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Election and Widening War

31 October 2024, by **Against the Current** Editors

The outcome isn't known as *Against the Current* goes to press a couple weeks before November 5, but will be shortly after or before this issue reaches our subscribers — or possibly the results, unless they're unexpectedly decisive, might be rejected as illegitimate by close to half the country, with a looming potential for constitutional crisis and chaos.

Rather than speculate on the outcome, we'll look here at the confluence of domestic and global factors that go into making such a volatile moment in U.S. politics, set to persist well after November 5.

1) The 2024 presidential election rides on likely razor-thin margins in seven or so "swing states," so that a few tens of thousands of votes either way outweigh 150 or 160 million cast nationwide — the product of the United States' uniquely absurd Electoral College system.

The latter is not only grotesquely undemocratic but vulnerable to all kinds of voter-suppression and other schemes at state levels. This includes threats that election results might not be certified by local officials or hopelessly delayed by bureaucratic obstruction (such as a new Georgia ballot hand-count requirement, voter roll purges and barriers to registration).

The MAGA-run Republican Party in

particular is openly putting in place the mechanics for a multi-front Grand Theft Election game to be rolled out in vote counts and certification battles — procedural, legal and potentially physical. And while these moves are pretty well publicized, the Democrats are contributing their share to voter suppression through various pretexts to exclude the Green Party and other options from state ballots.

Arsenal of Genocide

2) U.S. elections conventionally don't hinge on international issues. In 2024, however, it's impossible to overlook the explosion in the Middle East, where the United States plays the central role as the arsenal of genocide. Israel's war now entails the depopulation of southern Lebanon, and a potential risk to the very survival of that country — while northern Gaza undergoes what Palestinian officials call "genocide within genocide."

Throughout the year-long destruction of Gaza, the Biden administration has pontificated about Israel's right to "defend itself," while bleating about its own "round the clock" brokering negotiations for ceasefire and hostage release deals. The government of Benjamin Netanyahu, driven both by his personal need to stay in power and

by the ideological goal of continuing and expanding the war, has openly sabotaged these efforts. In the process it has essentially abandoned the Israeli hostages in Gaza captivity.

It's also entirely clear that Netanyahu (like Russia's Vladimir Putin) intends to boost the chances of Donald Trump's return to the White House. Yet faced with Netanyahu's contempt, the U.S. president responds with more and more weapons transfers to Israel. That amounts to Biden pouring gasoline on the fire he claims to be trying to put out — with predictable results.

Biden sends unlimited weaponry to Israel — with no restraints, even when U.S. law explicitly forbids arming human rights violators. Meanwhile Biden refuses to give Ukraine permission to use American-supplied weapons to attack the Russian bases that launch terror bombing raids on Ukraine's people and its critical infrastructure.

The Gaza massacre continues. That now constitutes mass murder for its own sake, with the real death toll by now almost surely well into six figures. Meanwhile and mostly under the daily headline radar, the Israeli military and heavily armed settlers rampage with murderous impunity in West Bank Palestinian villages.

Amidst this came the stunning

sequence of events, beginning with Israel's assassination in Tehran of Hamas leader Ismael Haniyeh — who served as the organization's negotiator for a ceasefire and hostage release deal. This was followed in Lebanon by the detonation of Hezbollah's pagers and walkie-talkies, systematic assassinations of its leadership, and bombings carried out with U.S.-supplied weapons with little regard for civilian death and destruction in densely populated neighborhoods.

A million desperate Lebanese civilians are displaced not only from the south of the country but districts of Beirut as well. It's the height of delusion to think that somehow these atrocities wouldn't feed back into U.S. politics, from the November election to events well into the future. The impact on the Arab-American vote in November is just for openers. Additional factors include the alienation of sectors of the Democrats' progressive voter base, the bitter polarization on university campuses and punitive repression of pro-Palestinian activism.

Israel's assault on Lebanon is an "incursion" which no sane observer expects to remain "limited." And Netanyahu's ultimate dream, to bring the United States into a war with Iran, may be changing from fantasy to reality (and more likely if Trump returns to office).

Even though Israel's military and intelligence services were so unprepared for the October 7, 2023 Hamas raid, for the past 18 years they've prepared the war to destroy Hezbollah — ever since the inconclusive end of the 2006 33-day war. Inevitably this is also a war against Lebanon itself that may lead to the total collapse of that fragile state. Netanyahu himself has warned the Lebanese population to "rise up against Hezbollah" or suffer the fate of Gaza.

Undoubtedly U.S. and probably other allies' intelligence agencies assisted Israel in the astounding penetration of Hezbollah's security infrastructure. Furthermore Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah apparently believed, along with most commentators and probably Washington and Tehran too,

that its rocket exchanges with Israel would remain "within bounds" short of full-scale-out war. That was a fatal miscalculation, and not Israel's intention.

Whatever happens next, Israel has torn an enormous hole in the strategic capacity and fearsome image of what's called the "axis of resistance." This "axis" included Hezbollah and the Houthi movement in Yemen, as well as forces allied to Iran inside Iraq.

Contrary to rightwing and Israeli propaganda, these forces are not puppets responding to Iran's orders. They are actors with their local interests and initiative — and despite their rhetoric and the illusions of some activists, Palestinian freedom is not the top of their respective agendas. But they — especially Hezbollah — are or at least had been a kind of insurance policy for Iran against the threat of a direct Israeli-U.S. attack.

As that shield is severely weakened if it still exists, the Iranian rulers, already facing a very weak economy and openly at war with their own population, may be forced to pursue closer protective relations with Russia and China.

Attacking Iran has potential implications for other conflicts, including Russia's annexationist invasion of Ukraine which the Iranian regime has supported, that are difficult to predict. U.S. imperialism is inextricably front and center in these events, whatever the verbal postures of the Biden team to "prevent a wider war" may have been.

The transition period between the November 5 election and the January 20 presidential inauguration could be even more ominous globally as well as at home. In the end, "Genocide Joe" Biden's presidential legacy is the destruction of Gaza and the new Middle East catastrophe. Whether it also includes the return of Donald Trump is to be determined.

Political System in Decay...

3) On the home front, whatever the

ultimate result, the U.S. electoral cycle has revealed the stench of decay in the country's supposedly sacred institutions. It's not just that the system of elections is vulnerable to voter suppression and manipulation, in ways we sketched at the outset and more.

What were supposed to be safeguards of "stability," if not democracy — the absurdly unrepresentative Senate, the autonomous powers assigned to the states, the supposedly above-partisanship of a Supreme Court whose nearly uncontrollable majority is now both white-supremacist and semi-monarchist — are now enablers of instability and potential chaos.

More than that, the elimination of any meaningful campaign finance regulation in our politics has turned the twin Republican and Democratic parties into money-vacuuming apparatuses. There is no accountability to anyone but the corporate powers and megadonors (let alone the parties' nonexistent "memberships"). That domination in turn makes the capitalist parties, and the political system, largely impervious to the popular will or the massive crises that affect the society.

A partial counterweight is available in the form of ballot initiatives in some states, notably right now as a vehicle for defending reproductive and abortion rights against the vicious attacks from the right wing. Women's right to abortion of course is a central and critical issue on which the Democrats hope to cling to the presidency.

But fundamental issues that should be at the core of political discussion are ignored: We've repeatedly emphasized that the obscene inequalities of wealth and opportunity in the United States are at the heart of the stresses afflicting millions of Americans from inflation, poor access to medical care, miserable housing and working conditions.

Because neither capitalist party addresses the core issues and consequences of inequality, their quarrels about economic policy are mainly empty noise, or in Donald Trump's case about the health care

crisis, “concepts.”

Within the next few years, the United States along with the whole world will confront climate-change disasters of magnitudes we can barely imagine now. The incredible devastation in southern states wrought by Hurricane Helene, hundreds of miles inland from landfall and estimated at \$100 billion or more even before Milton hit Florida, is just a foretaste. The Amazon rainforest is drying and burning throughout South America, from Brazil to Ecuador to Colombia.

...While Struggle Continues

4) The left in the United States does not meaningfully affect electoral outcomes, but more importantly social movements and working-class struggles have not taken a break for the long election season. Although the east coast longshore strike won a huge wage increase, it is suspended until mid-January with talks continuing over automation. After a five-week strike Boeing mechanics voted down a contract with a 34% wage increase over four years because

it failed to restore pensions. Meanwhile the United Auto Workers threaten to strike Stellantis over the company’s failure to implement provisions of the historic contract that the union won last year.

No matter how the election turns out, campus and community movements in support of Palestine will persist with renewed energy, especially with Israel’s escalating invasion of Lebanon. University administrations, pressured by donors and congressional committees, have embarked on punitive and repressive campaigns against pro-Palestinian students and faculty that threaten the very foundations of campus speech and academic freedom.

At the same time, there are initiatives within unions and city councils for Palestinian rights. These call for divestment from Israeli-linked corporations and arms suppliers, demand a U.S. arms embargo, and support the resolution initiated by Bernie Sanders in the Senate to block the Biden administration’s new \$20 billion weapons transfer to Israel. Here is where leftwing activism can play a significant role.

An open question is whether a significant opening for independent politics — the Green Party in particular — can emerge from progressive revulsion over “Genocide Joe” Biden’s role in the Middle East slaughter and broader disaffection from the capitalist parties’ destructive duopoly. It’s important to note that the Green Party runs campaigns not only in top-level national elections but also in local races, with some significant impact.

Right now, none of the left forces in the electoral field have anything like a mass base, but each speaks to different sectors looking for political alternatives. One urgent task is to continue finding common grounds among movements toward building a serious, genuine political alternative that can reach out to broader popular sectors in the electoral sphere. That prospect is by no means quick or easy, but beyond November 5 and in the period to come will be part of urgent ongoing discussions. As always, building the movements of resistance — whether under Trump or Harris — remains central.

[Against the Current](#)

Israel’s Next Attack on Iran

30 October 2024, by **Gilbert Achcar**

This is what happened indeed. Israel’s occupation forces invaded Rafah on 6 May, then completed their control over the Strip and waited for the summer season to end before launching their large-scale attack on Hezbollah. Before that time, Israel had escalated its provocation of Iran by assassinating Ismail Haniyeh in the middle of Tehran on July 31. Iran hesitated to respond to this assassination of one of its allies in its own backyard until Israel assassinated Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut, along with Brigadier General Abbas Nilforoushan of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps. This was the second high-ranking officer of the Corps to be

assassinated by Israel after Major-General Mohammad Reza Zahedi. The latter was killed in the Iranian consulate in Damascus on the 1st of April, in an operation that prompted Tehran to launch its first retaliatory attack on Israel on 13 April.

Tehran decided to qualitatively escalate its second retaliatory attack on Israel launched on the 1st of this month by making a more extensive use of ballistic missiles, which the Zionist forces cannot intercept in totality, launching about 200 of them (in April, 9 out of 55 ballistic missiles that entered the airspace above Israel’s interception system passed

through the holes in the net – see the above-quoted article). The escalation was inevitable after Tehran had begun to lose credibility, especially among its Arab Shiite supporters, the Lebanese in particular. It was keen, however, to keep its attack, this time as well, within limits that would not bring about a large-scale Israeli attack with direct US participation. Tehran knows that the administration of US President Joe Biden is not willing to participate in such an attack before the US elections, for fear that it may backfire on Vice President Kamala Harris’s presidential campaign.

Biden therefore demanded from

Netanyahu that the Israeli attack too remain limited in a way that would not harm Harris's campaign. He asked him to avoid Iranian oil facilities for fear that Tehran would respond by disrupting all oil exports from the Gulf, thus causing a severe crisis in the global oil market, with a sharp rise in prices that could have a disastrous effect on the VP's campaign. Biden also asked Netanyahu not to launch a direct strike on Iran's nuclear facilities, knowing that Israel alone does not have the ability to destroy them anyway. The only effect of attacking those facilities without destroying them might well be to hasten Iran's development of nuclear weapons.

As for what Biden promised Netanyahu in exchange for his restraint this time, it has not been disclosed yet. However, the US administration's decision to send a THAAD anti-ballistic missile defence system to Israel, with a hundred

soldiers to operate it, constitutes a qualitative step in transforming US participation in the ongoing Zionist onslaught from indirect to direct, through the deployment of US soldiers alongside Israel's forces – not to mention the reinforcement of US air force presence in the region with additional squadrons of F-16, F-15E, and A-10.

The nature of the attack carried out by the Israeli Air Force last Saturday is very significant for the near future. This attack, the first on Iran officially claimed by the Zionist state, focused on destroying the anti-aircraft defences surrounding the capital, Tehran, and Iran's nuclear facilities, as well as destroying the giant fuel mixers that Tehran uses to make the fuel needed for its missiles (the attack also killed four Iranian soldiers). The Israeli attack thus clearly constituted a prelude to a subsequent attack on Iran by weakening Iran's defensive

capabilities and its ability to manufacture more surface-to-air missiles and ballistic missiles.

Netanyahu is now waiting for Tuesday's elections to decide his next move: If Trump wins, he will consult him to see if he is prepared to carry out a large-scale joint US-Israeli attack with the primary goal of destroying Iran's nuclear facilities. Achieving this goal would require the B-2 strategic bombers that the US Air Force alone possesses, which can carry the GBU-57 bunker-buster bombs, each weighing about 15 tons, that Israel does not possess either. If Harris wins, Netanyahu will likely strive to drag Biden into carrying out the attack with him. This could then be Biden's final and greatest gift to the Zionist state after serving its interests for half a century, in a unique dedication for which Netanyahu publicly thanked him during his last visit to the White House end of last July.

Israel-Iran Conflict Becomes Issue in U.S. Presidential Election

29 October 2024, by Dan La Botz

Israel's bombing of Iran on October 26, a response to Iran's earlier firing of 300 missiles at Israel at the beginning of October, represents an expansion of Israel's wars on Gaza and Lebanon, threatens a regional conflict and raises the horrifying prospect of involving Israel's partner the United States and Iran's ally Russia, both nuclear powers. The conflict is now also an issue in the U.S. presidential election.

Vice-President Kamala Harris is once again tested on the question of her steadfast support for Joe Biden's commitment to Israel and Donald Trump has an opportunity to lambast the Biden-Harris administration for their foreign policy failures. Trump and Harris both view Iran as an enemy of Israel and the United States, and

Trump has a particular animus against Iran since U.S. intelligence informed him that Iran was planning to assassinate him.

Following the Israel bombardment of Tehran, Harris stated once again, "We maintain the importance of supporting Israel's right to defend itself," but she added, "we are also very adamant that we must see de-escalation in the region going forward, and that will be our focus." This parallels the earlier Biden-Harris position of supporting Israel's right to make war on Hamas in Gaza, but calling for a ceasefire there and also later in Lebanon—while taking no action to bring one about.

As for Trump, he told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu earlier this month, "Do what you have to do."

Trump has been in regular communication with Netanyahu, and Biden has expressed concern that Trump might harm U.S. diplomatic efforts to prevent an expansion of the conflict. Yet Trump has also said, "They (Israel and Iran) are very close to global catastrophe," and, he added, "We have a nonexistent president and a nonexistent vice president who should be in charge. But nobody knows what's going on."

As vice-president, Harris had years of foreign policy experience, as did Trump as president, but it is Trump who says he will "Make America Great Again" both at home and abroad. His strongman appeal may win the argument.

Yet, while the debate over Israel's

wars in Gaza, Lebanon, and now Iran rages in elite circles and among some voters, for most Americans, the priority is the U.S. economy, followed by immigration. Trump has through the past year driven the political debate first with Biden and then with Harris. Trump argues that America is a failing nation, that average Americans can't afford housing and basic necessities. And immigration, says Trump poses an existential threat to American life and national identity.

He and his running mate Senator J.D.

Vance have argued that immigrants bring crime, disease, and "poison the blood" of the American people. Immigrants, they say, take Americans' jobs, especially from Black and Hispanic workers. Harris' call for an "opportunity economy" has not assuaged voters' anxieties and she has not—as Senator Bernie Sanders suggested—put forward a program for the working class.

International affairs—even the prospect of a regional war—cannot overcome Americans' historic

disinterest in such matters, at least as long as the United States is not directly involved and U.S. lives are not threatened. The one thing Americans do want is that the United States be strong. Eighty years of U.S. global economic, political and military dominance lead Americans to presume that the United States is the "indispensable nation," as politicians, historians, and journalists have claimed. So, will they believe that Harris or Trump projects the greater impression of strength and power they desire?

Elections smelling of gas in Mozambique!

28 October 2024, by **Paul Martial**

An outsider

FRELIMO reigns supreme in the country. It wins the majority of votes every time, although the accuracy of the ballot is systematically questioned by the opposition as well as by many international observers. Current president Filipe Nyusi is not eligible to stand for a third term, so Daniel Chapo has been chosen to represent FRELIMO. As in the previous election in 2019, other candidates include Ossufo Momade for the RENAMO (Mozambican National Resistance) party and Lutero Simango for the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM), a split from RENAMO.

The newcomer is Venâncio Mondlane, a former RENAMO member who left after failing to become the candidate for these elections. Very popular with young people, he has become FRELIMO's main rival. As for the political programmes of the two parties, they hardly vary. Initial

figures show a high abstention rate, with a turnout of around 35%. The authorities have announced that the final results will be known in around ten days' time. However, initial results show Chapo in the lead, followed by Mondlane.

Blood in the gas

What will be at stake in these elections is whether or not there will be a second round. And if there is, then the FRELIMO candidate could be in an uncomfortable position.

Fingers are already being pointed at fraud. In a number of polling stations, turnout rates have exceeded 100% in favour of FRELIMO, and in some cases the police have seized ballot boxes or polling station presidents have been caught stuffing ballot boxes. Such fraud could trigger street protests after the results are announced.

The major concern for the FRELIMO leaders is gas exploitation by the big majors such as ExxonMobile and

TotalEnergies in Cabo Delgado. This is a guarantee of substantial enrichment. Already in 2015, the country's leaders had opaquely borrowed 2 billion dollars, a large part of which was misappropriated, causing the country's economic stagnation.

Gas exploitation is yet to begin, and is far from a foregone conclusion. The authorities are facing a jihadist insurgency, which they have brought under control thanks to the intervention of soldiers from the Rwandan army. However, the situation remains extremely precarious. The population is as much the victim of radical Islamists as it is of the Mozambican armed forces. The latter are accused of executions and torture even inside TotalEnergies' premises after the company had withdrawn its staff.

17 October 2024

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Lebanon: a fragile country becomes a new war front

27 October 2024, by **Joseph Daher**

Lebanon: a country at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict

Lebanon gained its independence in 1943 following the French Mandate which had been imposed on the country in 1920. Political representation in Lebanon is organised along confessional lines. The Lebanese confessional system (like confessionalism in general) is one of the main instruments used by the ruling classes to reinforce their control over the popular classes, by keeping them subordinate to their confessional leaders.

A confessional political system

At the same time, the Lebanese confessional system was born in parallel with the development of Lebanese capitalism and in interaction with French colonial rule. Since Lebanon's independence in 1943, the confessional nature of the Lebanese state has served the political and economic elites of the ruling confessional groups, who have relied on the country's free market economic orientation to consolidate their power. After the end of the civil war in 1989, this power only increased.

Successive Lebanese governments have adopted neo-liberal policies that have led to the deepening of the historically constituted characteristics of the Lebanese economy: a development model centred on finance and services in which social inequalities and regional disparities are very pronounced.

The consequences of the Nakba in Lebanon

Lebanon was affected from the outset by the birth of the state of Israel or Nakba ('catastrophe' in Arabic) in 1948. In addition to its crimes against the Palestinians, the newly created Israeli army of occupation also committed crimes in Lebanon during this period, notably in the village of Houla at the end of October 1948, massacring all the civilians who had remained there in two days. Lebanon also took in more than 100,000 Palestinian refugees. The United Nations established 16 official Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. At its peak, the number of Palestinian refugees probably exceeded half a million, or more than 10% of Lebanon's total population, although UNRWA now estimates the number at around 250,000.

The origins of the civil war from 1982 to 2000

Subsequently, Lebanon suffered numerous attacks by the Israeli army of occupation and several invasions and wars. In 1978, the Israeli army of occupation invaded part of southern Lebanon to combat the Palestinian resistance. Four years after this invasion, the Israeli state began a new invasion, this time extending as far as the capital Beirut.

The aim of the invasion, dubbed 'Peace for Galilee' in 1982, was to eliminate the Palestinian resistance, the political presence of the PLO and the progressive Lebanese forces, and

to install a friendly regime in Beirut. In this context, the capital underwent a deadly siege and was bombed on a massive scale, finally leading to the expulsion of the PLO forces from Beirut to Tunis in 1982. Following this forced departure of the PLO, the terrible massacres of Sabra and Shatila were committed in September 1982, under the responsibility of the Israeli occupation.

The role of Hezbollah after 2000

The creation and development of Hezbollah was historically linked to various elements of the invasion of Lebanon by the Israeli occupation army in 1982 and the occupation of the country until 2000, as well as to the political dynamics and regional projects of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). The occupation of southern Lebanon ended in 2000 with the withdrawal of Israeli troops, with the exception of the Shebaa farms, a disputed area straddling Lebanon and Syria.

The Israeli army of occupation launched a new war against Lebanon in 2006, with the support of the United States, which resulted in the deaths of more than 1,200 people, including 270 Hezbollah fighters. Israel lost more than 150 people, mainly soldiers. Despite the asymmetry of losses and military strength - both largely in Israel's favour - Israel failed to achieve its objectives by significantly weakening Hezbollah, both politically and militarily, which Hezbollah considered a political success.

At the same time, and this is a major difference with the current Israeli war

on Lebanon, not a single senior Hezbollah leader was killed during the 33 days of war, despite numerous attempts by the Israeli occupation army, including the dropping of 22 tonnes of bombs on a bunker in Beirut supposedly occupied by senior Hezbollah members, or the failure to kidnap key leaders.

After the 2006 war, the Israeli-Lebanese border saw only a few security incidents, most of which occurred between 2013 and 2014, after the outbreak of the Syrian uprising. Hezbollah retaliated militarily against multiple Israeli incursions.

Lebanon: after 7 October 2023

Following the outbreak of Israel's genocidal war against the Gaza Strip after 7 October 2023, Hezbollah announced its 'unity of fronts' strategy, the aim of which was to link the Lebanese front with that of Gaza. The party's initial aim was to show solidarity with its Palestinian political allies, and to be credible when mobilising the rhetoric of resistance, while seeking to protect its interests and alliances linked to Iran in the region.

Hezbollah's calculated military operations

The Lebanese movement's first targets were the Shebaa Farms in occupied Lebanese territory, not Israeli territory directly. Subsequently, they carried out attacks on Israeli military sites. Nevertheless, Hezbollah's military operations remained calculated and relatively moderate compared with the violence of the Israeli attacks, with the aim of avoiding an all-out war with Israel.

However, the party certainly had no idea that the genocidal war against Gaza would last so long and that Israel would escalate its attacks against Lebanon to such an intense level, with the full support of the United States and major European powers such as France.

Policy of unity of fronts rejected by the Lebanese people

In mid-September 2024, the deadly violence of the Israeli army's occupation accelerated with military escalation and terrorist operations leading to the murder of around 570 people, the vast majority of them civilians, including 50 children, and thousands of wounded. This was followed by massive bombing campaigns aimed at assassinating Hezbollah's senior military and political figures, but also killing around two thousand civilians and forcing the displacement of over a million people.

The unity of the fronts is therefore becoming increasingly difficult to defend politically among the Lebanese population. The cost for Lebanon is

increasingly heavy, and Hezbollah does not want this conflict to be exploited by its domestic political enemies who would make it the main culprit for all the country's misfortunes.

Hezbollah finds itself in the most dangerous situation since its creation, and there is no end in sight, as Israel continues its war against Lebanon, which also includes targeting the party's infrastructure and capabilities. On the national scene, its political and social isolation among the Lebanese population is very likely to increase.

Building an alternative vision of society

Despite the Israeli war and the country's socio-economic crisis, forms of solidarity with the displaced are being put in place across the country, even if political tensions continue to exist. There is currently no organised progressive political alternative in the country with significant capacity for action, despite unsuccessful attempts in recent years to build such a project, particularly following the popular uprising in 2019. The need to build a genuine counter-hegemonic project, rooted in the country's popular classes and in coalition with independent social forces such as the trade unions, feminist and anti-racist organisations, remains a necessity for the future of the popular classes in the country, but first the Israeli war machine must be stopped.

October 9

Sources: [L'Anticapitaliste](#),
[L'Anticapitaliste](#) [L'Anticapitaliste](#)

"The Path to Victory and the Tasks of the Ukrainian Left"

25 October 2024, by **Sotsialnyi Rukh**

1. An Honest Response to the Challenges of War, Not Hypocritical Politics

The uncertain prospects of Ukraine's victory stem from the fact that the only reliable strategy to oppose the aggressor—mobilizing all available economic resources to support the frontline and critical infrastructure—contradicts the interests of the oligarchy. Due to the free market, Ukraine has a caricature of a war economy, and the concentration of luxury amid poverty becomes dangerously explosive. The unwillingness to nationalize production capacities, tax large businesses, and direct the budget towards rearmament makes it possible to prolong the war at the cost of significant human losses and constant mobilization.

We believe that the government should start a dialogue with the people about the achievable goals of the war, and most importantly, introduce a defensive economy or acknowledge the unpreparedness to fight for victory. We advocate for ending the uncertainty regarding the duration of military service, as it is a matter of elementary fairness. Gaining technological superiority combined with a careful approach to people is the path to victory.

The "Social Movement" advocates for the development of the state sector of the economy, subordinated to the priorities of defense and full employment, and defends the rights of conscripts and servicemen to dignified treatment, demobilization after a defined term of service, and rehabilitation.

2. International Solidarity as a Way to Overcome the Crisis of the World Order

The ongoing war in Ukraine is one of the signs of a crisis in the world order based on the neoliberal model. It is characterized by the exploitation of poor countries by the rich, inequality in access to fundamental goods, and the prosperity of financial elites at the cost of debt bondage for entire nations. All these features of the neoliberal system have undermined trust in international law and made

global polarization inevitable.

To fight against Russian aggression and for a path to post-war reconstruction that benefits the working people, we need support from the global community, including humanitarian and military assistance. European integration should not serve as a justification for antisocial reforms but should take place on fair grounds, accompanied by improving the welfare of the Ukrainian people and strengthening democracy.

We are confident that our ties with leftist movements across Europe will help Ukraine better defend itself. At the same time, we stand in solidarity with progressive movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America in their struggle against imperialism. We condemn the aggressive and occupation policies of other states—be it the oppression of Palestinians by Israel, Kurds by Turkey, or Yemenis by Saudi Arabia. A new architecture of international relations is needed, where there are no privileges for "great powers," G7, or permanent members of the UN Security Council, and the voices of the peripheral peoples are heard.

The "Social Movement" advocates for nuclear disarmament, interaction with left-wing forces that recognize Ukraine's right to self-defense, and supports the struggle of other nations for liberation.

3. Building a "Ukraine for All" as a Space for Solidarity and Security

Although the war against an external enemy was supposed to unite the people of Ukraine, in reality, shameful attempts are being made to divide Ukrainians into "right" and "wrong." Instead of uniting as many people as possible around ideas of justice, freedom, and solidarity, conflicts within society are being provoked. There are manifestations of linguistic chauvinism, justification of hostility towards national minorities, the queer community, and fostering ideological uniformity. This will not allow the global fight against Russian imperialism to gain traction and will complicate the reintegration of occupied territories.

Establishing equality is impossible without overcoming social vulnerability. Conversely, the state's reduction of social spending and irresponsible deregulation are already affecting the resilience of society. It is time to end the promotion of policies that exacerbate inequality. Demands for women's emancipation, inclusive spaces for people with disabilities, and support for victims of far-right violence can strengthen Ukraine's ability to resist tyranny both externally and internally. Proving our humanity = gaining an advantage over the aggressor.

The "Social Movement" will oppose policies that divide society and will protect social rights as a prerequisite for affirming human dignity. We will demand full state control over the protection of lives and the well-being of workers, who are at greater risk than ever.

4. Ecosocialist Transformation — The Key to Survival

Russia's eco-terrorism, combined with years of large-scale, predatory exploitation of natural resources by domestic oligarchs and the authorities' neglect of environmental protection, poses a threat to Ukraine's ecosystems, including its biodiversity, clean water resources, soil fertility, and the health and lives of the population. The war and the anti-environmental policy of capital negatively affect poor and discriminated groups, increasing their vulnerability.

We emphasize the need to harmonize social production and ecological reproduction based on the principles of ecosocialism. The green transition, first and foremost, should be fair, taking into account the interests of the workforce by creating new jobs, retraining workers, and ensuring social guarantees and compensation for those who may lose their jobs due to the closure of enterprises. Efficient use of energy resources requires a reduction in working hours, and the nationalization of energy companies will allow rational management of capacities without the influence of commercial interests. We support small, family farmers for food security and agricultural greening, the idea of

deprivatizing common resources, and firmly oppose monopolistic agroholdings that destroy the ecosystem.

The “Social Movement” will work together with trade unions and other progressive public organizations to develop a program of transformations that meet the long-term interests of workers, farmers, and other vulnerable segments of the Ukrainian population in the context of production, ecology, and energy.

5. Workers Bore the Burden of the War, Therefore They Deserve a Voice

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the core of resistance to

aggression—both at the front and in the rear—has been the working class. Unfortunately, in conditions where the main burden of the war has been shifted to the working class, there is no left-wing political force in Ukraine that would voice the issues inherent to working people and act on the principles of inclusive democracy. Under the realities of oligarchic capitalism, restrictions on freedoms often serve the interests of the elites.

To build an ecosocial, independent Ukraine of equal rights and opportunities, there is a need for a political democratic platform that will unite workers and other oppressed groups, representing their interests in politics, including participation in

elections. We are open to interaction with political parties that share our vision. The sooner a competitive political process is restored, the sooner trust in the state will be regained. Corruption, censorship, and other abuses by officials harm the defense efforts. The best remedy against this is the democratic renewal of power. Freedom is the foundation of security for all citizens.

The “Social Movement” advocates for the restoration of electoral rights, the right to peaceful assembly and workers’ strikes, and the abolition of all restrictions on labor and social rights.

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Hezbollah’s Dilemma

24 October 2024, by Gilbert Achcar

In building a resistance movement affiliated with it in Lebanon, Iran’s Khomeinist regime saw a major ideological weapon in its war against the Iraqi Baathist regime that invaded its territory in 1980. Sponsoring an actual resistance against the Zionist state enabled Tehran to expose the falsehood of Saddam Hussein’s anti-Persian Arab-Islamic claims and to bridge the nationalist gulf between Arabs and Persians, by way of which Baghdad tried to shield Iraq’s Shiites from Khomeinist contagion, and which Gulf Arab states with a large Shiite population exploited for the same purpose. Likewise, outbidding all Arab regimes on the issue of Palestine, especially the Saudi kingdom, allowed Tehran to break the Sunni cordon that Riyadh sought to build around it to shield the Sunnis in general from the influence of the “Islamic Revolution”.

Thus, Hezbollah was born at the same time as an embodiment of Lebanese resistance against the Zionist occupier and an arm of Tehran, part of the ideological-military network that Iran sought to build in the Arab East and

which would later expand significantly, taking advantage of the US overthrow of Iraq’s Baathist regime and Washington’s empowerment of Tehran’s supporters in Baghdad, followed by the Syrian Baathist regime’s resort to Iran to save it from the popular revolution that rose up against it (it is sufficient to point out this historical paradox to show the hollowness of what remained of the Baathist ideology following the despotic degeneration of the regimes in Baghdad and Damascus, but also Tehran’s prioritising of sectarian considerations over its own pan-Islamic ideology).

Hezbollah naturally imitated what the Khomeinist regime had done in Iran where it crushed all other groups that had been involved in the struggle against the Shah’s rule, the Iranian left in particular. The party imposed by force its monopoly on the resistance against the Israeli occupation of Lebanon, dealing painful blows to the “Lebanese Resistance Front” spearheaded by the Communists. It then ended up

accepting a tense coexistence with what remained of its competitors in the areas where Lebanon’s Shiites are concentrated, from Amal to the Lebanese Communist Party, adapting to the specificity of a country where sectarian pluralism is mixed with political pluralism. This path led to the party’s involvement, under the leadership of Hassan Nasrallah, its Secretary-General since 1992, in the Lebanese political and institutional system in a very hybrid combination.

On the one hand, Hezbollah formed a state of its own with all its components, including an army, a security apparatus, and various civil institutions, within the Lebanese state, thus considerably increasing the latter’s fragility. Hezbollah’s substate is completely dependent on Iran, ideologically, financially, and militarily, and openly declares its allegiance through its professed adoption of the principle of “Guardianship of the Jurist” specific to the Khomeinist doctrine, which legitimizes the autocratic-theocratic rule that characterizes the mullahs’

regime. On the other hand, Hezbollah is a Lebanese faction that has become a key part of the country's patchwork, although it imported customs imitating the Iranian patron. Hassan Nasrallah embodied this duality very well: he was the man who once boasted in a speech that his party is the "Party of the Guardianship of the Jurist" and he was also a Lebanese leader at heart, addressing his party's popular base as well as all Lebanese in the dialect they are familiar with.

Nasrallah was keen to preserve this duality, by strengthening its Lebanese facet through odd alliances of a type that is unique to Lebanese politics, especially his alliance with Michel Aoun, the Maronite leader who, until 2006, was outbidding everybody in hostility to the Syrian regime and boasting of his role in producing UN Security Council Resolution 1559 of 2004 that called for the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon and the disarmament of Hezbollah. Hassan Nasrallah also showed a special concern for his party's popular base and for Lebanon in general, particularly when he expressed his regret over the consequences of the Israeli aggression in 2006, which followed an operation carried out by his party across Lebanon's southern border. However, Hezbollah did not hesitate to respond to Tehran's invitation to throw its forces into the battle to save the Syrian Assad regime, contradicting its main argument up until then, which was that it had to keep its weapons independently of the Lebanese state for the sole purpose of defending Lebanon.

Hezbollah has sustained this last narrative over the years by combining a keenness to avoid exposing Lebanon to the Zionist machine of destruction and killing through a reckless adventure, such as a new crossing of the southern border, along with strengthening its image as a shield for the country in the face of that machine. The party played the main

role in driving the Israeli troops out of Lebanon in 2000 and proved again in 2006 its ability to resist their aggression by imposing a high price on them. Iran then considerably reinforced its arsenal of missiles and rockets until Hezbollah believed that it had achieved some degree of "balance of terror" between it and the Zionist state. It portrayed its intervention in Syria as part of its battle against Israel, aimed at preserving the "axis of resistance". Yet, since last month, the Zionist state has managed to settle the "mutual, but unequal, deterrence" between it and Hezbollah, by means of an "asymmetric war" in which it employed its intelligence and technological superiority in addition to its greater military power (see [Lebanon and the Israeli Strategy of Intimidation](#)).

Hezbollah is now facing the dilemma of its dual loyalty, in a way that affects its vital interests. Evidence indicates that part of its leaders, especially among the political leadership involved in Lebanese state institutions, are inclined to accept a ceasefire, along with a withdrawal north of the Litani River in conformity with the 2006 UN Security Council resolution in this regard, and to facilitate the election of a consensual president of the Lebanese Republic, other than the man loyal to Damascus the party has insisted on so far. Tehran, however, firmly opposed this tendency, forcing the party to adhere to the principle of making a ceasefire in Lebanon dependent on a ceasefire in Gaza, despite the fact that it has become absurd since the main thrust of the Zionist aggression has moved from Gaza to Lebanon. It would be now more rational for Hamas to insist on continuing the fighting in the Strip until a ceasefire in Lebanon is reached in support of Hezbollah, than for the latter to insist on continuing the fighting in Lebanon in support of Hamas in Gaza, where the movement is no longer capable of more than waging a guerrilla war that will

certainly carry on as long as the occupation remains, that is, until a time of which there is no glimmer at all in the darkness of the foreseeable future.

The fact is that Tehran's insistence on keeping the Lebanese front active has nothing to do with concern for the people of Gaza and even for the people of Lebanon themselves, including the Shiites who have suffered and are suffering most of the damage resulting from the ongoing Zionist aggression. Rather, its goal is to keep Hezbollah's deterrent role active as long as Iran faces the possibility that the Netanyahu government ignites a large-scale war against Iran. This is the reason why Hezbollah has not used the strongest weapons of its military arsenal so far, as they are mainly intended for the defence of Iran, not for the defence of Lebanon or even of the party itself.

The dilemma and paradox become more complicated as the Israeli killing and destruction that targets Hezbollah's popular base increase, since it is in the party's obvious interest to cease fire and retreat, as any force facing aggression by a much stronger force should, especially when the enemy has been able to eliminate a major part of its leadership. This is without mentioning the fact that Hezbollah operates in a social and political environment - the extremely fragile Lebanese fabric - that threatens to explode in its face. Under such circumstances, it would be logical to implement a partial withdrawal to limit losses and damage and avoid the risk of turning the setback into a defeat. However, another obvious interest conflicts with the previous and is governed by dependence on Tehran, in that without Iran the party would be unable to financially compensate its social base and environment in order to maintain its popularity, and without Iran it cannot rebuild its military strength, as it did on both counts in 2006.

[Gilbert Achcar's blog](#)

Accusations of “Fascism” - Confusing for American Voters

23 October 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

Asked in a television interview if he thought the election process might be disrupted by outside agitators, he replied: “I think the bigger problem is the enemy from within. We have some very bad people. We have some sick people, radical left lunatics.” But, he added, “It should be very easily handled by, if necessary, by National Guard, or if really necessary, by the military, because they can’t let that happen.”

Several commentators pointed out that using the military to repress one’s political opponents sure seems like what we call fascism. And to many no doubt using this power against U.S. citizens seems to go beyond Trump’s earlier statements that he would use police and national guards to round up immigrants and put them into concentration camps and deport them.

Also contributing to this discussion is a remark by General Mark A. Milley, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under Trump, that the former president was “fascist to the core,” as recounted in a new book by the famous American journalist Bob Woodward. Harris herself has quoted Milley’s statement and on other occasions agreed that Trump can be

called a fascist. President Joe Biden had already called Trump’s movement “semi-fascist” back in 2022.

The claim that Trump is a fascist may not, however, move many American voters. The U.S. fight against Benito Mussolini’s fascists and Adolf Hitler’s Nazis in World War II is now ancient history. Only the 1 to 2% of Americans who are over 85 would have any first-hand memory of those events. Moreover, the American people have a notoriously vague knowledge of history and most have never given any thought to the question of fascism and what it means. For years among politicians and the press calling someone a fascist was seen as being in bad taste, while among the population in general calling someone a fascist just meant they were bad.

The situation is complicated too by the fact that Trump has routinely called Kamala Harris “a Marxist, communist, fascist, socialist.” Trump’s running mate, Senator J.D. Vance has stated that the Democrat’s claims that Trump is an authoritarian or a fascist have been responsible for the two assassination attempts against him.

The left has not always been helpful in clarifying fascism. In the 1960s and

70s, leftists tended to use the word indiscriminately: Southern racists were fascists, the Vietnam War was fascist, Chicago Mayor Daley was fascist, for some the entire American political system was fascist. For forty years after that the Communist Party and Maoist groups declared every presidential election that the Republican candidate was a fascist and that one had to vote Democrat.

Today, in groups like the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), whose members tend to be college educated there is some discussion of fascism by academic leftists. Jacobin magazine, for example, ran an interview in 2019 with Enzo Traverso about his book *The New Faces of Fascism* and his theory of “post-fascism” to explain people like Trump. In the far left’s small socialist and anarchist organizations, there are serious and practical discussions. And popular e-newspapers like Truthout have published many articles. Still, to most Americans, the word fascism clarifies nothing.

If Trump is elected, which is quite possible, and he proves to be the fascist we believe him to be, we will be both theoretically and practically unprepared.

Mazan, rape as a political fact

22 October 2024, by **Aurélie-Anne Thos**

What first comes to mind is the sociological composition of the accused. Their ages range from 26 to 73, they are firefighters, male nurses, butchers, councillors, pensioners...

Together they make up a sample of ‘all men’. They are not ‘deranged’ nor ‘monsters’. They are socially integrated, married men with children. What they have in common

are that they are men, they live in this area [Mazan] and they raped Gisèle Pelicot. These are ordinary men, who have all accepted the invitation of Dominique Pelicot to abuse a woman

who was asleep. This disproves the reactionary narrative that rapists are only racialised men. They illustrate what we, feminists, have been saying for years: all men are not rapists, but all men can be rapists.

An emblematic case touching on all aspects of rape

This trial reveals even more about our society and rape culture as it addresses all aspects of rape. For example, “chemical submission” had previously been discussed only in relation to rapes committed with the party drug GHB, but this has now been widened because of this case and the non-profit group ‘Don’t Put Me to Sleep’ set up by Caroline Darian, the daughter of Gisèle Pelicot. This case has revealed the use of prescription anxiety drugs to commit violence.

This case also exemplifies the collusion between men committing sexual violence, since Dominique Pelicot helped other men to drug their partner, and in return benefited from the complicit silence of hundreds of men he had contacted.

It demonstrates the connection between sexual violence, intra-familial violence and incest. Dominique had drugged and photographed his daughter Caroline, and there is still an investigation into whether she was also a victim of rape.

Furthermore, the case illustrates the connection between sexual violence and child sexual exploitation, since several accused men kept child pornography on their computers. It also shows how issues of consent and

women’s bodily autonomy lie behind sexual violence. Many accused men argued in defence of their acts that it was not rape since the husband of Gisèle Pelicot had agreed.

Finally, it showed how these men committed these acts with impunity, and even when presented with overwhelming material evidence as in this trial, they continue, again and again, to deny the facts.

The Mazan trial is a trial of rape as a social fact

Rape is a grave crime that however benefits from a unique special treatment: responsibility is always first sought on the side of the victim. Women are relentlessly suspected of being the cause of the rape they have suffered. They are suspected of being motivated by money or revenge, and if the women are racialised, their exoticisation is used to portray them as causing their rape.

But the case of Gisèle Pelicot is unprecedented in some sense: the facts are very well documented with videos, pictures, and reports from gynaecologists and toxicologists. The main protagonist, Dominique Pelicot, has admitted to having drugged her with heavy doses and having recruited men to rape her. Finally, Gisèle Pelicot is a 67-year-old white woman, with nothing that could be used to pretend she was guilty of these rapes.

Since it is not possible to attack the victim, explain these acts by ‘moments of madness’, or describe these men as ‘monsters’, then one has to face the real issues: deprived of all these smoke screens, what remains is simply the rape, the act itself, the violence in

itself as a tool for domination. One of the lawyers of an accused man said that ‘there is rape and then there is rape’. But this time, finally we will be able to talk about the intentions of rapists and open a debate about consent, rape culture and masculine domination at the social, political and legal level.

The time of rage

Everywhere, thousands of women are hanging on this trial, because there is something that resonates and echoes our history. We are waiting, scrutinising and monitoring this trial rather than simply following it because we can smell the trap. We know it is not simply about the 51 men accused in this trial. There were a lot more rapists, at least 83. We know that there was probably more sexual violence committed without videos or evidence. Finally, we know that there is everything else: the other victims, the other violence, the other rapists, everything else that is not usually talked about.

We feel deeply that a historic moment is at stake: Gisèle Pelicot is no longer an anonymous victim, and Mazan is not a miscellaneous news item. We have invested it with political weight. We won’t give up.

On Saturday 14 September, marches were organised in solidarity with Gisèle. More than 10,000 women marched. We must devote all efforts to building a massive movement against violence against women.

19 September 2024

*This article was translated from ***l’Anticapitaliste*** by Clément M. for ***rs21***.*

Decolonisation now in Kanaky!

21 October 2024, by Cathy Billard

Since 13 May, the date on which a law to unfreeze the electorate was presented and then voted on, the territory known as 'New Caledonia' has been living under an emergency regime, despite months of growing mobilisation and attempts by the pro-independence movement to hold discussions. The vote, which was presented as a democratic enlargement, shredded all the commitments made by the French state since 1988 and the hopes of the Kanak people to finally decide for themselves, completely independent of the interests of French imperialism.

The uprising was such that it prevented President Macron from carrying through with his hasty policy and having the Congress, in which he would have had a majority, vote to ratify this umpteenth hold-up of democracy. And the dissolution, followed by the governmental

vacancy, imposed a de facto suspension.

In the end, the prime minister announced what reflects the balance of power on the ground. The social crisis resulting from the paralysis of economic activities by roadblocks and angry demonstrations, as well as the election of the pro-independence Emmanuel Tjibaou to the National Assembly, dictated the announcement of the abandonment of the implementation of the law that had been passed and the postponement of the provincial elections that were to implement it. [1]

This is a first victory for the mobilisation of the people of Kanaky which the NPA-l'Anticapitaliste welcomes. It calls for follow-up action.

Firstly, the immediate and unconditional release of the hundreds of Kanak political prisoners, starting

with the CCAT leaders deported to France. Secondly, independent investigations to establish the truth and bring justice to the young Kanaks murdered by the police and militias. As long as the right to self-determination is not implemented, it is not up to the people to pay the consequences of a situation caused by the authoritarianism of Macron-Darmanin-Backès-Metzdorf! Tens of thousands of people are unemployed: we need to compensate for the loss of wages and infrastructure instead of letting the misery deepen!

And of course there is an urgent need to resume the process of decolonisation. The time of the colonies must come to an end!

9 October 2024

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

Martinique: 'Our economy is based on a colonial model'.

20 October 2024, by **Marcel Sellaye**

How did the movement against the high cost of living come about?

There have been some impressive mobilisations by the people of the French West Indies against the high cost of living in recent years: in 2009, they were initiated by the LKP in Guadeloupe and the K5F in Martinique, then, more recently, in the context of the covid pandemic and the less spectacular one of 2021. The movement launched on 1 September 2024 by RPPRAC (Rassemblement pour la Protection des Peuples et des Ressources Afro-Caribéens - Rally for the Protection of Afro-Caribbean Peoples and Resources) specifically targets food prices, which have soared by 40% according to INSEE.

In reality, the high cost of living in the French West Indies, in this case

Martinique, is entirely due to the structure of the 'Martinique economy', which has been part of the global economy since 1957 (as part of the European Common Market). The structural high cost of living is aggravated by changes in the global inflationary context.

Martinique's economy is dependent on the French market - a legacy of the colonial economic model based on the principle of exclusive trade with 'metropolitan France' to the detriment of local production. So not only are 80% of foodstuffs imported, but they also pass through the hands of fourteen intermediaries concerned about their profits!

This economic model is very costly for the population, particularly for the working and popular classes (35% of

whom live below the poverty line). This market is dominated by the oligopoly GBH (Groupe Bernard Hayot), the leader in mass retailing since 1960 and whose owner is one of the 500 richest people in France. This same dependence also benefits the multinational CMA CGM (which has a monopoly on maritime transport), which contributes to the increase in the cost of purchasing products, which officially stands at around 7%.

What are the demands of the movement?

It all goes back to 2012, when measures were taken to regulate this market through a system of permanent promotions on basic products (the Price Quality Shield). A system managed exclusively by suppliers and distributors under the

benevolent eye of the state.

In 2023, in the face of ever-rising prices, a 'commission of enquiry into the cost of living in the territorial regional authorities governed by Articles 73 and 74', led by Martinique MP Johnny Hajjar (Parti Progressiste Martiniquais, a Césairist party), revealed the opacity of the system and the exorbitant margins built up by supermarkets. It was against this backdrop that the RPPRAC, whose equivalent in France would be the *Gilets jaunes*, emerged.

Launched on social networks, its ambition was to mobilise simultaneously, on 1 September, the peoples of the colonies (Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Réunion) and West Indians living in France. But it is in Martinique, alongside its leaders (Rodrigue Petitot and Aude Goussard), that it is gathering the largest number of people (nearly 800 responded to the call on 1 September) and has since been leading blockades of supermarkets - in particular those belonging to the GBH group (Carrefour).

The movement has undoubtedly succeeded in highlighting this legitimate concern of the population, but it is a pity that, in the name of 'efficiency', it has sidelined the issues of low wages and pensions, health, public services and so on.

It was able to provoke several official 'negotiation' meetings on price cuts, notably at the prefecture and the Territorial Assembly. After more than a month of mobilisation, the leaders

officially acknowledged that they had been unsuccessful. In any case, this temporary failure has led its leaders to amend their hegemonic discourse and review their relationship with the trade union movement, which they initially claimed to do without, on the pretext in particular of its 'failure in the 2009 movement' and its responsibility for the current situation.

How have the authorities, including the French government, responded?

The government could not pretend to ignore the issue of the high cost of living, especially after the proven failure of previous measures - in which it was complicit - and especially after the publication of the report by the parliamentary commission of enquiry led by MP Hajjar.

What's more, the prefect was careful not to invite the MP to any of the meetings held in the prefecture on the subject. He was firm in his opposition to the demand for transparency made by the RPPRAC, which wanted live coverage of the debates.

He was quick to impose a curfew, following the night-time violence perpetrated on the fringes of the movement and the exchanges of fire between police and demonstrators in the popular neighbourhood of Sainte-Thérèse in mid-September.

But the most significant development was the return to France of the CRS (French riot police), who had been deemed undesirable after their

misdeeds in Fort-de-France in December 1959. Against a backdrop of high living costs, unemployment, forced emigration, demands for autonomy and popular urban uprisings, three young people were shot dead by the CRS.

What action is the movement planning to take in the near future?

What seemed unthinkable until then, because of the anti-union stance, happened on 28 September, at a rally organised by the CDMT (Martinique Workers' Democratic Federation) against the backdrop of a general strike called by the CGTM union at the Maison des syndicats: the 'official' meeting between the leaders of the RPPRAC and the activists and leaders of the two trade union federations, the activists of the UFM (Union des femmes de Martinique), the activists of the Respé list (Résistance ESpoir, Émancipation) during a meeting held in the same place in front of a hundred people. The structural high cost of living is aggravated by changes in the global inflationary context.

The meeting launched at the initiative of 3 unions (CGTM, CDMT and UNSA) on 4 October was a first attempt to initiate a collective and in-depth discussion on the relationship with the RPPRAC, but also and above all to think about the reconstruction of deteriorated relationships (at the top of the inter-union organisation) and to prepare a popular mobilisation, commensurate with the social and environmental stakes, with a guarantee of effectiveness.

The gold curse in Ghana

19 October 2024, by Paul Martial

Increased mobilisation

An initial demonstration initiated by the Democracy Hub movement

brought together around a hundred activists protesting against the activities of illegal gold miners known in Ghana as *galamsey*, a word derived from 'gather them and sell'. The police intervened violently and imprisoned around fifty demonstrators. This

repression, far from weakening the struggle, strengthened it. As a result, the three days of mobilisation called for at the beginning of October brought together a much larger number of people. Most were dressed in red and black, demanding the

release of the demonstrators and an end to illegal gold mining. Several placards were held up saying "Your greed fuels our crisis".

Illegal mines

Most of the mines are concentrated in the south of the country, and illegal gold panning could involve almost a million miners, providing a livelihood for 4.5 million people. This activity has many harmful consequences for the environment. It destroys forests, pollutes rivers with mercury and cyanide, and degrades the land through the use of high-pressure water, which eliminates nutrients. What's more, the holes are often not filled in, leading to accidents. Miners and their families suffer from health

problems linked to exposure to chemicals. The use of mechanisation is also cutting into the agricultural land used for cocoa plantations.

Government accused

The repression of the demonstrators was aimed at stifling this issue, which remains perilous for the government. Although some measures have been taken against illegal mining, they are above all symbolic because the stakes are so high. There are social issues at stake - the jobs of hundreds of thousands of people - as well as economic ones, since Ghana is Africa's second largest gold producer, with companies that do not hesitate to buy

gold produced in illegal mines at very low prices.

Finally, this controversy sheds a harsh light on the system of clientelism and corruption in the country's two main parties. The report by Professor Kawabena Frimpong Boateng, a former Minister of the Environment, implicates a number of senior members of the government involved in *galamsey* activities.

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

The solution would be a radical rethink of the extractivist model imposed by multinationals on African countries, offering young people prospects other than polluting their country and endangering themselves and their families.

Nothing Israel does will serve Syrians' struggle for freedom

18 October 2024, by **Joseph Daher**

Israel's escalation of violence in Lebanon and its assassination of several Hezbollah military and political leaders, including long time secretary general Hassan Nasrallah, has led to many debates on Hezbollah's nature and political trajectory. This has also raised the important question of the right of resistance, particularly in the current context.

The vastly differing views of Hezbollah were starkly reflected in the scenes that followed Nasrallah's assassination. On one side, the party's members, supporters, and allies, expressed sadness and sorrow, while at the same time images were shared across social media of Syrians from the opposition-controlled north-western areas distributing sweets in celebration. Some supporters of the Syrian revolution also expressed joy over the massive Israeli bombing of Dahiyeh (southern Beirut).

These reactions can be largely attributed to Hezbollah's role in having assisted the Syrian regime in crushing the uprising, laying siege on cities like Madaya, forcibly displacing civilians and various other violations of human rights against civilian populations. In addition to this, a lot of Syrians recalled when it was Hezbollah's members and supporters who distributed sweets in Dahiyeh in the summer of 2013, following the capture of the city of al-Qusayr in Homs province by the Syrian army and Hezbollah against Syrian armed opposition groups.

While one can understand that the positive reactions to the assassination by Syrians opposed to the Syrian regime are a form of revenge because of Hezbollah's complicity, the context surrounding the current moment, matters. We have to be clear, Israel's war against Lebanon is not to promote the freedom of Syrians or any other

population in the region suffering from authoritarian states.

A new Middle East

Israel's recent bombing campaigns in Lebanon, supported by the US, have been taking place amidst its continuous genocide in Gaza and annexation of the West Bank, and have spared no one. More than 2000 people have been killed, thousands more are injured, and considerable destruction has been caused. Not to mention, 1.2 million people have been displaced in less than a month. In an attempt to re-occupy territories of southern Lebanon through ground offensives, Israel's occupation army is also provoking wide scale destructions.

Additionally, Israeli officials from the Netanyahu to Spokesperson Avichay Adraee, who serves as the head of the Arab media division of the Israeli

occupation army, have attempted to create and promote sectarian tensions among Lebanese people to potentially provoke a civil war. For example, just a few days ago Israel struck the village of Aito where mostly Christian populations live, and where internally displaced people coming from majority Shi'a areas were being welcomed. At least 22 people were killed by the bombing. This was a way to fuel more sectarian tensions amongst the Lebanese population.

More widely, Netanyahu's plans are clear: a new Middle East that bows down to US and Israel, forced to submit under harsh violence. This strategy does not include any prospect of democracy and justice for Syrians or the wider region's popular classes, quite the opposite.

In reality Israel was not in favour of the Syrian regime being overthrown, and in July 2018 Netanyahu declared no objection to Assad taking back control of the country and stabilising his power. He said Israel would only act against perceived threats, such as Iran and Hezbollah's forces and influence, explaining, "We haven't had a problem with the Assad regime, for 40 years not a single bullet was fired on the Golan Heights".

Furthermore, Israel has continuously justified these merciless bombing campaigns against civilian areas in Gaza and Lebanon by stating that Hamas or Hezbollah members or infrastructures were present. However, for Israel, all civilians in these areas are considered supporters and by extension, labelled "terrorists". In fact, Western media, which has aided and abetted this war, echoes Israeli propaganda by continuously describing these areas as Hezbollah or Hamas strongholds.

Similarly, the Syrian regime

extensively bombed opposition held areas to cause massive destructions, including human casualties, and displace the local population who were opposed to the regime in order to force them into regions under their control. They destroyed the opposition's infrastructure and cut their supply lines, including through the deliberate targeting of hospitals, schools, markets, and civilians. Preventing civilian access to basic goods and services, including humanitarian aid, was another widely employed tactic to guarantee forcible displacement, or the eventual surrendering of territory and population by the opposition. The regime also justified their campaign as fighting "jihadist terrorists".

Right to resist

Israel's war on Palestine and Lebanon is not to promote "peace" or "liberate" local populations from Hezbollah or Hamas, but to pursue its historical objectives as a settler colonial state of eliminating Palestinians through a continued Nakba and consolidating a regional order serving US imperial interests. These objectives are a mortal threat to the whole region, with no exception.

With this in mind, Palestinians and Lebanese people have the right to resist Israel's racist, colonial apartheid state violence, including through military resistance. This includes the right of Hezbollah and Hamas, which are the main actors involved in the armed confrontation with the Israeli occupation army, to resist.

After all, did Syrians not have the right to defend themselves against the military campaign led by pro-regime forces accompanied by thousands of

foreign fighters led by Iran and Hezbollah, and aided by Russia aviation, to re-occupy eastern Aleppo in 2016? They did, because the issue at hand was opposing a war against civilians in Eastern Aleppo, and elsewhere, regardless of the reactionary nature of some parts of opposition armed groups.

However, defending the right of people to resist oppression should not be confused with support for the political projects of Hezbollah or Hamas, or the belief that these parties will be able to deliver Palestinian liberation. Just as all critiques of these political parties shouldn't be confused with "promoting" Israeli propaganda or siding with US allies.

If support is uncritical, it becomes a passive form of solidarity limited to celebrating Hezbollah, and often its main sponsor Iran. Rather, such a narrow perspective becomes an obstacle to building a wider popular resistance against Israel's war on Lebanon and/or attempts to establish regional and international solidarity.

Indeed, one of the reasons for Hezbollah's growing isolation is its defence of the sectarian and neoliberal political system in Lebanon, and serving in the interests of Iran, including through supporting the survival of the Syrian regime.

Finally, the dividing views over Nasrallah's assassination have demonstrated the glaring absence of an independent democratic and progressive bloc that is able to organise and clearly oppose Israel's wars as well as Western imperialist interests, whilst also affirming solidarity with all oppressed peoples in the region against all authoritarian regimes and political orders.

[New Arab](#)

Al-Aqsa Flood, the West and the Holocaust: A Conversation with Gilbert Achcar

17 October 2024, by Gilbert Achcar

1. Al-Aqsa Flood brought “the question of Palestine” back to the centre of world’s attention and exposed the bias inherent in the official and institutional “Western” position, which not only supported Israel, but also sacrificed values, such as journalistic objectivity, freedom of opinion, and others, in order to protect the Israeli government’s narrative, even when the latter was crumbling. By “Western” position here, we do not mean all Western countries, nor do we mean that there is one position without internal objection or different iterations. Rather, we mean a position that defined itself as “Western” and justified its limitations in this light. How can media and cultural attitudes towards the current genocide be assessed and explained? Were there any shifts in these attitudes from last year until now?

Let me first clarify what Operation Al-Aqsa Flood is supposed to have achieved. If what is meant by returning Palestine to the “centre of world’s attention” is the rising wave of condemnation of Israel’s genocidal war and solidarity with the Palestinian people, it would be more accurate to say that it occurred despite Al-Aqsa Flood rather than thanks to it. Indeed, the operation’s first impact was that global sympathy for the Israelis reached a peak, with intense media exploitation of what happened on the 7th of October – not without exaggeration and even fabrication of myths. However, it is the brutality of the onslaught on Gaza, which exceeded what had been witnessed in all Zionist wars against the people of Palestine, including the 1948 Nakba, that provoked the indignation of a significant part of public opinion in Western countries. As for the Global South, most of its populations support the Palestinian cause, with the great exception of India, dominated by a neofascist and anti-Muslim government that shares the mindset of Israel’s neofascist government.

The crux of the matter is the exceptionality of the genocidal war that the Zionist state has been waging in Gaza. It has exacerbated the divide in Western media between those who brood over the myth of the State of Israel as redemption for the Nazi Holocaust, so that anyone who opposes it is referred to a genealogy that puts them in the same category as the Nazis, and those who denounce what is being done by a state now ruled by a coalition of neofascists and neo-Nazis, whose behaviour towards the Palestinian people is reminiscent of the behaviour of German Nazis. The Palestine solidarity movement is noticeably quite stronger in Britain than in countries like France or Germany. One of the key reasons for this is the obvious difference between the guilt complex of the Germans and the French, whose ancestors were involved in the extermination of the Jews, and the absence of such a complex among the British, who see their ancestors, quite the contrary, as saviours of the Jews.

2. The Holocaust is the cultural and historical lever for this position, especially in countries such as Germany, leading them to withdraw “the question of Palestine” from foreign policy and insert it in a psychological and historical narrative of guilt and responsibility. How was this historical narrative constructed and turned into a lever for Western support for Israel?

This is a very old propaganda endeavour, which began immediately after World War II when the Zionist movement escalated its campaign towards the Western governments, and the United States in particular, as well as the Soviet government, in order to get them to support the project of a Jewish state – first, by exerting pressure on the British government, and later at the United Nations when the issue was referred to it. The propaganda focused initially on [Palestinian religious leader] Amin al-Husseini’s disastrous role in turning

into a Nazi propaganda mouthpiece during the war, so that Palestinians could be portrayed as Nazi followers – contrary to the historical record, as I showed in my book *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives* (2010).

This legend continued to be weaved over the decades, with Gamal Abdel Nasser and Yasser Arafat portrayed in turn as if they were impersonators of Adolf Hitler. The latest to be Nazified are Hamas and Hezbollah. Al-Aqsa Flood provided a unique opportunity to bring this mythical narrative to a climax. From the outset, Netanyahu and his co-thinkers, but also various Western governments, described the operation as “the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust”. This way of putting things is intended to portray Al-Aqsa Flood as a continuation of the series of racist crimes to which European Jews have been subjected throughout history, thus detaching it from the historical sequence to which it truly belongs, which is the history of popular struggles against colonialism in general, and the history of resistance to Zionist colonialism in Palestine in particular.

3. Narratives change and adapt to social and political transformations. This applies to the Holocaust narrative, whose features changed in recent years. Whereas this narrative was initially about the West’s relationship with its Jewish components, it began to change, in a push to redefine it, into a narrative about the danger of Islam to Jews, especially after the events of September 11. How was this narrative reoriented to align with political change?

The issue is more complex than that, I believe. The Zionist focus on Islam has been in line with the rise of Islamophobia in the West in recent decades, especially after the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington. It happened amid a global rise of the far right, pioneered by the Zionist

state where the neofascist Likud party came to power in 1977; its then most radical figure, Ariel Sharon, became prime minister in 2001 a few months before 9/11; and most notably, Netanyahu has been occupying the same position for the long haul starting in 2009. They all engaged in manufacturing the ideology of the contemporary far right, in which Jews have been replaced by Muslims so that the state claiming to represent the legacy of the anti-Nazi struggle turned into a central cog in the opposite tradition, that of present-day Islamophobic far right.

However, the issue is complicated when the Israeli goal of “normalization” with reactionary Arab states, and most notably with the Saudi kingdom, is taken into account. That is why there is a parallel discourse that distinguishes between “good Muslims” and “bad Muslims”, with a focus on depicting Hamas and Hezbollah as antisemitic, that is, anti-Jewish racist groups, and calling them terrorists, of course, so as to differentiate between them, with Iran behind them, and the “normalization” countries, namely Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and the Gulf monarchies. The same distinction was at the heart of the George W. Bush administration’s rhetoric after September 11.

4. The debate over the Arab position on the Holocaust was one way to transform this narrative, by devising an Arab culpability or an Arab antisemitism that could replace the former enemy. How would you evaluate these attempts, based on your book on the subject?

These attempts do not stand the test of reality and examination of the historical facts. I have devoted a thick book to refute them, which was commended even by some prominent Holocaust historians and which no pro-Zionist historian was able to counter except with the usual epithets and insults, especially the veiled accusation of antisemitism. They hence preferred to confront it with a conspiracy of silence, to the extent that no prominent US newspaper or magazine did review the book, to the great disappointment of my US publisher, one of the largest US

publishing houses. As for the Hebrew translation, it wasn’t reviewed, commented on or even mentioned in any Israeli newspaper. Published in 2017 after years of pressure by anti-Zionist Israelis, it was contracted by the US publisher, which owns the translation rights, with the Van Leer Institute, where several Israeli Jewish and Palestinian intellectuals have worked, the most prominent of the latter being Azmi Bishara when he was still in the country. In fact, you can notice that the historical debate on these matters has faded in recent years to be replaced by general charges without scholarly pretence.

5. The return of “the question of Palestine” to the centre of politics was accompanied by the ongoing “genocide” in Gaza, which became the headline of this year, and a quasi-criminal charge against the Israeli government. Do you expect the “genocide” to transform the “Western” approaches of Israel and the Holocaust narrative?

There is no unified “Western” position on the matter. There are Western European governments, in Ireland, Spain and Belgium, that adopted early positions condemning the Zionist aggression on Gaza and calling for solidarity with the Palestinian people by recognizing the State of Palestine, a way for them to register their condemnation of the Netanyahu government’s deeds and their support for a peaceful solution to the ongoing conflict within the framework established by international law. The judicial response to the Zionist genocidal war, which is being handled by the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, is of course based on international law, whose violation by the Zionist State has reached a higher level than any time before.

All of this affected other Western governments, to the extent that Germany itself, which has been the most ardent of Israel’s supporters for obvious historical reasons, started showing some timid reservation and suggesting that its military exports to Israel have been frozen. As for Britain, even its current prime minister, a pro-Zionist par excellence, was forced to announce a suspension of some

military exports to Israel. The latest event in this regard is the French President’s call for an end to arms exports to Israel while it is engaged in a deadly war on Gaza and Lebanon.

More importantly, opposition to the genocidal war waged by the Zionist state reached the US House of Representatives, where a few lawmakers submitted bills to attach to military exports to Israel strict conditions regarding their usage. Even Joe Biden, whom Netanyahu described as a “proud Irish-American Zionist”, had to freeze for a while its supply to Israel of the most lethal bombs weighing about a ton each, which Zionist forces have used extensively to destroy Gaza and annihilate its people. All this points to the stark contradiction between international law, most of which was drafted in the wake of the victory over Nazism and its allies, and the behaviour of the Zionist state. Western governments face a difficult choice in their stance on this international law which they enthusiastically upheld against the Russian invasion of Ukraine and overlooked regarding the genocidal war in Gaza, but with a trouble that is increasing with time.

6. The second development that accompanied the return of “the question of Palestine” was the wave of solidarity with Gaza, which surprised many, especially after decades of keeping the Palestinian issue away from the centre of Western public attention. Do you see in this solidarity the possibility of a political shift in the ways of approaching “the question of Palestine” in the West?

If we are to find a glimmer of hope in the midst of this tragic fog that has haunted our region since the beginning of the genocidal war in Gaza, it is undoubtedly in the popular solidarity movement that has developed in Western countries – contrary to the lackluster picture reflected by Arab countries in this regard – especially in the United States, where this movement is most important because of the centrality of the US role in supporting the Zionist state, and indeed US complicity with it and full participation in its ongoing genocidal war. We have reached the

point where the position on this war has become a factor to be reckoned with in the US elections. This is an

important development, and it is to be hoped that it will continue and reach the point where it could change the international equation regarding

Palestine.

[Gilbert Achcar's blog](#)

Starmer's first hundred days

16 October 2024, by **Dave Kellaway**

1 - A Partnership with Capital in Whose Interests?

Starmer's immediate slapdown of Transport Secretary Louise Haigh's comments about P&O Ferries being a rogue company sums up the contradictions at the heart of this government [2]. P&O had sacked 800 workers and simply replaced them with much lower-paid ones. Even Grant Shapps, the Tory minister at the time, criticised it. Haigh called for consumers to boycott it and said her department would have nothing to do with it. The problem is that Starmer is keen for DP World, a Dubai-based company, to participate in the big investment summit he is holding next week.

On the one hand, Labour is waxing lyrical about the modest improvement it is legislating for in Britain's extremely oppressive labour laws. On the other, it is basing its whole growth project on a partnership with companies like DP World. Labour ideology claims that this will lead to more tax, better wages, and social spending.

A one-sided partnership with capital has replaced any notion at all of supporting the many rather than the few. Another story in The Guardian today shows how the private equity lobby is apparently being successful in scaling back Chancellor Rachel Reeves's supposed plans to increase capital gains tax on carried interest. Bosses pocket this when they buy up and restructure companies.

The government is hyping this investment conference—which will include another tax-dodging, anti-union business, Amazon—for all that

it's worth. Starmer claims all this investment is new and is down to the new government. Hard to believe, given the lead-in time for this level of investment.

2 - Political Support for Labour Is Collapsing.

Already the government's poll ratings have plummeted. A More in Common poll had them barely a couple of points ahead of the Tories. New Ipsos polling reveals Sir Keir's net popularity has fallen to a record low of minus 26 points—worse than Reform leader Nigel Farage. The Labour Party's net popularity also shrank 13.5 points to minus 21 points since the general election.

Although the honeymoon with big business is in full swing, it has ended quickly in public opinion. Despite some early scandals—cutting benefits for single parents and cuddling up to Formula 1 boss Bernie Ecclestone—the Blair government never plunged to these depths. Two major decisions have resonated very negatively with the public: the axing of the winter fuel allowance except for extremely poor pensioners, and the 'freebie' scandal.

3 - Freebie Scandal Is Hurting Labour.

Starmer, Reeves, Rayner, and Cooper have accepted donations for clothes and concerts of over £100k. The Tory press, which hardly attacked Johnson's corruption, have had a field day—just wait until they unearth the first pensioner death from hypothermia.

True, all these donations were

declared, but most people just do not see the need for these highly paid politicians not to pay for their spectacles and clothes. Teachers or other workers who are in professional settings do not get free money to buy their suits.

The last time we had an outcry over MPs' expenses, the impact was significant and long-lasting. Starmer's relative political inexperience meant he completely underestimated all this. Even today, in his interview on the BBC podcast, he failed to acknowledge much of an error—loftily putting it down to side winds that all Prime Ministers have to deal with. Paying back less than 10% and promising not to take any more freebies will not stop people at football matches waving banners saying 'Two-tier Keir'.

4 - Freezing Out the Pensioners.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves did not expect such a backlash about the axing of the universal winter fuel allowance. Labour thought everyone would follow the Richard Branson argument—why should millionaires receive a benefit they do not need? Let us target it better so we can save money. Of course, you could make the same argument about all universal benefits and the NHS.

Traditionally, social democrats have argued universal benefits are cheap to administer and avoid the reality that many people do not apply for means-tested benefits. Universal benefits bind people into a common good that involves them, and more progressive taxation would compensate for the Bransons of the world receiving it. We know 800,000 pensioners do not apply for pension credit, so they will not be

covered by the safety net.

What is utterly cynical about the whole operation is that Reeves would gain no saving for the public purse at all if all those entitled to pension credit applied for it and then got the fuel allowance. The sums involved are relatively small in any case.

The idea that it is a tough decision is laughable—it is tough if you take on powerful interests like the rich or corporations, not if you target the vulnerable. Unlike with the two-child benefit cap where seven Labour MPs voted against the government, only one did on the fuel issue, although dozens abstained.

5 - Internal Democracy Stifled.

Labour MPs' that voted against the government led to a draconian reaction from the Starmer leadership; all seven were suspended from the Parliamentary Party. This week it emerged that Labour MPs were instructed not to table any amendments to government bills and indeed not to voice open opposition to government policy. Blair was much more supple politically than Starmer on these issues.

The Prime Minister perhaps sees himself continuing his role as the head of the Crown Prosecution Service and views things in a management framework where little debate is allowed once an executive decision is made. Also, the Corbyn interlude has convinced the leadership that the tombstone on that particular project must be firmly cemented in. Blair never had to deal with anything like the Corbyn insurgency.

This anti-democratic, quasi-Stalinist approach has been replicated at a local constituency level too. Local members' meetings are being tightly controlled with a new agenda system being implemented that limits political discussion and the number of motions that can be raised. Palestine is off the agenda completely. The leadership wants to drive the last remaining Corbynist sympathisers out of the party. Canvassers and leafleters for election campaigns are all that is required. In our local branch, ward meetings with discussion will be

conducted on Zoom so they can be more easily controlled, and these will alternate with social meet-ups.

At the September Labour Party conference, a heckler was treated to rough handling and a rather demeaning whipping up of the floor by the Prime Minister. Another delegate leading the Socialist Education Association was unceremoniously booted out of conference for wearing a Palestine solidarity badge. The space for socialist activists inside Labour has been severely reduced. Many activists have left; others are formally holding on to membership but nearly all their political activity is carried out outside the party.

6 -No Change on Democratic Rights

Very little difference can be observed between the Tories and Labour on democratic rights. The repressive legislation on political protest is not going to be repealed by Labour. Not a whisper has been uttered about the abnormally long sentences being given out to eco-activists such as those who threw soup over Van Gogh's Sunflowers.

While Labour has dumped the Rwanda plan, its narrative about stopping the small boats is similar to the Tory one. The focus is on the evil gangsters rather than providing safe and legal routes. So women and children continue to die in the Channel. Detention centres are being expanded despite the abuse and mistreatment reported at many of them. Tory minimum salary levels required for people legally here on work visas to bring their partners into the UK have remained unchanged.

Whereas Taylor Swift, who presumably needed a visa, is given a police escort by Labour, the grandson of Mandela, who was invited here to talk about Palestine solidarity, was refused entry. Starmer remains as firmly tied to US policy as Sunak was. No chance he will follow fellow leaders like Sánchez in Spain in recognising Palestinian statehood now or condemning any Israeli genocidal action.

7 - Conflict at the Top

Much verbiage has been written about the internal squabbles in the leader's staff team. Sue Gray, the super civil servant brought in to create a smooth government apparatus, has been removed. Depending on whom you read, she was accused of micromanagement, taking decisions on whom ministers should appoint without going through Sir Keir, and cutting the pay and limiting the contracts of special advisers... while getting paid more than the PM.

As mentioned above, Starmer likes the technocratic, mission-led approach, and Gray suited the bill. He failed to see that letting Gray fall out with your main consigliere, who spearheaded the election win and helped you smash the left in the party, was probably a bad tactic. McSweeney, whom some commentators have compared to Cummings, is the new Chief of Staff. In the end, Cummings did for Johnson; there are still some on the right of Labour who would happily dispense with Starmer if he steps out of line.

8 - Some Positive but Limited Measures.

It would be unbalanced for socialists not to accept some positive but often limited measures have been taken—the two-party system works on the basis that there are some material differences:

- Hillsborough Law, which sets out a duty of candour on public bodies
- Renters' reform, although not rent controls as exist in some other countries
- Rail nationalisation—but not of the rolling stock
- Lifting the ban on onshore wind farms and the green energy company—although nothing like the £28 billion original plan
- Settling the public sector disputes with above-inflation deals
- Limited some export of arms to Israel but leaving

over 80% intact

- Labour laws a step forward but nowhere near enough

9 - One Step Forward, Two Steps Back with Labour Laws. It is worthwhile examining the limits of the new labour laws more closely. Individual rights are somewhat restored but the powers unions can use are still much more limited than in other European countries like Italy or France. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) still considers Britain to be in breach of international and EU standards on trade union rights even after Labour's new laws. There is an excellent analysis by Keith Ewing and John Hendy, the leading labour lawyer, in today's Morning Star:

It comes nowhere near the transformational proposals which Labour adopted in 2021 and 2022: A New Deal for Working People (...) The Bill is a bit like Swiss cheese. There are welcome new employment rights and improvements of existing rights. But it does not do nearly enough to remove the restraints on trade unions or to give them the powers they need to make a significant difference to the lives of the millions of workers who are without a voice at work. (...)

Although the Bill gives the Secretary of State and his enforcement officers enforcement powers in relation to a limited range of specified statutory rights, our labour law continues to be bedevilled by weak and inadequate remedies. While trade unions can be restrained by injunction when they break the law, there are no corresponding remedies to employers when they do the same.

It will remain impossible to restrain employers when, for example, they break the law on redundancy or fire-and-rehire consultation or refuse to reinstate an unfairly dismissed worker. Employers will remain free to choose whether to obey the law,

and to buy themselves out of trouble if they decide not to do so. The failure to address this fundamental imbalance of power speaks volumes about the content of the Bill.

10 - Where Will the Left Opposition to This Government Come From?

In the first hundred days, we have seen unease in the PLP over the two-child cap and the fuel allowance but only seven rebels. The trade unions led the successful passing of an alternative economic approach at the Labour Party conference which included the maintenance of the fuel allowance and a wealth tax but is non-binding and will be ignored by the government. The motion would not have passed if it was down to CLP delegates. This shows the importance of working inside the trade unions.

The NEC election results for the membership section are very revealing. Only 13% of the members voted, showing the rampant depoliticisation but also the fact that the pro-leadership faction also does not lead an army of activists. It does not need to.

About a third of this 13% voted for left candidates, holding on to four of the five reps. Computed into numbers, this equates to between 12,000 and 15,000 people. This means there is now a greater number of left political activists outside Labour than inside.

Outside Labour, nearly all the groups are recruiting, and the Palestine Solidarity and anti-racist campaigns are vibrant, involving people way beyond the usual left milieu. Corbyn is accepting now that he is unlikely to be re-admitted to Labour, and he has semi-organised a group with the four left/Gaza independents and participated in discussions with currents that are looking to set up some sort of broad left party. It is all still very fragmented—for example, there were two left-of-Labour candidates at a recent Coventry council by-election who lost to Labour.

Two major issues arise—how is a left

alternative organised democratically rather than as a structureless mash-up between leading personalities or the existing left groups, and secondly, there has to be a distinction between a broad mass party and a revolutionary Marxist one. If people involved in these discussions do not separate out these two sorts of political currents then you will end up in an impasse. Any new formation needs an openly eco-socialist approach and needs to seek common work with people in the Greens and other eco-activists. The Green Party continues to poll well—up three points in the latest Ipsos poll. Diane Abbott, in her autobiography, floats the idea of a progressive Labour/Green alliance.

11 - Tory Party Disarray Helps Labour.

All of Starmer's problems can be relativised to a degree because of the disarray of the Tory Party. We now know their never-ending leadership race will end up with a leader from the right of the party. Whether this will stave off the threat from Reform UK or merely amplify those issues that Farage wins most votes on is difficult to assess.

The Reform UK conference attracted 4,000 people and it is two points up in the polls. If Labour fails to convince people that it is changing their living conditions, then there is plenty of space for the hard right to further progress. Reform is second to Labour in over 80 seats, while in other areas the Greens are becoming the main challenger. Labour's victory was a very thin landslide on a lower vote than Corbyn won. More worrying is the growing influence of the fascist far right. These groups are raising money to support their 'political prisoners' in jail after the attempted pogroms. Tommy Robinson is selling a lot of his book and organising a demonstration on the 26th October which anti-racists are opposing.

12 - Bosses with Labour for Now.

Finally, the bosses are happy enough sticking with the Labour B team for the moment... There are huge bungs of money coming their way as a result of the partnership strategy.

Take the carbon capture deal for Liverpool and Teesside worth around £20 billion. The carbon savings are overestimated by the government and the money could be better spent. A lot of this money will be going directly to the fossil fuel companies [3]

The big property development and building companies are likely also to

be the main winners in Labour's housing programme rather than the homeless or those needing social housing rather than affordable or market-priced homes. Changing building planning regulations and new towns will not solve the housing crisis unless there are homes cheap enough to buy or rent. Why would developers

ever want housing to become cheap or house prices to decline?

Contradictions run through all of Labour's policies but for the capitalists they look a more reliable pair of hands for now than a Tory Party led by Jenrick or Badenoch.

[AntiCapitalst Resistance](#)

The U.S. Election Too Close to Call and too Strange for Words

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

In September and October, the Southeast was hit by hurricanes Helene and Milton, with high winds and torrential rain causing vast destruction to homes and businesses and to highways, and bridges, as well as taking a number of lives. One might expect and hope that society would unite in the face of such a disaster. But, no.

Rightwing conspiracy theorists, including Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Green, claimed that the U.S. government, that is to say Biden and Harris, controlled the weather and used the storm to attack those predominantly Republican states, disrupt voting, and steal the election from Trump. Others claimed the government, having manufactured or directed the hurricanes, planned to seize the land for lithium mining. Those theories went viral on social media and led to threats, including death threats, to federal rescue and relief workers and to meteorologists who predict and report on the weather. With some grieving, some injured, many without homes, or lacking power, Harris apparently feels this is not the moment to talk about climate change.

Trump himself claimed that Biden and Harris had ignored the states hit by hurricanes—claims denied by their Republican governors—and that the

federal government was giving only \$750 to disaster victims—not true, that was just an emergency relief payment.

Then there is the question of security. There were two attempts by Americans to assassinate Trump in the last four months and U.S. intelligence services have verified that Iran has plans to assassinate Trump. Understandably then, Trump has security concerns and has demanded more protection, including from the U.S. military and has even asked for a military aircraft, requests that are out of the ordinary for candidates' protection. At the same time, Trump has suggested, and many of his followers have accepted the idea, that the Democrats were behind the assassination attempts.

Reports state that Trump is angry because his donors haven't contributed more money. Harris meanwhile is awash in money. She has raised more than one billion dollars, and she appears to have more than 100 million dollars more than Trump. Money goes for television, radio, and social media advertising, for staff, and for field operations, meaning canvassers' door knocking.

Harris, however, is worried about winning over Black and Hispanic

voters. Over the last three elections, Democrats have lost Black and Hispanic voters to the Republican Party and in particular to Donald Trump. A New York Times poll finds that Harris has lost ground among Black voters, particularly Black young voters, those Blacks without a college degree, and Black men in particular. Today 15 percent of Black voters support Trump. Harris has also lost support among Hispanic voters, 37% of whom now support Trump. The majority of Black and Hispanic voters still back Harris, as do all of the important Black and Hispanic organizations; still Harris has suffered a serious erosion of support.

Then too, there is the problem of the Arab American voters who have moved away from Harris because of her support for Israel with its genocidal war on Gaza. A poll taken among the 206,000 Muslim and Arab Michigan voters a month ago found that 40% favored Green Party candidate Jill Stein, 18% favored Trump, and only 12% Harris. The Greens are a left party, but votes for Stein could bring about Trump's election.

Many of us on the left find it hard to support either candidate—but many of us will vote for Harris to stop Trump.

13 October 2024

Belgium: For freedom of movement and settlement, against closed centres

14 October 2024, by **Gauche anticapitaliste/SAP Antikapitalisten**

The outgoing Vivaldi federal government (with Ecolo and the PS) has meekly taken over the construction of three closed centres, including a 200-place closed centre in Jumet by 2028, which would make it the largest detention centre in Belgium, with the support of the Charleroi authorities (PS and Paul Magnette).

The closed centres are veritable transit prisons before detainees are deported by plane from Belgian territory, not for any criminal offences they have committed, but solely for reasons of migration.

These prisons are disgraceful in terms

of respect for rights and procedures, as well as in terms of detention conditions: a glaring lack of staff, including carers, an invasion of bedbugs, harassment and recurrent violence, self-mutilation and suicide attempts, disinformation campaigns and incitement to voluntary deportation.

These prisons are the result of a violent migration policy dictated by the extreme right, based on the exploitation, detention and deportation of people dispossessed of their dignity and humanity by a capitalist and neo-colonialist system.

The anti-capitalist left supports the struggle of undocumented

migrants for a genuine migration policy that includes :

- **Open borders** ('Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state' = Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

- **Freedom of movement and settlement for everyone**, including non-Europeans, with equal rights (no one is illegal)

- **Regularisation of the status of all undocumented migrants**

- **The dismantling of closed centres** (using the money recovered to improve the reception of asylum seekers fleeing our economic, military and climate disorder)

University funding law: Milei's first failure?

13 October 2024, by **Latin America Commission, New Anti-Capitalist Party**

A veto that won't go through

A few weeks ago, parliament approved a law to revalue pensions, but the government vetoed it under the Constitution. However, the legislative power has the possibility of imposing its law if two-thirds of the legislators present in both chambers agree. On this occasion, Milei gathered enough deputies to prevent the law from being passed. The mobilisation on this issue at the beginning of September was

significant but not massive, with 50,000 demonstrators in Buenos Aires and heavy repression.

On the other hand, Milei's veto of the university law is facing stronger opposition in parliament. It is likely that more than two-thirds of the Senate will oppose it, and it is possible, although not certain, that the Chamber of Deputies will do the same.

Milei less popular

At the same time, Milei's popularity is starting to fall. For the first time since he came to power, several opinion polls, including in the right-wing media, show a fall in favourable opinions of his government and of himself. Whereas it was still over 52% in July, it is now below 50% and close to 40% in some cases. This is still high if we take into account all the austerity measures he has imposed over the last year or so, which have brutally worsened the living

conditions of the majority of the working and middle classes. This loss of credibility should be seen in the context of the fact that political and trade union sectors, hitherto very accommodating to Milei, are allowing themselves to play a freer game and to make gestures of opposition or resistance.

Massive demonstrations

The deep popular attachment to the public university (which is free in Argentina, with no conditions of access and of a high international

standard), Milei's growing discredit and the fact that it was the university authorities and all the unions who launched the call explain the success of the demonstrations on 2 October. They took place all over Argentina, including in small towns, and were, in terms of numbers, of the same order of magnitude as those of last April, i.e. massive: from hundreds of thousands to a million people. Unlike the demonstrations of recent months, they did not give rise to confrontation or repression. Politicians such as Massa, the former Peronist candidate in the last presidential elections, and members of parliament from the UCR, the traditional 'radical' party of the bourgeoisie, were even seen in the ranks of the demonstrators. Using this

presence, Milei and the media in its service have of course described the demonstrations as 'political propaganda'. But nothing says that this is enough to stop the movement.

Before and during the vote in Parliament in the coming week, university strikes and demonstrations are planned across the country. It will be important to see whether the student movement, which has been largely absent for years, mobilises en masse on this occasion. In any case, hopes are growing of inflicting on Milei what would be a first political defeat after more than ten months of authoritarian and ultra-neoliberal government.

How dangerous is Chinese Nationalism?

12 October 2024, by **Chuang Liang**

The CCP police don't seem to want to publicize the motives in the first three cases, but many people believe that those attackers were influenced by nationalistic sentiments. For example, the Suzhou attack was clearly incited by online hate speech against Japan; and the Shenzhen attack occurred on September 18, which is the anniversary of Japanese invasion of Manchuria and always associated with 'national humiliation' and 'anti-Japan' in the official Chinese nationalist narrative. Also, unlike inside China, the western media can find and publish more details about the Zurich attacker:

The exact motive for his actions remains elusive at this point.

But just before the attack, around noon on October 1st, the assailant posted a long text on social networks.

In it, he first described his sexual fantasies with a woman he met, saying how much he missed her, as well as the time they spent together.

The text also mentions his love for his home country and its ruling Party [4]

It is also reported that the 23-year-old man had been very angry about a lecture on Taiwan sovereignty organized by the University of Zurich in the week before the crime, and cursed on the Internet: 'Shame on Taiwan independence! Taiwan province belongs to China!' [5] Of course nationalism was always part of our education, but it was not so horrible in the past.

I remember back to the early 2000s, I found a hand-made poster on the notice board of my high school library, which was about boycotting Japanese products. Its eye-catching slogan was: Every yuan you spend now buying Japanese goods will become a bullet to kill your countrymen in the future!

However, no one took the boycotting action seriously and Sony Walkman was still the dream music player of every school kid at that time. Generally speaking, those who stuck to strict 'made in China only' principle were considered a special kind of unpopular geeks - this is shown in a documentary about them [6].

Besides, there was no call to harm

foreign civilians at that time, while today you can easily find cold-blooded comments advocating killing on Chinese social media.

A Chinese media recently posted a short video to analyze the ridiculous propaganda on the internet against the Japanese schools in China [7], but the first and second most liked comments were 'What on earth are the Japanese schools in China teaching?' and 'They must be demolished.' respectively.

However, I still believe that the population is not as crazy as Nazi Germany or Japan at the height of militarism. Here is an example: The Japanese consumed a lot of luxury goods during their bubble economy era so they now have a very large second-hand stock. In recent years, importing vintage or even FMCG jewelry (and all kinds of other stuff) and selling them online in China has been a very popular trade, especially during the period of COVID Lockdown when most of other businesses were hard to operate. Chinese consumers love them - even they know clearly

that these goods had been pre-owned and worn by Japanese. Who can say no to Burberry accessories at five euros? Students, housewives and unemployed youth all flock to this trade and try to make a profit on TikTok or other online flea market apps.

This is the typical 'two-faced Chinese' - on one hand, people "harmonize" (or accept) nationalist rhetoric; on the other hand, they care more about material interests in their private lives. In recent years, we saw farces about boycotting Korean supermarket chain, boycotting American brands, boycotting French companies, etc. But none of them lasted more than a couple of months.

This is understandable. In a country where people got arrested and sentenced for insulting table tennis Olympians [8] or martyrs [9] online, you must follow its 'political correctness'.

In a recent interview, an IT expert who used to work for the CCP's internet censorship department said that for a long time in the past, hate speech on the Chinese internet targeting race, nationality, gender or sexuality were tacitly endorsed and even guided by the authorities. [10]

Just like many other governments in the world and in history, the CCP stirs

up nationalism to consolidate its rule. By creating some outside enemies, it tries to prove that the Chinese people need its protection, which means the need of building big battleships, cutting-edge stealth jets and more nukes. A classical Animal Farm trick - the human farm owner (American imperialists, Japanese militarists, British colonialists, Taiwanese separatists, etc.) is coming back!

However, a typical nationalist rhetoric also promises affluence and prosperity. Just like Hitler once promised that every German family would own a Volkswagen car. In 2021, Xi Jinping announced that China's battle against poverty had achieved a comprehensive victory on the 100th anniversary of the founding of the CCP. But in the August of 2024 the youth unemployment rate is 18.8%. [11] Although the CCP wanted the Chinese people to hate the U.S. and Japan, it definitely does not want them to start killing foreigners right now. The young people who sell second-hand Japanese goods for living is perhaps only an irony - what is worse is that the anti-foreigners nationalism will push the developed countries to further distance themselves from China: divestment, making changes in their supply chains, and avoiding China as a tourist destination.

The cases of killings also reflect the desperation of Chinese society. There are a much greater number of indiscriminate killings of Chinese on top of the killings of foreigners. The attacks on foreigners are not just the result of nationalist hatred, but also the result of overall decadence of society, which has left many individuals in a state of despair and hopelessness. If the economy continues to deteriorate, this kind of chaos and brutality will exacerbate and nationalism could become the trigger for even greater tragedies. We have seen many such examples in the history.

And there is another danger: Xi's subordinates may only present him with selected public opinions, which will make him believe that the nationalist brainwash works and make bad decisions.

Putin once seriously believed that Ukrainians would greet Russian tanks in Kiev waving the tricolor. On the Chinese internet, you can also find insane talks about that Taiwanese will line up for PRC ID cards the day after the PLA landing.

Sober people can tell the difference between jokes and intelligence, we can only keep fingers crossed that the same goes for our Great Leader.

How Kenya's Youth, Middle Classes and Working Poor Joined Forces

11 October 2024, by **Caroline Kimeu**

"We are tired," chanted the thousands of demonstrators who had turned out to oppose government plans to introduce wide-ranging tax hikes, on what would become the bloodiest day of the protests. Hoisting up Kenyan flags, they marched through one of the city's main avenues, which was colored pink from water cannon spray, dodging rounds of rubber bullets and teargas. As the cloudy haze cleared

up, a protester held a bandana over his mouth with one hand, defiantly holding up a placard with the other: "It's not teargas but the fragrance of change," it read.

The tax increase plan had attracted the ire of the country's middle class and working poor, with its wide-ranging hikes on car ownership, medical bills, financial transactions,

digital content creation and essentials like sanitary towels, oil and bread.

An analysis by World Bank economists shows that while tax policies and government expenditure policies in high-income countries cushion their poor, they make poor households even poorer in low and middle-income countries. Kenya currently spends more of its national revenue servicing

debt than it does on all other spending combined, including spending on social security, health and education. This risks deepening inequality and throwing the country's poorest even deeper into poverty.

As I covered news of the day's events, weaving my way through the crowd and speaking with protesters, it was clear that while the now-withdrawn tax hike plan had brought people to the streets, it was also the proverbial "straw that broke the camel's back."

The nationwide demonstrations grew into wider calls for the country's leaders to cut government spending, crack down on corruption, and invest in development and essential services. The youth demanded an audit on how the nation saddled itself with soaring \$80bn public debt, a fivefold increase in the last decade, tied to infrastructure projects dogged by corruption claims and concerns over financial viability.

I've come to view Kenyans as like a friend whose temper is not quick to boil over, but when it does, it erupts. During the June 25 protests, I knew that things had come to a head when protesters stormed Parliament after lawmakers approved the contentious bill, and set part of the building on fire. Several protesters were killed in ensuing clashes with the police. Like many Kenyans, I wondered if the uprising would push the country over the edge or reel it back from decades of poor governance.

Kenyan President William Ruto withdrew the bill on June 26, changing course amid escalations in violence and growing calls for his resignation. Online, many called it "too little, too late." At least 39 people were killed by police in the last two weeks of protests, according to the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights. Up to 32 people suspected of playing a leading role in the protests say they were abducted by government agents over the course of the protests. A number were held incommunicado, without access to their families or legal representation, according to Amnesty International.

The government has shifted dramatically in its reactions to the

events of the last three weeks, going from minor concessions to brutal police crackdowns on protesters, to withdrawing the bill and calling for dialogue. Even after Ruto revoked the bill, the wave of protests continued to sweep over the country. They slowed after turning bloody on June 25, and as many young people became reluctant to demonstrate after reports emerged, from activists and local media, that politicians had hired poor young people to disrupt and delegitimize the movement by looting local businesses and causing mayhem.

Ruto called the protests an "important inflection point" for the country, saying in a televised debate on June 30 that "candid conversations" on the debt crisis were necessary. He defended the finance bill, saying that the \$2.7 billion that it would have raised in tax could have reduced borrowing and helped improve public services. "There are only two things you can do: Either you raise money from taxes or you borrow, period," said Ruto. "There is no magic."

Under growing pressure to address the mounting upheaval, Ruto agreed to calls from Kenyan youth for a live meeting on X (formerly Twitter). 163,000 live participants attended the July 5 discussions at its peak, and around 5.6 million users over the session. While some people viewed the engagement as a historic conversation between a president and a public openly opposed to his administration, others considered it a whitewashing exercise and boycotted the talks.

An hour before the event, Ruto announced that he would appoint an independent task force to audit the public debt. It will report its findings in three months. He also announced \$1.39 billion in budget cuts, including on government spending. He dissolved 47 unnecessary state agencies, reduced the number of government advisers by 50% and suspended costly and controversial new appointments to the executive. He also scrapped the offices of the first lady, the spouse of the deputy president, and the prime cabinet secretary, as well as plans to renovate government offices. He suspended all nonessential state travel and banned state officers from participating in "harambees,"

fundraising events that are viewed as opportunities for the political class to gain backing by corrupting the public.

Those changes, he said during the live talks, would address public anger over wasteful spending and what he termed the "obnoxious opulence" of state officers, while the government would need to borrow \$1.3 billion to tackle the budgetary crisis after withdrawing the finance bill.

In just a matter of weeks, Kenya has witnessed a public awakening that's prompted deep public scrutiny of the governance crisis that's plagued the country for decades.

Kenyans are bearing the consequences of the country's public debt through highly taxed goods, and there is a growing disconnect between the public and the government, which Kenyans accuse of corruption and wasteful spending, including overstaffing, excessive travel and corruption. The country's lawmakers are known to carry wads of cash, drive fancy cars and live in posh estates.

The country has faced economic shocks caused by the lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, currency depreciation, inflation, unemployment and recurring climate disasters like droughts and flooding. The difficult economy has also focused public attention on leaders' performances as they attempt to address the economic challenges facing the country. In Kenya's last elections, I found Kenyans more interested in debates over the cost of living, debt and youth unemployment than in the ethnic and personality-driven contests that have dominated many previous cycles.

Ruto rode in on promises to make life easier for the working poor, but the public is now disenchanted with the president, whom they have nicknamed "Zakayo" after the biblical tax collector Zaccheus. Some view the jet-setting president as more invested in the country's international image than the situation at home, and accuse him of prioritizing the policies of lenders like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over domestic needs.

The IMF had urged Kenya to increase domestic revenue collection to access

more funding, at a time when many are grappling with the cost of living crisis and beset with questions over how the country's debt was accumulated. While many are struggling to get by, some view Ruto as prioritizing debt repayments over their interests.

Many Kenyans I met on the streets felt that tax increases in recent years had made life more difficult yet hadn't noticeably improved public services. I've watched the country's poor turn to community-run groups for social support in emergency situations because state options are poor or unavailable, and the middle class resort to costly private services.

The country's working-age youth, who make up just over a third of the country's population, are grappling with the high cost of living while unemployed. One protester I spoke with during last week's protests had a bachelor's degree, yet could not find work and ended up taking a job as a security guard in the city center. It reminded me of warnings from grassroots leaders that the lack of opportunity and deepening wealth inequalities are "a time bomb" that could trigger an uprising by frustrated youth. Even as protests have waned, I've wondered if there are signs of this now.

I found it striking that public-driven social media protests, with no political or apparent leader, could trigger a mass street turnout. The protests were led by an unlikely group of Kenyans: under 27s ("Gen Z"), who were perceived until recently as apathetic to mainstream politics, and millennials, who were widely viewed as more inclined to digital activism over street marches. While Gen Z's involvement carried important symbolism, I've also wondered if the media obsession with their leading role has led to narrow views about whose interests the movement represents. The youth are championing issues that affect the vast majority of Kenyans, and which have been the subject of decades-long struggles. We still have a long way to go, but many of the political and social freedoms we enjoy today were hard-won, and paved the way for the public awakening we are witnessing today.

When the protests first began, high-ranking officials downplayed the discontent that was mounting online. "Digital wankers," Ruto's economic adviser David Ndi called those protesting on social media. But online opposition represented deep-seated public anger over how the country is run, as became clear when the social media protests spilled onto the streets and tens of thousands marched across the country. Everyone, from influencers to informal workers rallied behind the calls for lawmakers to rule out the tax proposals.

The working poor showed up with fervor. Motorcycle riders ferried protesters in and out of a packed capital. Residents of Nairobi's informal settlements, who make up more than half of the city's population, filled the streets. A new generation of young, educated and upwardly mobile protesters also took to the streets, like the suited, bow tie-wearing Gen Z protester Kasmuel McOure. Influential figures like rugby player-turned-celebrity chef Dennis Ombachi became vocal, and established grassroots organizers like the hijabi activist Honey Farsafi ran public crowdfunding.

The heavy middle-class presence was a new development, mocked by one member of Parliament who called the youth protesters "iPhone-using, Uber-riding, KFC-eating and bottled water-drinking Kenyans" who were out of touch with real problems. Yet this demographic became instrumental in coordinating the protests. At the height of the protests, up to 60,000 X users at a time listened to a six-hour space debating the bill.

Techies developed artificial intelligence to help Kenyans understand it better, lawyers helped facilitate the release of those detained or abducted during the protests, the public translated concerns over the bill into common vernacular, and millions of shillings were raised for those killed or injured. Kenyans in the diaspora launched solidarity protests from major cities across the world and medics ran volunteer emergency response centers across the capital that saved many lives. It was unlike anything I'd ever seen, as a Kenyan and as a journalist, in a country where

class differences have been known to divide, rather than unify, the public politically. The demonstrations attracted interest across the continent, becoming a subject of discussion in countries like Uganda, Nigeria and Ghana, where some people saw their struggles with government corruption and debt mirrored in the Kenyan uprising.

While protesters were largely united by calls for change, there were some tensions in the movement too. In its early days, moves by one activist to solicit funding from politicians were shot down over fears that the movement would be co-opted by the political class. Protesters were also divided on whether to attempt to occupy the State House — the president's residence — after many were killed during the occupation of Parliament on June 25. Feminist organizers opposed the release and distribution of revenge porn of a female lawmaker who supported the tax measures. The public hunt for a police officer who killed a protester prompted different views on X over how he would be dealt with, and whether or not his family would be kept from harm.

The country's political class has also found itself under deep public scrutiny. A specialized ChatGPT that lists politicians' corruption scandals on demand circulated, along with spreadsheets of the current administration's track record in achieving campaign pledges. The country's first lady Rachel Ruto and other members of the political class had to cancel church appearances because of the growing pushback against what the public perceives as an "unholy alliance" between the church and the country's leaders. Many believe the close links breed corruption and a lack of public accountability in both institutions.

While the measures Ruto announced on July 5 may have tamed the street protests and cooled the spiraling calls for his resignation, the public scrutiny of his government has risen to heights not seen in recent years, and that's unlikely to die down any time soon.

July 9, 2024

One year after 7 October, Gilbert Achcar discusses the future of Gaza, Lebanon, and the regional conflict

10 October 2024, by **Gilbert Achcar**

On 7 October this year, the Palestinians in Gaza marked one year of the devastating war that Israel inflicted on them hours after the Hamas Al-Aqsa Flood Operation struck the south of Israel in the early hours of 7 October 2023.

Twelve months down the road, close to 50,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been killed, with many more still to be recovered from underneath the rubble that has been amassing with every heavy Israeli raid on Gaza.

Over 100,000 Palestinians have been wounded, with many of them now suffering life-long injuries that are more often than not disabling. Gaza's healthcare system, housing facilities, education system, and infrastructure are either devastated or badly damaged.

This has been the case despite the remarkable resilience of Hamas's military wing, and the support it has received from Hezbollah in South Lebanon, whose rockets, fired at northern Israel, have put pressure on its military, and despite the recurrent international appeals for Israel to stop its genocidal war.

Emboldened by the failure of the international community to put a stop to his war on Gaza, and with the not-so-secret sympathy for his war on Hamas from several world capitals, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took his assault on Hamas and Hezbollah to the next level with a series of assassinations of its leaders, including of Fuad Shukr, a leading Hezbollah figure in Beirut, and Ismail

Haniyeh, the chief of the Hamas Political Bureau while he was in Tehran. Then there was the shocking elimination of Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut on 27 September.

The killing of the Hamas and Hezbollah leaders and many of the fighters of both the Islamist resistance groups is part of the larger damage that both have suffered along with Israel's destruction of significant parts of their military infrastructure, more so with Hamas in Gaza than with Hezbollah, at least so far, in South Lebanon.

According to Gilbert Achcar, a Lebanese professor of Development Studies and International Relations at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies), University of London, in the UK, the situation looks very difficult for Hamas.

Palestine

"We can say for sure that Hamas has been smashed in Gaza, and I don't think that Israel will let them reconstitute their apparatus and the whole infrastructure that was built over decades," Achcar said. Worse still, he added, he does not think that Israel is going to leave Gaza this time around.

"We have to remember that when [former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel] Sharon carried out his withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, Netanyahu, then a member of the Israeli Government, resigned to protest this withdrawal," Achcar said. Today, Netanyahu is set

to stay in Gaza, one way or the other, he said.

According to Achcar, "at best" Gaza will be like the West Bank in that it will be divided into tiny townships, similar to the situation in South Africa during the apartheid years when the black African population was forced into designated restricted neighbourhoods.

"Things will be much worse for Gaza given its geographic isolation," Achcar said.

However, resistance, and militant resistance in particular, will not be fully eliminated. "It will persist, but more in occasional attacks as has been happening in the West Bank. For sure there is no going back [for Hamas] to the situation of 6 October 2023."

Achcar said that it should not be overlooked that Hamas "remains strong" outside Gaza. "It is there in the West Bank, Jordan, and in the refugee camps in Lebanon," he explained. He added that the question today is not about whether or not Hamas will remain, because "Hamas will remain simply because [Netanyahu] cannot eradicate it."

The question is rather what Hamas will be able to do from now on.

For Achcar, the latter is the bigger question, especially in view of what he said is the fact that the "Palestinians in Gaza are realising more and more the level of their defeat."

"This has really been a genocidal war along with an intensity in destruction

that I don't think can be compared to anything other than Hiroshima," he said, in a reference to the 1945 US atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan during World War II.

"The far-right Israeli Government, which [in essence] is a group of neo-fascists and neo-Nazis, will surely push for the permanent reoccupation of Gaza," Achcar said.

He argued that it is hard to ignore the consensus that has been created in Israeli political quarters about the need to fight hard against Hamas after the Al-Aqsa Flood Operation. "I think it is quite similar to the way things were in the US against Al-Qaida after the attacks of 9/11," he said, in a reference to the bringing down of the World Trade Centre towers in New York and the attack on the Pentagon in the autumn of 2001.

"This is why I think that the overall balance sheet for the 7 October operation is disastrous and that it was a huge miscalculation," he said. He added that with the current situation on the ground in Gaza and the damage that Hamas has been enduring, it will be very hard for its leaders to speak of "a divine victory" or any such thing in the near future.

Achcar argued that the situation is very hard in many ways, not just because of the damage that Hamas and the entire population of Gaza have suffered, but also because there is no clear political alternative to Hamas. "Today, there is simply a political vacuum there," he stated, while arguing that the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a whole and its leader Mahmoud Abbas have "zero credibility" and "zero popularity" in Gaza.

According to Achcar, the prominent and popular Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti, imprisoned by Israel since 2002, arguably a leader of the Second Intifada in 2000, could have been a political alternative to Hamas. However, he added that "there is no way that Netanyahu will release Barghouti."

Unfortunate and distressing as it might be, Achcar said, "this is a very

hard moment [for the Palestinians]. It is a moment of defeat for the [Palestinian] liberation movement and a moment of victory for Zionist arrogance."

"This much we have to realise," he stated.

Achcar is not willing to entertain the argument that despite all the actual and long-term damage that the military might of the Israeli Occupation has inflicted on Hamas and Gaza, Hamas has also imposed a new reality in which Israeli arrogance was subject to a shocking challenge in the early hours of 7 October 2023 and that the PA narrative, which had been introduced along with the September 1993 Oslo Accords, about negotiations and security coordination with Israel as a path towards Palestinian statehood, has also been dramatically defied.

He argued that nobody needed to do anything to show that the Oslo Process has long been dead. It has been dead since the Second Intifada, he said.

Former Palestinian leader Yasser "Arafat had the illusion of [securing] an independent Palestinian state [through negotiations], but this illusion died with Arafat," 20 years ago in November 2004, he said. He added that Netanyahu was not going to allow a Palestinian state, and that this much the Israeli Prime Minister has himself said.

However, he argued, that what the Al-Aqsa Flood had brought about was not the elimination of a faulty and inconclusive process of negotiations and security cooperation with Israel. What it did, he argued, "is introduce a much worse political alternative" than the status quo put together by the Oslo Process.

A year after the beginning of the Israeli war on Gaza, coupled by persisting Israeli military operations in the West Bank, the Palestinian population "is scattered in what is even less than a Bantustan," and the Israeli far-right "is pushing to expel the Palestinian population into Sinai. They would have done so, had it not been for the red line that the Egyptian

government drew about it."

Today, he anticipates that Netanyahu's far-right colleagues in government will push to keep the Palestinians in Gaza in Rafah at the very southern point of the Strip and allow Israeli settlers to reclaim large parts of Gaza in the north and maybe middle of the Strip right up to the borders with Egypt.

"The only silver lining in this whole catastrophe is the increase of [world] solidarity with the Palestinian [people and cause], especially in the US," Achcar said. "This is important for the future. It is important that the world realise that some 50,000 people, mostly women and children, have been killed by Israel in Gaza."

Meanwhile, he added that the Palestinian resistance does require a new political alternative that is different from the liberation movements of the past and not just from Hamas. "There has been a need for a third force, but the current forces have not been allowing" this new force to find its way, he said.

It has to be admitted that this new force should not be military, he added. He argued that military force will not secure Palestinian objectives, simply because of the discrepancy in favour of Israel. "When your enemy is stronger, don't fight him on his terrain but find another way to fight him," he said.

Achcar argued that he is not prescribing something that the Palestinian path to liberation is unfamiliar with. He said that "the biggest moment of Palestinian impact was during the First Intifada" in 1988, when the left-leaning Palestinian leadership of the uprising "had the intelligence not to use the weapons they had."

At that point, Achcar said, the Israelis were caught off guard, and it was then that they decided to negotiate with the Palestinians in Oslo, simply to end the First Intifada, "which was then the peak of the Palestinian struggle." Today, he added, the Palestinians could benefit from regaining the spirit of that moment, rather than try to resurrect the militant path.

The non-military struggle of the Palestinian people, Achcar argued, created a camp within Israeli society that was calling for Palestinian statehood. On the other hand, he argued that the path of suicide bombings helped Sharon to promote his extremist policies.

“Sharon surfed on Hamas suicide attacks,” Achcar said. He added that Sharon also trapped Hamas into this path in order to pursue his policies.

Today, Achcar said the Palestinians need a new approach in gaining their liberation and a new style of leadership that “is progressive” and will work on three objectives.

The first, he said, is to lead a good part of Israeli society to split from the ideology and path of Zionism. The second is for the new Palestinian leadership to connect with the civil-rights movements in the Arab world. The third is to expand and consolidate the international solidarity that has been on the rise due to the horrific Israeli war on Gaza.

Lebanon

Regarding Lebanon, however, the question of the future of the resistance is much more layered, according to Achcar. This question has become even more pressing with the assassination of Nasrallah.

Nasrallah and his political and military choices, Achcar argued, cannot be seen in black or white. He agreed that while some people might think of Nasrallah as the man who shored up the oppression of the Syrian people by supporting the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in Damascus, others might see him as the “sayyed al-mokkawama” (the head of resistance), who was arguably Israel’s worst nightmare for three consecutive decades.

During this period, he imposed defeats on the Israeli Army, including making it withdraw from the south of Lebanon in 2000 which it occupied since the 1982 invasion executed by Sharon, as chief of the Israeli military at the time.

“Nasrallah was [all of the above]; he

meant different things to different people,” Achcar said.

“To his base in Lebanon, to his allies in the region, and to [many Shia], he was surely the sayyed al-mokkawama,” Achcar said. If one were to examine the reaction to the Israeli assassination of Nasrallah, one would find that the sense of devastation and loss was not confined to those who subscribed either to Nasrallah’s base or his ideology.

Many in Lebanon, he said, thought of Nasrallah and will continue to think of him as a “strong leader who imposed the Israeli evacuation and who dared to stand up to Israel.”

However, he added that it is hard today to think of Nasrallah without thinking of the fact that when he got involved in Syria, “he and Hezbollah were perceived as an Iranian proxy,” without excluding their role in forcing the Israeli evacuation of south Lebanon.

In the final analysis, Nasrallah’s dominant image is that of the man who forced the Israeli evacuation from south Lebanon, resisted the Israeli onslaught in 2006, and who over the past year has forced a large number of Israelis to leave their homes in the north of Israel on the borders with Lebanon as an act of solidarity with Gaza.

“This is why his assassination is a major victory for Israel, and this is why so many Lebanese, including myself, who stand clearly on the left and who disagree with much of the ideology of Hezbollah, found his assassination really saddening,” Achcar said.

He added that it is hard to think of Hezbollah as it has become, either in political or military terms, without thinking of Nasrallah. With close to 30 years at the helm, he argued, Nasrallah was the one who made Hezbollah the way it has become. He was arguably, “in relative terms, the best possible leader of Hezbollah, given that while he was willing to fight, he had the intelligence and sensitivity to preserve lives,” especially of civilians.

Achcar recalled the famous interview that Nasrallah gave after the Israeli war against Lebanon in July 2006 that came in the wake of Hezbollah’s abduction of Israeli soldiers. Nasrallah said that had he anticipated the huge damage that Israel would inflict on Lebanon, his calculations would have been different.

In August 2006, a few weeks after the end of war, Nasrallah said that had he known that Israel would inflict such a huge damage on Lebanon, he would not have ordered the kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers in an operation that Hezbollah fighters conducted during a secret crossing into the north of Israel.

This statement, Achcar said, was a message to the Lebanese people, “and Nasrallah had the courage and the conscience to make it.”

While he might not have been the major strategist that some people thought he was, during his years at the top of Hezbollah Nasrallah refrained from abducting or harming Israeli civilians because he did not want to subject Lebanese civilians to harm at the hands of Israel.

“This was part of his popularity... and this is why his death is a major loss for the country and not just for Hezbollah,” he added.

Such cautious and calculated political perceptions were perhaps shared with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh “and this was one of the reasons why Netanyahu decided to assassinate these two leaders,” Achcar said.

Netanyahu did not want resistance leaders with political sensibility and with the courage and weight to pursue political settlements.

“Netanyahu is like Sharon,” Achcar said. Neither of these two men, he added, wanted or want to engage politically, and this is why Netanyahu does not want leaders with the ability or the intention to reach political settlements on any issue. He added that the replacement of Haniyeh with Yehiya Sinwar, who is much less inclined than his predecessor to consider pragmatic political compromises, is perhaps useful for

Netanyahu's on-going war against Hamas.

Speaking before the speculation over the Israeli assassination of Hashem Safieddine, the potential successor of Nasrallah, Achcar argued that whoever the replacement of Nasrallah might be as leader of Hezbollah, Israel is unlikely to have anything but an easier way ahead because it is unlikely that any of the potential successors will be able to deliver the kind of complex performances that Nasrallah did, no matter their flaws.

"I just don't think that there will be another Nasrallah," he stated. This is partially why the Lebanese resistance will also need to think of alternatives that are much more political, progressive, and inclusive and are less militant and sect-based, he added.

Israel

Not excluding the Israeli losses during its recently initiated ground operation in the south of Lebanon, Achcar argued that as a result of its year-long genocidal war on Gaza and the assassinations of the leaders of Hezbollah, Hamas, and commanders of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, Netanyahu can now claim he has managed to regain the Israeli deterrence that was compromised with the Al-Aqsa Flood Operation and, before it, by the performance of Hezbollah as it redeployed in southern Lebanon after 2006.

In the eyes of Netanyahu, Achcar argued, "the fear of Israel is there again." He added that there are now concerns about the Israeli retaliation to the Iranian missile attacks on Israeli targets on 1 October.

Another emboldening fact for Netanyahu is that US President Joe Biden has been mostly supportive of the Israeli wars waged to destroy Hamas and Hezbollah. "Irrespective of whatever he has said when the world was outraged at the horrors of the war over the past year, the Israeli war on Gaza is arguably the first fully joint US-Israeli war," Achcar said.

Consequently, he argued that Netanyahu, who is not sure that former Republican US President Donald Trump will find his way back to the White House in November, will not want to take the risk of waiting for the expiry of such US support in case Democratic Party nominee Kamala Harris wins the November elections.

"This is especially so with regards to Netanyahu's plans against Iran. Netanyahu would not want to face the pressure for self-restraint that Harris might impose," Achcar said. He added that Netanyahu will remember that former US President Barack Obama, "prioritised the nuclear deal with Tehran," over Netanyahu's strong objections.

A new Middle East?

Whatever might happen on the Iranian front, Achcar argued, today the political landscape of the Middle East is one where Islamist movements of all shades have suffered huge losses. With the retreat of these movements, he added, there is a political vacuum that needs to be filled with a new form of political power that could be similar to the "very impressive young civilian leadership" of the 2019 Sudanese Revolution that ousted the regime of former President Omar al-Bashir.

"This is not an easy thing to do, and it might take a long time before we get there," he said.

Meanwhile, Achcar would not conclude that the Middle East is changing in the way that Netanyahu wants, where the resistance to Israeli occupation is forever defeated, or at least disabled, and where normalisation with Israel has become the norm, irrespective of whatever happens with the Palestinian cause.

This, he said, is not at all likely. "The Saudis themselves are now saying that they will not normalise with Israel prior to a serious move towards Palestinian statehood.

Other factors that might prevent the emergence of the kind of Middle East that Netanyahu is hoping for, Achcar said, include the popular support in the region for the rights of the Palestinian people and the growing international support that is unlikely to be silenced by a limited Israeli military withdrawal from Gaza.

Fatal Flaws in UK-Mauritius "Joint Statement" on planned Treaty on Chagos

9 October 2024, by **Lalit**

In fact, taken as a whole, the 3 October Joint Statement is one big booby-trap for Mauritius. It prolongs colonization of the Republic of Mauritius, it denies the right to free movement by all Mauritians, it denies

the free right of return, it prolongs military occupation and even puts base closure and thus peace outside of Mauritius' democratic control in our own land, it puts sovereignty up for bilateral negotiation outside the

established norms of international law. So, it must be opposed. The victory of the historic ICJ judgment of 2019 would be shattered by such a Treaty. It is a blatant move by the UK-USA imperialists to steal a good part

of Mauritius.

Perfidious Albion is at it again. Doing America's dirty work. And another fawning Mauritian leader is at it again, too, this time as leader of an independent State, while being egged on, it seems, by the Modi Government. And we deplore the inability of the Mauritian opposition to oppose the military occupation head-on as the prolonged colonization it is.

The Exact Wording

The Agreement purports to be the result of bilateral negotiation, yet the two signatories make a point of stating in the document, that they also have "the full support and assistance of our close partners, the United States of America and the Republic of India." Now we know the real reason India's Foreign Minister Jaishankar was here in July for a lightning visit that seemed, at the time, to be for reasons vague and ephemeral. The real reason was obviously to get Mauritius to agree to this Joint Statement. India is presumably getting its share in terms of American arms sales, use of Diego Garcia base for its navy, and cover for its secret Agalega base.

It is pitiful when big empires begin to collapse. Their moral core rots publicly. Every decision they take is the wrong one. Let us explain. The USA and UK are supposedly the closest geopolitical allies in the world. Yet circumstances pit them against each other over Diego. The UK-USA were so isolated at the UN General assembly that they only got three countries to vote with them, once Maldives withdrew its vote: Israel, Hungary and Australia's previous right-wing government.

At the same time, Britain and the USA sound either half-witted or mad when they stand up and shriek in support of Ukraine's right not to be occupied by Russia. The exposure of the USA's genocide alongside Israel against the militarily occupied Palestine is also a source of mutual blaming - especially when at the ICJ the very same issues are cross-referenced in the Mauritius' case against the UK for its colonization and military occupation and the Palestinian case (put in by

Nicaragua) against Israel for the very same thing. So, the UK is in a corner, and the USA can't get it out of the corner. And they have difficulty coming to any consensus.

And, even on what seem small things, they fall out. Yes, the USA recently went ahead and denied a British judge access to Diego Garcia when she had to be there to judge a British Indian Ocean Territories (BIOT) Supreme Court case about 64 refugees being held illegally there. So, the UK state was cornered on this human rights issue that exposed its continued colonization and military occupation of Mauritius. Now, "Great" Britain's judiciary does not take kindly to this kind of thing. It is not up to Royal standards of a United "Kingdom", so to speak. So, the "special relationship" starts to fall apart. The UK Brexit vote was thoroughly tampered with by the USA's right-wing politicians like Trump's advisor Steve Bannon, and so US interference and Brexit have bankrupted the UK. As it is, the UK, like the rest of Europe, is suffering from a refugee crisis provoked by the USA. It is American wars that cause people to flee from bombed out societies and ruined infrastructure in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and also from Libya where nearly 2 million non-Libyan Africans worked. And this has led to a political crisis, in the UK. This crisis caused the Conservative Government to set up a far-fetched and illegal scheme in Rwanda to "out-source" the UK's refugee problem to another country.

The UK and USA rightly anticipated there would be a huge immigration crisis around the BIOT and the military base on Diego - just as there is on Lampedusa in Sicily and on Spain's Canary Islands, and in particular when the USA is busy sparking war against China via Taiwan. The 64 Sri Lankans were merely the early-warning signal of a "flood", to use the right-wing language, of refugees. So, in reality the American base is threatened not by China or Russia, as the UK and USA pretend it is, but by 64 poor Sri Lankans, some of them children, shipwrecked there. It shows how every bit of protest against the imperialists, when their empires start to topple, counts. And it also shows

what the UK-USA empire has come to. The Rwanda scheme - already billed to cost British VAT-payers some 4 billion pounds - was shut down by the new Labour Government for being against international law. But, the UK judiciary still had to deal with the 64 Sri Lankans without transferring them to Britain. This became the last straw.

So, dire circumstances lead to dire actions, like the UK trying to both "give" (to quote the international press) and "keep" its sovereignty over the place the USA, in fact, controls! It is this confusion that has produced this flawed "Joint Statement".

Here are the flaws of the Joint Statement, concentrating on paragraph 3:

While the Joint Statement says at paragraph 3 that "Mauritius is sovereign over Chagos, including Diego Garcia," we must remember that its first paragraph described the document as being about not "sovereignty" itself but about "the exercise of sovereignty". The wording implies there are two different things: Who "is sovereign"? The document says Mauritius is. But who has "the exercise of sovereignty"? Are they one and the same? The two expressions seem, at first view, to mean the same thing. But in the Joint Statement they definitely do not. In any case, this kind of formulation is so bizarre, especially coming from the perfidious Albion, that it ought to set off alarm bells in our heads.

Here is the first problem: the meat of the third paragraph reads, "the United Kingdom will be authorised to exercise with respect to Diego Garcia the sovereign rights ... of Mauritius required to ensure the continued operation of the [US military] base". Let us deal with this in grammatical terms. In black and white, it says "the UK will be authorised to exercise ... the sovereign rights ... of Mauritius". So, Mauritius is sovereign, as the document has already said, but the UK is authorised to exercise this Mauritian sovereignty! What is this?

So, here we see the perfidy of the words "exercise of sovereignty" that we mentioned from the first paragraph, which declares what the

Joint Statement is about: it is about the exercise of sovereignty, not about sovereignty. Yes, believe it or not, Mauritius is not “sovereign over Chagos, including Diego Garcia” as promised earlier in paragraph three, because the UK will be authorised to exercise the sovereign rights of Mauritius, and this is what the Joint Statement is about. No less.

And, to mask all this perfidy, the formulation is intentionally clumsy in another way. Not only is this authorization for the UK to exercise Mauritius’ sovereign rights supposed to be only “with respect to Diego Garcia” (pretending to spare the other outer Chagos islands, and leave them to Mauritius’ sovereignty) but also, added on afterwards to include we suppose literally “anything anywhere” concerning those sovereign rights “required to ensure the continued operation of the base”. This means it may be “with respect to Diego Garcia” or it may also include anything “required to ensure the continued operation of the base”.

We know that the USA has always objected to Mauritius controlling not only Diego Garcia, but any of the other islands. But now, in respect to Diego Garcia, any form of sovereignty that is “required to ensure the continued operation of the base” will be exercised by the UK. Of course, what exactly this means will be decided later by ... none other than the USA. Just like the USA decided to kick the British judge out of BIOT. So Mauritius has what is left of sovereignty when Britain has exercised any sovereignty “required to ensure the continued operation of the base”, and the USA will decide on the meaning of the bland “with respect to Diego Garcia” en temps et lieu.

Other oddities in this paragraph must now also be looked at. Where it says, “the UK will be authorised to exercise ... sovereign rights ...”, after the word “rights”, there are the two words “and authorities”. This, we can only guess, is to ensure all the “rights” Mauritius has, as well as all the “authorities” it has, meaning all the powers it has, “powers” flowing from sovereignty, will be authorised to be exercised by the UK.

The next oddity is the frank, “For an initial period of 99 years.” Let’s deal with the word “initial”, it means that what Britain means is that its exercise of sovereignty will last for “ONE CENTURY”, but that is only to begin with. This formulation is a synonym for “forever” – unless we are talking geological time, and the first lap lasts, as it is, “... well into the next century”.

The third oddity is ensuring that Mauritius, the weak partner, will agree with the strong partner, the UK to submit to the exigencies of the really big masked partner, the USA. Read this paragraph hidden in the middle of paragraph 3: “At the same time, both our countries are committed to the need, and will agree in the treaty, to ensure the long-term, secure and effective operation of the existing base on Diego Garcia which plays a vital role in regional and global security.” Decisions about what will ensure the “secure and effective operation of the existing base” will be made presumably by the USA.

The blood money in exchange for the war machine on our land

There are two paragraphs mainly about money. They are vague and humiliating for Mauritius. “The treaty will address wrongs of the past”, the Joint Statement says. How? An apology for stealing the land? An apology for hounding out the Mauritians living there on that Mauritian land? Or are they talking about money? Who knows?

And it goes on “and demonstrate the commitment of both parties to support the welfare of Chagossians. Mauritius will now be free to implement a programme of resettlement on the islands of the Chagos Archipelago, other than Diego Garcia, and the UK will capitalise a new trust fund, as well as separately provide other support, for the benefit of Chagossians.” No mention of free movement for anyone. No mention of all the ordinary aspects of sovereignty. Can Mauritius build ports or an airstrip? Or will this affect

the “secure and effective operation of the existing base”? The wording is absurd.

“It will also herald a new era of economic, security and environmental partnership between our two nations. To enable this partnership the UK will provide a package of financial support to Mauritius. This will include an indexed annual payment for the duration of the agreement and the establishment of a transformational infrastructure partnership, underpinned by UK grant funding, to deliver strategic projects generating meaningful change for ordinary Mauritians and boosting economic development across the country.” This is the bribe. This is the blood money. This is what aims to draw the Mauritian people into moral degradation by agreement to it!

Then the Joint Statement goes on, “More broadly, the UK and Mauritius will cooperate on environmental protection, maritime security, combating illegal fishing, irregular migration and drug and people trafficking within the Chagos Archipelago, with the shared objective of securing and protecting one of the world’s most important marine environments. This will include the establishment of a Mauritian Marine Protected Area.” This is Mauritius will “cooperate” with the UK to do all this, including a “Mauritian” MPA, as opposed to Mauritius doing all this independently and in a sovereign way.

Conclusion

Let us end with a simple quote from the Mauritian Constitution. Section 1 reads “Mauritius shall be a sovereign democratic state”

and Section 111 reads,

“Mauritius includes:

“(a) The islands of Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agalega, Cargados Carajos, Tromelin, and the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia and any other island comprised in the State of Mauritius;

“(b) the territorial sea and the air space above the territorial sea and the

Why Hezbollah's still standing despite Israel assassinating Hassan Nasrallah

8 October 2024, by **Joseph Daher**

Cult of personality

In the past decades, a cult of personality had developed in the party's propaganda around Hassan Nasrallah. This was notably reflected in the aftermath of Israel's war on Lebanon in 2006 when their initial slogan “Al-Nasr al-ilâhi” was changed to “Nasr(un) min Allâh” (A Victory from God), which was an instrumentalization of Hassan Nasrallah's name. This was part of the cultivation of the leader's image in the Party's media campaigns.

Whilst Hezbollah enjoyed significant popularity among other Lebanese religious sects and even across the Middle East and North Africa, Nasrallah's popularity outside of the party's base had considerably reduced after the 2006 war. There were a number of reasons for this, including Hezbollah using its military capacities against other national actors. For example, in 2008 the party invaded particular neighbourhoods in West Beirut and military confrontations occurred in other regions, notably in the Chouf, after the Lebanese government announced that it wanted to dismantle the party's communications network.

In addition to this, the Party later participated in the bloody repression of the Syrian uprising alongside the despotic Syrian regime, which also created sectarian tensions in Lebanon.

Hezbollah has also been amongst the parties considered responsible for the economic and financial crisis of 2019 as it has been part of every national unity government since 2005. Nasrallah vehemently opposed the

protest movement that year, and went as far as accusing those taking to the streets of being financed by foreign embassies. Hezbollah members were even sent to attack the demonstrators.

Over the past few years Hezbollah members have been involved in several sectarian tensions with members of other religious sects, and has been accused of being one of the main actors obstructing the investigation into the explosions at the port of Beirut in August 2020.

For all of these reasons, Hezbollah has grown more and more politically and socially isolated outside its Shi'a popular base. Rather than being seen as a national resistance figure, Nasrallah was also increasingly perceived as a sectarian “Zaim” defending his party's own political interests and those of authoritarian regimes, like Syria and Iran.

It is this isolation that has contributed to the party wanting to avoid a total war with Israel following 7 October. By adopting calculated and moderate action against Israeli military targets, Hezbollah has attempted to prevent the conflict from being exploited by internal political enemies within Lebanon, as this would in turn make the party the main actor responsible for all the country's misfortunes. However, Israel's current war on Lebanon, with the support of the USA, has severely undermined this plan.

What now?

In this context, Hezbollah's officials are trying to demonstrate that the party is continuing in the former party secretary general's path following his

assassination and that of a number of high military and political cadres. The interim leader Naim Qassem stressed this to supporters and members in his speech, when he declared: “We continue Hassan Nasrallah's footsteps”.

For Hezbollah, the priorities are now to firstly protect its internal structures and chain of commands, including by filling the void at the top of the party regarding the various political and military responsibilities, and electing a new secretary general.

Secondly, the Party seeks to maintain its objectives regarding the war with Israel: no separation of the Gaza and Lebanese fronts until a ceasefire in the Gaza strip, and to maintain and protect its military infrastructures and capacities, including long range missiles and rockets, from Israel's attacks and ground offensives.

It is important to note that despite the considerable blows, the Party still currently remains the most important political actor in Lebanon. It also maintains an influence exceeding its national borders, particularly in Syria, also representing Teheran's political regional interests.

Indeed Hezbollah's military capacities remain as their key assets, despite Israeli infiltration, a weakening of internal communication, and a large number of their military experienced commanders having been assassinated. Notably, it has a vast arsenal of rockets and missiles. For the first time since 7 October, the Party recently used various Fadi missiles (middle-range missiles), to strike military sites in the outskirts of the cities of Haifa and Tel Aviv.

Furthermore, during the Israeli army's initial attempts to infiltrate Lebanese territories, Hezbollah's soldiers destroyed their Merkava tanks, injuring and killing some of their soldiers.

Alongside its armed movement, the party has a large network of institutions providing key and essential services, though this has partially been undermined by the war and consequently the ever-increasing needs of the population. In this context, Hezbollah's popular base will most probably remain - especially in the absence of an inclusive political alternative and in the midst of a continuous economic crisis with a non-functioning state.

On the regional level, Hezbollah still benefits from the support of Iran, even if the strength of this has been undermined amongst sections of the party following Israel's recent assassinations and destruction. Indeed, Teheran's strategic objectives, particularly since 7 October, have been to improve its regional geopolitical position in order to strengthen their future negotiating power with the US on nuclear issues

and sanctions. They also see this as a way of guaranteeing political and security interests, whilst preventing a direct regional conflict with Israel and the US.

Iran's latest retaliation against Israel, which has not resulted in significant damages, should be seen in this framework. Of course through this they have also attempted to reaffirm a form of deterrence, although it's been unequal compared to the superiority of Israeli military capacities and the support provided by Washington. Moreover, this won't stop Israel's war on Lebanon.

It is fair to say that Hezbollah is in the most dangerous situation since its foundation, which is unlikely to improve soon given Israel's continued attacks, and the party's isolation within Lebanon.

While the main strengths of the movement has been to build a strong and disciplined organisation, and not a "one man show" - despite the cult-like support for Nasrallah, the party's ability to widen its base is very much restricted by its political strategy and

orientation. Hezbollah has not been engaged in building a counterhegemonic project that challenges the Lebanese sectarian and neoliberal system. In fact, it has actively sustained it by becoming one of its main defenders.

Moreover, the party has been acting as the leading nexus of Iranian influence and interests in the region, particularly following the eruption of uprisings in Syria and across the Middle East and North Africa since 2011, which also promotes a neoliberal authoritarian order opposed to the emancipation and liberation of the popular classes.

In other words, Hezbollah, like other regional political actors involved in the resistance against Israel, is incapable of building a large movement linking democratic and social issues, opposing all imperialist and sub-imperialist forces, while promoting social transformation from below through the construction of movements in which the popular classes are the real actors of their emancipation.

[New Arab](#)

Biden-Harris Send More U.S. Arms and Troops to the Middle East

7 October 2024, by [Dan La Botz](#)

While the Biden-Harris administration has consistently called for peace in the region, it has done so while persisting in politically supporting and arming Israel. For weeks Senator Bernie Sanders has been calling for an end to military aid to Israel, because it has broken both international and American law. "In my view," he said, "Israel should not be receiving another nickel in U.S. military aid." But the Biden-Harris government has ignored him and other critics.

U.S. military aid to Israel is staggering. Since its founding in 1948,

according to the non-governmental Council on Foreign Relations, "Israel has been the largest cumulative recipient of U.S. foreign aid receiving about \$310 billion (adjusted for inflation) in total economic and military assistance. The United States provided Israel considerable economic assistance from 1971 to 2007, but nearly all U.S. aid today goes to support Israel's military, the most advanced in the region. The United States has provisionally agreed to provide Israel with \$3.8 billion per year through 2028."

Since Israel's war with Hamas began last October, the United States has provided about \$30 billion in military assistance to Israel. According to the Leahy Law the United States cannot provide security assistance to foreign governments or groups that commit gross human rights violations, but the Biden-Harris administration has simply ignored the law.

The U.S. itself is also present, with about 40,000 military personnel in the region in August, and the number has been growing. U.S. troops are stationed in Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq,

Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates, and there are also large bases in Djibouti and Turkey.

Since Israel's war on Hamas began, Biden has also sent several warships to the Eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea. These include two aircraft carrier groups, several destroyers, and amphibious landing vessel, as well as thousands of Marines. The United States has also deployed considerable Air Force resources, fighters, transport aircraft, and tankers, serviced by a few thousand more troops. More U.S. war planes are on the way.

The Palestine solidarity movement, so active on some campuses in the spring, has been repressed by university administrations, and its encampments and protests are banned. Pro-Palestine professors have been fired and speakers cancelled. Parts of the Palestine solidarity movement remain divided over support for Hamas. In several U.S. cities, relatively small numbers joined in pro-Palestine demonstrations on October 5, chanting slogans such as, "Gaza, Lebanon you will rise, the people are by your side." But with war now not only in Gaza but also in Lebanon, where 43% are Christian

and 58% Muslim (27% Shiite), many do not support Hezbollah and even blame it for the war, so the situation is now more complicated. War with Iran will make it more complicated still. The anti-war movement has yet to come to grips with these developments.

Kamala Harris met with Arab and Muslim groups in the crucial state of Michigan last week. She is still talking peace while Biden provides arms. It could cost her the election, and could lead to Republican Donald Trump's victory.

6 October 2024

Tanzania: Masai evicted from their land on the altar of profit

6 October 2024, by Paul Martial

The Tanzanian government's policy, with the complicity of major Western NGOs, is to replace herders with tourists, who bring in more money. Joseph Oleshangay has embarked on a European tour to alert the authorities and NGOs to the situation of the Masai of Tanzania. A lawyer from this community of herders, he is committed, despite threats and pressure, to fighting the mass expulsions of the Masai from their ancestral lands, particularly in the Ngorongoro region.

Harassment policy

For several years now, the Tanzanian authorities have been trying hard to dislodge these pastoralists from their land. They blame their cattle for destroying the rich ecosystem of the Ngorongoro region, where the volcano Ol Doinyo Lengai proudly stands. A region where you can find wild animals. The Masai's cows pose a danger to lions, hyenas, rhinoceroses, zebras and others.

Acting under Government Notice (GN

673), the government deregistered 11 constituencies, 25 villages and nearly 96 hamlets, removing them from the electoral register and depriving community members of their right to vote. It also closed education services and medical clinics. As a result, measles is making a comeback due to a lack of vaccinations. At the same time, forest rangers requisitioned livestock, plunging many families into poverty. The aim is to evict 110,000 Masai from their land.

Profit versus ecology

This is not a question of 'punitive ecology' on the part of the Tanzanian government; its aim is profit by developing tourism in this region: luxury tourism and in particular the highly lucrative niche of trophy hunting. To this end, the Tanzanian government has granted the royal family of the United Arab Emirates the Loliondo lands for hunting wild animals. The Masai living on these lands have been expelled and some

who have tried to return have been killed by the security forces. The government's target for 2025 is five million visitors and six billion dollars in revenue, which should go straight into the pockets of the country's select group of businessmen and politicians.

On the other hand, this policy is really endangering the ecological balance of the region by building the infrastructure needed to accommodate hundreds of thousands of people. As Joseph Oleshangay pointed out: 'In 1976, there was one road right inside the crater. Today, there are 29! Cars drive around there all day and that stresses out the wild animals.'

Green colonialism

Unfortunately, this policy is not unique to Tanzania. It is shared by many African countries and enjoys the support and guidance of major NGOs such as the WWF, the Nature Conservancy and even UNESCO. For Ngorongoro, for example, in 2019 the WWF was promoting the reduction of the number of Masai and cattle to 'an

acceptable minimum', while UNESCO was advocating the transformation of Ngorongoro into a nature reserve with no population except for the maintenance of a few *bomas* (community enclosures for cattle)... for cultural tourism.

This policy of promoting nature reserves stems directly from colonial policies. At the time, the aim was to preserve virgin nature, reified as a

kind of terrestrial Eden. Nothing has really changed, except that we now talk about bio-diversity. But the means remain the same: discrediting and even criminalising the agro-pastoral activities of the people who have lived there for centuries, with the aim of evicting them using the expertise supposedly possessed by the big Western NGOs.

The Masai have mobilised. They have blocked the flow of tourist vehicles, taken legal action and organised a massive demonstration attended by over 40,000 people. They point out that they are the guarantors of nature protection and not the Tanzanian government, which has authorised TotalEnergies to drill 419 wells in the Murchison Falls natural park.

Is AMLO's latest reform a poisoned chalice?

5 October 2024, by Latin America Commission, New Anti-Capitalist Party

He congratulated himself on his six years in office. The economy in general terms is showing largely positive figures: measures to increase minimum wages, pensions and grants for young people have not been offset by inflation, which remains well below that of most Latin American countries.

For Mexico's workers, indigenous communities and poor people, the promises of the 'Fifth Transformation' made at the start of the six-year term are still far short of the hopes raised, but the difference with all the previous governments for decades is such that Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) is 'retiring' to his property in Chiapas with a popularity rating at an all-time high in Mexico (over 70%).

The judiciary: a bastion of the right

He is leaving it up to the woman he has endorsed and the members of his party, MORENA, who have an absolute majority in parliament, to enforce the latest major constitutional law that he pushed through, to the great displeasure of the opposition and large sectors of the bourgeoisie. This is the reform of the judiciary.

In Mexico, until this law, judges, from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy, were selected by complex and often opaque procedures. This left room for influence peddling, nepotism and widespread corruption. The Supreme Court of Justice also functioned as a cover for the interests of the privileged classes and had on several occasions blocked social or anti-neoliberal laws that AMLO had wanted to promulgate. Although as president he had the power to appoint some of its members, of the 11 current members of this court, only three were in his favour. Generally speaking, the judiciary in Mexico is clearly a bastion of the right and of the wealthy. And AMLO or even the new president could fear 'institutional coups d'état' like those carried out in Brazil against Lula or Dilma Rousseff.

The people support the constitutional law

The law that has just been passed provides for all judges in Mexico to be elected by the people. It was approved by qualified majorities in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate (after some undemocratic manoeuvring). But it came up against head-on opposition not only from the

coalition of right-wing parties (PAN, PRI, PRD, etc.) but also from the vast majority of civil servants and justice workers.

55,000 justice workers went on strike for over a month and demonstrated by the tens of thousands in the streets against this law. Of course, they were loudly supported by the parties of the old regime and by the mainstream media. On the other hand, the vast majority of the population supports this law, because they have no confidence in the current judiciary and because it is AMLO who is proposing it and the right who is opposing it.

A law imposed without consultation

However, this law poses numerous social, political and democratic problems. If a large proportion of justice workers, many of whom are AMLO voters, are opposed to it, it is because it was imposed on them without any consultation and because it will put an end to many opportunities for internal promotion.

It is clear that, in the current situation, López Obrador's party will have control of the three branches of

government - executive, legislative and judicial - thanks in particular to the procedure for selecting candidates for judgeships, which remains highly opaque and is unlikely to prevent manoeuvring or corruption at many levels.

At the end of the day, this reform is characteristic of the nature of the government under AMLO: there is no real desire to transform the system, but it is applied from above and is largely imperfect, relying solely on the prestige of the Supreme Guide and in

no way on popular mobilisation and control.

26 September 2024

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

France in the grip of multiple crises

4 October 2024, by **Pierre Rousset**

The electorate wanted neither Macronism nor an RN in the corridors of power. Today, they have both, thanks to Macron. Macron took eight weeks to choose a Prime Minister, Michel Barnier, a member of a party, Les Républicains (LR), which only received 5% of the vote in the elections. He negotiated his appointment with Marine Le Pen, leader of the RN, to ensure that the latter would not table a motion of censure against him from the outset. Madame agreed... with reservations. Now the choice of Prime Minister depends on the goodwill of the far right!

Governmental and parliamentary crisis

The new parliament (577 deputies) is even more fragmented than its predecessor. Following a ballot that was particularly representative for a legislative election in France (66.7%).

- **The New Popular Front (NFP)** came out on top, with a very relative majority (182 seats, 193 with the various other left MPs). It is represented by four parties: the Ecologistes, La France insoumise (Unbowed France, LFI), the Parti communiste (French CP, PCF) and the Parti socialiste (Socialist Party, PS), but was supported by a vast mobilisation of trade unions and associations. Institutional practice dictates that the President should first ask the leading group to put forward a

candidate for the post of Prime Minister, in this case Lucie Castets, a senior civil servant committed to the fight against tax evasion and the defence of public services. Emmanuelle Macron could very well have respected this practice, banking on the fact that an NFP government would be toppled by a motion of censure. Instead, he chose to send a political message: the neoliberal counter-reforms he has implemented cannot be called into question - which is what the NFP was preparing to do.

- **The 'presidential camp'** is credited with 168 seats. It previously had 250. The fall would have been much more drastic had the social and political left not allowed the election of many Macronists to block the RN. The so-called 'presidential majority' has suffered an electoral disaster. With the next presidential election on the horizon, disunity and rival ambitions are becoming the rule (Macron cannot run for a third term).

- The former governing party of the traditional right, the **Républicains** group is now only the fifth largest component of Parliament (43 seats, 66 with their allies). It has split and joined forces with the RN. It did not join the 'Republican Front' during the legislative elections. Now that the Prime Minister chosen by Macron (and tolerated by the RN) belongs to his party, they are no less demanding the full application of his program! Michel Barnier will nonetheless have to come to terms with Macron and assert a degree of independence from the LR.

- With 143 seats, the

Rassemblement National's results were mixed. Although the result is far from what it could have hoped for, it has almost doubled its number of MPs - and therefore its financial capacity and the various rights granted to parliamentary groups.

No stable majority is in sight, and new general elections cannot be held before June 2025.

Democratic crisis, on the way to a new authoritarianism

The Constitution of the Fifth Republic is one of the most undemocratic in Western Europe, but that is not enough for Macron or the proponents of the neoliberal order. The previous (minority) government had already misused and abused an article of the Constitution (the 49.3) that allows a law to be passed without a vote. The pension reform has become a typical example of a widespread denial of democracy. It was rejected by 90% of working people, by all the unions, by Parliament - millions of people took to the streets. The government was inflexible, hoping to crush any hint of resistance.

The denial of democracy has become natural, a 'given', for a whole 'social elite' whose mission is to ensure the direct domination of Capital over society by completing the dismantling of the social gains won in the

aftermath of the Second World War and after May 68; by transferring to the private sector everything that is profitable and leaving to the public sector everything that is not; by marginalising the 'intermediary bodies' (trade unions, etc.), places of counter-power - and more.

Numerous articles of the law relating to the state of emergency have been incorporated into the current legal apparatus. The surveillance society is one of the most developed in Western Europe. The powers of the special services have been strengthened. The police are militarised. The army is playing a growing role throughout the country. A secret centre of governance has been set up, the National Defence and Security Council (whose deliberations are subject to defence secrecy). Environmental movements and solidarity with Palestine are criminalised. The factory of the dominant ideology is extending its hold over the media and the polling industry. Civil, social and environmental rights are being restricted. A civil war preventive mechanism is being put in place.

The crisis of the regime

The Constitution of the Fifth Republic was designed to protect power from any social or political hazard. It provides the matrix for the hyper-presidentialism driven by Emmanuel Macron. In so doing, he has broken the balance that has allowed this regime to last: between the presidency and parliament, between the state and capital, between repression and reform, and so on. It used to be that if millions of people demonstrated, parliament, even a Gaullist one, would give up something. That is no longer the case. The current offensive against rights is intended to be merciless and thus is loosing all legitimacy. The regime is also destabilised by international upheavals (globalisation and its crisis, the geopolitics of the great powers): a minor imperialist like France no longer has the means to make its claims.

The very nature of the political regime is changing (a question that deserves

to be discussed in greater depth). Macron has embarked on what many analysts call a 'conservative revolution', but in a chaotic way. The RN is part of the same dynamic: the 'confrontation-entente' duo we are witnessing is not fortuitous.

A new opportunity on the left?

The formation of the New Popular Front and the unexpected success of its election campaign have given new hope. We are well aware that this is only a reprieve. The rise of the RN continues and the momentum of popular mobilisations remains fragile, but the time gained can be put to good use. The momentum generated by the NFP was 'suspended' by the school holidays and the Olympic Games. The autumn season began with demonstrations in France on 7 September against Barnier's appointment (around 30,000 in Paris, mainly young people, who were very committed). More are planned.

The Macronists have done their utmost to poach left-wing MPs, without success. The unity between the four main parties representing the NFP has been maintained, although not without crises and outbursts that had a demoralising impact on the activists carrying the process forward at grassroots level in June. It happened again in September, with a very violent polemic between François Ruffin, who left the LFI, and Jean-Luc Mélenchon's staff. We could do without such posturing. Unity is a battle, but the way in which it is fought matters. The question is not anecdotal.

The present conditions are favourable to maintaining the unity of the NFP. After Barnier's appointment, in agreement with the Rassemblement National, even the most right-wing wing of the PS cannot envisage participating in the government.

The initial success of the NFP was due in particular to four conditions: the state of emergency provoked by the threat of the RN, the history of left-wing unity which provided a reference matrix (the NUPES) [12], the

mobilisation of trade unions and associations which exerted decisive pressure in favour of political unity, and the fact that the distribution of electoral constituencies was essentially a given since there was dissolution: quite logically, outgoing MPs had to be allowed to complete their term of office.

The political arc included in the NFP was broader than the parties 'in charge'. All the non-sectarian components of the far left were able to get involved and campaign. On the right, former French President François Hollande invited himself into the elections, getting himself elected on behalf of the NFP.

In the recent past, the PS, the PCF and the Ecologistes have suffered resounding electoral failures. Anne Hidalgo, the mayor of Paris, took 1.77% of the vote in the 2022 presidential election under the PS banner! This consolidated the LFI's hegemony on the left. Since then, its allies have regained their colours, displaying a 'left' profile. On the other hand, the LFI's colours were tarnished when Jean-Luc Mélenchon expelled a number of outgoing MPs who had shown too much independence. Four of them maintained their candidacy and three were re-elected under the NFP banner in the face of competition from Mélenchonist candidates. The purge was very badly received in left-wing activist circles and the defeat of three out of four of his close allies sounded a warning to Mélenchon.

A number of well-known LFI MPs have broken ranks, denouncing the lack of democracy within the LFI, which continues to face internal criticism over the matter. The history of this formation is very complex. It has managed to win an electoral base in working-class neighbourhoods and suburbs by getting abstainers (often Muslims) to vote. It has consistently projected a program for breaking with the neo-liberal order (while favouring the geopolitics of states at international level). It has been constructed as an electoral machine whose permanent horizon is the presidential election, a 'gaseous' movement with no formal membership status and no internal operating rules, even if there are structures that allow

personalities to be associated with its programmatic development.

A limit may have been reached. Can the LFI expand its territorial coverage without enriching its political discourse and organisational structure? Can it advocate democracy in society, but not implement it within its own movement? Can it speak out against violence against women, but cover it up too easily internally? Can it announce the Sixth Republic, while Mélenchon plays to the presidential posture of the Fifth Republic? What becomes of the LFI obviously concerns all the components of the left.

What becomes of the NPF will be decided in the coming weeks. Will the proliferation of local committees make it possible to integrate all the vital forces available today into its dynamic?

A new generation of young people is coming on to the scene, bringing with them a sense of solidarity (in defence of Palestinians, migrants and racialised people). Social insecurity and the impact of the climate-ecological crisis are providing fertile ground for a wide range of resistance movements. Everything must be done to encourage them to converge. But for that to happen, we need to break with the left's presidential tropism. A

real cultural revolution.

Source: 6 October 2024 [ESSF](#)

Date first published: 13 September 2024 [Amandla](#).

** This article was written for the South African magazine Amandla! It had to be very brief in order to respect the format of the publication. A much more developed contribution is in preparation, with the aim of addressing an international readership. The version above includes data and developments that were 'skipped' in the English version when the Amandla! editorial team had to make the final cuts.*

National elections in Austria: A disaster for democracy and the welfare state - and for the left

3 October 2024, by **EF, WH and PS**

It was mainly workers who voted for the FPÖ, employees with apprenticeships and without A-levels, the 35 to 59 age group and almost equally women and men. The latter is new; women had previously been less likely to vote for the party. The party was less well received by older people, pensioners and people with A-levels or a university degree.

The main reasons for voting were dissatisfaction with the coronavirus policy, rising prices, particularly for housing and energy, deteriorations in the healthcare system, migration/refugees (this topic has recently been linked to terrorist attacks), but also the issues of war and Austrian neutrality.

The FPÖ has become significantly more radical under Herbert Kickl, its 'federal party leader' since June 2021, and publicly advocates conspiracy theories (about the coronavirus), recommended horse medicine instead of vaccinations, calls for the

'remigration' of refugees, wants to set up a reporting office for politicising teachers, and to deprive public broadcasting of funding by cancelling licence fees. He also played an important role in the regrouping of the far-right factions in the EU Parliament to provide Orbán with a forum and a parliamentary faction.

He represents a sharply neoliberal policy, veiled with folksy slogans for tax cuts like 'more net from the gross,' which would rob the social system of its financing. Similar to the AfD, he plays the 'peace party,' wants to lower energy prices by importing even more gas from Russia, and is very sympathetic to Putin's war in Ukraine. Like many right-wing populists, he considers climate protection to be nonsense. Kickl likes to call himself the 'People's Chancellor' and wants to 'keep refugees in camps' - deliberately provocative allusions to Nazi language. The Identitarians now appear to have established themselves as the ideological core of the FPÖ,

with the party leader characterising them as a 'desirable NGO'.

The success of the FPÖ is not explained by the special abilities of its leader Kickl, but primarily by the political vacuum and the rightward development of the conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP). Since December 2021, the ÖVP has been in a coalition with the Greens, with the chancellor coming from the ÖVP. The ÖVP is increasingly adopting topics and, to some extent, terminology from the far right. It wants to detain refugees in camps at the EU's external borders, stirs up hatred against young climate activists and tries to criminalise them, while talking about 'Autoland Austria'. So far, attempts at neoliberal 'reforms' and increased electronic surveillance have been blocked by the Green coalition partner.

The ÖVP is facing serious corruption allegations and a series of court cases involving its leading figures, both as a

party and as individuals, from the time of its coalition with the FPÖ under Chancellor Sebastian Kurz (2017 to 2019). It also lost more than a quarter of its voters – to the FPÖ (and to the group of non-voters), of all people – due to its poor management of the coronavirus and inflation, the weakening of the (good) public health system, poor economic data and an uncredible political agenda.

The ÖVP chancellor surprised everyone on election night by stating that he did not want to enter into a (widely expected) coalition with the FPÖ under Herbert Kickl. It is not yet possible to say whether this is meant seriously or is just a tactical manoeuvre vis-à-vis the Social Democrats, in order to force them into serious concessions by engaging in mock negotiations with the FPÖ, only to suddenly form a coalition with the FPÖ after all (as was already the case

under Chancellor Schüssel from 2000 to 2006).

The Social Democratic Party (SPÖ), led by the new, self-confident and combative reformist Andi Babler, stagnated at its worst election result in decades (21.1%) and was unable to benefit from the ÖVP's losses. Although a third of the Green Party's voters have left, the gain from this group just about made up for the losses to non-voters, but could not be used to strengthen the party. Babler was marginalised by the media as a political outlaw because of his – very moderate – reform proposals, while infighting and intrigue within the party have robbed the SPÖ's election campaign of any momentum.

Groups to the left of the Social Democrats failed to clear the 4% hurdle. The Communist Party of Austria (KPÖ) tripled its result, achieving almost 115,700 votes or

2.4% (up 1.7%), but this is not enough to enter the National Council. The lists 'Gaza' (0.4%) and 'Keine' (0.6%) also failed.

On 20 September, one week before the election, 13,000 people demonstrated in Vienna – a joint action of the climate strike movement with dozens of local 'Defend Democracy' initiatives from all over Austria. Compared to the 'sea of lights' in January 1993 with over 100,000 participants, it was unfortunately still far too few. This alliance is a tender plant, but it could mark the beginning of a resistance movement against the right-wing development if the cooperation is developed and social issues are also taken up. There is a threat of a massive weakening of the welfare state and democratic achievements.

30 September 2024

Focus turns to Lebanon

2 October 2024, by **Gilbert Achcar**

"Israel is now turning against Lebanon to secure its northern border"

Since September 23, the Israeli army's bombings in Lebanon have led to the death of more than a thousand people, the departure to Syria of 100,000 people and the displacement of a million people, out of the approximately 5 million inhabitants of Lebanon. Interview with Gilbert Achcar, Lebanese activist and professor at the University of London.

There is every reason to fear that the mid-September attacks in Lebanon have launched a new sequence of the war that began in October 2023 in Gaza...

Since Israel has basically completed the most intensive stage of its destruction in Gaza, it is now turning against Lebanon, against Hezbollah to secure its northern border. It is doing this by leaving Hezbollah with no choice but to capitulate and withdraw away from the border or face an all-out war. The Israelis have begun a gradual escalation of violence that has now culminated in the decapitation of Hezbollah, including the assassination of its leader Hassan Nasrallah, and are refusing any offer of a ceasefire. With an outright capitulation of the organization unlikely, one must prepare for continued escalation, including the intervention of ground troops in ad hoc operations, all aimed at inflicting the greatest possible

damage on the organization and dismantling its infrastructure.

How is what is happening today different from previous conflicts: 2006, 1982?

In 1982, Israel invaded half of Lebanon, up to the capital Beirut, which was besieged by Israeli troops in September. Very quickly, the resistance, initially launched by the communists, forced back the Israeli army, which confined itself to a portion of southern Lebanon for several years (18 years of occupation) until it had to abandon it in 2000. Israel suffered a political defeat in this regard. As much as the war had scored a point for the State of Israel vis-à-vis the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) which had had to evacuate Beirut in 1982, Israel showed itself vulnerable to the resistance that developed in Lebanon.

In 2006, Israel had taken into account the lessons of 1982 and therefore did not envisage a permanent occupation. There was an incursion of troops which encountered fierce resistance, more costly than expected. That war also ended in a fiasco for Israel, in the sense that Hezbollah, far from being destroyed, emerged stronger in the end because it rebuilt its arsenal and greatly expanded it. The lesson that the Israeli army learned from 2006 was not to take risks when they intervene in populated areas like Gaza or Lebanon, especially urban areas, but to destroy everything before entering, which resulted in the terrible destruction of Gaza and the genocidal nature of the war waged against the enclave. In Lebanon, they have not yet reached that stage, but they openly threaten to transform parts of Lebanon into another Gaza.

After the death of Hassan Nasrallah, what does Hezbollah represent in Lebanon today?

The organization has been greatly weakened not only by the assassination of Nasrallah, but also by the dismantling of its internal communications network and the assassination of several of its military leaders. The organization has been truly decapitated. It will reconstitute itself and attempt to reconstitute its arsenal, although Israel is making this increasingly difficult by bombing the transport routes in Syria through which weapons can reach Hezbollah from Iran.

On the political level, there is also a considerable weakening of the organization. Hezbollah certainly retains its social base, a large part of which depends financially on the organization. But there is a strong disaffection among the Lebanese population that began with Hezbollah's intervention in Syria with the Assad regime. This intervention has greatly changed the image of Hezbollah in Lebanon and in the region: from fighting against Israel, the organization had moved to fighting in defense of a bloodthirsty regime. Hezbollah has appeared more than ever as being above all an auxiliary of Iran.

Today, a large part of the Lebanese

population reproaches Hezbollah for involving Lebanon in the war with Israel in the name of solidarity with Gaza, even if it is in a limited way, pointing out the fact that Syria, which is supposed to be part of the same "axis of resistance" and which certainly has much more means than Hezbollah, is doing nothing at all. Similarly, Iran, the leader of the same "axis," does little beyond speeches. Only once, in retaliation for the assassination of Iranian leaders in Damascus last April, did Iran launch missiles and drones against Israel with advance notice that helped make their impact negligible.

Many in Lebanon are therefore asking, "Why should we, a small country, the weakest in the region, suffer consequences on behalf of Iran?" This type of argument has become very strong today. Hezbollah has claimed until now that it constitutes a kind of shield, a security guarantee for Lebanon against Israel, but this argument is being undermined by Israel's spectacular demonstration of its great military, technological and intelligence superiority.

Indeed, with the risk of seeing Lebanon destroyed...

Part of Lebanon rather, because Israel is specifically targeting Hezbollah, the regions where it is present. It is playing on sectarian divisions and even divisions within the Shiites themselves who are divided in Lebanon into two allied but very distinct camps: Hezbollah on the one hand and Amal on the other. The Amal movement has not been involved in the ongoing fight against Israel and does not depend on Iran like Hezbollah. Israel is therefore playing on this and is specifically targeting the regions and areas controlled by Hezbollah. There is a strong fear that the threat of transforming this part of Lebanon into Gaza mark 2 will be implemented.

How can we build solidarity for anti-capitalists and anti-colonialists when we do not share the political projects of the forces present?

Solidarity must always be conceived as independent and critical. The

notion of "unconditional solidarity" does not seem useful to me. Solidarity with a force whose profile one does not share must always be critical in the sense that one must show solidarity with the victim against the main oppressor, without forgetting that this victim may in turn be in a situation of oppression vis-à-vis others.

If tomorrow there were an offensive by Israel and the United States against Iran, we would have to mobilize powerfully against it as an imperialist aggression, without however "unconditionally" supporting the Iranian regime and even less supporting it against its population if it rose up on occasion.

In the same way, in 1990-91, we had to mobilize against the imperialist aggression against Iraq, without however supporting the regime of Saddam Hussein, and even less its bloody repression of the populations of the south and north of the country who rose up on occasion. We must not fall into either of these traps.

There are people on the left who, in the name of the nature of Hezbollah as a confessional and fundamentalist organization subservient to the Iranian regime of the mullahs, come to adopt neutral attitudes, which sometimes even border on support for Israel. This must be strongly opposed: we must not hesitate at all to mobilize against Israeli aggression, that of a colonial, oppressive and predatory state. Whatever the dominant political leaderships on the other side, resistance to the colonial aggressor is right.

But we must not fall into the other trap of making Hezbollah or Hamas - or even worse, the Houthis of Yemen who are the equivalent of the Taliban - progressive champions. These are forces that, on the social and cultural level, can be quite reactionary, and brutal dictatorships like the Syrian and Iranian regimes.

30 September 2024

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

Hezbollah's Miscalculation

Last week, we wondered "whether the sudden escalation in what we called the 'Israeli strategy of intimidation' is paving the way for a full-scale aggression against Lebanon that would include indiscriminate heavy bombing of all areas where Hezbollah is present, including the densely populated southern suburb of Beirut". This led us to another question: will US President Biden "pressure Netanyahu firmly enough to prevent war... or will he once again go along with his friend's criminal endeavour, even if accompanied by an expression of regret and resentment meant to deflect the blame in his and his Secretary of State Blinken's usual hypocritical way?" (["Strategic Reflections on the Escalation of Israeli Intimidation in Lebanon"](#), 24/9/2024).

The answer to these two interconnected questions was not long in coming: the Israeli ministry of Aggression (falsely called ministry of "Defence") announced last Wednesday that its director general received a new aid package worth \$8.7 billion during his visit to the US military command at the Pentagon. The ministry commented on the matter by saying that it confirms "the strong and enduring strategic partnership between Israel and the United States and the ironclad commitment to Israel's security". Two days later, on Friday night, the current onslaught by the Zionist armed forces on Hezbollah culminated in the assassination of the party's Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah and a number of its leaders, completing what turned out to be a systematic decapitation of the organization after having sabotaged its communications network, in preparation for new steps on the path to a comprehensive onslaught on the party's areas, which have so far included intensive, concentrated bombardment and the gradual expansion of a ground invasion that Israeli sources claim will remain

"limited".

Thus, it becomes clear that the US administration's call for a three-week ceasefire between Hezbollah and the Zionist state, which was issued after French prompting and announced in conjunction with Paris, was not sincere at all, as it was not accompanied by any actual US pressure. It is worth noting in this regard that the Washington Post published an investigation last Wednesday that showed that opinions regarding the ceasefire differed within the Biden administration, with some of its members seeing in the Israeli military escalation "a potentially effective means of degrading the Lebanese militant group". The administration's response to Hassan Nasrallah's assassination, starting with Biden himself, was to applaud and praise the operation, describing it as "a measure of justice" by branding Hezbollah and its Secretary-General as terrorists. This reaction confirmed Washington's total military and political complicity in the ongoing onslaught against Lebanon after its blatant complicity in the ongoing genocidal war in Gaza.

The Biden administration's hypocrisy reached a new low with this, since labelling the Lebanese party as a terrorist organization is in stark contrast to the negotiations it has been conducting with it for several months, seeking what it called a "diplomatic solution" to the conflict between it and the Zionist state. How could Washington negotiate with a "terrorist group", through the mediation of Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, Hezbollah's political (but not military) ally, and seek a diplomatic settlement with such a group? Not to mention that there is no type of act that could be described as terrorist that the Zionist state has not committed with an intensity and murderous brutality that surpass everything that Washington has described and continues to describe as terrorist (ignoring what it itself has committed, of course).

Here is once again, after the genocidal war in Gaza, a malicious justification for a war aiming at the eradication of a mass organization that has several elected MPs and oversees a large

civilian quasi-state apparatus, by branding it as a whole as terrorist, without even distinguishing between its military wing and its civilian institutions. In contrast to the case of Hamas, whose Operation "Al-Aqsa Flood" was widely exploited to stick that label to it, Hezbollah under the leadership of Hassan Nasrallah did not carry out any act that could be described as terrorist in the sense of deliberately attacking Israeli or US civilians or non-combatants. They therefore recalled the 1983 attacks that targeted the US embassy, and US and French troops participating in the "Multinational Force" in Lebanon, and even attributed these attacks to Hassan Nasrallah, who was not in the party's leadership at the time and was only 23 years old! In fact, Nasrallah supervised the party's transformation towards engaging in Lebanese political life by taking part in parliamentary elections for the first time in 1992, the year he assumed the position of Secretary-General.

Last week, we described how Hezbollah's calculation in waging a limited battle against Israel in support for Gaza had begun to backfire on it, as it found itself "trapped in mutual, but unequal, deterrence" with the Zionist army. The truth is that the party fell into the trap set for it by Israel, through its insistence on continuing to exchange fire with it "until a ceasefire in Gaza", while it became clear that the weight of the battle was shifting from the wracked Strip to Lebanon. It would have been more appropriate for the party to publicly announce its acceptance of the French-US call for a three-week ceasefire (especially since it was in dire need of catching its breath and restoring its leadership apparatus after its communications network was blown up) and a cessation of military operations on its part, which would have been an embarrassment to the Zionist government and would have exposed it to intense international pressure urging it to follow suit.

Recent days have made it clear that Hezbollah's perception of "mutual deterrence" between it and the Zionist state did not sufficiently take into account the unequal nature of this deterrence (a miscalculation similar to Hamas's, albeit much less serious),

and that its perception of the commitment of its sponsor in Tehran to defending it was also illusory, as Iran responded to the repeated attacks that Israel has been launching directly against it only once, last April, and in a manner that was almost more symbolic than harmful.

It seems that Hezbollah has confirmed its willingness to return to implementing UN Security Council

Resolution 1701 of 2006, which calls for the withdrawal of its forces to the north of the Litani River, thus acknowledging the imbalance of power between it and the Zionist state and accepting the condition that was imposed on it through US mediation. This willingness was confirmed by the Lebanese caretaker Prime Minister, Najib Mikati, following his meeting with Nabih Berri. It is therefore worth wondering about the utility of insisting

on continuing to fight until a ceasefire is reached in Gaza, thus giving the Zionist government a pretext to further escalate its onslaught against Lebanon and against Hezbollah in particular.

1 October 2024

Source Gilbert Achcar's [blog](#). Originally published in Arabic on [Al-Quds al-Arabi](#).

Harris and Trump Campaign Amidst Strikes and Protests

1 October 2024, by Dan La Botz

Harris, most vulnerable on the immigration issue, visited the southern border taking the hardest position ever put forward by a Democrat. "The United States is a sovereign nation, and I believe we have a duty to set rules at our border and to enforce them," said Harris. She has called for more immigration judges, more border patrol agents, new inspection systems to detect fentanyl, a reform of the asylum system, and touts her record prosecuting drug cartels and human trafficking as California's attorney general.

Yet her approach still remains far more humane than Trump's. She has condemned him, saying that he, "ripped toddlers out of their mothers' arms" and "put children in cages." Harris says, "We must reform our immigration system to ensure that it works in an orderly way, that it is humane and that it makes our country stronger,"

Trump called Harris' remarks on border security and immigration reform, "bullshit."

Workers Strike,

People Protest

While the presidential campaign goes on, so do strikes and protests against Israel. At Boeing in Washington State, 33,000 members of the International Association of Machinists remain on strike, demanding a 40% wage increase from the troubled corporation. The strike has so far cost the company one billion dollars and workers have not been paid since the walk-out began on September 13. The corporation has raised its wage offer from 25% to 30%, still far from the workers' demand.

Meanwhile, 25,000 East Coast and Gulf Coast dockworkers, members of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), prepare to strike for higher wages on October 1. If they walk out, it would be the first such strike since 1977. While the West Coast dockworkers belong to the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), once led by Communists, and have a long history of militant strikes the ILA is altogether different. The ILA was dominated by the Mafia and that legacy still survives, with one officer taking a salary of over \$500,000 per year.

ILA members currently earn \$39 an hour after six years on the job, while

ILWU members on the West Coast, make \$54.85 an hour. Supposing a 40-hour work week, West Coast port workers are making more than \$116,000 a year, versus \$81,000 for those on the East and Gulf coasts. The ILA began by asking for a 77% raise. The U.S. government has the power to intervene in the strike, but Biden has said he will not.

Meanwhile protests against Israel's wars on Gaza and now on Lebanon continue. Thousands demonstrated in New York, marching through Manhattan and protesting at the United Nations against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who had come to speak there. Organized by Jewish Voice for Peace and Not in Our name among other groups, they carried banners reading, "No Vote for Genocide." Speaking at a rally in the rain one speaker said, "Stop killing children, end the war, sign the deal, bring the hostages home," the speaker continued. "There is no military solution."

Israel's terrorism, setting off explosions of cell phones and walkie-talkies, its intense bombing of Lebanon, its assassination of Hassan Nasrallah will lead to more protests. All of this is a problem for Harris who continues to support Israel.

29 September 2024