2024 is probably just a dream. But it takes a dream to pin your hopes on it.

As for *Commons/Spilne*, we hope to continue our work, write and tell what is important to us and be useful to progressive struggles in Ukraine. We hope to continue the Periphery Dialogues, to inform Ukrainian readers about the contexts, problems and struggles in other countries; build connections and understanding with people living in other peripheral realities, in the hope of contributing to mutual solidarity in progressive struggles.

*This interview was conducted by Patrick Le Tréhondat on 3 February 2024.*

*Translated by International Viewpoint from [Presse-toi à gauche](#) !.*

# Argentina heading to stagflation

12 February 2024, by **Eduardo Lucita**

Obsessed with achieving a primary fiscal surplus of 2 points by 2024, minister Caputo ordered a fiscal adjustment of 5.2% of GDP. This percentage would be achieved with a 2.9% reduction in expenditure and a 2.2% increase in revenue (this adjustment is stronger than the one requested by the Fund, which, in the face of a primary deficit of 3%, proposed to bring it to zero by 2025). At the same time, it ordered a devaluation of 118% and a monthly adjustment (crawling peg) of the exchange rate of 2% and freed the prices of goods and services traded in the domestic market.

## The role of Congress

The minister's scheme is to increase income through the replacement of export duties on non-agricultural sectors (20% of these sales can be settled in the CCL) and income tax on the 4th Category, plus increased PAIS tax on imports and withholdings on exports. The reduction in expenses is achieved with the extension of the 2023 Budget, thus liquefying the state's liabilities (public salaries, debts with suppliers, retirements and pensions), plus the repeal of the law that imposes retirement mobility. Some of these measures included in the so-called Omnibus Law will require the approval of Congress. Hence, Caputo threatened that if this law is not approved, the adjustment on expenses and rates would be greater, and the responsibility would fall on the legislators.

In addition, the package of measures replaces the SIRA with a new system that will not require prior approval and the issuance of a bond (BOPREAL), which importers can subscribe in pesos, and which is settled at maturity in dollars. With it, they will be able to pay debts with

their foreign suppliers (this is the first time that the Central Bank issues debt in foreign currency, which may be a first step towards dollarization).

## A desired stagflation

The devaluation had an immediate pass-through to prices. Inflation in December was 25.5% (29.7 in food) closing 2023 with an increase of 211.4%, the highest rate since 1990. Increases in the order of 18-20% are expected for January and February when increases in public tariffs (gas, electricity, water, transport) weigh in. The doubling of the amount of the AUH and the 50% increase in the Food Card do not compensate for the increases in the cost of living.

The acceleration of inflation had a rapid impact on public salaries, pensions and popular incomes, while lowering the interest rate also liquefied the funds of savers. This is reflected in lower domestic consumption. Economic activity is falling, and recession is the order of the day. Various estimates indicate that GDP fell by 2.3% in 2023 and project a further fall of between 2.5 and 4% this year. Two consecutive years of falling GDP have totally discouraged investment, dragging private sector activity down, deepening the recession, which in turn explains the reduction in imports. Lower activity can cause the unemployment rate to climb to 8-9%.

This year, exports will be important, and there may be a greater inflow of speculative financial capital. Added together, they cannot necessarily offset the fall, so the economy will tend to stagnate while inflation is estimated on average at 250% for the whole year. It is nothing more than a desire for stagflation, as the President opportunely announced.

## Market solution

The Central Bank is determined to absorb pesos from the market and liquefy them via the lowering of the interest rate, while buying foreign currency to rebuild the balance sheet of the institution. But since the only tool available to increase reserves is the trade surplus, it not only needs exports to grow, but also imports to fall, therefore less consumption and investment. Thus, domestic demand, which had been falling since the last quarter of 2023, has now had that decline accelerated.

The government's entire tightening policy is focused on fighting high inflation with a market solution, hence the induced recession. That is, demand will fall so much that companies will finally begin to liquidate stocks and lower prices, which is what happened in recent years with Cavallo and negative inflation.

## A less-than-optimistic world

In its latest "World Economic Outlook" report, the World Bank set a bleak outlook, stating that: "Without a major course correction, the decade of the 2020s will go down in history as a time of wasted opportunities for the global economy." While he noted that "the global economy is in better shape than it was a year ago, the risk of a global recession has diminished, especially given the strength of the U.S. economy." At the same time, it added, as a contradictory tendency, "... that the slowdown in the Chinese economy is greater than expected."

The agency projects that global growth will remain weak, slowing to 2.4% this year and the third consecutive slowdown. Monetary

policies, tight credit conditions, and low global trade and investment are expected to weigh on growth. It points out that the main difficulties are the suffocation of debts for the middle and low developing countries and the difficulties of the poor population in accessing basic foodstuffs. It does not mention our country as an example, but it is more than evident.

## Just a certainty

In this context, it is difficult to make projections, if the situation left by the previous government was already complex, the first month of the Milei

government made it even more complex and deepened the crisis. What will be the recession floor for the market solution to start operating? How much will the drop in activity impact tax collection? Making BOPREAL's tenders successful depends on a minimum exchange rate gap of 40%. If the gap continues to grow, will it force a new devaluation? Will a new devaluation relaunch the inflationary spiral? What will the flow of foreign currency be like? How much will the slowdown in the Chinese economy impact the demand for our products and how much will the good harvests in Brazil, the United States and our country put pressure on

prices?

Nothing is certain. Only that the package of measures constitutes a full-line attack on working people. The extraordinary breadth of the CGT's call for a general strike and rally in front of the National Congress on the 24th reaffirms this certainty. As well as that 2024 will be a year of high social conflict. Of strong disputes that will unfold in parliament, in the courts and in the streets. Once again, the coin is still in the air.

20 January 2024

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **Viento Sur**.

# Biden Under Pressure to Stop Israel's Genocide in Palestine; His Election Could Be at Stake

11 February 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

Americans, like millions more around the globe, are appalled by the continuing destruction that has nearly obliterated Gaza and killed thousands. The death toll is now estimated at over 28,000, though perhaps as many as another 6,000 may be buried under the rubble; 67,600 Palestinians have been injured, many maimed; most have been displaced with 1.9 million now living in 154 shelters, usually tent cities run by United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees.

The American reaction to Israel's continuing crimes against humanity and to the United States' continuing to support Israel militarily and politically has been enormous. There have been repeated rallies and marches for both Israel and Palestine involving two million people since October 7, 2023, but the pro-Palestinian demonstrations have been twice as large as those for Israel. Harvard's Nonviolent Action Lab and the Counting Crowds Consortium reports that 293,000 individuals participated

in the pro-Israel events, and at least 694,000 in the pro-Palestinian events. The pro-Palestine rallies and marches are the biggest progressive movement since Black Lives Matter racial justice protests of 2020, which were the largest in U.S. history.

Some 70 U.S. cities and towns, among them Chicago and Seattle, have passed some sort of resolution on the Israel war on Gaza. Most of these symbolic statements have been passed in states and cities governed by Democrats. Some are stronger than others, but most of them call for a ceasefire, even though President Biden opposes such a measure.

Under this pressure, on February 8, Biden said that Israel's response to the Hamas attack was "over the top." But then White House aides said that that should not be interpreted as a change of position and that Biden continued to support Israel's war of self-defense, but believed Israel must take measures to protect civilians.

Biden's position is costing him the support of Arab American voters. According to the Arab American Institute, in 2020, a majority of Arab Americans, some 59%, supported Biden, while today only 17% or less do. Since 1997 a majority of Arab Americans identified as Democrats, but today 32% now identify as Republicans and 31% as independents. In Michigan, there are more than 200,000 registered voters who are Muslim and 300,000 people of Middle Eastern and North African ancestry, according to a report of voting patterns in 2020. And Biden won Michigan by just 154,000 votes, so clearly his reelection hangs in the balance.

Recognizing this, Biden sent a group of aides to Michigan on February 8, among them Samantha Power, head of the U.S. Agency for International Development, principal deputy national security adviser Jon Finer and Steven Benjamin, who directs the Office of Public Engagement. Among

others, they met with Arab American and Muslim state legislators Alabas Farhat and Abraham Aiyash, Dearborn Mayor Abdullah Hammoud, Deputy Wayne County Executive Assad I. Turfe and Arab American News publisher Osama Siblani. Over 30 legislators have joined the "Listen to Michigan" campaign, promising to vote "uncommitted" rather than Republican or Democrat in the February 27 state primary election.

The campaign is recruiting others.

Groups like the Palestinian Campaign for Human Rights call upon voters to "Resign from Bad Bosses Like Butcher Biden!" and demonstrators chant, "Genocide Joe, what do you say? How many kids have you killed today?"

While Biden and his aides have focused on trying to keep their Arab

and Muslim supporters, many Black people and many young people and some progressive Jews also sympathize with the Palestinian cause. Virtually every day, thousands are demonstrating somewhere in the country. Biden and the Democrats can see their Arab and Muslim voters, many waving Palestinian flags, marching away from them.

*11 February 2024*

# **Pakistan General Elections: A Vote Against IMF Policies and State Repression**

## **10 February 2024, by Farooq Tariq**

The centrist right-wing party, PML-N, which had the backing of the military establishment, failed to resonate with voters. Initial results suggest that Pakistan has voted against IMF policies and state repression.

While Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz retained its majority in the Punjab Assembly and Pakistan People's Party secured a sweeping victory in the Sindh assembly seats, the Balochistan assembly witnessed a split vote among several nationalist and federal parties. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan Tehreek Insaaf-supported "independent" candidates dominated.

Despite facing obstacles such as the Election Commission of Pakistan's refusal to allow the use of its election symbol due to alleged unfair internal elections, Pakistan Tehreek Insaaf-supported "independents" emerged as the single largest political group at the national assembly.

The overall vote reflects a stance against IMF policies, which have led to an unprecedented price hike in Pakistan. These elections serve as a clear repudiation of the implementers of IMF policies and those responsible for inflation and state coercion, particularly the PDM government, which has been in power for 16 months before the elections.

Furthermore, the vote signifies opposition to state repression, particularly targeting PTI led by Imran Khan, who faced several politically motivated convictions in the days leading up to the general election. This perceived victimization of Imran Khan mobilized voters against the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz, strategically orchestrated by the military establishment. The return of three-time Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif from self-imposed exile in the UK and the swift dismissal of all cases against him underscore this collusion.

The religious political parties experienced setbacks in these elections, with only Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam making notable gains. Tehreek Labeek secured 5 to 7 percent of votes in each constituency, while Jamaat-e-Islami's independent campaign failed to yield significant results.

The elections, delayed unconstitutionally for several months by the caretaker government that assumed power in August 2023, were evidently orchestrated to favor the Muslim League-N.

The left-wing suffered from the popularity of Tehreek Insaaf, with most anti-military establishment and anti-IMF policy votes going to PTI.

Left-wing candidates, including those from Haqooq Khalq Party, Awami Workers Party, and Brabri Party, failed to secure significant support or win any seats. Notably, a national assembly seat held by Marxist Ali Wazir during the 2018 general elections was lost this time.

The elections were marred by widespread corruption, with all major political parties spending exorbitant sums to buy votes. The open sale of votes for up to 5000 Rupees (\$18) further undermined the democratic process. Campaigns lacked substantive discussion on issues, with PTI focusing on condemning Imran Khan's sentencing, PML-N rallying around the slogan "Give Nawaz to Pakistan," and PPP presenting Bilawal Bhutto as a national savior.

The outcome underscores the dominance of right-wing ideologies, though the vote lacked revolutionary fervor and was primarily a reaction to intra-right-wing conflicts rather than a clear division between left and right. This was not solely an anti-establishment vote, as PTI's anti-establishment stance remains temporary and selective in its opposition to state oppression.

Unfortunately, the elections offer little hope for positive change, as the



incoming government is poised to fast-track neoliberal policies, privatize state institutions, and deepen class exploitation.

The potential government under Nawaz Sharif's leadership is expected to cozy up to the IMF and World Bank, prioritizing corporate interests over public welfare. The rise of corporate farming, facilitated by PML-N and caretaker governments, is likely to

exacerbate economic inequality and fail to address the needs of small farmers.

Although the left-wing participated to some extent, their influence was limited, with fewer than 40 candidates contesting. Despite this setback, parties like Haqooq Khalq vow to continue strengthening their base among the working class through

parliamentary intervention.

The incoming government will undoubtedly be capitalist and right-wing, focused on counter-reforms rather than radical change. The Left is committed to intensifying the movement of the working class, small farmers, and common people against this oppressive regime.

*10 February 2024*

## Sahel: a military coup

9 February 2024, by **Paul Martial**

The staging was perfect. At the same time on Sunday 28 January, the military juntas of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso read an identical statement on their national television announcing their departure from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

### Sanctions and threats

ECOWAS was founded in 1975 with the initial aim of creating a single market in the region. Its prerogatives have gradually been extended to the political and legal spheres. Among the 15 member countries, the French-speaking countries, with the exception of Guinea, are also members of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), to which Guinea-Bissau (a former Portuguese colony) has been added. This structure groups together countries whose currency is the CFA franc.

Nationals of ECOWAS countries can move and settle freely, and goods are not subject to customs duties.

During the coups d'état in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, ECOWAS adopted particularly severe economic sanctions, notably against Niger. In the case of Niger, ECOWAS even raised the possibility of military intervention to re-establish

constitutional order.

### A discredited structure

To justify their departure from ECOWAS, the juntas criticised the lack of solidarity and aid to their country in the face of serious terrorist attacks. They also criticised ECOWAS for trampling on their nation's sovereignty by acting on behalf of foreign powers, and for abandoning the pan-Africanism espoused by its founding fathers. There is no doubt that the economic sanctions have been very badly received by the populations who are the first victims. All the more so as the ECOWAS heads of state who have taken these decisions are, for the most part, either elected through massive electoral fraud or through constitutional manipulations enabling them to run for a third term. In Togo, for example, the Gnassingbé dynasty has reigned for over fifty years. Ouattara in Côte d'Ivoire came to power with the help of armed intervention by France, and has held on by changing the constitution. As for Senegal, Macky Sall has eliminated his two main rivals from the presidential election race and has just postponed the presidential election until December, arousing the anger of the population. ECOWAS leaders are far from being paragons of democracy.

Obviously, Emmanuel Macron's open support for a possible armed ECOWAS operation against Niger only confirms what a large part of public opinion in the Sahel thinks, namely that this structure is manipulated by France.

### Towards an exit from the CFA franc

Although the departure from ECOWAS is announced with immediate effect, article 91 of the organisation allows for a one-year delay. The leaders have said they are open to negotiations with the three countries that formed the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) a few months ago. The three countries are landlocked, and access to the sea remains an imperative. While for Mali, Guinea, which is also under ECOWAS sanctions for a coup d'état, is an option, for Burkina and Niger access to the sea via Togo or Benin is compromised.

With the departure of ECOWAS, free movement will still be guaranteed within the WAEMU area. But it is not certain that the ESA countries will stop there. Indeed, the question of leaving the CFA franc is also being raised in favour of a common currency for the three countries.

These decisions can be seen as salutary, symbolising the conquest of sovereignty. This would have been

acceptable if the populations had been consulted and therefore involved in the decision. This is clearly not the

case, given the repeated attacks on democratic freedoms in these three Sahelian countries.

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

# Protests by Soldiers' Wives in Russia Show How an Antiwar Movement Can Grow There

8 February 2024, by **Kirill Medvedev**

In fall 2022, Russia began a partial mobilization of civilians for the war in Ukraine. By October 2023, at least four thousand of them had been killed (Russia's total nonrecoverable losses amount to four hundred thousand men, but these are mostly contract soldiers who were killed or heavily wounded). Striking, among the mobilized dead, is the number of over-forties, since young men are more likely to avoid the draft. Many of these men were sent to the front despite deferrals for health reasons or work. They were promised that they would mainly serve in the rear — but in fact they were thrown into the most dangerous parts of the front, often without training and with poor equipment.

While the mobilization lasted a month, there was no official decree to end it, so the mobilized men are forced to stay at the front. At first, the authorities promised to replace them with contractors, but now openly state that they will have to fight until the "Special Military Operation" (SMO) is over. The mobilized are not allowed leave — after all, it has been estimated that if they were granted this dispensation, most would never return. Ninety-eight percent of the mobilized wounded are later returned to service.

But the relatives of the mobilized are not accepting all this. A growing movement is demanding that they be brought home, moving from attempts at dialogue with local officials and appeals to the president to street actions and mass flash mobs. Their demands include the establishment of a one-year time limit for mobilization,

or a complete transition to contractual status. The movement also demands rights to social protest and public assembly, as well as "social justice and equality in rights and duties for everyone, including the mobilized."

Initially, the women participating in the movement tried to reach out to military committees and local officials, who largely ignored them. The first visible public action was participation in the ritual action held by the Communist Party (KPRF) on November 7, anniversary of the October Revolution. Three dozen women brought placards reading "Bring back our husbands." They were instantly surrounded by police, and the KPRF leader Gennady Zyuganov promised that he would help with the return of the mobilized men. No such help was forthcoming.

This action in fact resulted from an appeal by a deputy in the State Duma (parliament), who called on Muscovites to attend the rally with the words: "Some go to the front to defend the Motherland, while others continue to shamelessly trade in the riches of our land and reap huge profits." This offers a typical taste of today's KPRF rhetoric — support for the war, added to the desire to attribute its negative outcomes to some unspecified group of "oligarchs and liberals." The activists wryly remarked: "We thought it was an invitation to visit, and we came." This is an alarming signal for the prowar left and all the controlled parties: the further any call for political participation reaches, the more likely it is to lead to uncomfortable demands related to the effects of the war.

Since this incident, women participants in the movement have tried in vain to coordinate their own rallies in several cities. Officials opposed this, including under the absurd pretext of the COVID threat. (Progovernment and prowar rallies, organized from above, take place without similar restrictions). The maximum that the authorities did allow was an indoor rally, to which only the wives of mobilized men were allowed, and all visible agitation was tightly controlled.

More of a success was the flash mob. "Bring back my husband. I'm fucking tired" — stickers with these words were pasted by women on the rear windows of their cars. The number of women involved in the movement is rising, and they are drawing attention to their demands by attending the actions of pro-Kremlin movements in Moscow, laying flowers at monuments to patriotic heroes, and trying hundreds of letters and calls to Putin's "Direct Line" phone-in show.

Initially, the presidential administration recommended that regional officials "extinguish with money" the protest of the mobilized men's wives. At the same time, law enforcers started coming to activists' homes and blocking their social media. TV propagandists and progovernment Telegram channels accuse these women of working for the "West" and Ukraine. As a result of the mass complaints, the main and most radical mouthpiece of the movement, the "Way Home" Telegram channel, was labeled "fake." Putin's staff created the "Katyusha" movement, whose participants

pretend to be wives of the mobilized and mouth government-loyalist positions. Such displays, as well as the creation of various pseudoprotest formations, are an established technique of Kremlin apparatchiks. Putin's meetings with representatives of "ordinary people" are often attended by the same figures (probably from the security forces) who pose as soldiers, fishermen, or laborers.

The solution to the problem of the mobilized men's relatives has been handed down to regional authorities. Moscow can thus blame local leaders for measures that are too harsh or that prove unsuccessful. The main concern: to prevent the protesters from uniting at the national level.

## "Attacked From Both Sides"

The relatives of the mobilized men complain of resentment from both jingoist Russian patriots and the most radical oppositionists. These latter criticize the women for not speaking out in support of Ukraine and failing to directly demand that the war stop; the husbands are accused of agreeing to their own mobilization.

The demands to return the mobilized initially caused tension also among Russians who feared another wave of mobilization. So, the movement eventually abandoned the demand for more rotation of men in favor of a complete rejection of mobilization.

The mobilized, like contract workers, receive 200,000 rubles a month — a large amount especially by provincial standards, and around triple the average salary. They also get benefits like free child transport or exemption from kindergarten fees. This is also a factor for tension. Some of their "patriotically" minded or poverty-stricken fellow citizens are dissatisfied that the relatives who receive such state assistance are also voicing discontent.

Yet activists explain that most of the payments are themselves spent on buying equipment — medicines, bandages, and food for the mobilized.

Secondly, we might add, perhaps there is a logic in the fact that a group that has been a relative beneficiary of the war gradually turns out to be politically conscious and militant. Coming into contact with the state, with its insolent officials and lying spokesmen, in the name of receiving its benefits, this group is filled with a kind of moral resentment that has been the fuel for revolts and revolutions for centuries.

Another good cause for resentment is the fact that prisoners, including those convicted of serious crimes, who sign the contract (six to eighteen months) remain at liberty after their military service ends, and often commit new crimes, while civilians who are mobilized are doomed to serve until the SMO is over.

In general, the bet that — against the backdrop of poverty, especially in the regions — payments and benefits will prove decisive for successful recruitment is entirely consistent with the cynical neoliberal-paternalistic logic inherent in the Russian government. This logic is one of the pillars for the "military-Keynesian" project that analysts have been discussing lately — essentially an updated and radicalized version of the "welfare in exchange for loyalty" deal, which dates back to the first decade of Putin's rule. This time, the authorities are trying to buy not only the loyalty of citizens, but also the frontline presence, health, and lives of hundreds of thousands of men. The deal is framed as a preaching of patriotism and family values, but it threatens to generate counterversions of both, in a new round of politicization.

## Patriotism, Family, Love

This takes many forms. "There was a split between the wives involved in chats, dividing them into three groups," says one activist. "One group was the 'fierce' girls who said, 'Our boys are good, let them go ahead, I'll bear with it,' while they themselves are constantly asking about money. The second group — and I belonged to it — is 'neutral': we support our

husbands and do not meddle. And the third says — 'let's bring our husbands home.' Now I'm leaning more toward the third group, because enough is enough."

The wives' persistence and self-organization belie myths about the passivity and almost "slave-like character" of the Russian population. Much emotional energy has been invested in spreading this myth over the past two years, including by a radically disillusioned part of the opposition public. The movement's successes may not only help debunk this myth, but also provide the ground for a new patriotic emotion that realizes the authorities' fears and refutes skeptics' stereotypes.

The same goes for the ideological theme of the family, increasingly aggressively preached by the authorities, the church, and ultraconservatives. Evidently, there is no greater enemy for the Russian family than war. As some wives put it, the "'year of the family' has been announced. But what family? You have destroyed thousands of families. What kind of family can we talk about?" The wives of the mobilized complain, among other things, about the psychological trauma of young children growing up without fathers, who stop talking and experience other developmental problems. It is increasingly clear that women's struggle for their husbands' return from the front is an adherence to "family values" in their reasonable, not twisted conservative version.

Political scientist Tatiana Stanovaya considers it emblematic that Putin was recently "asked" to run for president again in 2024 by people whose sons had died in the war.

This will be used as a response to the protest of wives and mothers of the mobilized. The Kremlin is showing society that there are two types of behavior: true patriots who are willing to give up their most precious things for the sake of the homeland, and [those who] don't understand what the country is fighting for and how important it is for everyone to stick together . .

Fertility is another fetish of the government, which sends young men to war and exports them abroad, thus widening the negative demographic gap, and tries to compensate for it by promoting traditional values and banning abortion. "I am ready to raise your fertility rate if you give me my husband back," the activist replies.

"Yesterday he called me, it was the first time I heard him cry." Like all protracted wars, the SMO in Ukraine threatens the dominant canon of masculinity. In a society shaped by neoliberal ideology and authoritarian pressures, notions of civic valor are devalued in the extreme. Work and other socially useful activities are perceived strictly as an element of private life and the individual's career.

What instead predominates is the archaic notion that war is the only sphere where a man can prove himself as a citizen-patriot. To be a real man, he should be ready to uncomplainingly fulfill his duty and go to war, even without fully understanding its meaning. One of the main reasons many men did not evade mobilization was that they were "ashamed to run away from the military commissar." These women are trying to bring them home — at the same time generating a model of citizenship in which saving loved ones and fighting for life is not contrary to the interests of society and the country, but fully in line with them:

I am not only for my son, I am for all the guys who were mobilized. And they are simply being destroyed there, so that they do not come back, so that they don't bring their negativity toward the authorities back with them. My husband said to me: "Do you think that if they start pressing you, we won't turn around and go [to Moscow], like Prigozhin did in his time? We will go."

Finally, there is love. Officials believe that "in war wives often wait not for

their husbands, but for their wage cards." It seems that in a society demoralized by poverty, there is good reason for such a cynical view. But the activists believe otherwise: "They try to shut us up with payments and benefits. But when it comes to the cost of a loved one's life, you want to tear up the person who dares to make such a nasty offer," the women respond. "No money can replace a loving husband for a loving wife and no money can replace a father for a child." "We don't need benefits, we need our boyfriends . . ." "Stop shoving stinking benefits and payments at us instead of returning our loved ones . . ."

In the current system, the women's arguments that they simply love their husbands and so fight for their lives sound like a revelation. Love that turns into a political protest against the rich and powerful ruling and trading our lives is something we are all sorely lacking, not just in Russia.

In turn, the relatives of the mobilized lack international support. Russian propaganda fills the airwaves with narratives about the struggle of state sovereignties and civilizations. It tries to discredit and criminalize the very idea of international solidarity, labeling any expression of it as a sign of interference by foreign forces. But while appeals to Western governments are hardly useful for movements like the relatives of the mobilized, they vitally need the support of women's, antiwar, and trade union initiatives that can give their struggles an international dimension. The relatives of the mobilized do themselves point to this international context. They recall how 2.5 million mobilized Americans went to Vietnam (and only over time did the antiwar movement turn some of them around). Or they use the white handkerchief symbol, referring to the movement of Argentine mothers whose children disappeared under 1976–81 dictator Jorge Videla.

## From Past to Future

Women's antiwar resistance has a long history in Russia. During World

War I women began by asking for the payment or increase of mobilization benefits, but quickly moved to radical actions and anti-government slogans. They took to the streets, broke into administrative buildings, smashed up stores, and tried to hold up rail convoys with mobilized men. As one Russian peasant woman scolded Tsar Nicholas II: "Fuck his mother, he can give my husband back, I don't need his pennies." Against the "war, the high costs and the position of the woman worker," women came out to demonstrate on February 23, giving rise to the Russian Revolution.

In the 1990s, Committee of Soldiers' Mothers demanded an immediate halt to the war in Chechnya and the withdrawal of troops from the republic. They successfully negotiated with Chechen commanders for the extradition of prisoners, organized the Grozny-Moscow antiwar march, sought the release of deserters from criminal responsibility, and collected humanitarian aid for the peaceful population of the Chechen Republic. They again played a key role in the peace process.

The specter of women's self-organization looms over today's Russia, too. "As Grandpa Lenin said, 'every cook must learn to govern the state,'" the hosts of the Way Home group remind us. This is not just an amusing turn of phrase, or a ritual reference to the leader of the most successful antiwar project in Russian history. It is a direct challenge to a stereotype that, according to sociologists, is ingrained in many Russians' thinking: "even if we don't understand why the war started, the people at the top surely know it, otherwise they wouldn't have started it."

But there is no secret knowledge that gives elites the right and reason to start wars. The only "secret" revealed by an effective antiwar movement is whose interests lie behind the current war. The movement of relatives of the mobilized proves that, contrary to propaganda, activism is not a virus introduced by some external enemy and can be wiped out by repression. No — it is something that matures and self-organizes within society, passing through different stages of awareness.



The previous version of the movement for the return of the mobilized emerged in 2022 and was called the "Committee of Mothers and Wives." Representatives of the "Citizens of the USSR" movement and fighters against the Jewish religious movement Chabad played some role in it (alas, antisemitic conspiracy has always played a role in the post-Soviet red-brown opposition). This element allowed the authorities to marginalize the organization quite easily. The movement we see today declares its pluralism (including different opinions on the SMO) in its ranks, focusing on the demand for demobilization and the

right to free speech — tactically, an absolutely correct move. What happens next will largely depend on the willingness of the Left and democratic forces to engage in respectful dialogue and solidarity.

On December 14, Putin staged another "Direct Line," referring to the war. As the Way Home channel comments: "Everyone was waiting for some word about the mobilized. Some had hopes. Some didn't. This is just another knife in the back. Another brazen betrayal." The president called Ukrainian Odessa a "Russian city,"

signaling his willingness to continue the war and occupy new territories — at the cost of a huge number of lives, of course. According to the latest poll, 48 percent of Russians support the demobilization demand, while 32 percent oppose it. No matter how long the war lasts and no matter what happens to the current "relatives of the mobilized" movement, any serious, mass anti-Putinist project will develop along the paths that these women are today treading.

19 December 2024

Source: [Jacobin](#).

## Capitalism and drug trafficking in Ecuador: Two sides of the same coin

7 February 2024, by **Andrés Madrid Tamayo, Andrés Tapia Arias**

Ecuador is experiencing a wave of organized criminal violence that has made the headlines around the world. However, these events cannot be understood unless we look at the structural problems. The situation in Ecuador has become increasingly complicated in recent years: deepening poverty, new international drug routes and the emergence of a local narco-bourgeoisie, have developed in the context of a global crisis of capitalism in its neoliberal version, leading to a decomposition and rupture of the social pact between classes, nationalities and hegemonic blocs.

In this situation, the government of Daniel Noboa has decided to 'confront' the wave of drug-related crime that is engulfing Ecuador by declaring an 'internal armed conflict'. In other words, a war against the poor, financed on the backs of the poor, which has been supported by the middle class and certain lower class sectors that have been captured by the government's punitive discourse. The premise behind the government's

action appears to be that "violence can be remedied with more violence", revealing an attempt by the elites to discipline society by way of death.

The evidence worldwide shows that more than 40 years of the war on drugs have been a failure: the psychotropic industry has grown and so has the consumer population, money laundering has increased and social fragmentation has deepened. Colombia, Mexico and Peru are notable examples of the utter failure of this strategy, driven by what was once the world's biggest consumer of cocaine, the United States. (According to a 2023 report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United States is now the third biggest consumer of cocaine in the world, relative to population, behind Australia and the United Kingdom.)

The true background to the declaration of war by the government does not lie in the current explosion of the narco-economy in Ecuador, or in the 'unexpected takeover' - broadcast around the world - of the TC

Televisión channel. Analysis of the way the operation was carried out and the subsequent murder of the prosecutor César Suarez, in charge of investigating this "armed assault" on the TC Televisión channel, suggests that it was either a staged operation or at least one tolerated by the security forces with the aim of blaming "terrorism" and justifying the declaration of an internal armed conflict.

The economic elites, especially during the Correa, Moreno and Lasso administrations, have slowly been preparing - mainly after the plurinational rebellions of October 2019 and June 2022 - a strategy for eliminating the only left-wing opposition with a real capacity for social mobilization: the Ecuadorean Indigenous movement (Zibechi, 2024).

### Cocaine,

# geopolitics and spectacle

Beyond the spectacle of violence that Ecuador has been experiencing for some time now, the root of the problem is that cocaine continues to flow through the main ports. Why? The answer is simple, and to some extent obvious: the exporting elites continue to benefit from it, and the money continues to be laundered. The problem is not so much Fito - one of the most important local drug traffickers - as the participation, over several decades, of the bourgeoisie as a class in the drug business.

You only have to look at the press reports that point to the export shipping fleets belonging to President Noboa's family, on which bananas and cocaine leave for Europe. How can billions of dollars be laundered if not through the financial system and the real economy (real estate, agro-industry, mining and commerce)? In short, certain groups living in Samborondón or Cumbayá (exclusive areas of Guayaquil and Quito) continue to become more powerful, in collusion with local gangs and transnational groups, like the Sinaloa, Jalisco Nueva Generación, and 'Albanian' cartels, among others.

The government's declaration of an internal armed conflict has dodged the central problem: the bourgeois drug economy. Without attacking the root of the problem, this bombastic declaration translates, in practice, into a war against the poor, not against drug trafficking. No one in Ecuador has ever seen a single member of the drug-trafficking bourgeoisie in their wealthy suburbs imprisoned or mistreated. However, the militarization and humiliation of the poorer communities is commonplace.

In this tragedy, poor and racialized young people - many of them Afro-Ecuadorians - from the slums of cities with a grotesque gulf between rich and poor (like Guayaquil, Durán, Portoviejo, Santo Domingo, Esmeraldas, Machala, Quevedo, Babahoyo, and others), have been the main victim. The vulgar dichotomy between "bad guys" and "good guys"

is exacerbated at every turn. The former, the "terrorists", are the poor, the blacks, the cholos, the montubios, the delinquents, the precarious workers, the young men, the objectified women and the organized people in general; in short, the subaltern classes. The second are the really-existing 'powers that be', which take advantage of the idea of Ecuadorean "national unity" to bolster their interests.

For the subalterns there is only public humiliation, mistreatment, beatings, torture, humiliation and death (the latter often described with the macabre euphemism of "casualties"); all of this is meticulously conveyed through the corporate media. In contrast, the powers-that-be violently attack one part of the economic chain of drug trafficking, the one that operates in the poor neighbourhoods, while making invisible the other part of the narco-economy - the main one - that operates as a lumpenized bourgeoisie and controls the main part of the drug market.

This operation turns the poor into a synonym for criminal or terrorist. In the process, it seeks to dynamite the concept of human rights in public opinion. It intentionally overlooks the fact that the popular sectors are the victims of drug violence, not its cause. The people are caught in the crossfire of the narco-bourgeoisie, which pits the gangs against each other and against the government (where the gangs also have a presence, as has been shown by the denunciation of the US ambassador to Ecuador, Michael Fitzpatrick, who a couple of years ago said on CNN that he was very concerned "about the penetration of drug trafficking in Ecuador and in the forces of law and order").

This scenario implies a twofold triumph for the really-existing power. On the one hand, it has managed to discipline society through fear and a one-sided official account of what is going on in the country. The state legitimizes itself as the main political actor, and justifies its anti-people reform package by normalising the use of violence against so-called "terrorism" and by winning support among frightened subaltern sectors of the population. Any dissenting voice is

considered an ally of the drug traffickers. This facilitates the implementation of the government's neoliberal package because it finds no opposition in the terrorized society, or if it does, it eliminates it through the violence of war.

On the other hand, it opens the door to a military presence of the U.S. in Ecuador, and of Israeli Zionism through the export of its military technology. This objective, justified on the grounds of the uprisings of 2019 and 2022 - seeks to give an anti-communist character to the government's stabilization strategy. And it gives a glimpse of what has been going on behind the scenes of this whole operation: the underlying geopolitical and geostrategic issue is that the US wants to win more ground in the southern hemisphere in the midst of its dispute with the Beijing-Moscow-Tehran axis.

Other aspects also affect the chaotic map of the drug trafficking business in Ecuador. Firstly, we should mention the 'peace process' in Colombia, which disrupted the northern border by in large part removing one of the ideological poles in the dispute. The former FARC-EP has been replaced by weak and scattered groups of dissidents, and led to the growth of multiple narco-paramilitary gangs. Secondly, the assassination in December 2020 of alias 'Rasquiña' (leader of Los Choneros) fragmented the gang landscape into multiple groups (Tiguerones, Chonekillers, Los Fatales, Águilas, etc.) which fought for territory against other groups with different origins such as Los Lobos. 3)

The arrival of the Mexican cartels, to expand the cocaine export trade to Europe, given that it is more convenient to transport the drugs from dollarized Ecuador than from Peru or Colombia, was a third factor. The emergence of synthetic drugs, such as fentanyl, has reshaped the geography of the drugs trade, and has been one of the triggers for the escalation of violence in Ecuador. As the Colombian government says, the growth of consumption of this drug in the United States decreased the demand for cocaine, strengthening other cocaine markets in Europe, Asia and Oceania. The traditional Pacific

coast route was now joined by the Amazon basin route towards the Atlantic and the South Pacific. This brought about an important change in the epicentre of cocaine production: historically located on Colombia's Pacific coast, it shifted to the area bordering the north-east of Ecuador (Sucumbíos province), a region that is currently the main cocaine production centre in the world. With this shift came also the transfer of drug-trafficking know-how to Ecuador, including the pedagogy of terror and professional training in the use of violence, for example Albanian Mafia's "schools for hitmen".

The final factor to take account of is of course the desperate poverty that afflicts especially the poor neighbourhoods all along the Ecuadorean coast. There, the brutal inequalities of capitalism have forced young people into the ranks of the drug gangs. With almost no legal opportunities open to them, the gangs seem to be their only option, offering at least a minimum wage and some sort of future. It may be brief, but it's better than nothing.

## Narco-bourgeoisie

As in any other sector of the capitalist economy, large business groups invest in certain branches of production and profitable markets (regardless of whether they are lawful or immoral), diversifying their returns and, in this case, laundering billions of dollars of proceeds from criminal activities. The narcos have penetrated the economy of a dollarized country, as exemplified in particular by the mining sector. Data on the intensive presence of mining in the southern subtropical areas of the country show the level of penetration of one of the local gangs, Los Lobos, allied to a transnational cartel, the Jalisco New Generation. They control 20 mining concessions directly, while in another 30 they exercise their power through extortion, collecting protection money from the mine operators. In this part of the country alone, Los Lobos are linked to at least 40 local mining mafias, with a monthly turnover of 3.6 million dollars (Ojo Público, 2024). Meanwhile, Los Choneros launder their resources through real estate

and public works, and the Albanian Mafia through the domestic financial system (cooperatives and banks).

As in other countries in the region, such as Mexico, the declaration of a "war on drugs" by the government implies a siding with one of the drug-trafficking cartels in the conflict. In other words, an alliance with one or more of the dominant drug cartels in order to limit or eliminate other cartels, whose relationship with the really-existing powers-that-be is of lesser relevance.

In other words: conflicts over the drug trafficking business relate to local, regional and global inter-bourgeois disputes - disputes between drug lords and drug businesses that have a closer or lesser relationship with the government and the state. By way of illustration, it is worth noting that Genaro García Luna, Secretary of Security and ideologue of the war on drugs during Felipe Calderón's government in Mexico, worked directly for the Sinaloa Cartel. This strategy has functioned as a business model, and even as a way of continuing the counterinsurgency policy, which, applied to the Ecuadorean case, would translate into a hardening of the government's approach of criminalising social struggles.

Why is the persecution of Los Choneros and the Albanian Mafia not as intense as that against Los Lobos and Los Tigüerones? Have successive governments been soft on the drug gangs? These questions are not just fundamental questions, but plausible hypotheses<sup>2</sup>. Look for example at the murder of Rubén Chérrez, a close friend of Danilo Carrera, brother-in-law of Guillermo Lasso, and linked to drug trafficking, corruption, influence peddling and a key player in the impeachment trial against the former president.

The orchestration of prison massacres in 2021, 2022 and 2023, the infiltration of drug traffickers into the National Service for the Comprehensive Care of Adults Deprived of their Liberty and Adolescent Offenders (SNAI), in the ports, customs and border force, in short, the politicization of the drug

trade, are all part of a demobilization strategy. The argument, put forward by both Moreno and Lasso, that the 2019 and 2022 strikes were financed by groups linked to drug trafficking, clearly points in this direction.

The entry of the drug trade into Ecuadorean politics is a phenomenon that can be traced back to at least the last five governments (some accounts suggest that the possible arrival of the Sinaloa cartel occurred during the administration of Lucio Gutiérrez). The lumpenization that this entails is mainly associated with the degradation of neoliberal capitalism which, deepened in recent years, has led to a systematic dismantling of the state, budget cuts and the loss of acquired rights.

In the absence of a common class project, the dominant elites became entrenched in disputes that disrupted the framework of public security. At the same time, poverty was on the rise. All this produced a breeding ground for the growth of phenomena associated with the drug-trafficking economy. Based on the adaptive capacity of capital (Marx) or capitalism's need to codify deterritorialized flows (Deleuze), the drug trafficking business gradually adapted to the needs of Ecuadorean capitalism, from the point of view of economic accumulation, state domination and the building of consent among the population with regard to an expanded repressive strategy.

In this maelstrom, the government has seized the opportunity to legitimize itself with a view to its re-election in 2025, whether through painting itself as the victim ("the violence of the narco is a legacy of past governments"), whether by carrying out false flag operations (such as the TC Televisión simulation) or through the deepening of violence (the use of rival groups, terrorism as a political resource, etc.). The idea has been planted in Ecuadorean society, not only that the problem is the absence of the state, but also that this must be solved by building an apparatus centred on internal militarization and repression. This suggests a number of possible options for government action in the coming months:

1) Promote reforms to the Integral Penal Code to toughen the penalties for terrorism, intensify Bukele-style repression and legitimize the state of emergency, provisions that in due course will not discriminate between a social movement activist and a lumpen.

2) Moves from the Assembly and the Executive to adopt packages of reforms and anti-popular actions: labour deregulation, VAT increases, Free Trade Agreement with China, the elimination of subsidies, etc.

3) Defend the agreements made by the government of Guillermo Lasso to allow the presence of US military personnel and contractors in Ecuador, against the backdrop of a "Plan Ecuador -the local version of Plan Colombia-, one more step towards the militarization of society and the loss of sovereignty.

4) Giving free rein to large-scale mining, raw material exports and liberalization of the economy as a means of generating profits for the local bourgeoisie, based on the needs of capitalism in the metropolitan countries.

5) Implementation of cosmetic measures in the investigation of the drug cartels' infiltration of the security forces, the judiciary, customs, etc., with the aim of covering up the absence of significant arrests of bourgeois bosses of the drug trafficking business and local criminal gangs (at most, a few selective arrests as a "smokescreen").

6) Strengthening the supposed Correism/anti-Correism dichotomy and deepening the criminalization of the leadership of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) as a way of creating "false positives".

## Possible responses

## from below

Given this state of affairs, it is natural that the Ecuadorean situation should seem quite confusing for the popular organizations. But there are fundamental elements within this panorama that should guide our actions. The first, of course, is that the growth of drug trafficking has not been caused by the popular sectors. Those responsible are well entrenched in the drug bourgeoisie.

The debt owed by the left, which did not recognize this in time, lies in not having sufficiently organized the poor sectors most vulnerable to being recruited by the gangs, into an organizational project capable of offering an alternative to the transformations of the capitalist economy (among which drug trafficking is one). The second, despite the above, involves continuing to insist on building unity from below, in order to accumulate forces and confront a comprehensive offensive from above. The narrative of "national unity" promoted by the government is a pus-filled shell, and the popular sectors must dissociate themselves from this discourse.

The popular movement - and this is the third guiding element - must present itself as the real opposition to the drug trafficking business, a business that is built by powerful economic groups working with international cartels and local criminal gangs, and which has the blessing of the government of the day. The strategy of labour deregulation and the anti-popular reforms that the Noboa government intends to impose under the pretext of "financing the war" must meet with the fiercest opposition. Those who caused (and benefited from) the narco boom were the rich: they are the ones to blame and they must bear the consequences.

We must demand a change in the state's anti-drug strategy. Firstly, by condemning the racist practices and

the criminalization of poverty that humiliate the popular sectors and try to hide the conditions of misery in which the majority of the Ecuadorean people live. Secondly, by rejecting the build-up of repressive forces, which only serve to encourage corruption in public and private institutions, and to make invisible the precarious social conditions of the majority of the affected population and to increase senseless violence.

The defence of the territories of the Indigenous nationalities and peoples, and of any land where there are organized communities, by means of the community, Indigenous and people's guards (the self-defence forces developed by the Indigenous movement and some other local communities), must also be one of our priorities. Hand in hand with the above, we must reject any building of prisons in areas where there are organized social movements (as the government proposes to do in the provinces of Pastaza and Santa Elena).

In short, the proliferation of drug trafficking in Ecuador is an acute symptom of the degradation of neoliberal capitalism and marks a point of no return between barbarism and a profound transformation of our country. It brings face to face the narco-bourgeoisie with the subaltern sectors, whose main organizational reference point is the Indigenous Movement. The declarations of the President of the Republic, ignoring the obvious use of the current situation to accentuate anti-popular measures, clearly illustrate that the target of the "war" is not and never will be the drug trade, but the people at the bottom. We must understand this battle for what it really is and unite and organize ourselves accordingly.

29 January 2024

*Translated for **International Viewpoint** from **Jacobin América Latina**.*



# Is a new political cycle opening up in Chile?

**6 February 2024, by Franck Gaudichaud, Pablo Abufom**

On Sunday 17 December 2023, for the second time in just over a year, Chileans voted in a referendum “for” or “against” a draft new Constitution, which would put an end to the one promulgated in 1980 during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (and altered several times since 1989). This new national election takes place four years after the great social revolt of 2019, which shook the five decades of neoliberal hegemony established in the Andean country, and two years after the election of Gabriel Boric, the young president of the progressive left (supported by a coalition of the Communist Party and the Broad Front, in alliance with part of the old Concertación which governed during the post-dictatorship transition).

The first constitutional plebiscite of 2022 was to “approve” or “reject” the proposal for a new constitution drafted by a Convention composed mainly of anti-neoliberal representatives and with the participation of indigenous peoples, social movements and with gender parity. It was a project that included decades of social struggles and aspired to a democratic Chile based on broad social rights. This Sunday’s plebiscite, on the contrary, was drafted by a Council with an extreme right majority headed by the Republican Party, which deepened the political regime of the 1980 constitution and restricted social rights.

## A class vote

Once again, more than 15 million Chileans were called to vote: 55.8% opposed the new constitutional text, although 15% of voters did not go to the polls, despite the voting system which mandated automatic voter registration (again in effect from 2022). Once again, in the capital there

was a class vote, as in the rest of the country: while the 3 richest municipalities in the country voted “in favour”, the popular municipalities in the south and west of the capital declared themselves more than 60%, or even 70%, “against”. Only two regions of the Andean country voted by a majority in favour of the latest draft Constitution, drafted as it was by the right. However, big capital and its media have invested more than 130 million pesos in the campaign to defend the new text and a constitution that would definitively prevent any legislation in favour of abortion, that would safeguard the funded pension system, which would consolidate the commodification of water, education and health, and which would enshrine the prohibition overall of collective bargaining, while protecting one of the most reactionary rights to strike in Latin America.

## A defeat for Antonio Kast’s party of the extreme right

In September 2022, more than 62% of the population had already rejected a constitutional proposal, but in this case a clearly left-wing, equal and feminist Magna Carta, which proclaimed a “plurinational” state and recognised new rights for indigenous peoples. For many voters, it was about overcoming – at least in part – the neoliberal subsidiary state and an extractivist and ecocidal development model, inherited from Pinochet and his “Chicago Boys.” In this month of December, the rejection is expressed again, but in the face of a text written by the extreme and traditional right, within the framework of a process much more “controlled” by the

traditional parties and parliament, attached to “technical committees of admissibility” and to commissions of “experts”. The 50 members (elected in May 2023) of the Constitutional Council were led by a relative majority attached to the Republican Party of José Antonio Kast, a new extreme right that has emerged strongly in the last three years, which has emerged as a “return to order” force with an openly racist, anti-immigrant, patriarchal, conservative and ultra-securitarian discourse in the face of the collective rebellion of October 2019, against the powerful feminist movement and its demands, against the Boric government and its “late progressivism”. In alliance with the right, the Republican Party believed it could draft a Constitution in its own image and likeness, that of the “true Chileans” in the words of the president of the Council, the very reactionary and fundamentalist Lutheran Beatriz Hevia. With the result of the last referendum, the Republican Party has just suffered its first clear defeat. Above all, because Kast already saw himself as a new presidential candidate with a real chance of winning at the end of 2025. The knives are also out between the coalition of the traditional conservative-neoliberal right (Chile Vamos), around figures like Evelyn Matthei, and the Republican clan, each seeking to evade responsibility for the debacle. Dissidence is also appearing within the extreme right with some leaders or opinionologists such as Axel Kaiser seeking to create a “libertarian party”, even more radical than Kast and copied from Javier Milei’s model in Argentina. These differentiations and tensions within the right-wing camp are destined to grow in importance in the coming months, creating a possible window of political opportunity for the social and political left.

# A government without Boric, a government without reforms

On the night of the result, President Boric once again spoke of national consensus, while confirming that the constituent process had come to an end after these two rejections, recognising that the “social emergencies” were now elsewhere. The young president, instead of taking advantage of this right-wing defeat at the polls, repeated a self-flagellating speech criticising the supposed “radicality” of the first constitutional proposal of 2021-2022, and rejecting any “polarisation” of the country:

“It is time to recognise the result achieved by those who raised the option against, but without forgetting that an important part of those who went to the polls voted for the option in favour. We cannot repeat the same mistake of the previous plebiscites. Every one of us constitutes the country and those who triumph in an election cannot ignore or do without those who are circumstantially defeated. Our country will continue with the current Constitution because after two plebiscite constitutional proposals, neither has managed to represent and unite Chile in its beautiful diversity. The country became polarised, divided, and regardless of this overwhelming result, the constitutional process failed to channel the hopes of having a new Constitution written for everyone.”

In general, several government officials recognise that this result brings some “fresh air” to an executive that has been characterised since its inception by a weak capacity for change and some timid and contradictory reforms (advances in free health care, decrease in weekly working time and increase in the minimum wage). What marks the Boric administration above all is its lack of even minimal will to confront the dominant and business sectors and to try to mobilise popular sectors “from below”, while, apart from the

Communist Party (Partido Comunista/PC), it has no real link with the working and subordinate sectors. As a minority in Parliament, locked into a parliamentary logic and management of the state apparatus, and having failed to impose his tax reform, Boric increasingly depends on the Socialist Party and its allies (pillars of neoliberalism since 1990), who have entered the seat of the Chilean Presidency, La Moneda, with strength and are embodied by Minister of the Interior, Carolina Tohá. Mired in a corruption case (the Caso Convenios or Agreements Case) and faced with a systematic and terribly effective bombardment by capitalist media monopolies that focused public debates on drug trafficking, insecurity and the rejection of migrants, the government has to suffer more than simply promoting the political agenda. Along these lines, and despite the protests of many honest militants or the criticism of leaders such as the communist mayor of Recoleta, Daniel Jadue, the government has continued to militarise the Mapuche territory of Wallmapu, whilst defending the Carabineros (police) and broad impunity for those responsible for the repression of October 2019, as well as proposing laws that criminalise struggles for the right to housing. The presence of figures from the left such as the Minister and spokesperson of the General Secretary of Government, Camila Vallejo, does not change this general orientation, which is also causing ongoing demobilisation among the bases of both the Frente Amplio (Broad Front) and the PC.

## A new political cycle and perspectives for the social movements

Sunday’s elections undeniably mark the end of a political cycle. Paradoxical elements of continuity can be discerned at the heart of these two referendums, and even in the wake of October 2019: clearly, the crisis of hegemony, the rejection of the

political “caste” and the dissatisfaction with the lack of solutions to the main popular demands are still with us, in different ways and with different strategic orientations. If the profound impact that the media and social networks had on the electoral results of both plebiscites are discounted, in any case, it can be ascertained that the vote “against something” weighs more than the vote “in favour of something.” This reflects a situation of national political stalemate, in which none of the actors in dispute manage to impose their programme or convince the population of their proposals to exit the crisis. Neither the massive irruption of the people in October 2019, nor the anti-neoliberal majority of the 2021 Convention, nor the progressivism in the government since 2022, nor the Pinochet majority of the Council of 2023: none of these expressions of the crisis have represented a way out.

In this situation, the main threat to the popular sectors of Chile is the successful emergence of a far-right political force that manages to capitalise on the defeats of all the actors mentioned above. Needless to say, Milei’s triumph in Argentina influences this intuition. But in a scenario of political polarisation, when a progressive government has been unable to fulfill its programme, it is not unreasonable to envision a next right/far-right government, and this explains why the main presidential figures in the polls today are Kast and Matthei.

Faced with this odious scenario, the left and the social, feminist and popular movements have the obligation to draw strategic lessons from the last four years. On the one hand, the programmatic moderation that the ruling party has embodied has had the effect, of disappointing its electoral base and refusing to adopt paths of popular mobilisation to counteract the opposition’s parliamentary blockade. When faced with stubborn opposition, the government prefers to remove its pretense of change and ends up “successfully” approving projects stripped of their initial intention, sending a clear message: in times of crisis, there is no alternative to programmatic surrender. There is no

room to support a programme of change, no room for mobilising the social bases. Seen in this way, the government has renounced precisely the little it can do in times of crisis and parliamentary blockade: that is, to use that small fraction of power to force an open confrontation over the programme and highlight the positions of each actor in dispute. On the contrary, it has preferred to reissue the elitarian “politics of agreements”, at the heights, without the people who characterised the social-liberal center-left of the transition.

On the other hand, the left and the social movements would do well to take advantage of this moment of opening and closing to make a profound self-criticism about the organisational dispersion that sectoral struggles imply, each one in its field or territory, without the construction of a common space for the dispute for power built around a transversal programme for class independence. A notable exception to this has been the case of feminism developed around the Feminist General Strike promoted by the March 8 Feminist Coordination, which has sought to make feminism a global vision that can programmatically and organisationally confront all national problems.

In classical terms, this new cycle will

confront the left and social movements with the problem of party building, in terms of developing a political force capable of striking unified blows in a common direction. This requires, first of all, identifying the reasons why the October rebellion failed to impose by its own means the terms of the solution to the crisis, and why it had to be transmuted into a constituent process agreed upon and designed by and from the Congress. Rather than blaming the “traitors” on duty who would have perverted the power of the social revolt, this closing of the cycle forces us to think about our own shortcomings: a dispersion of social demands without reference to the common thread of structural causes of the crisis of Chilean/global neoliberal capitalism, an archipelago of organisations without common activity other than street mobilisation, a disconnection between the militant nuclei and the mobilised mass, and the persistence of artisanal modes of organisation that were not able to take advantage of the massive and popular irruption of the revolt to construct new alternative political references with a national presence.

If the main threat in Chile to the popular camp today is a rise of the extreme right, then the order of the day must be to identify all the ways in which it is possible to take responsibility to stop this regressive process inch by inch and share how to

do this. We believe that this happens mainly through the resurgence of demands that can remove the Chilean working class from the growing precariousness it experiences, and a political force that connects these solutions with a heritage of profound transformation, at the root, that breaks with the prevailing political and economic regime that puts the brakes on a transformative solution to the crisis. If Kast and other Chilean neofascist expressions represent a way out of the crisis with conservative, authoritarian and nationalist characteristics which reinforce the regime, then the path for the left and social movements will have to be a path of social struggles and class conflict, feminist and ecosocialist and thoroughly anticapitalist, aimed at exploding the causes of the crisis, while resolving its most immediate symptoms with short-term material solutions. Without this combination, the extreme right will continue to have a free path to convince the popular sectors that current progressivism is not on their side, and that the only solution is to trust in their platform of competition of the penultimate against the last.

21 December 2023

*Translated by David Fagan for  
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## “The absence of rules is the fundamental character of the regime”

5 February 2024, by **Masis Kürkçügil**

**Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's fiery statements condemning Israel seem courageous inside the country and perhaps in part of the non-Western world, but Turkey's trade relations with Israel tell a different story. These bilateral trade relations, steadily strengthened in recent years, have continued since the 7**

**October offensive. Moreover, we know that companies within Erdoğan's patronage network profit greatly from this trade. How do you explain this contradiction?**

Traditionally, relations between Turkey and Israel have remained stable despite changing public discourse. Turkey has had a particular

trajectory when it comes to Israel. It was the first Muslim country to recognize Israel when it was founded in 1948. As a non-Arab but Muslim country that can be an economic interlocutor, Turkey is important to Israel. During the Cold War, Israel and Turkey were two major allies of the United States in the region. Ankara was heavily dependent on Israel in

lobbying activities in the United States because of the Armenian genocide. Moreover, during Azerbaijan's attack on Armenia in 2022, Israel made a significant military contribution. While the Arab countries are not in a position to compete with these two states in the region, Iran is a state that they must consider at various levels.

Moreover, before Hamas' action on 7 October shook the world, Turkey had begun to normalize its relations with Egypt and Israel, in parallel with the appeasement initiated by the Abraham Accords between Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Israel. Meanwhile, the Gulf countries have called on Syria to join the Arab League. Although there are no concrete plans yet, the mention at the last G20 meeting of an alternative to China's trade routes, namely a US-backed Asia-Europe route through Israel from India, hinted at possible "stability" in the region. However, Palestine's destiny already seems to be mapped out in this quest for stability, and the Hamas attack and the Israeli offensive in Gaza do not seem to alter the long-term goals of the states.

Relations between Turkey and Israel have also been plagued by a series of problems. Notably, at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2009, Erdoğan attracted attention by shouting "one minute" during a debate in tribute to Israeli President Shimon Peres, abandoning all diplomatic conventions and declaring: "You know very well how to kill people." This earned him recognition as a *mujahid* in the domestic political scene. However, a year later, in May 2010, diplomatic relations were severed after the Mavi Marmara ship attempted to break the blockade of the Gaza Strip and the death of nine people as a result of the assault on it by Israeli soldiers.

Relations began to heal two years later when Israel apologized and agreed to pay \$20 million in compensation for the Mavi Marmara incident. Although Erdoğan did not react during the large protests that followed the assault on the ship, in 2016 he criticized those who questioned the restoration of relations, saying, "Did you ask me

before you sent this aid there?"

Despite Erdoğan's harsh criticism during the 2017 Jerusalem crisis and other tense incidents, relations began to normalize in 2022 with the first visit of an Israeli president to Turkey since 2014, Isaac Herzog, and the appointment of ambassadors a few months later. Discussions have also begun on the transfer of energy resources from Israel to Europe. However, it should be noted that the volume of natural gas coming from Israel may not be sufficient for such a project, while Turkey, with high energy demand, aspires to become a key crossing point between producing countries and Europe.

During this period, trade between Turkey and Israel followed a distinct trajectory. Even during periods when Erdoğan used the harshest expressions, the volume of trade increased. In 2002, when the AKP came to power, Turkey's exports to Israel were \$861.4 million and imports from Israel amounted to \$544.5 million. In 2022, exports reached \$6.74 billion, while imports reached \$2.17 billion. The two countries complement each other in trade, with Turkey mainly sending food products and steel raw materials, while importing mineral oils and fuels from Israel. A free trade agreement has been in force between the two countries since 1997.

After the Hamas attack on 7 October, early data indicated a slight decline in trade. However, the cancellation of agreements or the imposition of sanctions are not on the agenda. Moreover, the management of international trade by Erdoğan's entourage is not limited to relations with Israel.

Erdoğan often uses foreign policy as a tool for domestic policy. For example, he recently reconciled, as if nothing had happened, with the United Arab Emirates, which he had clearly designated as the financiers of the attempted coup d'état of 15 July 2016. After openly accusing Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the wake of the murder of Saudi dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi in a consular building in Turkey in 2018, he embraced him as if nothing had

happened. Although the genocide in Gaza is on an unrivalled level compared to previous incidents, it is unlikely that Erdoğan, who is seeking to borrow from all corners of the world, will radically cut off relations with Israel.

**Relations between Turkey and Russia also appear to be contradictory. Despite frequent confrontations between Turkey and Russia in Syria, the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Black Sea, the mutual dependence between the two countries seems to be growing beyond the personal closeness between Erdoğan and Putin. During the Russia-Ukraine war, Turkey supplied SİHA drones to Ukraine at the beginning of the conflict, while continuing its efforts to circumvent sanctions against Russia. While discussions are taking place about granting privileges for the construction of new nuclear reactors in Russia, Turkey is considering becoming a new energy hub for Russia. What can you say about this relationship?**

The only channel that could break Russia's isolation in the west following its invasion of Ukraine was Turkey. Indeed, with the exception of China, Turkey has been the most significant country to circumvent sanctions imposed on Russia. The relationship between Erdoğan and Putin, whom Erdoğan calls his friend in the context of the usual personalization of Turkish foreign policy, is quite zigzagging. After the downing of a Russian bomber on the Syrian border in November 2015, relations reached a critical point. Erdoğan sent a letter of apology to Russia and accused the coup plotters of shooting down the plane.

Thus, when the rapprochement that had begun in the 2000s was suddenly confronted with this crisis, it could be expected that Ankara would move closer to the West. But relations have accelerated with the controversial purchase of S-400 air defence systems, despite the growing tension with NATO. Even the supply of SİHA drones to Ukraine has not tarnished these relations.



The acquisition of the S-400 air defence system from Russia has led to the exclusion of Turkey from the production process of the F-35 aircraft, in which it participates, and even to the non-delivery of the aircraft, despite the fact that they were paid for to the tune of \$1.5 billion. It has also hampered the supply of spare parts for F-16 aircraft. These missiles, which were inactive, represented a concession to Russia. Even the joint war with Azerbaijan against Armenia, ignoring the Russian forces installed in Karabakh in the Caucasus, has not altered relations. Turkey, by facilitating the access of Ukrainian wheat to the world market, is protecting the interests of both sides by also helping to lift the Russian embargo.

Turkey's extradition of Ukrainians considered by Russia to be war criminals has certainly created unease, but in the end, it has not gone beyond a tension instrumentalized for domestic political purposes for two mutually dependent leaders. When the invasion of Ukraine began, Turkey was the scene of a significant influx of Russians. Events such as Turkey's approval of Sweden's NATO membership after leaving it in abeyance are also no longer essential.

In Turkey-Russia relations, the most critical issue is the future of Syria. Ankara tried to topple Assad by using a mercenary force such as the Syrian National Army, even after the US abandoned that goal. However, as Ankara did not react in any way to the emergence of Islamic State (ISIS) in the region, the United States cooperated with YPG-PYD forces in Syria. [46] Thus, Erdoğan found himself confronted with an unforeseen "Kurdish formation." During negotiations with the PKK in Turkey, Erdoğan established relations with representatives of the PYD in Syria. However, in 2015, he ended these negotiations and attacked, declaring the PYD as an enemy. The Obama administration, meanwhile, has formed a well-equipped force of 50,000 people, including mostly YPG-PYD Kurds, but also partially Arabs, to fight ISIS.

While Turkey has sought to take control of a 30-kilometer-deep area

along the border in Syria to push back the Kurds, it has only succeeded in opening two pockets across the border. Due to Russia's control of the airspace, these operations took place with Moscow's approval.

Putin's intention to turn Turkey into a natural gas hub is especially important to Erdoğan. If the gas sent by the Turkish Stream is transmitted to third countries, Turkey will enjoy a significant advantage. On the other hand, Ankara has made a commitment to Moscow on nuclear energy. The commissioning of the first reactor at the Akkuyu nuclear power plant is expected. On the other hand, Turkey has adopted different positions from Russia in Libya, Africa and the Mediterranean.

Although the goal of achieving a trade volume of \$100 billion over the past decade has not been fully met, it has surpassed \$60 billion. Nevertheless, the centre of gravity of economic relations between Turkey and Russia remains energy. After the 2016 coup attempt, Erdoğan, who did not find the support he sought from the West, was immediately supported by Putin, which was important to AKP voters. At the same time, by controlling the airspace in northern Syria, Russia has opened a loophole allowing Erdoğan to conduct cross-border operations. Russia's presence in Syria is seen as more palatable to the United States, which supports the Syrian Democratic Forces, including the Kurds.

The relationship between Turkey and Russia is, in a way, a kind of blackmail against the West. Turkey, which is a "dialogue partner" in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, has at times threatened to become a full-fledged member. [47]

At the moment, with the occupation of Ukraine, Turkey's dependence on Russia has increased, and Erdoğan is more relaxed compared to 2016. However, relations with Russia or Israel are negligible compared to relations with European capital. Nevertheless, from the point of view of areas of influence, relations with Russia are more attractive.

**Tensions between Turkey and the West, particularly with the United States, persist. What are the issues**

**of contradiction here and what developments do you foresee in the near future?**

The justification for Turkey's dependence on NATO during the Cold War is no longer valid. But Turkey must consider the place of the United States as a world power. However, the emergence of new areas of influence and trade routes has rendered the old dependency relationship obsolete. The conflict between the United States and China has created new uncertainties. The position of the United States vis-à-vis Russia or Iran does not correspond to Turkey's interests. The competition between the United States and China concerns not only the Far East, but also the Middle East, where China is now present. In March 2023, talks between the two enemy powers in the region, Iran and Saudi Arabia, were held under the mediation of China. The U.S. could not accomplish such a thing, it is weakened in the Middle East and does not have a credible military force.

The character of the political regime in Turkey is not a problem for Europe or, of course, for the United States. However, due to the unconventional way in which Erdoğan is leading the game, he seems an unreliable interlocutor. One day Erdoğan can talk about joining the EU, the next day he can hold a referendum to reject it, he can accept the death penalty, slow down the functioning of NATO and flirt with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. However, the intensity of economic and political relations with the West prevents him from acting completely autonomously. No one is talking about leaving NATO. In fact, if things continue like this, even if NATO cannot exclude Turkey from membership, it could reduce its influence.

Since we cannot separate foreign policy from domestic policy, Erdoğan will have to deal with domestic issues, especially economic and social problems, in the coming years. The absence of rules, the refusal to submit to any rules on the part of Erdoğan, is the fundamental characteristic of the regime. From justice to foreign policy, from social policies to rights, the total absence of rules is obvious. Turkey's economy hadn't been this far removed

from foreign investment in a very long time. In a country where Erdoğan decides the interest rate, even the inflation rate, and who will go to jail, no one invests. As a result, the president's scope for manoeuvre is becoming increasingly restricted.

**All these developments have sparked debates about Turkey's place in the international system. Some interpret this as an independent foreign policy, others as a shift in the axis (detaching from NATO, Eurasianism), and for some, it is interpreted as an underlying imperialist expansion. What do you think?**

While even F-16 spare parts were not supplied to Turkey, supplying F-35s to Greece and establishing U.S. bases near the border meant encirclement for Turkey, which was taking initiatives in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. Of course, the United States had thus created a Black Sea route against Russia before the war in Ukraine, but Turkey was excluded. Like when the U.S., seeing Turkey as an unreliable ally in Syria, formed an alliance with local Kurdish and Arab forces there.

There is an undeniable fact: Turkey is the most militarily and economically powerful country in the region. The Turkish army maintains troops in thirteen countries. The imperial past and imperialist aims such as pan-Turkism brought the old spheres of influence back to the agenda after the pressure from the USSR had disappeared. Perceived as "an ideological mixture of Islamism, Turkish nationalism and Ottoman imperialism," neo-Ottomanism has gained legitimacy. In parallel with the strengthening of the far right in domestic politics, an expansionist tendency legitimized by the discourse of "survival" is also intensifying in foreign policy. Just a decade ago,

Erdoğan declared that "Kosovo is Turkey and Turkey is Kosovo," showing the breadth of spheres of influence. Today, even a simple passer-by in the street - subjected to a media bludgeon almost totally dominated by the regime - can claim that Iraq's Mosul province is in fact Turkey's natural border.

After the start of the Arab Spring, Erdoğan, by becoming the godfather of the Muslim Brotherhood, was giving advice to Morsi in Egypt and also recommending that Assad integrate the Muslim Brotherhood into power. And, when his advice didn't come to fruition, he began dreaming of sending his troops all the way to Damascus. But his plan to turn Turkey into a regional power, launched in 2011, has completely collapsed. The dream of dominion over the seas, the "blue homeland" has been shipwrecked. The "precious solitude" has given way to hugs with those who were once labelled murderers.

The desirability of becoming a sub-imperialist power could perhaps have been discussed under other circumstances. However, the opportunity to become a soft power has long since been missed.

Since 2010, Turkey has adopted a proactive policy, independent of the alliances to which it belongs, and therefore a policy distant from the West, even hostile. It explores the possibilities of being a power in a region stretching from the Balkans (where one million people speak Turkish and one-fifth of the Turkish population is of Balkan origin) to the Caucasus, from the Middle East to Africa. Erdoğan openly declared in 2013: "If you claim to be a great power, you must be present in every corner of the world." In fact, when the USSR collapsed, thus eliminating the motive of Turkey's dependence on the United States, the Prime Minister at

the time, Süleyman Demirel, also raised the possibility of a sphere of influence stretching from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China.

The foreign policy that former Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu called "zero problems with neighbours" quickly produced opposite results. In 2013, İbrahim Kalın, one of Erdoğan's closest aides at the time, summed up Turkey's foreign policy by calling it "precious solitude." Among other things, Turkey, despite not being a party to international maritime law, has launched a show of force in the Mediterranean Sea by referring to the notion of Mavi Vatan (Blue Homeland) for maritime areas of jurisdiction, thus creating a general atmosphere of hard power.

While reforms to improve relations with the EU were avoided, the attempt to portray himself as the mouthpiece of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab world after the overthrow of Morsi in Egypt was unsuccessful. The dreams of co-presidency attributed to Turkey and of course to Erdoğan, since the Bush-era Greater Middle East projects, have been set aside, but Erdoğan's ambition to become a world leader has not been extinguished.

"Turkey has the ambitions of a Rolls Royce and the resources of a Rover," a U.S. ambassador said of Turkey. On the one hand, there is an exaggerated belief in the power and capabilities of the regime, but this is accompanied by a constant retreat from the point of view of objectives. The question of the "survival" of the homeland, which Erdoğan waves as a shield in domestic politics, is also used in international politics to describe a state as a "besieged country," thus seeking to legitimize its aggressiveness. But Erdoğan's cards are considerably weaker than they were a decade ago.

12 January 2024

## The U.S.-Mexico Border at Center of the

# Presidential Election

**4 February 2024, by Dan La Botz**

In response, Biden, who in 2020 promised more humane policies at the border, now says if Congress gives him the authority, he will close the border and establish greater control, appalling some of his supporters.

A PEW poll last summer found that about 75% of Americans believe that the U.S. government is doing a poor job at the border and almost half believe illegal immigration is a big problem. Both parties also agree that there is a crisis at the U.S. southern border that leads to problems in maintaining immigration policy.

The United States accepted 1.8 million legal immigrants last year, a little more than average, but many more are undocumented. In December 2023 U.S. authorities took into custody 225,000 undocumented immigrants crossing the border between official ports of entry and each month it processes another 50,000 who appear at official entry ports. That amounts to more than 3,20,000 per year. About 430,000 of these applied for asylum because they fear violence in their countries. Increasingly these immigrants are families with children from Venezuela and Central America.

The U.S. immigration courts are

overwhelmed, with over two million cases pending. The enormous numbers of immigrants along the borders sometimes create chaotic conditions in the border's cities and towns where local governments and migrant aid organizations are also beyond their capacities.

Republican governor Greg Abbott of Texas has led the fight over the migrant issue, transporting over 100,000 immigrants to northern cities like Washington, D.C., New York City, Chicago, and Philadelphia that are governed by Democrats, leading to crises in housing, education and social welfare in those places. Since 2021 Abbott has ordered the Texas National Guard to place razor wire along the border, though control of the border is a federal not a state responsibility. Biden's administration has ordered the concertina wire removed, and was upheld by a split 5 to 4 decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court. Texas has defied the court, leading to tensions between the National Guard and U.S. immigration authorities.

Ron DeSantis, Republican governor of Florida, has said he will send 1,000 Florida National Guard troops to Texas to support Abbott's forces.

Some 25 of 26 Republican state governors support Abbott.

Now the Republican majority in the House of Representatives is moving to impeach Alejandro Mayorkas, the head of Homeland Security which has responsibility for the border. The Senate, controlled by the Democrats, would surely not convict him. This is a stunt aimed at winning voters for Trump.

Meanwhile, far-right white Christian nationalists last week organized a caravan called "God's Army," that traveled from Virginia to the Texas border—about 1,400 miles—to "take back the border." With banners emblazoned with the face of Jesus and the American flag, organizers promised to lead 40,000 people to the border but ultimately only a few hundred made the trip. Leaders of Texas border communities, who are largely Mexican American, spoke out against racist convoy.

Border and immigration legislation in Congress is stalled because the Republicans want it to remain an unsolved problem because that's good for Trump's campaign.

*4 February 2024*

## Smoke and Mirrors - The Unionist Miracle - What's really happening in the North of Ireland?

**3 February 2024, by Joseph Healy**

The DUP, known locally in the North of Ireland as the Dumb Unionist Party, had made strategic error after error.

Firstly, in being an enthusiastic supporter of Brexit, when most in the North of Ireland were opposed to it,

especially the young. Secondly, in swallowing Johnson's promise of "no border in the Irish Sea", which he

enthusiastically sold to them as part of his over ready Brexit, which all can now see never defrosted in the middle. Johnson's deal resulted in the Northern Ireland Protocol, which in order to protect the region's unique status as having access to both the EU and UK markets, meant that goods coming from Britain needed to be checked to ensure that they were not destined for the Irish Republic and the EU across the guaranteed open border between the two parts of Ireland.

Jeffrey Donaldson, decided to take a stand on this declaring that it was effectively treating the North of Ireland in a different way from the rest of the UK state. No Border in the Irish Sea festooned lampposts in the hard line Unionist areas of Belfast and the old Unionist cry of No Surrender echoed across the Loyalist areas of the North of Ireland.

The Windsor Protocol, negotiated last year between the UK and the EU took the wind out of the DUP's sails as it demonstrated that the UK government was more interested in a harmonious relationship with the EU than the concerns of the DUP. The British government told the DUP that there would be no further change and that some aspects of the Protocol had been softened with the assent of the EU. This clear sidelining of the DUP further enraged the base but they began to lose more and more support across the region as public services crumbled.

The recent huge public services strike, where DUP negotiators going to meet the NI Secretary of State, were

heckled by strikers and told to go back to work, was very bad optics for the party. The result of the two year stalemate has been a lack of funding from Westminster, resulting in a situation in the NHS where it is in far worse state than other regions of the UK state and where public sector salaries lie far behind those of England, Wales and Scotland, resulting in a huge haemorrhaging of NHS staff across the border to the Irish Republic where they are paid far higher wages. For the public in the North of Ireland this has become the dominant political issue and much of their anger is directed at the DUP.

The political fact remained that the DUP, if it returned to the Assembly under Sinn Fein, would have to demonstrate some concrete victory after a two year boycott. This resulted in the current so called deal which is effectively no real change in the Windsor Agreement and was only backed by 53% of the DUP Executive, leaving Donaldson in a very exposed position and there is still talk of a possible split in the party.

Despite Donaldson's claims, the protocol remains, as streamlined by the Windsor Framework. The Irish Sea border remains. Donaldson is highlighting the issue of checks on goods but there was never a problem with trade between the North of Ireland and GB, because the EU doesn't care what goes into GB. The EU does care what goes into the single market and that is why the red lane exists under the Windsor Agreement.

As a recent article in *The Irish News*

by Brian Feeney stated: "Speed is of the essence to get the deal over the line before there's time for the DUP dissidents to see through the smoke and mirrors. Once done, no-one will notice any difference in everyday life. Except for one aspect, and it's a fairly consequential one: There'll be a Sinn Fein first minister in the person of Michelle O'Neill."

The whole thing has been a piece of political theatre to assuage the fears of the Unionist base but essentially it is like Canute trying to hold back the tide as the Unionist tide in the North of Ireland retreats. The Loyalist hard men have threatened to block the roads of the region this Friday but they are a much reduced force compared to their heyday in the 70s when the Loyalist Workers force managed to paralyse the North of Ireland and bring down the Sunningdale Power Sharing Agreement.

For the DUP's base hearing Mary Lou Mac Donald, President of Sinn Fein, tell the UK media that "Irish unity is within touching distance" is the real gall. With a Sinn Fein woman as First Minister in the North and a potential Sinn Fein government soon in the South, led by another Irish nationalist woman, Donaldson's band aid on trade is a poor substitute for the loss of power which has over the last decade been the undoing of Unionism as the clock ticks down on the end of the partitionist dream.

1 February 2024

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

## A slow collapse in Tunisia

2 February 2024, by Édouard Soulier

This tragedy followed the death of 40 Tunisian migrants a few hours after they set sail from Sfax. The vast majority of migrants departing from this Tunisian coastal town are from sub-Saharan Africa, but almost one in

five migrants leaving Tunisia is from that country.

### Serious economic crisis

The country's disastrous political and economic situation is driving people to



Europe, and for several months now Tunisia has also been a transit country for crossings. Tunisia is in the throes of a serious economic crisis, with food shortages, price rises and a huge state debt. And in a country where strongly neoliberal economic policies have been in place since the years under Ben Ali, the neoliberal reforms did not stop after the revolution. The country is heavily in debt, and the only way out is to continue borrowing by accepting the IMF's reforms.

Stuck in this logic, against which he has no solution, the current president, Kaïs Saïed, is sinking into totalitarianism. Dozens of opponents have been arrested on completely fabricated pretexts. As the Tunisian people commemorate the 12th anniversary of the Revolution, not even journalists are spared prison. On 10 January, Zied El Heni, a freelance

journalist, appeared in court in Tunisia on a charge of "contempt" against a Tunisian government minister whom he had criticised on IFM radio. The prosecutor requested immediate detention under a law that gives the authorities extensive powers to clamp down on freedom of expression.

## State racism

The other facet of Kaïs Saïed's policy is to descend into the foulest racism by targeting black migrants in transit. after agreeing to act as border guards for Europe, almost 70,000 migrants were arrested in 2023 by Tunisian forces as they tried to cross the Mediterranean. Since the summer of 2023, Black people from sub-Saharan Africa in Tunisia have been the victims of manhunts and veritable pogroms under the benevolent gaze of the

Tunis government. Arbitrary arrests on the basis of skin colour, forced transport to the borders, to the Libyan desert or the Algerian mountains have become the political management of migration under the guise of the "great replacement" theory.

This border management policy in no way prevents people from leaving, nor - alas - from being shipwrecked or killed. The Tunisian people, who have shown all their strength in active support for the Palestinian people since the massacres in Gaza, must impose a political response commensurate with what is at stake, against Kaïs Saïed's policy if necessary.

31 January 2024

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

# United Auto Workers Call for a General Strike and Endorse Biden

1 February 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

In 2023, following indictment and conviction of the old UAW leadership for corruption, Shawn Fain and a group of reformers were elected to lead the union. Fain and his group then led the union in a remarkable national strike against all three big U.S. auto makers. As I wrote at the time:

The United Auto Workers carried out a 45-day strike against the Big Three U.S. auto companies—Ford, Stellantis, and General Motors—then negotiated a contract in October and won not only large wage increases and the elimination of tiers but also encroached on the corporations' control over their plants and the industry. The United States has not seen a union lead a strike of industrial workers like this for decades.

Now Fain has called for a general strike by U.S. unions for May 2028.

Speaking at the UAW national political conference he said, "We want a general strike. We want everybody walking out just like they do in other countries." While there have been some big strike waves such as those of in 1919, the 1930s, 1946, and 1970, and a few industry-wide and city general strikes, there has never been a national general strike. To achieve such a strike, Fain has called upon unions to set their contract expiration dates for May 2028, as the UAW has.

Such a call will be difficult to achieve. The Taft-Hartley Law of 1947 outlawed sympathy strikes, solidarity strikes and general strikes, and since the 1970s and until the last few years, strikes in the United States have declined dramatically. Union leaders have been hesitant to challenge the status quo and workers so far have not had the consciousness, organization, and combativity to do so. Clearly

Fain's call for a strike four years from now is an attempt to get workers' attention and to orient the working class to a policy of class struggle.

At the same time, Fain announced that the UAW, with almost one million members (400,000 active and 500,000 retired) will endorse Biden for president, calling his rival Donald Trump "a scab" opposed to "everything we stand for." President Joe Biden had joined UAW workers on the picket line last year, a first for any U.S. president. Still, an internal UAW poll conducted last summer showed that 30% of members supported Biden, 30% backed Trump, and 40% were independent. In recent presidential elections about 60% voted Democratic. Fain's announcement is meant to unify the members behind Biden.

Fain's two announcements reveal

labor's possibilities and problems. On the one hand, there is now a small but significant part of the UAW and working class more generally prepared to engage in class struggle. But labor's political direction is more problematic. The UAW endorsed Biden, the candidate of a capitalist party. Some UAW members objected to supporting Biden because of his

support for Israel's genocidal war on Palestine. A more significant number of UAW members support Trump with his racist, misogynist, pro-business, and authoritarian politics. And the working class itself has no independent political arm.

The United States has not had an important working-class party—labor, Socialist, or Communist—since the

1910s. And there hasn't been much interest in creating one since the 1930s. While not on the agenda at the moment, the need for such a party of working people is clear, but it will have to be done by a fight against the labor bureaucracy and the Democratic Party. So, the obstacles are clear too.

*28 January 2024*