

Elements on the world geostrategical situation

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This text was one of three presented to open a discussion on the international situation at the International Committee meeting and which we agreed will together form the basis for our future elaboration. [1] This was a few hours before the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. We also refer to the statement of 1 March 2022 [2], adopted after this attack, by the bureau of the Fourth International.

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This imperialist aggression proves that the world geopolitical situation is very volatile, which we have analysed in this text. Joe Biden's strategic priority was China and the Indo-Pacific region. Now he is forced to focus on Russia and Europe. In any case, the centrality of Eurasia in the major power relations and disputes is confirmed.

The discussion in the IC underlined the need for further reflection on (a) the articulation between the economic-social and geopolitical crises (in addition to the ecological crisis), especially after the decisive economic-financial crisis of 2007-2008; (b) the question of whether, since the pandemic, this unprecedented combination of crises has opened up a new, albeit defensive, moment in the global situation; (c) the absorption by the Fourth International of the idea of the crisis of social reproduction, of care (hence the importance to be given to the themes of social care in our programme).

The international defeat of the revolutionary movements in the 1980s in all the major geopolitical sectors paved the way for the neo-liberal counter-revolution, capitalist globalization and financialization of the economy, the reintegration of China and Russia into the world market, initiating a new phase of capital expansion.

The triumphant phase of globalization was accompanied by a succession of financial upheavals, culminating in the great subprime crisis of 2007-2009 whose consequences continue still today. The economic and social impact of these crises, particularly of the latter, has been considerable, contributing in particular to an international redistribution of capital at the expense of the countries most affected (buy-out of companies at knock-down prices) and to the brutal impoverishment of

social strata. In more than one country, the ruined middle classes have swung over into reaction.

Against the backdrop of pandemic (Covid-19), climatic and, more generally, ecological crises, the triumphant phase of capitalist globalisation has given way to a conflictual globalisation, fraught with contradictions. An arc of old crises (debt, international governance, etc.) is now intertwined in a particularly dynamic and explosive way, opening up a global, multidimensional crisis and giving a new course to the geopolitical struggle for hegemony between the United States and China.

The big imperialist capital (West, Japan) was convinced that it could subordinate to itself Russia and China (which had become the workshop of the world) - and this could have happened. It did not foresee that the new bourgeois classes in China, in particular, would be able to build on the legacy of the revolution (starting with independence) to use the free movement of goods and capital in the world market to their advantage. Although China's social formation does have subordinate features, the country has become the world's second largest power, changing geopolitical relations. As for Russia, it reaffirms its intention to maintain its zone of influence around what was once the Tsarist empire and the Soviet Union.

To a large extent, the analytical framework analysed in earlier documents adopted by the bodies of the Fourth International remains valid, however the situation is changing rapidly. We must take full measure of the acceleration of the global crisis opened up by capitalism, an issue that permeates the three texts under discussion at the IC.

1. Deepening, worsening of previous dynamics

After 40 years of neo-liberal globalization under the aegis of the United States, financial, production and service chains are internationalized. The "logic" of globalized capital demands freedom of speculation and investment without borders. It is in contradiction with the "logic" of states, which not only limit the free movement of workers but oppose it today in the name of geo-strategic interests. Conflicts between powers lead in fact to the division of "camps" in a world marked by a very high degree of economic interdependence, interfering more and more negatively with the "good functioning" of the capitalist economic system (development of rival and incompatible technologies). Among the most recent examples: Washington is imposing stricter US controls (including an audit) on foreign entities listed on Wall Street and in response, in the name of national sovereignty, Beijing is beginning to impose on some of the Chinese companies concerned by this threat their "repatriation" to Hong Kong, which could lead to an international "financial decoupling" alongside a partial "technological decoupling".

At the same time talk of a "new cold war" between a Western alliance (understood in its political sense: including Japan, South Korea, Australia...) and China (with or without Russia) is more and more frequent. At the time of the "East-West blocs", the formula of cold war was already inappropriate, because it was symptomatically European-centric: the war in Asia was hyper-hot, it is enough just to remember US escalation in Vietnam...). Today, the analogy is misleading because the situation has changed so much. Today, China and Russia are integrated into the same world market as the United States or the European Union. Capitalist globalization is an essential fact.

On the military front, two hot spots have emerged: Taiwan between the United States and China; Ukraine and the Black Sea between Russia and the West. More generally, the arms race is entering a new stage that could see the development of weapons (hypersonic, etc.) that would disrupt missile systems and anti-missile shields. The "miniaturization" of nuclear weapons is intended to make their use in a theatre of operations politically acceptable. The attributes of Great Powers are becoming more complex. The navy, with its aircraft carrier armadas and its fleet of submarines, must now be

complemented by a quest for hegemony in space as well as in artificial intelligence (making possible notably manipulation of information and communications).

2. An unprecedented situation

In order to respond politically to the present challenges, we must therefore start from the existence of a convergence of an articulation of crises in a moment of historical bifurcation that poses a major challenge to all political actors.:

- The global ecological crisis, the effects of which are already being felt by people and whose reality is becoming perceptible, provoking awareness and the development of new resistance movements. This is obviously a question of global warming, but also of the collapse of biodiversity, soil erosion, the depletion of drinking water resources, etc.
- The crisis of capitalist globalization, which is not manifested by an orderly de-globalization, but by increasing contractions within a dominant neo-liberal order which is not fundamentally in question, even though it manifests the disorders generated by the neoliberal capitalist mode of regulation that began to be imposed some fifty years ago.
- The crisis of international capitalist governance (“multilateralism”), which Donald Trump has detonated, but which the election of Joe Biden does not make it possible to overcome easily. In fact It expresses a fracture in the bourgeois strategic political project, which started at the beginning of the century, but which has worsened in the last 15 years, between those sectors which stake on the old cosmopolitan democratic neo-liberalism and those which, in view of the loss of legitimacy of the “democracies” in the world, are betting on post-fascist (nationalist, xenophobic racist, obscurantist) paths of which Trump, Bolsonaro, Duterte, Modi, Erdogan and so many movements in the East and West, North and South, are examples.
- The health crisis caused by the particularities of the Covid-19 pandemic. In contrast to previous coronavirus epidemics, it has taken on a truly global dimension and will be long-lasting, because, notably, of the capacity for mutation of Sars-Cov-2 that is much greater than initially expected and the intensity of exchanges in the framework of globalization. We had already entered a new period of repeated epidemics, and we now know to what point this is a central question at an international level. The scale of the current pandemic is unprecedented since the First World War (the so-called Spanish flu).
- The social crisis fuelled by neoliberal policies and the scope of public and private debt leading to the general casualization of entire social sectors and the tearing apart of the social fabric in various regions of the world. Exacerbated by the degree of enrichment of the richest, by epidemics and pandemics, inequalities are growing exponentially both internationally between different regions, and nationally within in most countries.
- The democratic crisis with a dominant tendency of generalized attacks on democratic freedoms or the rights of popular social sectors and people, of the radicalization of authoritarian regimes and the rise of extreme right-wing groups and fascistic currents or different types (including with religious references and in all internationally present religions).
- The crisis of citizenship with the accentuation of class, gender and “racial” oppression, the undermining of the right to vote for all in a growing number of countries, and the loss of substance of the “bourgeois democracy” of yesteryear even in the West.

These crises combine and feed off each other, provoking, sometimes massive, multiple social resistances, including with important political repercussions (see the presidential election in Chile) but which have difficulty in being sustained and coordinated.

3. Inter-imperialist conflicts of great powers

The international political situation is dominated by the Washington/Beijing conflict, with the established power (the US) facing the expansion of the rising power (China), with Russia seeking to strengthen its hand in this context. It would be adventurous to pretend to predict the future of these conflicts, which will depend, in particular, on the evolution of the internal situation in these countries.

Joe Biden has succeeded in doing what Obama wanted to do but could not: redeploy the US presence in the Pacific Ocean, while relying on regional powers in the Middle East (Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt...) to defend its interests in this part of the world. Faced with China, it wants to renegotiate the Trans-Pacific Partnership. It has formalized its alliances in the Indo-Pacific theatre of operations by giving a more operational content to the Quad agreement (United States, India, Japan, Australia) and by signing the Aukus agreement with Australia and Great Britain. This is a success from the point of view of US imperialism which also has the largest army in the world (by far) and an unparalleled network of state alliances and 750 military bases over 80 countries.

China, on the other hand, has only one real military base abroad, although it has many ports around the world where its fleet can anchor. Outside Eurasia, it has no strong allies, even if it has client states. However, it should be noted that:

- Although the Afghan debacle did not mean the US withdrawal from the Asian zone, it strengthens China's hand in Central Asia.
- US allies such as India and Japan have their own interests to defend against China that will not necessarily always correspond with Washington's priorities.
- The US has less of a presence on the Eurasian continent than China, which is expanding considerably. The European Union has played an important role in consolidating the WTO order in the past, but it carries little weight in the main areas of conflict. It does not even offer the US an effective ally on the continent, especially when China and Russia join forces. Western Europe, the cradle of traditional imperialism, is not the centre of gravity of Eurasia.
- Despite its global military supremacy, the US it is not in a strong position in the China Sea, which Beijing has militarized at the expense of neighbouring countries. China's firepower in this area is increased tenfold by its geographical proximity, never far from its coasts, and by the mainland's transport system, which allows it to deploy its forces rapidly. A military conflict around Taiwan would turn to its advantage.

Of course, Washington would have the option of counter-attacking elsewhere by militarily cutting off Beijing's supply lines, reducing its ability to use international banking, etc. But this would mean engaging in a global conflict with the risk of collapse of the economic system. But this would mean engaging in a global conflict with the risk of collapse of the economic system. Objectively, neither China nor the US has any interest in such a conflict. War is unlikely; but it is not unthinkable. An accident is always possible, as is a political or social crisis in one of the countries involved. Joe Biden's position is very fragile, Trumpism continues to be very strong in the US. Xi Jinping's position is not consolidated, perhaps more fragile than it seems.

Russia benefits from its geostrategic position in Eurasia, its energy resources, its arms production, its know-how in military logistics, its fleet of submarines (much larger than China's), and its solid footholds in the Middle East (notably in Syria) and its hacker networks. It is not strictly speaking a third world power, but it has strengthened its position in its geopolitical space by supporting the brutal repression of demonstrations in Belarus or Kazakhstan, keeping Georgia divided and now arm-wrestling over the Western advance in Ukraine. It can even compete with its rivals, in Africa for example, thanks notably to the export of its mercenaries (the Wagner organization) in return for economic and political benefits.

Russia and China are in competition, especially in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, but they are also united against the Atlantic Alliance and NATO. In the present situation the alliance between Beijing and Moscow can be strengthened by the threat of a simultaneous military conflict around Taiwan and on the Eastern European borders.

Japan is directly concerned by the two "hot spots" of the Korean peninsula and Taiwan. Tokyo aims, by taking advantage of this context, to complete its policy of complete rearmament, to emancipate itself definitively from the pacifist clause of the Japanese Constitution and to neutralize the pressure of an anti-war public opinion. The role of Japanese imperialism is growing in the North Pacific.

The European imperialist powers, Germany and France in the first place, find themselves in a marginal position in this US/China conflict. More generally, they are in a weak position in the face of international issues. The European Union is weakened both by Brexit and the continuing weight of the pandemic in Western Europe, compromising its place in the economic recovery. Moreover, a series of its contradictions are proving to be an obstacle to playing a political role commensurate with its economic weight as the world's third largest economy.

The European Union is also largely dependent on international value chains and, moreover, Germany is dependent on Russia for its energy supply (reinforced by the completion of the Nordstream 2 gas pipeline) and China has an important place in its exports.

The main concerns of European, and particularly German, leaders are in the East and in the Eastern Mediterranean basin, with both the Ukrainian question and relations within a weakened EU with the Visegrad group (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia) whose regimes play the card of nationalist contraction with authoritarian regimes.

Moreover, European leaders are seeking to have an independent policy towards Russia, with which they must deal with the Ukrainian question.

The USA, while having, with the Biden administration, further increased its military aid to Ukraine (it comes in third position in the US military aid, after Israel and Egypt), supports, for the time being, the policy of moderation demanded by Germany by refusing to extend the sanctions aimed at the commissioning of Nordstream2.

In addition to the Ukrainian question, there is the issue of Turkish policy. While it is exerting maximum influence as a member of NATO, particularly in support of the Ukrainian government, and seeking Germany's support, Turkey is playing its own game in the eastern Mediterranean basin. It plays the role of a police lock against the access of migrants to Europe, and seeks to develop its own energy independence and regional role, through its agreements with Libya and its underwater gas prospecting, competing with the EastMed Greece/Israel/Cyprus project which has the support of France.

Moreover, France in particular, which has much less economic weight vis-à-vis Eastern Europe,

Ukraine and Russia, is trying to compensate for this weakness by its diplomatic weight and its status as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. But it has already lost much of its weight in the Maghreb, is also weakened by the situation in the French West Indies and its power grab in Kanaky, and is also weak in its traditional zone of influence, sub-Saharan Africa. The withdrawal from Mali highlights the inability of its military forces to secure imperialist interests in an important raw material supply area. Germany, moreover, has in recent years increased its efforts to also take part in the military posture in a region which, despite important economic stakes in the years to come, is no longer a safe zone for European economic interests.

In general, regional powers can play their own game and not only serve as relays for the United States, China, Russia and Japan. While North-South relations of domination have not disappeared, neither the North nor the South are today homogeneous realities.

4. Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific area

The US-China conflict is played out on all continents, but not in the same form or with the same intensity. Depending on the continent and the ocean area, the other imperialisms and regional powers play more or less important roles. Political history and the legacy of popular movements shape resistance to the neoliberal order in different ways.

However, the Eurasian and Indo-Pacific region is now a nodal point in the world economy and geopolitics.

It is in this context that all the major powers are facing each other, including on the military level. The Korean crisis concerns the United States, Japan, Russia and China very directly. The China Sea is one of the world's main economic communication routes, where the right of navigation is the subject of constant conflict. Arcs of US bases aim to control the deployment of Chinese naval forces in the open sea. The island states of the South Pacific are the object of an intense struggle for influence between the USA, Australia, China (and France thanks to the retention of Kanaky-New Caledonia in the colonial fold).

Middle East The relative stability of the situation in the Middle East may only be temporary. It may soon give way to a "hot" crisis, at least as far as the Iran issue is concerned. (to be developed)

In Latin America, the US maintains the economic-financial blockade of the governments of Cuba and Venezuela, with whom it carries on the traditional ideological struggle. It maintains its military bases in troubled Colombia, the Fourth Fleet in the waters of the South Atlantic, conducts joint military manoeuvres with Bolsonaro's Brazilian army, and maintains its traditional economic and political presence in mainland Central America.

Overall, however, large US multinationals are increasingly sharing the 'backyard' market with banks, industries and telecommunications companies from Europe, China, Korea and even India. Biden is using negotiations with the Mexican government to try to get the small partner to slow the wave of migration from Central and South America. Under Biden's leadership, the US has withdrawn from more direct skirmishes with Bolivia, Chile and Argentina, although unstable situations in Peru, possibly Chile and polarised Brazil, could lead to further interventionist thrusts.

[Lacks a synthetic point on Africa]

5. For an internationalist renewal

Internationalism is an expression of solidarity which is one of the essential foundations of our commitment to the fight for socialism. It is also a strategic necessity. Our adversaries operate globally. The challenges we face can only be met on an international scale.

Contributing to an internationalist renewal is thus one of the main responsibilities of our International. To this end, it is necessary to collaborate with all the forces that are prepared to do so, opposing imperialism everywhere, fighting for “real democracy” everywhere, defending oppressed peoples everywhere.

- “Campism” represents a major obstacle to the development of this internationalism. By placing itself on the level of relations between states, before that of solidarity between peoples, it leads to the sacrifice of populations that are victims of a great power (in this case China and Russia...) or of repressive regimes (or counter-revolutionary movements) as long as they are more or less anti-American.

During the Cold War, and until the end of the 1980s, campism led left-wing currents to forget or justify the crimes of the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies by defending regimes that had emerged from socialist revolutions. In the last two decades, the necessary mobilization in the face of imperialist interventions also led some to silence the reactionary nature of the regimes of Saddam Hussein, Bashar El Assad or Gaddafi, ignoring the necessary solidarity with the democratic currents of resistance to these regimes and setting up dictators as champions of the anti-imperialist struggle. Today, history is repeating itself in a caricatured form and the regimes of Putin and Xi Jinping are finding real ambassadors in Western countries, erasing the inter-imperialist nature of the conflicts between the USA, China and Russia and excusing the oppressive and dictatorial nature of these regimes, as if the need to impose democratic rights did not arise in these countries as elsewhere.

- With the Covid-19 pandemic, the exorbitant cost we are paying as a result of the neoliberal order and the grip of Big Pharma has been brought to light. This lesson is valid for all epidemics, especially where Covid-19 is not the most deadly. The fight for the right to health has truly taken on an international dimension around the demand to lift the patents on the coronavirus vaccines and to allow the countries of the South to produce the vaccines and ensure effective vaccination campaigns. To the authoritarianism prevalent in the management of the crisis by the dominant classes, we must oppose the principles of a policy of health democracy involving the populations in the definition and implementation of community health. To the obscurantist currents that feed on this crisis, we must oppose our alternative policy, but also contribute to ensuring rational information, where the analysis is based on the state of scientific (self-critical) knowledge.

- It is urgent to mobilize for the reconstitution of a global anti-war movement. Although war between the great powers may seem unlikely today, it is not unimaginable. The threat of war is in itself unacceptable, especially when it takes on a nuclear dimension, which is the case today. At a time of climate crisis, it is totally irresponsible to deploy hundreds of thousands of soldiers and all the logistics that go with it - the fact that armaments are one of the sectors that are not taken into account in the global warming prediction is sheer hypocrisy! Relying on diplomacy to save the peace means mortgaging the future and endorsing the idea that the people could only, in the end, be passive spectators.

Anti-war sentiment has been rekindled in various countries (including the US) in particular by the Afghan crisis, but the capacity for internationally coordinated anti-war action remains far below what is needed. We need to recover and revive the best traditions of the powerful anti-war movements of the 1970s. The powerful anti-war movements of the 1960s and 1970s in the US and

Europe, the mobilizations against the deployment of the Pershing bombers in the 1980s, played a key role in stopping military escalations and invigorated popular and youth movements at that time. Today, there are vibrant activist forces mobilising in many countries against social injustice, global warming and gender and racist discrimination. It is also becoming an urgent militant task to build an international anti-war movement that builds solidarity and puts at the forefront the rights of peoples threatened by the interventions of competing imperialisms.

- The question of migrations and borders has taken on unprecedented proportions. Physical walls are constantly being erected in Europe and North America, as well as legal walls (detention of migrants off its coast by Australia, agreements between the European Union and Turkey...).

Fortress Europe has never deserved its name so well with Frontex, an agency with exorbitant and opaque powers.

Solidarity must be asserted on both sides of the walls, for the safeguard of displaced populations and the respect of the rights of movement and the right to asylum, which the governments concerned deliberately ignore (see in particular the fate of Syrian or Afghan refugees).

Forced population movements are an inevitable consequence of the global crisis we are experiencing, which is largely the responsibility of the dominant order (fuelling the ecological crisis and widespread insecurity). The vast majority of migrations are regional (between countries of the South) or even national (within the same country). This is a reality that the anti-migrant discourse in the “centre” countries deliberately masks.

- “Walls” are not only being built on continents. Maritime law, shaped by the interests of the powers-that-be, creates maritime borders that privatize and militarize the seas and oceans. The ecological future of the planet and the consequences of global warming are largely played out in the oceans. The oceans must once again become common spaces for international cooperation for the benefit of the populations living on the shores of the oceans and for the protection of biodiversity.

- To the security policy imposed by the powers, let us oppose a security policy based on solidarity between peoples and the primacy of rights. To this end we should contribute to strengthening alliances between popular movements in all conflict zones to affirm popular solidarity - as is done between Pakistanis and Indians, for example, against the nuclear threat, by deploying regional cooperation structures (in South Asia), in Eastern Europe...

- We should strengthen the traditions of mutual support between these regional networks and mobilize them in common in the face of particularly important crises (Burma/Myanmar).

- Let us also contribute to strengthening the solidarity movements towards the populations victims of more or less natural disasters (hurricanes, earthquakes...), health crises (pandemics...), dictatorial regimes... even all three at the same time, by providing material aid and political support.

Beyond principled positions, internationalist renewal can only be achieved through multiple mobilizations and concrete actions. Internationalism will become a common good once again through involvement in practical campaigns.

23 February 2022

Fourth International

P.S.

- Fourth International :
<https://fourth.international/en/431>

Footnotes

[1] see [Contribution to the development of an ecosocialist programme in the framework of the necessary reduction of global material production](#) and see [The global economy in a planet in crisis: logistical disruptions, inflation, financial febrility - Growing inequalities, popular mobilizations and demands](#)

[2] [No to Putin's invasion of Ukraine! Support to the Ukrainian resistance! Solidarity with the Russian opposition to the war!](#)