

# **A World Pregnant with Wars and Popular Uprisings**

**Theses on the World Situation,  
the Perspectives for Class Struggle  
and the Tasks of Revolutionaries**



**By Michael Pröbsting**

**Published by the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency**



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**World Perspectives 2018:  
A World Pregnant with Wars and Popular Uprisings**

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and the Tasks of Revolutionaries*

*By Michael Pröbsting*

*This book has been discussed, amended and approved at a meeting  
of the International Executive Committee  
of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency  
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*This book is dedicated to all those who devote their lives  
to the working class' liberation struggle  
and to the building of the revolutionary world party  
without which this liberation struggle can not win.*

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## Preface

The following document – in fact, given its length it has become rather become a book – is a major contribution of our organization to keep the Marxists' analysis of the world situation and its accelerating contradictions updated. As we emphasize in the document, we consider it as crucial for revolutionaries to understand the nature and the inner dynamics of the current historic period. Without such an understanding it is impossible for socialists, indeed for all liberation fighters, to possess the necessary political compass on which they can base their program, strategy and tactics.

Since several years does the RCIT publish annual studies on the world situation in which it analysis its most important developments and changes. This book updates the Marxist analysis of the state of the world economy, of the relations between the Great Powers, of the struggle between the classes and the tactics of revolutionaries. We also deal in depth with new issues respectively extend our theoretical analysis on several questions. In particular we have deepened in this book, among others, our understanding of the nature respectively the transitional character of the present world political phase, of the nature of different types of wars and the tactical conclusions arriving from this, of the complex nature of the conflicts in the Middle East, of the capitalist restoration in North Korea and, finally, we have elaborated a new proposal for an international platform for the unification of revolutionary forces in the present phase.

In this brief preface we also wish to draw attention to two limitations of this book of which we are fully aware of. First, there is certain danger that the document becomes outdated soon on this or that aspect. In fact, already in the weeks between finishing the draft of this book and its final adoption at an international leadership meeting of the RCIT, several important events took place. Among them were the global stock market panic, the shooting down first of a Russian warplane and later an Israeli warplane in Syria, the mysterious killing of 100 pro-Assad fighters by the US military in Syrian Deir-ez-Zor which allegedly included Russian soldiers, or the political crisis in the Maldives and the threat of a military intervention by India. It is most likely that additional important events will take place in the coming weeks and months. However, we think that this limitation is not only unavoidable but it rather confirms the RCIT's fundamental analysis in this document: that the present world situation is characterized by accelerating contradictions and that we are approaching a pre-revolutionary phase.

Secondly, we are aware that this book does not deal equally with the political developments on all continents around the world. For reasons of time and space we had to focus on an in-depth analysis of those regions which we consider to be the most important focal points of the present world situation:

the Middle East and North Africa as well as the Korean Peninsula. However, as readers will be aware, the RCIT deals in its publications also with the other regions of the world and we refer those interested to our website respectively our journals.

We ask readers to study this book and to let us know their views and criticism. We call all those who share the broad outlook of this document to contact us and to discuss with us about concrete ways to open collaboration in joint activities so that we can strengthen the revolutionary forces around the world and move forward to build a Revolutionary World Party. The old German workers leader Wilhelm Liebknecht, a close collaborator of Marx and Engels, coined the excellent phrase when he summarized the task of revolutionaries: „*Study, Propagandize, Organize*“. And indeed, this is what the RCIT is doing since a number of years and this is what we wish to do jointly with all serious revolutionaries around the world!

*Aluta continua!*

*Michael Pröbsting (International Secretary of the RCIT)*

## Introduction

1. The recent developments of the world political situation have been a profound confirmation of the Marxists' analysis of the fundamental characteristics of the contradictions of today's global capitalism. Trotsky once stated that "*the strength of Marxism lies in its ability to foretell.*"<sup>1</sup> And indeed, as the RCIT predicted, the fundamental tendencies of the last years, and in particular since the inauguration of the Trump Administration, have accelerated: the reactionary offensive of the ruling class, the super-exploitation and oppression of the semi-colonial world as well as the rivalry between the imperialist Great Powers – all these tendencies have intensified. And, again as we predicted, these developments provoke mass resistance both against austerity plans as well as against anti-democratic attacks. By this, these contradictions of capitalism are preparing tremendous explosions – political crisis, wars and popular uprisings – with regional or even global consequences. As we already emphasized in the past, history's pace is accelerating.<sup>2</sup>

2. Such perspectives, when we are marching towards great events, make the struggle for the creation of new Revolutionary World Party more urgent than ever! The RCIT calls all socialists to make unification in a strong international revolutionary organization priority number one. Such unification should take place on the basis of a revolutionary platform which draws the class line on all major issues of global class struggle and which offers a program for socialist revolution. The RCIT is publishing a concrete proposal for revolutionary unity and calls all like-minded comrades to put aside any minor differences in order

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1 Leon Trotsky: *The Third International After Lenin. The Draft Program of the Communist International: A Criticism of Fundamentals* (1928), Pathfinder Press, New York 1970, p. 198

2 We refer readers to the RCIT's past World Perspective documents which can be accessed in our journals as well as on our website: RCIT: World Perspectives 2017: *The Struggle against the Reactionary Offensive in the Era of Trumpism*, 18 December 2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2017/>; RCIT: World Perspectives 2016: *Advancing Counterrevolution and Acceleration of Class Contradictions Mark the Opening of a New Political Phase*, 23 January 2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2016/>; RCIT: *Perspectives for the Class Struggle in Light of the Deepening Crisis in the Imperialist World Economy and Politics*, 11 January 2015, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-january-2015/>; RCIT: *Escalation of Inner-Imperialist Rivalry Marks the Opening of a New Phase of World Politics. Theses on Recent Major Developments in the World Situation Adopted by the RCIT's International Executive Committee*, April 2014, in: *Revolutionary Communism* (English-language Journal of the RCIT) No. 22, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-april-2014/>; RCIT: *Aggravation of Contradictions, Deepening of Crisis of Leadership. Theses on Recent Major Developments in the World Situation Adopted by the RCIT's International Executive Committee*, 9.9.2013, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 15, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-september2013/>; RCIT: *The World Situation and the Tasks of the Bolshevik-Communists. Theses of the International Executive Committee of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency*, March 2013, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 8, [www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-march-2013](http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-march-2013)

to advance our joint struggle for building the new Revolutionary World Party!  
(See Appendix)

3. This document should serve the purpose to offer activists an analysis and explanation of the contradictions and likely future developments of the present world situation. It will furthermore present an orientation to support activists in arming themselves for the future class struggles.

# I. The Reactionary Offensive of the Ruling Class Inevitably Provokes Political Crisis, Conflicts, Wars and Popular Uprisings

4. The capitalist world system remains stuck in a chronic stagnation of its economy. While the world economy has not entered a new period of deep recession yet, it is characterized by high debts and low productivity growth. While the IMF predicts that 2018 will be a year of moderate economic growth, others believe that a new recession will already hit this year. In fact, the latest panic at the global stock markets in early February underlines the fragile state of the capitalist world economy and its enormous inner contradictions.

5. What is clear, however, is that the beginning of the recession could only be delayed because governments, corporations and private households around the world – from the US to China – were prepared to increase their debts even more. Today, the capitalist world in East and West is more indebted than it was before the last recession in 2008/09. Furthermore, while during the last recession it was possible to cushion the blow because China and other “emerging markets” had relatively low debts, this is no longer the case. However, at the same time, such means of delaying the outbreak of the next recession will guarantee that once the downturn starts, it will become more destructive with unforeseeable political consequences.

## Main Characteristics of the Current World Situation

6. The main political characteristics of the present world situation are the following:

i. The reactionary offensive of the ruling class has provoked an *acceleration of the tensions between the imperialist Great Powers* (e.g. US vs. Russia, the looming trade war between US and China) or between imperialist powers and major regional powers (e.g. the military stand-off between China and India in summer 2017). Likewise there has been a cooling of the historic close relationship between the US and the EU.

ii. The reactionary offensive of the ruling class has also provoked an *acceleration of the imperialist aggression against the oppressed people of the South* (e.g. US vs. the Afghan people, North Korea, and Iran, Russia vs. the Syrian people, the pro-US Saudi coalition vs. Yemen, Israel vs. the Palestinian people, or the pro-imperialist AMISOM vs. the Somali people). Each of these conflicts has either already escalated into an open war or has the potential to do so in 2018.

iii. The reactionary offensive of the ruling class has provoked a *massive acceleration of the tensions between regional powers* (e.g. Saudi-Arabia/UAE/Israel vs.

Iran, Saudi-Arabia/UAE vs. Qatar, Egypt/Eritrea vs. Ethiopia/Sudan, or Tunisia vs. UAE). Most of these conflicts can explode into an open war in 2018.

iv. Furthermore, the reactionary offensive of the ruling class has provoked *serious or even deep domestic political crises* (e.g. the Trump Administration in the US; the preventive civil war from above of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman against a sector of the traditional political and religious establishment of the Saudi-Arabia; the ongoing malaise of Temer's illegitimate government in Brazil; the crisis of the regimes of Kabila in DRC, of Kenyatta in Kenya or of Gnassingbé in Togo; the enormous difficulties of Germany's Angela Merkel to establish a coalition government). Such crises can provoke mass struggles, and has already in some cases, or even trigger pre-revolutionary situations.

v. Finally, the reactionary offensive of the ruling class has provoked a *new upsurge of class struggles*. We can say that in the last few months we have seen, on an international scale, a higher level of class struggles than at any time since the strategic defeat of the Egyptian masses by the military coup of General Sisi on 3 July 2013. Examples for this encouraging development are the popular uprisings in Palestine, Iran, Tunisia, Sudan, Honduras and Catalonia; the mass protests in Togo, Kenya, Zambia, Morocco, and India; the mass strikes in Brazil, Argentina; the remarkable popular protests in the USA against the Trump Administration, etc.

vi. However, given the profound *crisis of leadership of the working class and popular movements*, these struggles are either very spontaneous and lack a strong, organized leadership – which implies the danger that they lose steam and get smashed by the regime (e.g. in Iran, Zambia); or that they are misdirected by petty-bourgeois reformist or populist leaderships which lead the struggle into a cul-de-sac (e.g. Syria, Kenya, Brazil, Argentina, Catalonia).

## Domestic Crisis and Aggressive Foreign Policy

7. The uniqueness of the present situation is that the ruling classes of capitalist states – both of imperialist powers as well as of semi-colonial countries – are forced to take aggressive steps in order to avoid the consequences of a domestic political crisis, a looming economic recession, a loss of sphere of influence abroad, etc. However, by taking such steps they either unintentionally deepen the crisis or, by avoiding a crisis in the short-term, they provoke an even worse crisis in the future. The pathetic US Administration of Donald “Dumb as Shit” Trump is a prime example for this.<sup>3</sup> In order to boost his dwindling

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3 This is how Trump's economic adviser Gary Cohn characterizes him. Others choose similar attributes. For Steve Mnuchin and Reince Priebus, Trump is an “*idiot*”. For his national security adviser, H. R. McMaster, Trump is a “*dope*”. (Quotes are taken from Michael Wolff: *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House*, Henry Holt and Company, London 2018, p. 301). And Secretary of State Rex Tillerson called Trump, as has been widely reported, a “*moron*”. (<http://edition.cnn.com/2017/10/04/politics/tillerson-trump-moron/index.html>) For the RCIT's analysis of the Trump Administration we refer readers to the pamphlet of Michael Pröbsting: *The Meaning, Consequences*

domestic support by appeasing the Evangelic, pro-Zionist fundamentalists, Trump recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's capital ... and destroys at the same time the so-called peace process in the Middle East. In order to survive its domestic crisis, this Administration is so desperate that it is ready to undertake every possible hara-kiri operation. This, again, is a reflection of the decay of U.S. imperialism. Indeed, one could characterize this bizarre amalgam of extreme right-wing billionaires, ultra-imperialist adventurists, evangelic tea-party morons and Zionist fanatics as the *Armageddon faction of the American bourgeoisie*. But Trump is not the only example. Take for example Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman who wants to "modernize" the country and expand its regional influence ... and in order to achieve this he launches one foreign policy adventure after the other which all turn out to be embarrassing failures (Yemen war, boycott of Qatar, arrest of Lebanon's Prime Minister Hariri, agreement to Jared Kushner's bizarre and doomed to fail Middle East "Peace" Plan etc.). Or take Philippines' strong man Rodrigo Duterte who announces a nation-wide war on drugs in order to create a Bonapartist authoritarian regime and ends up in corruption scandals, public humiliation and an embarrassing five-month battle in Marawi where the army hardly manages to defeat a few hundred encircled Islamist rebels. The reasons for this unique characteristic of the world situation can not be found in the dumbness of this or that individual (albeit some are really blessed with abysmal stupidity!) but rather in the decay of the capitalist world order which pushes its leaders to act increasingly in a desperate and adventurist way.<sup>4</sup>

8. Trotsky always emphasized that "*foreign policy is everywhere and always a continuation of domestic policy, for it is conducted by the same ruling class and pursues the same historic goals.*"<sup>5</sup> Given the decay of the productive forces in the present historic period and the corresponding increasingly fragile domestic rule of the bourgeoisie, it is only logical that the foreign policy of the ruling class increasingly become more aggressive. Chauvinism, militarist rhetoric and wars are important instruments for the ruling capitalist class to deflect from domestic crisis. However, they usually work for the bourgeoisie like a drug. In the short-term, an aggressive foreign policy often gives the bourgeoisie a kick

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and Lessons of Trump's Victory. On the Lessons of the US Presidential Election Outcome and the Perspectives for the Domestic and International Class Struggle, 24.November 2016, Special Issue of Revolutionary Communism No. 58 (December 2016), <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/meaning-of-trump/>

4 For our analysis of capitalism's decay in the present historic period we refer readers to RCIT: World Perspectives 2016: Advancing Counterrevolution and Acceleration of Class Contradictions Mark the Opening of a New Political Phase, Chapter II, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2016/part2/>; Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South. Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism, Vienna 2013, chapter 14, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/great-robbery-of-the-south/>

5 Leon Trotsky: The Revolution Betrayed. What is the Soviet Union and Where is it Going? (1936), Pathfinder Press, New York 1972, p. 186

at the beginning, i.e. it serves to strengthen it via an ideological offensive. But the more it strengthens the ruling class at the beginning, the more it threatens to ruin it later. A saber-rattling foreign policy creates huge expectations by the public opinion which can easily result in embarrassment and humiliation if such an adventure does not end in total victory. A war, destined to be short and decisive, can turn out to take much longer and to result in a quagmire – with all the risky domestic consequences (e.g. the U.S. in Afghanistan and Iraq, Saudi Arabia in Yemen). Furthermore, such a war often results in much higher economic losses than gains. In other words, chauvinism and militarism of the ruling class make it look strong and stable but in fact is an expression of domestic crisis and bears high risks to deepen such a crisis sooner or later. <sup>6</sup>

## Like the situation before the Balkan Wars 1912-13

9. We are marching towards great events and explosions as the world is sitting on a powder keg. The imperialist ideologists are fully aware of the dangers for their system. Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of the *World Economic Forum*, which is organizing the annual conferences in Davos, pessimistically warns in the group's annual report that *"this is perhaps the first generation to take the world to the brink of a systems breakdown."* <sup>7</sup> And another Western imperialist think tank, the *Eurasia Group*, warns its readers in alarming words in its latest forecast: *"Let's be honest: 2018 doesn't feel good. Yes, markets are soaring and the economy isn't bad, but citizens are divided. Governments aren't doing much governing. And the global order is unraveling. The scale of the world's political challenges is daunting. Liberal democracies have less legitimacy than at any time since World War II, and most of their structural problems don't appear fixable. Today's strongest leaders show little interest in civil society or common values. In the 20 years since we started Eurasia Group, the global environment has had its ups and downs. But if we had to pick one year for a big unexpected crisis – the geopolitical equivalent of the 2008 financial meltdown – it feels like 2018. Sorry."* <sup>8</sup> These warnings are in line with a statement which Jean-Marie Guéhenno, the former president of the *International Crisis Group*, made last year: *"The world is entering its most dangerous chapter in decades. The sharp uptick in war over recent years is outstripping our ability to cope with the consequences. From the global refugee crisis to the spread of terrorism, our collective failure to resolve conflict is giving birth to new threats and emergencies."*

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<sup>6</sup> We remark, as a side-note, that anti-migrant chauvinism fulfils not the same, but a similar role. It is destined to strengthen the ideological control of the bourgeoisie over sectors of the domestic working class and middle layers. It often fulfils this purpose for a certain period. However, it is also a risky instrument in cases of domestic crisis of the ruling class where sectors of the working class and the middle layers radically turn away from the ruling elite. In such situations chauvinism can provoke massive political instability: either by leading to clashes between sectors of the working class and the middle layers and / or by creating a fertile soil for the fraternization between domestic and migrant brothers and sisters on an anti-patriotic platform.

<sup>7</sup> World Economic Forum: The Global Risks Report 2018 13th Edition, p. 5

<sup>8</sup> Eurasia Group: Top Risks 2018, p. 3

*Even in peaceful societies, the politics of fear is leading to dangerous polarization and demagoguery.”<sup>9</sup>*

10. To a certain degree, we can compare the present world political phase with the situation before the Balkan Wars 1912-13. At that time the contradictions between regional powers like Serbia, Bulgaria, the Ottoman Empire and other states as well as the tensions between the Great Powers resulted in two devastating wars. As is well known, the Balkan Wars were the prelude to the first imperialist world war which started in August 1914. Even the German weekly newspaper “*Die Zeit*” compares the present situation in a recent editorial article with the period before the beginning of World War One and refers to the descriptions of the historian Christopher Clark in his famous book “*The Sleepwalkers*”.<sup>10</sup> With this analogy we don’t want to suggest that the Third World War will start in one or two years. As we have stated in past documents, while we consider an imperialist World War III as unavoidable if the international working class does not overthrow the global capitalist order beforehand, we think that the aggravation of the inter-imperialist antagonism to such a degree will take longer.

11. In the current period, the application of the dialectical method and its transformation into a concrete program of revolutionary action is of particular importance as the world situation becomes more and more complex. We see the unfolding of new historic circumstances as the US has outlived its role as the absolute hegemon of the capitalist world – a role it carried since 1945 – and the emergence of new imperialist rivals like China and Russia. We face the acceleration of imperialist wars against oppressed people as well as of democratic and national liberation struggles against dictatorships and foreign occupation. And we face numerous attempts of imperialist powers to exploit and utilize such liberation struggles. And there are more and more conflicts between semi-colonial states. Indeed, the increasing complexity of the world situation is one of its most important features. All these complex and contradictory developments require Marxists to elaborate a scientific and clear analysis as well as a sharp program to intervene in the class struggles.

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9 Jean-Marie Guéhenno: 10 Conflicts to Watch in 2017, Foreign Policy, January 5, 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/01/05/10-conflicts-to-watch-in-2017/>

10 Jochen Bittner und Jörg Lau: Nichts ist mehr sicher. Von Trumps Amerika über Nordkorea bis zum Mittleren Osten: All diese Krisen stehen für eine Welt in Unordnung. Und manchmal genügt ein Funke, um einen großen Krieg auszulösen, DIE ZEIT, 7. Dezember 2017, p. 2

## The Most Explosive Focal Points of the Current World Situation

12. If we have to identify the most explosive focal points of the current world situation, we would name the *Middle East* and the *Korean peninsula*. It is in these two regions where the interests of most imperialist Great Powers directly clash, where long-standing conflicts exist and where major wars with devastating consequences could break out. As the WEF's *Global Risks Report 2018* points out: "*the North Korea crisis has arguably brought the world closer than it has been for decades to the possible use of nuclear weapons.*"<sup>11</sup> Furthermore such devastating wars, with potentially hundreds of thousands of casualties, could provoke major domestic political crises, yet even pre-revolutionary situations, in the countries concerned, including in the U.S. In addition, there could be a new wave of revolutionary uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa – similar to the insurrectional wave in 2011. In short, the *Middle East* and the *Korean peninsula* are currently the two most important focuses of the world situation because what is happening there has immediately and direct global consequences and can abruptly change the entire world situation. A U.S. war against North Korea or a major war in the Middle East would have major repercussions for the relations between the Great Powers and it would also most likely provoke an immediate crash of the world economy.

13. The U.S. decline as the hegemonic imperialist power vis-à-vis the rise of China and Russia combined with the domestic crisis of the Trump Administration could tempt Washington to launch catastrophic adventures like a "limited" attack against North Korea resulting in a nuclear war on the Korean peninsula. In fact, such an attack is concretely discussed in the White House. It would have horrific consequences for the Korean people North and South and would immediately provoke a crash of the world economy. According to a report of the *Congressional Research Service*, sent to the U.S. lawmakers in October 2017, a conflict on the Korean peninsula could result in up to "300,000 dead in the first days of fighting" even if no nuclear weapons are involved. Likewise, we could see soon a devastating regional war in the Middle East involving Israel, Saudi Arabia, Iran and possibly even some of the Great Powers. The latest issue of the annual *Munich Security Report* notes that the deterioration of the security situation in Europe is also increasing the risks of armed conflicts even in Europe: "*In this dire state of affairs, miscalculations and misunderstandings could well lead to an inadvertent military clash.*"<sup>12</sup> Such catastrophic events like wars (or environmental disasters) can provoke mass unrest and pre-revolutionary situations on a regional or even global level. A genocidal attack of Israel against the Palestinian people, aiming at a second *Nakba*<sup>13</sup> by expelling the Arabs from

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11 World Economic Forum: The Global Risks Report 2018 13th Edition, p. 10

12 Munich Security Report 2018. To the Brink – and Back?, p. 32

13 The Palestinian people and the Arabs in general, call the expulsion of the Palestinian people by the Zionists in 1948 "Nakba".

parts of the West Bank or Gaza could provoke mass rebellions not only among the Palestinians but also among other Arab and Muslim peoples. Furthermore, we increasingly see “bread riots” as a result of the austerity policy enforced by the capitalist decay (e.g. Iran, Tunisia, Morocco, and Sudan). Such spontaneous mass protests could spread and lead to regional waves of uprisings (we saw such an elementary wave during the hunger revolts in 2008/09 and, in a more developed form, in 2011 in the Arab world).

14. Such mass popular uprisings could result in the revolutionary overthrow of reactionary regimes as it happened in Tunisia and Egypt in 2011. Likewise they could result in the splitting-up of oppressor states (e.g. if Catalonia becomes independent of Spain). Such events would be of enormous importance as they could advance the liberation struggle of the working class and the oppressed and enrich its political experience. However, at the same time, our class suffers from the chronic crisis of leadership. A number of forces parading under the banner of socialism or even communism implement in their day-to-day practice the worst austerity policy in the service of the capitalist monopolies or attack the workers’ right to strike (e.g. SYRIZA in Greece – the flagship of the ex-Stalinist *Party of the European Left*); others support imperialist wars in the South or “anti-terrorist” emergency decrees at home (e.g. the French “Communist” Party or the KPRF in Russia). Other “Communist” Parties like those in Syria are profoundly loyal servants of the Assad dictatorship. Various pseudo-Trotskyist groups hailed the military coup of General Sisi in Egypt in July 2013 as a “Second Revolution” (e.g. Alan Woods IMT, the Cliffite RS/IST or the Morenoite LIT) or they take a neutral stand in the epic struggle between the Assad regime and the Syrian people (e.g. the CWI, IMT, PTS/FT). Many of these pseudo-Marxists refuse to recognize the imperialist character of China and Russia. Hence, they fail to understand the inter-imperialist rivalry as a major factor in the present world situation and are incapable to apply the Leninist program of revolutionary defeatism.

15. However, such a crisis of leadership is no reason for revolutionaries to stand aside from the mass struggles and to passively wait for a *Deus ex machine* to solve this misery. No, revolutionaries are obliged to intervene in the mass struggles, even when these struggles are led by non-revolutionary forces and they themselves constitute only a small minority. They will be capable to advance their strategies and programs among the vanguard and the masses only with an approach as *a fighting force and not as a cynically commenting force*. Clearly, the struggle to build a Revolutionary World Party does not and cannot take place in a vacuum. It has to be conducted by applying the united front tactic towards those forces which have mass influence among the fighting workers and oppressed.<sup>14</sup> At the same time such tactics must be combined with fearless

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14 The RCIT has published a more detailed elaboration of the Marxist United Front Tactic in a book of Michael Pröbsting: *Marxism and the United Front Tactic Today*. The Struggle for Proletarian Hegemony in the Liberation Movement and the United Front Tactic Today. On the Application of

exposure of the failure of the official leadership and, in particular, the merciless denunciation of those pseudo-socialist forces which, through their reactionary deeds, smear the banner of communism in the eyes of the masses. The struggle for the construction of the Revolutionary World Party will advance only by removing these reformist and centrist obstacles.

## Changes in the Current World Political Phase

16. We are still in the political phase which opened up in 2013/14 and which is characterized by a counter-revolutionary offensive of the ruling class – a phase which tremendously accelerated since the victory of Trump in the US' Presidential elections in November 2016. However, a shift has taken place since the later part of 2017 as we see both an acceleration of counterrevolutionary attacks and war threats as well as an upsurge of the class struggle in a number of countries. In fact, these developments of the last few months point towards the pre-revolutionary nature of the next phase. In this phase there will wars, counter-revolutions and revolutions to a qualitative greater extent. In our opinion there are strong indications that we are already nearing the transition from the phase of counter-revolutionary offensive towards a new world political phase which will most likely have a pre-revolutionary character.

17. Such rapid changes lie in the revolutionary nature of the long-term, historic period we are in since 2008/09.<sup>15</sup> Such a historic period has to be understood, in fact it can only be understood, in a dialectical way. This period is characterized both by revolutions as well as by counter-revolutionary offensives. On the surface, these two elements seem to contradict each other. However, using the method of dialectics, the two poles form a unity of opposites. It is a revolutionary period because the capitalist class cannot develop the forces of production (as reflected, among others, by the fact that economic growth is based more on debts than increasing production) and because of it, the ruling classes are attacking the social gains and the democratic rights of the workers and the oppressed. In the current phase, the ruling class is winning in some countries (e.g. the military coup in Egypt in 2013) but in various other countries, the mass struggle is on the rise. Like in every situation the unity of opposites is in motion – one side in the process is growing stronger and the other side weaker.

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the Marxist United Front Tactic in Semi-Colonial and Imperialist Countries in the Present Period, RCIT 2016, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/book-united-front/>

15 For a more detailed elaboration of our understanding of the historic revolutionary period which opened in 2008/09 we refer readers to Michael Pröbsting: *The Great Robbery of the South. Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism*, Vienna 2013, chapter 14i), <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/great-robbery-of-the-south/>; RCIT: *Advancing Counterrevolution and Acceleration of Class Contradictions Mark the Opening of a New Political Phase. Theses on the World Situation, the Perspectives for Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries* (January 2016), Chapter II, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 46, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2016/>;

The question is whether the class enemy is getting stronger or our side is in the process of becoming stronger. It seems that we are entering in the last months a situation of growing resistance of the masses (Iran, Palestine, Tunisia, Morocco, Sudan, Honduras, India, Catalonia, etc.). Marxists have to observe indicators like mass rallies, demonstrations, strikes, voting for left parties, liberation wars, etc. In other words, we live in a period of revolutions, counter-revolutions including the danger of fascism and wars. We remark, as a side-note, that intelligent bourgeois analysts with a sense for history are also recognizing in their own way the fundamental explosive character of the present period.<sup>16</sup>

18. One could say that we are in a *pre-phase of capitalist breakdown*, i.e. we are before a phase of catastrophic events like major wars, economic collapse and revolutionary explosions. In the light of the distortion created by various revisionist theoreticians, starting with Eduard Bernstein, about the Marxist concept of *capitalist breakdown* we want to clarify that Marx, Lenin and Trotsky never understood this concept in the way that capitalism would collapse and disappear by itself so that it clears the way for socialism. This has always been complete nonsense. The Marxist classics rather understood by the concept of breakdown that this system is in a historic cul-de-sac and inevitable provokes wars, environmental catastrophes and revolutions. It will be sooner or later replaced, as Rosa Luxemburg famously coined the phrase, by socialism – if the working class successfully overthrows the bourgeoisie via an international socialist revolution – or by an epoch of barbarism, if the working class fails in its historic mission. Today, it would be more accurate to concretize the stage of barbarism by an epoch of “*stone age*” given the vast amount of destructive forces which the ruling class has accumulated over the past decades and which could multiple destroy the planet.

19. In summary, the present world situation is characterized by an increas-

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16 To give an example we refer to a recently published study of two analysts from the U.S. Federal Reserve Board. This study attempts to create an index of “geopolitical risk” and their effects for the world economy. They conclude that geopolitical events (we Marxists would prefer to speak about the struggle between the classes and states) indeed have important consequences for the economy. “*We find that an increase in geopolitical risk induces persistent declines in industrial production, employment, and international trade, and that both economic policy uncertainty and consumer confidence enhance the transmission of geopolitical risk shocks. We also document that stock returns experience a short-lived but significant drop in response to higher geopolitical risk. The stock market response varies substantially across industries, with the defense sector experiencing positive excess returns, and with sectors exposed to the broader economy – for instance steelworks and mining – experiencing negative returns.*”

Moreover, the authors arrive to the conclusion that such “geopolitical risks” have substantially increased in the past years. They construct a historical index covering the years 1900 to 2017. They arrive at the conclusion that, leaving aside the periods around the two world wars, the period since 9/11 in 2001 has seen the most significant instability and crisis and that this process is accelerating. “*High geopolitical risk leads to a decline in real activity, lower stock returns, and movements in capital flows away from emerging economies and towards advanced economies. (...) Extending our index back to 1900, geopolitical risk rose dramatically during the World War I and World War II, was elevated in the early 1980s, and has drifted upward since the beginning of the 21st century.*” (Both quotes are taken from: Dario Caldaray Matteo Iacoviello: *Measuring Geopolitical Risk*, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, January 10, 2018)

ing polarization and instability. It is pregnant with huge possibilities as well as dangers. The multitude of factors and the intertwining of conflicting forces exclude the possibility of a concrete prognosis. But the general tendency of development is absolutely clear: the old world order is breaking down and we are heading towards both devastating regional wars as well as (pre-)revolutionary waves of popular uprisings. This puts an enormous responsibility on the shoulders of all activists fighting against imperialism and capitalist exploitation!

20. The most crucial task of today remains to advance the construction of a Revolutionary World Party. In order to achieve this, revolutionaries must develop a correct assessment of the present world situation and the resulting strategies, programmatic demands and tactics. They have to fight for a revolutionary program which combines correct tactics in the major issues of the global class struggle with the goal of the international socialist revolution. It is urgent to overcome any kind of conservative routinism and sectarianism. Revolutionaries must unite *now* when they have reached agreement on such a program! The RCIT is fighting for such unity since its foundation and will continue to do this with redoubled energy in the coming period! As a concrete step in this direction we propose “*6 Points for a Platform of Revolutionary Unity Today*” and submit it for discussion for revolutionaries around the world. (See Appendix)

21. The RCIT looks back to a proud record as we understood from the beginning the major lines of the global dynamic of the present historic revolutionary period. We drew attention to the imperialist character of Russia and China when others were incapable to recognize it and hence failed to draw the necessary tactical conclusions of revolutionary defeatism. We recognized the reactionary character of the coups in Egypt, Ukraine and Brazil when other hailed them or took a neutral position. We continued to defend democratic and national liberation wars in Syria or Yemen when others denounced them as reactionary proxy wars and refused to support the struggles of the workers and oppressed. We took the banner of anti-imperialism by siding with national liberation struggles against imperialist occupiers when others refused to do so denouncing these struggles as “reactionary” because of their Islamist leadership (e.g. Hamas in Gaza, Taliban in Afghanistan, Islamists in Mali). The RCIT calls all revolutionaries around the world to unite on the basis of agreement of a program for the victory of the liberation struggles of the working class and the oppressed people via the world socialist revolution!

## II. Excuse: Different Types of Wars in the Present Period and Consequential Revolutionary Tactics

22. As wars become an increasingly crucial feature of the present historic period, it is urgent for revolutionaries to have a clear understanding of their nature and the consequential tactics. It should be evident for Marxists that the issue of war is a litmus test for every organization. Trotsky once remarked accurately: *“The problem of war, next to the problem of revolution, is the touchstone of a revolutionary party. Here no kind of equivocation is permissible. The principled decision is clear beforehand: defensism and defeatism are as incompatible as fire and water. It is necessary to say this first of all. This truth must be taught the members of the party.”*<sup>17</sup> As the RCIT has already dealt with this issue repeatedly, we will summarize here the results of our analyses and conclusions, apply them to recent developments as well as deal with some specific new issues which have gained importance in the past years.<sup>18</sup>

23. Basically, we can differentiate between the following different types of wars in the present period:

i. There are *conflicts between imperialist states*. Such conflicts can have the character of chauvinist campaigns, diplomatic tensions, trade wars, and finally, they can escalate into open wars as we have seen in two World Wars in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As the RCIT has shown in its past World Perspective documents as well as specific case studies, we have seen in the past decade an increasing number of inter-imperialist tensions as a result of the decline of the US as the absolute hegemon and the rise of China and Russia as new imperialist powers.<sup>19</sup> Examples for this type of conflict are the present tensions between

17 Leon Trotsky: Defeatism vs. Defensism (1937), in: Trotsky Writings 1937-38, p. 86

18 See e.g. RCIT: On the 100th Anniversary of the Outbreak of World War I: The Struggle against Imperialism and War. The Marxist Understanding of Modern Imperialism and the Revolutionary Program in Light of the Increasing Rivalry between the Great Powers, Revolutionary Uprisings, and Counterrevolutionary Setbacks, 25.6.2014, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/struggle-vs-imperialism-war/>; Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South. Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism, Vienna 2013, chapter 12 and 13, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/great-robbery-of-the-south/>; Yossi Schwartz: Marxism and War, 30.1.2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/marxism-and-war/>; Michael Pröbsting: Liberation Struggles and Imperialist Interference. The failure of sectarian “anti-imperialism” in the West: Some general considerations from the Marxist point of view and the example of the democratic revolution in Libya in 2011, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/liberation-struggle-and-imperialism/>; Michael Pröbsting: Dialectics and Wars in the Present Period. Preface to Rudolf Klement’s Principles and Tactics in War, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/dialectics-war/>

19 See in addition to the books and pamphlets mentioned in other footnotes in this chapter: Michael Pröbsting: Is Lenin’s Theory of Imperialism Incompatible with the Concept of Permanent Revolution? 5 May 2015, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialism-theory-and-permanent-revolution/>

the US and Japan vs. China in East Asia <sup>20</sup>, between the US vs. Russia in the Middle East <sup>21</sup>, or between the US and the EU vs. Russia since the beginning of the civil war in the Ukraine in 2014. <sup>22</sup>

Lenin often quoted the famous dictum of Clausewitz: “*War is merely a continuation of policy by other means.*” This means that Marxists don’t change their approach to the ruling class in wartimes, hence, the working class must fundamentally oppose its imperialist government equally in times of peace as well as in times of war.

A particular case, as we have explained in our special pamphlet, has been the conflict between China and India during the military stand-off in summer 2017. While India is not an imperialist state but rather a semi-colony, its sheer size (it will soon become the most populous state in the world), its role as a regional power in South Asia as well as its increasing close alliance with US and Japanese imperialism (as well as with Israel) give the conflict between the two powers a reactionary character on both sides. <sup>23</sup>

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revolution/; Michael Pröbsting: The China Question and the Marxist Theory of Imperialism, December 2014, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/reply-to-csr-pco-on-china/>; Michael Pröbsting: China’s Emergence as an Imperialist Power, Summer 2014, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialist-china-new-politics/>; Michael Pröbsting: Lenin’s Theory of Imperialism and the Rise of Russia as a Great Power. On the Understanding and Misunderstanding of Today’s Inter-Imperialist Rivalry in the Light of Lenin’s Theory of Imperialism, August 2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialism-theory-and-russia/>; Michael Pröbsting: Russia and China as Great Imperialist Powers. A Summary of the RCIT’s Analysis, 28 March 2014, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 22, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialist-china-and-russia/>; Michael Pröbsting: More on Russia and China as Great Imperialist Powers. A Reply to Chris Slee (Socialist Alliance, Australia) and Walter Daum (LRP, USA), 11 April 2014, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 22, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/reply-to-slee-on-russia-china/>; Michael Pröbsting: Russia as a Great Imperialist Power. The formation of Russian Monopoly Capital and its Empire – A Reply to our Critics, 18 March 2014, Special Issue of *Revolutionary Communism* No. 21 (March 2014), <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialist-russia/>; Michael Pröbsting: China’s transformation into an imperialist power. A study of the economic, political and military aspects of China as a Great Power, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 4, <http://www.thecommunists.net/publications/revcom-number-4/>;

20 See on this e.g. Michael Pröbsting: No to chauvinist war-mongering by Japanese and Chinese imperialism! Chinese and Japanese workers: Your main enemy is at home! Stop the conflict on the Senkaku/Diaoyu-islands in the East China Sea! 23.9.2012, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 6, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/no-war-between-china-and-japan/>

21 See on this the numerous documents and articles of the RCIT on the Syrian civil war which are collected in a special section on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/collection-of-articles-on-the-syrian-revolution/>

22 See e.g. the RCIT’s pamphlet by Michael Pröbsting: The Uprising in East Ukraine and Russian Imperialism. An Analysis of Recent Developments in the Ukrainian Civil War and their Consequences for Revolutionary Tactics, 22.October 2014, in: Special Issue of *Revolutionary Communism* No.28, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/ukraine-and-russian-imperialism/>. More statements and articles on the civil war in the Ukraine can be read in the following section of our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/>

23 See on this the RCIT’s pamphlet Michael Pröbsting: The China-India Conflict: Its Causes and Consequences. What are the background and the nature of the tensions between China and India in the Sikkim border region? What should be the tactical conclusions for Socialists and Activists of the Liberation Movements? 18 August 2017, *Revolutionary Communism* No. 71, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-india-rivalry/>

ii. There are also *aggressions up to open wars of imperialist states against oppressed people*. Examples for this are the U.S. occupation wars in Afghanistan since 2001 and Iraq since 2003, Russia's war against the Chechen people, or Israel's occupation of the Palestinian people including its recent three wars against Gaza (2009, 2012, and 2014). Other examples are the military intervention of the US in Somalia as well as in Northern and Western Africa or of European powers in Mali and other central African states. In the same category falls the US aggression against semi-colonial states like North Korea and Iran. An example for such a conflict of national oppression which has not been transformed into a civil war yet is the oppression of the Catalan people by the Spanish state or that of the Uyghur people by China.

In recent years we increasingly have seen cases where imperialist powers collaborate with allied regimes of semi-colonial states and equip and finance military forces composed mainly of soldiers from these countries. Examples for this are the Ethiopia-led AMISOM which acts, in close collaboration with US and EU imperialism, as an occupation force in Somalia fighting against Al-Shabaab; the recently constituted G5 force in Western Africa which shall fight against Islamist "terrorists" under French command; or various Iraqi special units which have been trained and equipped by the U.S. Such forces basically resemble the colonial troops of the British, French as well other Empires. While the troops might come from semi-colonial countries, they act as imperialist proxies and their wars have to be characterized as imperialist wars.

A specific case is the Kurdish PYD/YPG in Syria. While it has its historic origin in the struggle of the Kurdish people for national self-determination, its reactionary Stalinist-nationalist leadership has isolated itself from the liberation struggle of the Syrian workers and oppressed. Instead they collaborated with the Assad regime and later became the main proxy for US imperialism in Northern Syria (under the name of "*Syrian Democratic Forces*"). Today the SDF acts as foot soldiers for US imperialism.

iii. Likewise, there are wars of national oppression which are launched by semi-colonial capitalist states against weaker nations. The causes for this can be a long-standing relationship of national oppression (e.g. Serbia vs. Kosova; Turkey, Iran and Iraq vs. their Kurdish minorities; Iran vs. the Arab minorities; Ethiopia vs. Eritrea until 1993), or the interest of the semi-colonial state to suppress an ongoing revolutionary process, or the willingness of the semi-colonial regime to serve the interests of an imperialist powers. Naturally such causes don't exclude each other but can exist in combination. The aggression of the Saudi-led alliance, with the support of US imperialism, against the Yemeni people since 2015 or of the Iraqi regime against Iran in 1980/81 are examples where the latter two causes exist in combination.

iv. There are *civil wars of the workers and oppressed against a reactionary dictatorship*. The most prominent actual example for this is the ongoing Syrian Revolution which started in March 2011 and which, despite many setbacks,

is still continuing. The civil war in Libya against the Gaddafi regime between February and autumn 2011 is another example as well as the popular uprising in Yemen which started in autumn 2014 and which transformed into a civil war in spring 2015 driving out the pro-IMF Hadi government.

v. Finally, there are conflicts up to *wars between capitalist semi-colonial states*. Currently such wars can erupt at any given moment between Saudi-Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) vs. Iran, between Saudi-Arabia and the UAE vs. Qatar (with Turkey's support for the latter), or between Egypt (in alliance with Eritrea) vs. Ethiopia and Sudan (with Turkey's support for the latter).

We can expect a substantial increase of this type of wars. The reasons for this are the following:

We are living in a period where there exists no longer a single absolute imperialist hegemony (the U.S.) which acts as a kind of guarantor of the existing world order. Quite the opposite, there are now several imperialist Great Powers which are all rivaling to increase their sphere of influence at the cost of the others. Such circumstances allow the ruling classes of some semi-colonial states a certain, albeit limited, degree of independence and room for maneuver.

Furthermore, as we have elaborated in our book *The Great Robbery of the South*, the development of modern capitalism has led to a substantial shift of capitalist value production to countries of the South. These developments have created a number of advanced semi-colonial states which have become, or which desire to become, regional powers.

The combination of these factors has created a situation where conflicts up to open wars between non-imperialist states are becoming an increasingly important feature of the present world situation.

This type of wars is the most complicated issue for Marxists. This is so also because, as Trotsky emphasized, "*the bourgeoisie of colonial and semi-colonial countries is a semi-ruling, semi-oppressed class.*"<sup>24</sup> This means, it is a capitalist class which is fundamentally dependent on and subjugated to imperialism but which has also, to a certain degree, contradictory interests to the Great Powers.

Taking these factors into account we can say that the bourgeoisie of a given semi-colonial state *can* act in such conflicts as a proxy for the interest of imperialist powers. Given the semi-colonial character of the bourgeoisie of such countries, they are dependent on and subordinated to the imperialist powers. However, while they can not act independently of imperialist powers *in the long run*, this does not necessarily mean that they have no independent interests at all or that they would have no limited independent room for maneuver at all. The capitalist class of the given state often attempts to utilize the conflict between the imperialist powers and to create a space to expand their influence. The Erdoğan regime in Turkey is an example for this as it tries to play off Russia, the U.S. and the EU. Likewise, the Egypt regime of General Sisi, and even

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<sup>24</sup> Leon Trotsky: Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State? (1937); in: Writings of Leon Trotsky 1937-38, p. 70

the Saudi Kingdom to a certain degree, tries to build closer relations to Russia despite their traditional dependence on the US.

Furthermore, because of its “*semi-ruling, semi-oppressed*” character, the bourgeoisie of semi-colonial countries can also, for a limited period and only to a certain degree, come under the pressure of the popular classes in extraordinary cases when it faces a serious confrontation with an imperialist power or a war with another state.

## The Importance of Dialectic

24. However, as always, it is crucial to approach analyzing a war in a dialectical way, i.e. looking at each case concretely.<sup>25</sup> One must bear in mind that the schema elaborated above must not be viewed mechanically. First, there can be combinations of different types. The Saudi assault on Yemen served Riyadh’s interests to liquidate a revolutionary process as well as to reduce Iran’s regional influence and, in addition, it also serves the Western imperialist interests to control the strategically important entry to the Red Sea. These waters are key to international trade — 4 million barrels of oil pass through the strait every day. Second, during the course of a conflict its character can change to a certain degree or even completely. For example the democratic liberation war of the Syrian people against the Assad dictatorship also got an anti-imperialist character since 2015 when the Putin regime sent Russian military in support of the regime. Russia’s massive military intervention in Donbass in summer/autumn 2014 transformed the character of the Ukrainian civil war into a reactionary proxy war on both sides.

There was a similar case in the early 1980s. In 1980 Iraq’s Baath regime attacked Iran because it wanted to liquidate the revolutionary process which opened up there in February 1979. Later, when the Khomeini regime consolidated its power and smashed the workers and youth vanguard by summer 1981, the character of the war changed. While the war, in the first phase until summer 1981, was reactionary on the side of Iraq but a legitimate defensive war on the side of Iran, this was no longer the case when the revolutionary process in Iran had ended. From that moment on, the war took a reactionary character on both sides. Hence, revolutionaries defended Iran in the first period, but changed their tactic towards defeatism on both sides by summer 1981.<sup>26</sup>

25. In fact, such combinations of different types of war are often the case in one way or another. For example the Saudi war of aggression against the Houthi-led resistance in Yemen has also an element of a proxy war. While the Saudi-led alliance is openly backed by US imperialism (as well as several Euro-

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25 The German philosopher Hegel liked to say – and the Marxist classics referred to this insight many times – that “*the truth is always concrete*”.

26 See e.g. Workers Power: The Iran-Iraq war: Generalised Defeatism - not the Marxist method (1980), <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-iran-iraq-war-generalised-defeatism-not-the-marxist-method-1980/>

pean powers), the Houthis receive support by Iran and hence indirectly by the later allies, imperialist Russia and China. Likewise, there have been phases in the past where sectors of the Syrian rebels fighting against Assad received some modest support by US imperialism. Or, to give some historic examples as we have explained in past documents, the Chinese national resistance forces fighting against Japanese imperialism in 1937-45 received material support by the U.S. The same was the case with the Yugoslavian partisans during World War II. This however, did not transform these forces into proxies of Anglo-American imperialism. The task of Marxists is to analyze each conflict in a concrete way and to view these different factors in their totality, i.e. to understand reality as a “concrete totality, a unity of the universal and the particular” – to use the words of the distinguished Soviet philosopher of the 1920s, Abram Deborin.<sup>27</sup>

26. What are the tactics of revolutionaries in these different types of wars? Fundamentally, Marxists derive their assessment of a war not from the issue of the ideologies of the parties involved or who fired the first shots but from an analysis of the class interests involved. Lenin remarked accurately: “It seems to me that the most important thing that is usually overlooked in the question of the war, (...) is the question of the class character of the war: what caused that war, what classes are waging it, and what historical and historic-economic conditions gave rise to it.”<sup>28</sup>

## Revolutionary War Tactics

27. As we have explained many times, the position of orthodox Marxists in such wars are the following.

i. In the case of *conflicts between imperialist states* (or such special cases like the China-India conflict in summer 2017) revolutionaries can not support either side. We take the same approach on issues like trade agreements (e.g. RCEP, TPP) or Brexit. Both sides are reactionary forces striving to increase the exploitation and oppression of the working class and the poor. The maxim that “foreign policy is everywhere and always a continuation of domestic policy” is not only true for the bourgeoisie but for the proletariat too. Therefore, Marxists apply the Leninist program of *revolutionary defeatism*. This means, as the RCIT summarized in its program: “In imperialist wars, we reject any support for the ruling class. We advocate the defeat of the imperialist state. Our slogan is that of Karl Liebknecht: “The main enemy is at home”. Our goal is to transform the imperialist war into a civil war against the ruling class.”<sup>29</sup> Hence, in conflicts between the U.S. vs. Russia and China or between China vs. Japan, revolutionaries must oppose both sides and stand for their defeat.

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27 Abram Deborin: Lenin als revolutionärer Dialektiker (1925); in: Nikolai Bucharin/Abram Deborin: Kontroversen über dialektischen und mechanistischen Materialismus, Frankfurt a.M. 1974, p. 125 (out translation)

28 V. I. Lenin: War and Revolution (1917) ; in: CW Vol. 24, p. 398

29 RCIT: The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto, p.62, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto/>

Contrary to the hysteric denunciations of reformists against the program of revolutionary defeatism, Marxists insist that it is only the application of the program of class struggle in peace times in wartime. When workers in a given enterprise go on strike this has an undoubtedly negative consequence for the profit of the owner. Hence, it helps the competitors to gain an advantage. Naturally, this is not reason for the workers to hold back their struggle. The policy of revolutionary defeatism is the generalization of such an approach to the collective capitalist class in wartime.

In our opinion, it is impossible to build the new Revolutionary World Party without a clear understanding of the imperialist nature of *all* Great Powers, and the importance of the rivalry between them as a driving force of the world political situation. Hence, Marxists oppose the approach of many reformists and centrists (e.g. Stalinists, Bolivarians) which can be characterized as *bourgeois geopoliticism*. Such an approach divides the world in the main enemy, usually it is U.S. imperialism, on one side and all its opponents on the other side. This shall justify a policy of support for those powers in opposition to the main enemy. Usually this results in social-imperialist support e.g. for China and Russia against the U.S.

Such *bourgeois geopoliticism* has nothing to do with authentic Marxism! Lenin and the Bolsheviks unambiguously condemned all forms of social-imperialism – irrespective of whether they support their “own” or another bourgeoisie: *„Social-chauvinism is advocacy of the idea of “defence of the fatherland” in the present war. This idea logically leads to the abandonment of the class struggle during the war, to voting for war credits, etc. In fact, the social-chauvinists are pursuing an anti-proletarian bourgeois policy, for they are actually championing, not “defence of the fatherland” in the sense of combating foreign oppression, but the “right” of one or other of the “Great” Powers to plunder colonies and to oppress other nations. The social-chauvinists reiterate the bourgeois deception of the people that the war is being waged to protect the freedom and existence of nations, thereby taking sides with the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. Among the social-chauvinists are those who justify and varnish the governments and bourgeoisie of one of the belligerent groups of powers, as well as those who, like Kautsky, argue that the socialists of all the belligerent powers are equally entitled to “defend the fatherland”. Social-chauvinism, which is, in effect, defence of the privileges, the advantages, the right to pillage and plunder, of one’s “own” (or any) imperialist bourgeoisie, is the utter betrayal of all socialist convictions and of the decision of the Basle International Socialist Congress.“*<sup>30</sup>

ii. In the case of aggressions of imperialist states (or their proxies) against oppressed people we stand for the defeat of the imperialist side and for the military victory of the oppressed people. To quote again our program: *“In military conflicts between imperialist states and Stalinist degenerated workers states or semi-colonial peoples and states, we call for the defeat of the former and for the victory of non-imperialist side. We defend the latter, even if they are led by bourgeois (e.g. Sad-*

30 G. Zinoviev / V. I. Lenin: Socialism and War (1915) ; in: LCW Vol. 21, pp. 306-307 (our emphasis)

dam Hussein), petty-bourgeois (e.g. Hamas in Palestine, Taliban in Afghanistan) or Stalinist-bureaucratic (e.g. the Communist Party of Cuba) forces. At the same time we desire to break away the working class and the oppressed from these forces and to win them for an independent class policy through the application of anti-imperialist united front tactic. This means putting demands on the existing leaderships for a common struggle against imperialism under our own banners.”<sup>31</sup> Hence, in the wars of the US against the Afghan or the Iraqi people, of Russia against the Syrian or the Chechen people, of Israel against the Palestinian people, of European imperialists against resistance forces in Africa, of imperialist proxies against the popular resistance in Somalia or in Syria, revolutionaries stand for the defeat of the imperialist camp and for the military victory of the oppressed people. The RCIT takes the same position in the case of the U.S. aggression against North Korea or Iran.

Here, too, do we strongly renounce all those reformists and centrists who refuse to support unconditionally the struggle of the oppressed people against the imperialists. Groups like the CWI or the IMT usually justify their refusal to apply the anti-imperialist united front tactic in the national liberation struggle of Argentina against Britain in 1982, of the Afghan people against the Western imperialists or of the Palestinians against Israel by referring to the reactionary leadership of the forces at the leadership of these struggles. Contrary to them the RCIT stands on the principles of Trotsky’s Fourth International: “*The struggle against war and its social source, capitalism, presupposes direct, active, unequivocal support to the oppressed colonial peoples in their struggles and wars against imperialism. A ‘neutral’ position is tantamount to support of imperialism.*”<sup>32</sup> We categorically denounce these reformist and centrist forces which do not fully support the struggles and wars of the oppressed people against the imperialist masters as social-imperialist agents. To put it into the words of Leon Trotsky: “*Whoever directly or indirectly supports the system of colonization and protectorates, the domination of British capital in India, the domination of Japan in Korea or in Manchuria, of France in Indochina or in Africa, whoever does not fight against colonial enslavement, whoever does not support the uprisings of the oppressed nations and their independence, whoever defends or idealizes Gandhism, that is, the policy of passive resistance on questions which can be solved only by force of arms, is, despite good intentions or bad, a lackey, an apologist, an agent of the imperialists, of the slaveholders, of the militarists, and helps them to prepare new wars in pursuit of their old aims or new.*”<sup>33</sup>

iii. In the case of wars of national oppression which are launched by semi-colonial capitalist states against weaker nations, the RCIT stands for the defeat of the former and the defense of the latter. Our approach is similar like elaborated above (in the case of an aggression of imperialists against oppressed people).

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31 RCIT: The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto, pp.62-63

32 Resolution on the Antiwar Congress of the London Bureau (1936), in: Documents of the Fourth International, New York 1973, p. 99

33 Leon Trotsky: Declaration to the Antiwar Congress at Amsterdam (1932), in: Writings 1932, p. 153

Naturally, it can be the case that such a war becomes a subordinated element in a wider war, e.g. between two imperialist powers. (This was e.g. the case with Austria-Hungary's war against Serbia which became a subordinated element in the imperialist World War I.)

iv. We take a similar position in *civil wars of the workers and oppressed against a reactionary dictatorship*. Hence we stand for the defeat of the Assad regime in Syria and support the ongoing liberation struggle despite our sharp political opposition to the petty-bourgeois nationalist and Islamist leadership forces standing at the top of these struggles.

The last three types of war named here are *wars of liberation*, not *wars of oppression*. This is why socialists must take a side and support the working class and the oppressed people. "*The revolutionary proletariat distinguishes only between wars of oppression and wars of liberation. The character of a war is defined, not by diplomatic falsifications, but by the class which conducts the war and the objective aims it pursues in that war. The wars of the imperialist states, apart from the pretexts and political rhetoric, are of an oppressive character, reactionary and inimical to the people. Only the wars of the proletariat and of the oppressed nations can be characterized as wars of liberation (...)*"<sup>34</sup>

v. As we said above, *conflicts between capitalist semi-colonial states* are highly complicated issues. In principle we oppose the bourgeoisie of all semi-colonial states equally. Hence, in a conflict which exists in a vacuum, we would take a revolutionary defeatist position, i.e. standing for the defeat on both sides. However, in real life things don't exist in a vacuum and hence each conflict has to be analyzed concretely. In the case of a power struggle let us say between the ruling classes of Egypt and Ethiopia about access to the Nile water resources, we would, under normal circumstances, support neither side. The same could be said, in principle, about a war between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

But, as we have seen repeatedly, there can be additional factors which make such issues more complicated. For example in the case of the Saudi/UAE aggression against Qatar since summer 2017, we defended the later despite the fact that formally all sides are semi-colonial states. However, as we explained in our literature, under the concrete circumstances the Saudi aggression had a thoroughly reactionary character since it was attacking Qatar because of the later support for legitimate resistance movement fighting against imperialist occupation and dictatorship (e.g. Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, the Palestinian Hamas, Syrian rebels or the Afghan Taliban), because of its support of the TV channel *Al-Jazeera* as well as because of its opposition to the US, Israeli and Saudi war drive against Iran. In short, the Saudi aggression against Qatar was part of Riyadh's efforts to completely liquidate all obstacles for the establishment of a stable and thoroughly pro-US and pro-Israeli counter-revolutionary

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<sup>34</sup> Leon Trotsky: Declaration to the Antiwar Congress at Amsterdam (1932), in: Writings 1932, p. 153

order in the region.<sup>35</sup>

In general, it is urgent for revolutionaries in such cases to take into account the state of the class struggle in the concerned countries as well as the role of the imperialist powers (both old and new) in it. Likewise, one must study any significant changes in such developments. As we mentioned above, we have seen the example of the Iraq-Iran war in the 1980s where such changes affected the tactics of Marxists. In short, revolutionaries will have to analyze each war in its concrete totality, its different factors and their relationship to each other and elaborate out of this the correct tactical conclusions. As we said somewhere else: *“This is why a conflict or war has to be studied in all its aspects, with the general, fundamental, as well as its secondary, particular, characteristics. Such an approach must follow Lenin’s dialectical method to study a thing or a process ‘from appearance to essence and from less profound to more profound essence.’”*<sup>36</sup>

vi. Another highly complicated issue are *wars with a combined character, i.e. broader wars which includes two or more wars of different character*. World War II is a well-known example for this. Here one had wars between imperialist powers which were reactionary on both sides (e.g. Germany, Italy and Japan vs. UK/USA/France). But there were also wars between imperialists and colonial and oppressed people (e.g. China vs. Japan, Indian people vs. UK, partisan wars in Germany occupied countries) as well as between imperialist Germany and the USSR, a Stalinist-led degenerated workers state. In such cases, Marxists supported the anti-imperialist side. A similar situation can also take place in the near future. As we have dealt with this issue in detail in a special essay, we will only summarize our methodological approach at this point.<sup>37</sup>

In the concrete situation today it is possible that a similar situation could emerge in a broader war in the Middle East. There could be a war between Iran and Saudi Arabia and, in parallel, between Israel and Hezbollah and/or Gaza. While the US would support, in such a scenario, the Israeli/Saudi camp, Russia and China would probably side with Iran. Let us assume that neither the U.S. nor Russia intervene directly in the war but confine themselves to delivering supply and logistic support. Here we would have a contradictory situation, or to be precise, we would be presented with dialectical contradictions of a highly contradictory imperialist world and regional order.

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35 Michael Pröbsting: Qatar-Gulf Crisis: Another Offensive of the Arab Counter-Revolution, 10 June 2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/qatar-gulf-crisis/>

36 See Michael Pröbsting: Dialectics and Wars in the Present Period. Preface to Rudolf Klement’s Principles and Tactics in War, June 2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/dialectics-war/>. Lenin’s quote is taken from: V.I. Lenin: *Conspectus of Hegel’s Book The Science Of Logic*. Section Three: The Idea (1914); in: LCW 38, p.221

37 See Michael Pröbsting: Liberation Struggles and Imperialist Interference. The failure of sectarian “anti-imperialism” in the West: Some general considerations from the Marxist point of view and the example of the democratic revolution in Libya in 2011, Autumn 2012, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/liberation-struggle-and-imperialism/>; Yossi Schwartz and Max Bonham: On the new Cold War between Saudi Arabia and Iran, 26.12.2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/new-cold-war-between-saudi-arabia-and-iran/>

In such a scenario, the war of Israel against Gaza or Hezbollah would be utterly reactionary and Marxists would stand for the military victory of the Palestinian or Hezbollah side. However, the conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia would have a different character. Here we would have a reactionary war on both side and Marxists would take a defeatist position in relation both to Iran as well as to Saudi Arabia.

## Relationship between War and Revolution

29. We conclude this chapter by emphasizing the close relationship between war and revolution. A major war forces the ruling class to mobilize the resources of the society, taking away many people from their families (and sending a certain number back in coffins), to wage a hysterical campaign of chauvinism and ideological manipulation, etc. All this creates huge risks and particular in cases where the ruling class ends up as looser of the given war (i.e. all the sacrifices of the masses were in vain), a war can provoke mass unrest at home and even revolutionary situations. This is why the Leninist approach of transforming a reactionary war into a civil war against the own ruling class is not only correct from the view point of the historical interests of the proletariat but relates also to a realistic possibility. This is why Lenin spoke already during the Russo-Japanese war in 1904/05 about *"the great revolutionary role of the historic war"*.<sup>38</sup> Later, when he elaborated the full Marxist program for wars, he explained the necessity to relate the revolutionary war tactics to the objective explosive situation which a major war creates and to utilize it to advance the class struggle: *"The war has undoubtedly created a most acute crisis and has immeasurably increased the distress of the masses. The reactionary nature of this war, and the unblushing lies told by the bourgeoisie of all countries to conceal their predatory aims with "national" ideology are, on the basis of an objectively revolutionary situation, inevitably creating revolutionary moods among the masses. It is our duty to help the masses become conscious of these moods, deepen them and give them shape. This task finds correct expression only in the slogan: convert the imperialist war into a civil war; all consistently waged class struggles in wartime and all seriously conducted "mass-action" tactics inevitably lead to this. It is impossible to foretell whether a powerful revolutionary movement will flare-up in connection with, during or after the first or the second imperialist war of the Great Powers; in any case it is our bounden duty to work systematically and unswervingly in this direction."*<sup>39</sup>

30. In fact, the whole history of class societies confirms that major wars are pregnant with revolutions. To name but a few historical examples we refer to the *Jacquerie*, the great peasant uprising in northern France during the Hundred Years War after the ruling class suffered a number of defeats against the English; the heroic uprising of the Russian peasants led by Yemelyan Pugachev

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38 V.I. Lenin: The Fall of Port Arthur (1905), in: LCW 8, p.53

39 V.I. Lenin: Socialism and War (1915), in: LCW 21, p.313

in 1774/75 at the end of the long and exhausting Russo-Turkish war; the humiliating defeats of the despised Qing dynasty in the two Opium Wars against the Western Great Powers which gave birth first to 110 local peasant insurrections in 1841-49 and finally to the powerful uprising of the religious social-revolutionary *Taiiping* popular movement – one of the longest and bloodiest civil wars in human history (1850-64); and then we have the well-known examples of modern history with the Franco-Prussian War in 1870-71 leading to the *Parisian Commune*, the Russo-Japanese war in 1904/05 which led to the first Russian Revolution in 1905-07, World War I which resulted in the Russian October Revolution 1917 as well as a number of other workers uprisings in 1918/19 and finally World War II which provoked civil wars and revolutionary developments in various countries (e.g. China, Korea, Greece).

31. This does not mean that every war will result in a revolutionary uprising of the popular masses. But these examples demonstrate that major wars which mobilize the resources of the whole economy, which effect all classes of the society and which influence the whole political life and hence the consciousness of the masses, that such events provoke massive social and political instability and hence can lead to revolutionary ruptures. As we are convinced that chauvinism, military tensions and wars are becoming an increasingly defining feature of the capitalist society, we think that such a development towards militarism will in the end also break ground for sharp class struggles and revolutionary explosions.

### III. The State of the World Economy: Delaying the Eruption of Accumulated Contradictions

32. As we noted already in our last World Perspective document, the bourgeoisie has succeeded in delaying for now the collapse of the world economy by a new Great Recession. The latest IMF reports present a relatively optimistic picture. In its *January 2018 Update* the IMF states: *“The cyclical upswing underway since mid-2016 has continued to strengthen. Some 120 economies, accounting for three quarters of world GDP, have seen a pickup in growth in year-on-year terms in 2017, the broadest synchronized global growth upsurge since 2010.”*<sup>40</sup> The World GDP is supposed to grow (calculated by Market Exchange Rates) by 2.5% (2016), 3.2% (2017), 3.3% (2018) and 3.2% (2019).<sup>41</sup> The *IMF October 2017 Report* gave the following figures for the development of global GDP, industrial production, investment and trade. They reflect a certain, albeit not particularly impressive, upswing. (See Figure 1 and Figure 2)

33. However, the latest panic at the global stock markets in early February demonstrates the fragile state of the capitalist world economy and confirms the RCIT’s analysis which we have elaborated in the past years.<sup>42</sup> The smarter bourgeois economists are also fully aware that there is not much behind the official optimistic fanfares. The *World Economic Forum*, the organizer of the summit of the world’s elite in Davos in January, warns in its report: *“However, this relatively upbeat picture masks numerous concerns. This has been the weakest post-recession recovery on record. Productivity growth remains puzzlingly weak. Investment growth has been subdued, and in developing economies it has slowed sharply since 2010. And in many countries the social and political fabric has been badly frayed by many years of stagnating real incomes.”*<sup>43</sup> Likewise, the OECD notes in its latest report: *“Whilst the near-term cyclical improvement is welcome, it remains modest compared with the standards of past recoveries. Moreover, the prospects for continuing the global growth*

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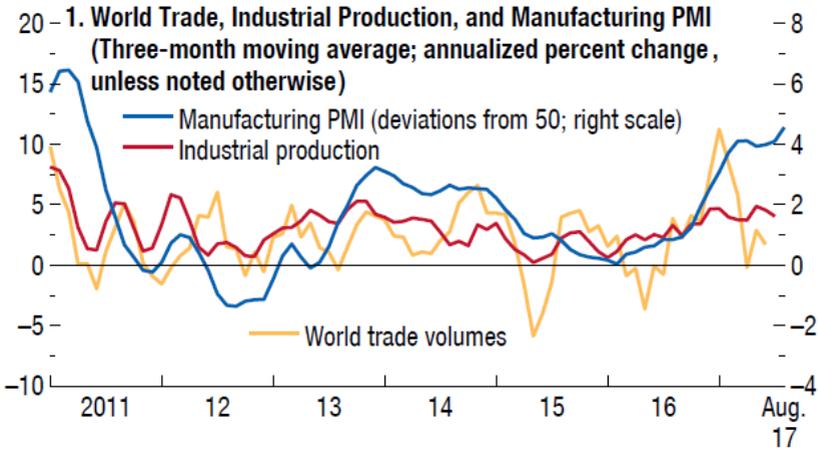
40 IMF: World Economic Outlook, Update, Brighter Prospects, Optimistic Markets, Challenges Ahead, 22 January 2018, p. 2

41 The IMF and other bourgeois institutes usually pronounce more the growth figures calculated in the so-called *“Purchasing Power Parity”* instead those calculated on the basis of *“Market Exchange Rates”*. Calculations based on *“Purchasing Power Parity”* are said to better reflect the growth of poorer countries while the *“Market Exchange Rates”* reflect growth rates expressed in the money terms of the leading world currencies (usually the US-Dollar). Leaving aside that this claim is in itself doubtful, it is clear that *global* growth rates must be calculated by a *single* measure, i.e. a single currency and not by different measures. The IMF and other economists do so only because they want to make the official growth rates look better, i.e. suggesting a higher growth rate.

42 On the stock market turbulences in early February 2018 see Michael Pröbsting: The Latest Stock Market Panic. A Harbinger of the Future Crash of the Capitalist World Economy, 8 February 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-stock-market-panic-february-2018/>

43 WEF: Global Risks Report 2018, p.19

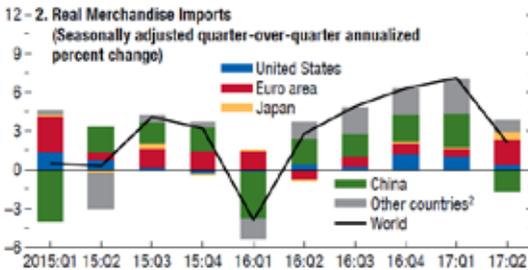
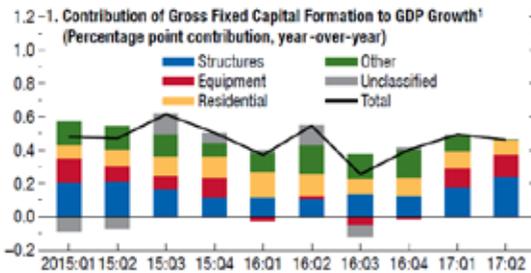
**Figure 1. World Trade, Industrial Production, and Manufacturing PMI, 2011-2017** <sup>44</sup>



**Figure 2. Global Fixed Investment and Trade** <sup>45</sup>

**Figure 1.2. Global Fixed Investment and Trade**

Investment began to pick up in the third quarter of 2016. Global trade accelerated as well, before moderating more recently.

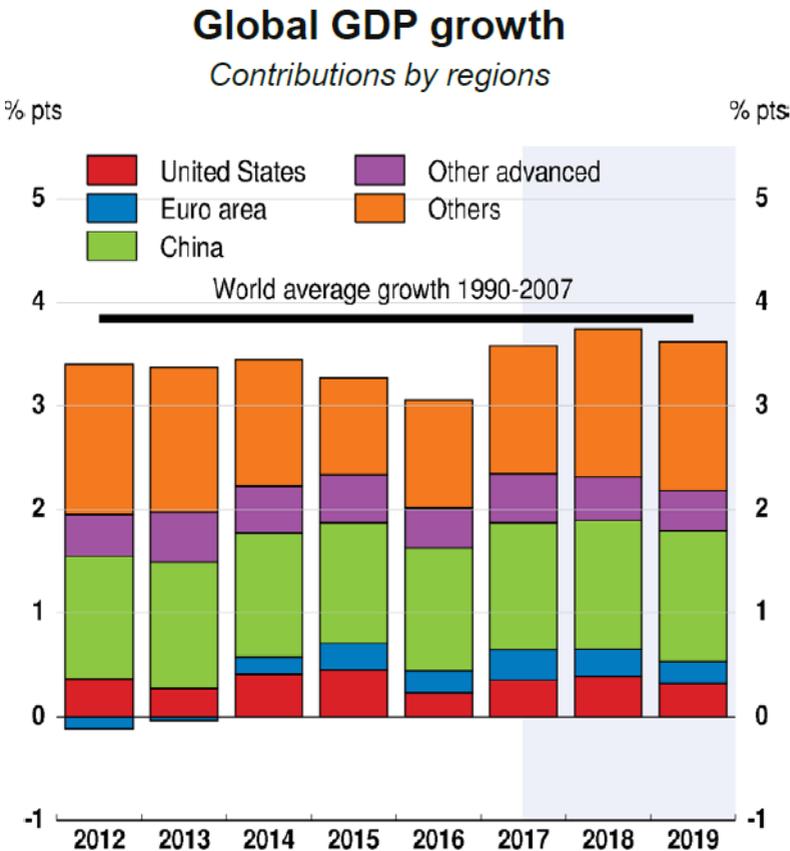


<sup>44</sup> IMF: World Economic Outlook October 2017. Seeking Sustainable Growth, p. 2

<sup>45</sup> IMF: World Economic Outlook October 2017. Seeking Sustainable Growth, p. 3

up-tick through 2019 and securing the foundations for higher potential output and more resilient and inclusive growth do not yet appear to be in place.”<sup>46</sup> In fact, there has not been a single year in this cycle since 2008 in which global production has reached the average of the years 1990-2007! (See Figure 3 and Figure 4) The development of investment and profits continues to be weak or is even in decline. In Figure 5 we see the latest World Bank statistic showing how weak investment and profit growth is, particularly if we compare it with the last cycle in the 2000s. We get an even worse picture when we look to the dynamic of investment in the other major economy – China. (See Figure 6)

**Figure 3. Global GDP Growth 2012-2019 compared to Average Growth 1990-2007**<sup>47</sup>



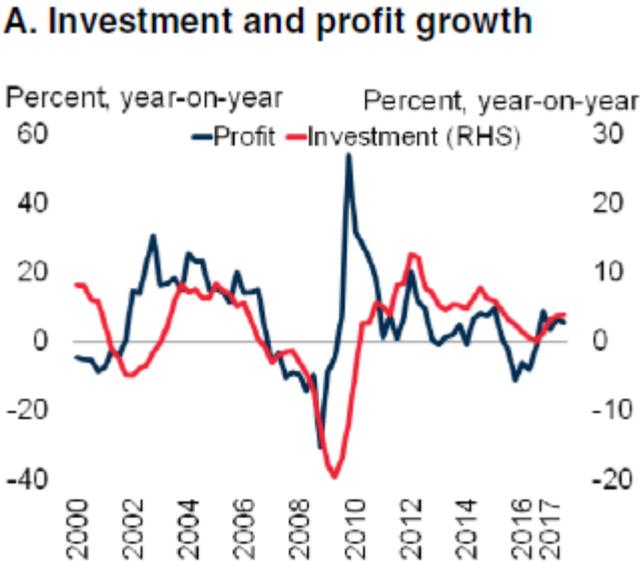
<sup>46</sup> OECD: Economic Outlook, Volume 2017 Issue 2, p. 12

<sup>47</sup> OECD Economic Outlook. The policy challenge: Catalyse the private sector for stronger and more inclusive growth, Presentation, Paris, 28 November 2017, p. 3

Figure 4. Global industrial production growth <sup>48</sup>



Figure 5. US: Investment and Profit Growth 2000-2017 <sup>49</sup>

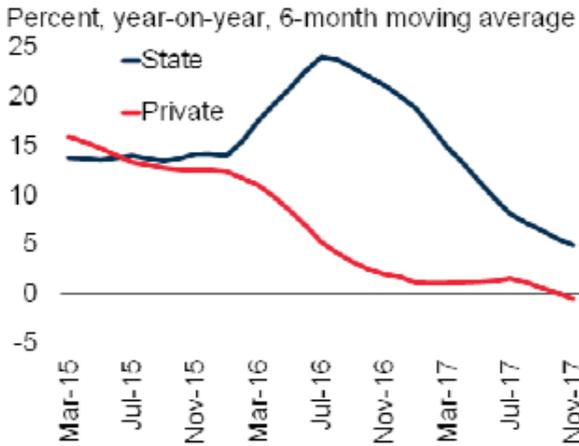


48 OECD: Economic Outlook, Volume 2017 Issue 2, p. 14

49 World Bank: Global Economic Prospects, January 2018, p. 13

Figure 6. China: Investment Growth 2015-2017<sup>50</sup>

## B. Investment growth



34. Furthermore, as we have pointed out in past World Perspectives documents, we continue to see a stagnation of world trade in relation to production.<sup>51</sup> This reflects the stagnation tendencies of the world economy in general and the rise of protectionism in particular since the beginning of the new historic period in 2008. (See Figure 7) As we have said, the era of globalization is about to come to an end. According to the *World Trade Organization* 791 new non-tariff barriers appeared annually on average in the years 2010-15 – that is, more than ever in history.<sup>52</sup> Another reflection of this development is the decline of cross-

50 World Bank: Global Economic Prospects, January 2018, p. 15

51 For the RCIT's analysis of the capitalist world economy since the Great Recession in 2008/09 see e.g. RCIT: World Perspectives 2017: The Struggle against the Reactionary Offensive in the Era of Trumpism, Chapter I, in: Revolutionary Communism No. 59, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2017/>; RCIT: Advancing Counterrevolution and Acceleration of Class Contradictions Mark the Opening of a New Political Phase. Theses on the World Situation, the Perspectives for Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries (January 2016), Chapter II and III, in: Revolutionary Communism No. 46, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2016/>; RCIT: Perspectives for the Class Struggle in Light of the Deepening Crisis in the Imperialist World Economy and Politics. Theses on Recent Major Developments in the World Situation and Perspectives Ahead (January 2015), in: Revolutionary Communism No. 32, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-january-2015/>; Michael Pröbsting: World economy – heading to a new upswing? in: Fifth International, Volume 3, No. 3, Autumn 2009, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-economy-crisis-2009/>; Michael Pröbsting: Imperialism, Globalization and the Decline of Capitalism (2008), in: Richard Brenner, Michael Pröbsting, Keith Spencer: The Credit Crunch - A Marxist Analysis, London 2008, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialism-and-globalization/>

52 Ravi Abdelal and Igor Makarov: The Fragmentation of the Global Economy and U.S.- Russia

border capital flows as a percentage of global GDP since the Great Recession in 2008/09. From a peak level of 20.7% in 2007 it fell to a record-low of 2.6% in 2015. (See Figure 8) This trend of de-globalization is also reflected in the decline of merger & acquisitions and greenfield investment by the multi-national corporations in 2017. According to a UNCTAD report investment in merger & acquisitions decreased from \$869 billion (2016) to \$666 (2017) and greenfield investment projects from \$834 billion (2016) to \$571 (2017).<sup>53</sup> Given the aggressive protectionism advocated by the Trump Administration there is a realistic possibility that a trade war could start in 2018 between the U.S. and China which would trigger another recession.<sup>54</sup>

**Figure 7. Ratio between Global Goods Trade and Global Industrial Production 2000-2018**<sup>55</sup>

### D. Ratio between global goods trade and global industrial production

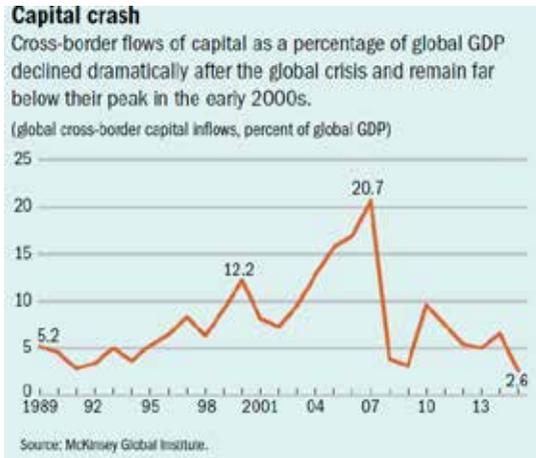


Relations, Working Group on the Future of U.S.-Russia Relations, Working Group Paper 8, April 2017, p. 8

<sup>53</sup> UNCTAD: Investment Trends Monitor, issue 28, January 2018, pp. 5-6

<sup>54</sup> For example the Bloomberg economist Jared Dillian warned recently: "I can't be the first to notice that 2018 could be the year that we get an honest-to-goodness trade war." (Jared Dillian: Trade and Central Banks Will Make Life Painful for Investors, Bloomberg View, 8. Januar 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2018-01-08/trade-and-central-banks-will-make-life-painful-for-investors>); see also Richard Javad Heydari: What a US-China trade war would look like, 2018-02-04, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/china-trade-war-180201121746516.html>

<sup>55</sup> World Bank: Global Economic Prospects, January 2018, p. 18

**Figure 8. Cross-Border Capital Flows as a Percentage of Global GDP**<sup>56</sup>

35. These stagnation tendencies of the business cycle reflect the failure of the monopoly bourgeoisie to overcome the fundamental inner contradictions of the capitalist world economy – its over-accumulation of capital and the fall of the rate of profit. Even the latest issue of the U.S. *“Economic Report of the President”*, annually produced by the White House and not known for a pessimistic outlook, is forced to draw attention to the decreasing rate of capital accumulation. It reproduces a figure showing the development of net investment as a share of the U.S. capital stock between 1945 and 2015. (See Figure 9) This figure reflects the declining dynamic of the expanded reproduction of capital: *“In 2009, net investment as a share of the capital stock fell to its lowest level in the post-World War II era and the nominal capital stock even declined. Although net investment has rebounded somewhat in the recovery, its level as a share of the capital stock remains well below the historical average and it declined slightly in 2015.”*<sup>57</sup> Hence, business investment in the US has ground to a halt and the age of the existing means of production has risen as aging equipment and technology is not replaced. As a result, as the economist David Rosenberg observed in a report to the U.S. Senate: *“The last time the private sector capital stock was this old and obsolete was back in 1958.”* (See Figure 10) We see a similar tendency in the downward trend of the global rate of profit as the Marxist economist Michael Roberts, among others, has demonstrated in his works. (See Figure 11)

<sup>56</sup> Sebastian Mallaby: *Globalization Resets*, in: *IMF Finance & Development*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (December 2016), p. 7

<sup>57</sup> *Economic Report of the President*, January 2017, Washington, p. 104

Figure 9. Net Investment as a Share of the Capital Stock, USA, 1945-2015 <sup>58</sup>

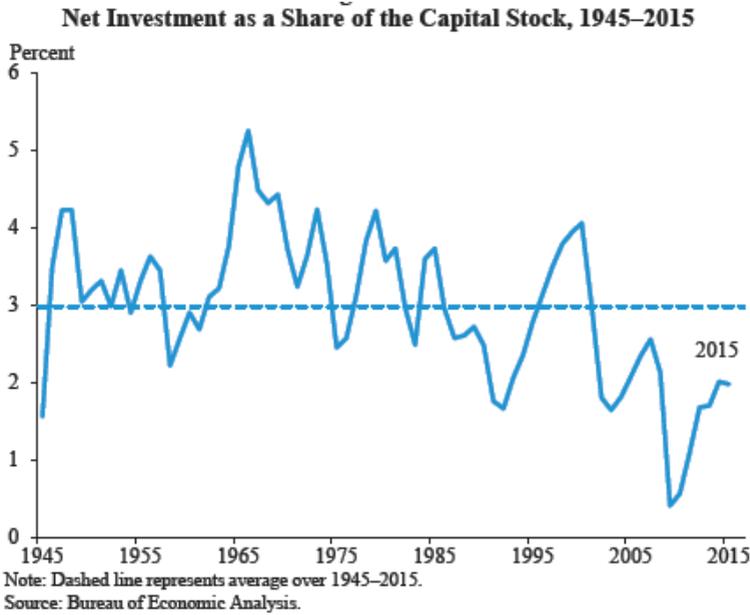
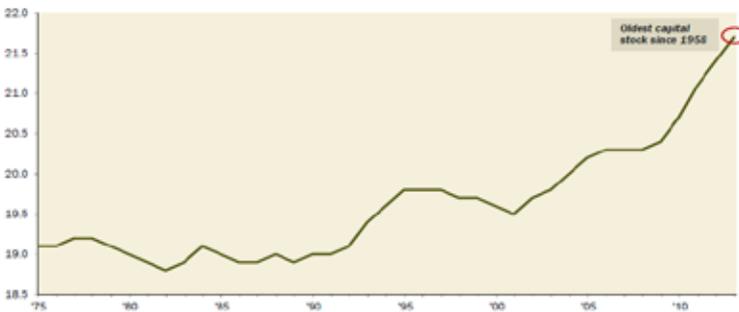


Figure 10. USA: Average Age of Private Fixed Assets, 1975-2014 <sup>59</sup>

**CHART 6: AN AGING AND AGED CAPITAL STOCK**

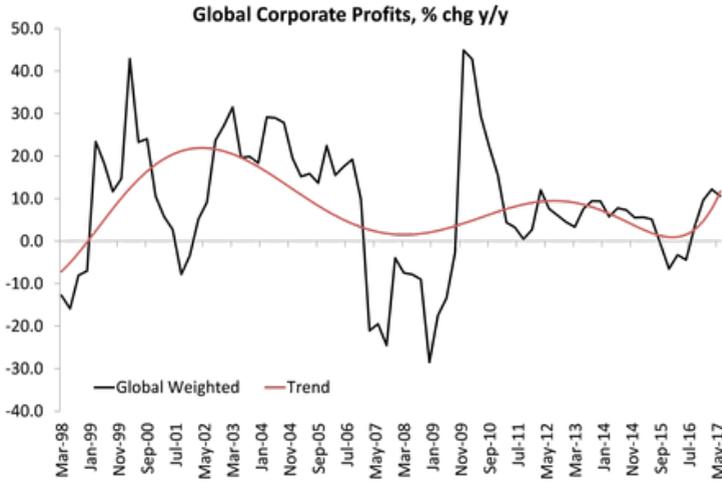
United States: Average Age of Private Fixed Assets (years)



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Gluskit Sheff

<sup>58</sup> Economic Report of the President, January 2017, Washington, p. 105

<sup>59</sup> David A. Rosenberg: The 2014 Outlook: Moving from Constant Crises to Broad-Based Growth, Statement by David A. Rosenberg before the Committee on the Budget, U.S. Senate, p. 5

**Figure 11. Global Corporate Profits**<sup>60</sup>

## Delaying the Beginning of the Next Recession

36. While the capitalist class has been unable to overcome these fundamental contradictions of its mode of production, it has been able, until now, to delay the beginning of the next recession. What have been the reasons for this? There are several reasons but the most important seem to be a massive increase in debt reaching a level higher than before the last recession in 2007. Related to this there is a huge bubble in the financial sector which will sooner or later explode. All this has been made possible by the reckless policy of the imperialist central banks of printing money and keeping down the interest rates at nearly zero.

37. Let us look to these developments more in detail. In Table 1 we see the latest calculations of the *Institute of International Finance* on global debt. It shows that debt as a share of global output rose massively in the past 15 years. Significantly, while debt as a share of global GDP was 276% before the last recession, this has grown to 327% in 2017 – despite all the official promises to reduce debt as it was understood to be a major reason for the severity of the last recession!

<sup>60</sup> Michael Roberts: Forecast for 2018: the trend and the cycles, December 29, 2017, <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2017/12/29/forecast-for-2018-the-trend-and-the-cycles/>

**Table 1. Global Debt (All Sectors), 2002-2017** <sup>61</sup>

	<i>In Trillion US-Dollar</i>	<i>Global Debt as a Share of Global GDP</i>
2002	86	246%
2007	149	276%
2012	205	305%
2017	217	327%

38. In Table 2 we see the breakdown of this debt into the different sectors: Non-Financial Corporations, Government, Financial Sector, Household. It is of particular interest to see that – compared with the situation before the last recession – the two sectors where debt increased most rapidly have been the non-financial corporations and the government. While it is only logical that the capitalists are prepared to increase their debt in order to keep their business operations going in this period of declining profit rate, it is telling that government debt is increasing massively but not that of the financial sector. This is all the more interesting since it was the financial sector which was massively in debt before the recession in 2007 and which triggered it. The explanation lies in the fundamental character of the capitalist government – as Marx and Engels already stated in the Communist Manifesto: “*The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie*” <sup>62</sup> Concretely, the capitalist state has taken over the debts of the banks and, by this, helped the financial speculators to start their risky business again. Meanwhile, the working class has to pay for the increased public debt with higher taxes and cuts in social service!

**Table 2. Global Sectoral Indebtedness (All Sectors), as a Share of Global GDP, 1997-2017** <sup>63</sup>

	<i>Non-Financial Corporations</i>	<i>Government</i>	<i>Financial Sector</i>	<i>Household</i>
1997	64%	58%	53%	42%
2007	77%	58%	86%	57%
2017	92%	87%	80%	59%

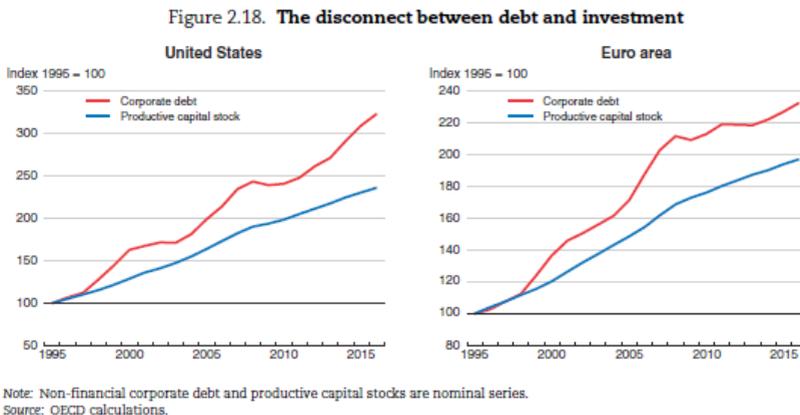
61 Tyler Durden: Global Debt Hits Record \$233 Trillion, Up \$16Tn In 9 Months, 01/07/2018, <https://www.zerohedge.com/news/2018-01-07/global-debt-hits-record-233-trillion-16-trillion-9-months>

62 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848), in: MECW Vol. 6, p. 486

63 Tyler Durden: Global Debt Hits Record \$233 Trillion, Up \$16Tn In 9 Months, 01/07/2018, <https://www.zerohedge.com/news/2018-01-07/global-debt-hits-record-233-trillion-16-trillion-9-months>

39. The growth of indebtedness is taking place in *all* imperialist economies. In Figure 12 we see how massively the gap between corporate debt and productive capital stock has been growing between 1995 and 2016 both in the United States as well as in the Euro Area. However, while the level of indebtedness was already high in the Western imperialist economies before the recession in 2008/09 but not so much in the so-called “emerging markets” (including China), this has changed now. In fact, debt has even increased faster in China than in the old imperialist economies! According to the latest OECD report, aggregate debt in China rose from less than 100% of GDP at the end of 2008 to 170% by early 2016.<sup>64</sup> According to another report, China’s total debt is believed to be around 280% of GDP, with corporate debt rising quickly to 160% of GDP, the highest level among the major world economies.<sup>65</sup> Finally, in Table 2 we can see that debts in government and non-financial corporations sector increased in nearly all G20 countries. Marx observed in Volume III of *Capital* that the credit system helps the capitalists to accelerate production. However, he also warned that indebtedness is a double-edged sword. The more it accelerates production, the more it will later result in violent eruptions: *“Hence, the credit system accelerates the material development of the productive forces and the establishment of the world-market. It is the historical mission of the capitalist system of production to raise these material foundations of the new mode of production to a certain degree of perfection. At the same time credit accelerates the violent eruptions of this contradiction – crises – and thereby the elements of disintegration of the old mode of production.”*<sup>66</sup>

**Figure 12. Corporate Debt and Productive Capital Stock in the US and Euro Area, 1995-2016**<sup>67</sup>



64 OECD Economic Outlook, Volume 2017 Issue 2, p. 58

65 PricewaterhouseCoopers: The Long View. How will the global economic order change by 2050? February 2017, p. 22

66 Karl Marx: Capital Band III, MECW Vol. 37, p. 439

67 OECD Economic Outlook, Volume 2017 Issue 2, p. 77

**Table 3. Sovereign and Nonfinancial Private Sector Debt-to-GDP Ratios (Percent) <sup>68</sup>**

	2006	2016
Japan	343	388
Canada	221	295
USA	225	259
Britain	210	250
Italy	205	246
Australia	187	243
South Korea	183	232
France	164	226
Germany	180	168
China	142	254
Brazil	118	145
India	125	125
South Africa	104	124
Turkey	81	113
Mexico	64	103
Russia	49	84
Saudi Arabia	66	78
Argentina	93	73
Indonesia	61	68

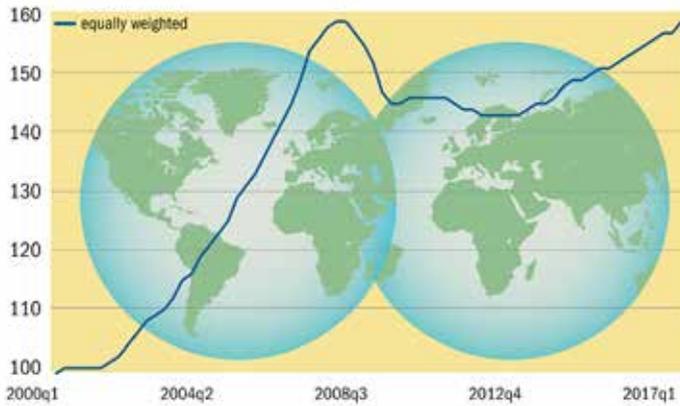
40. There are many indications that the global economy is experiencing a similar bubble as it did in the last two decades. Global stock markets are hitting all-time high after all-time high. But in fact this is a bubble which should soon implode. The WEF alarmingly observes: “US stocks have only twice in history been higher than they are at the moment: just prior to the crashes of 1929 and 2000.” <sup>69</sup> Another example for the bizarre bubble is the hype around the cryptocurrency Bitcoin, which increased in value by around 1200% in 2017! Likewise, the *Global House Price Index* has increased massively and has reached now the same level when the bubble was at its height in 2007! (See Figure 13) In short, assets are unsustainably overpriced and this bubble must implode rather sooner than later. Such an implosion most likely would trigger another Great Recession.

<sup>68</sup> IMF: Global Financial Stability Report. Is Growth at Risk? October 2017, p. 34

<sup>69</sup> WEF: Global Risks Report 2018, p.19

**Figure 13. Global House Price Index Q1-2000 – Q2-2017** <sup>70</sup>**Global Real House Price Index**

Global housing markets have been steadily climbing up.



Sources: Bank for International Settlements, European Central Bank, Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, Savills, and national sources



[www.imf.org/housing](http://www.imf.org/housing) | #HousingWatch

## Why the Next Recession will be Worse

41. In fact, the next recession will most likely be worse than the last. This is the case for a number of reasons related to the deep stagnation of the capitalist world economy. But at this place we want to point out only three important factors. First, during the last recession in 2008/09, the dramatic effects on the world economy could be softened by the fact that the recession had its focus in the old imperialist countries. Hence, China which experienced still some significant growth, as well as other “emerging economies”, could soften the consequences of the slump. This is no longer the case. As we have demonstrated, indebtedness in China and other “emerging economies” has significantly increased and, hence, their ability for counter-cyclical interventions is much more limited now.

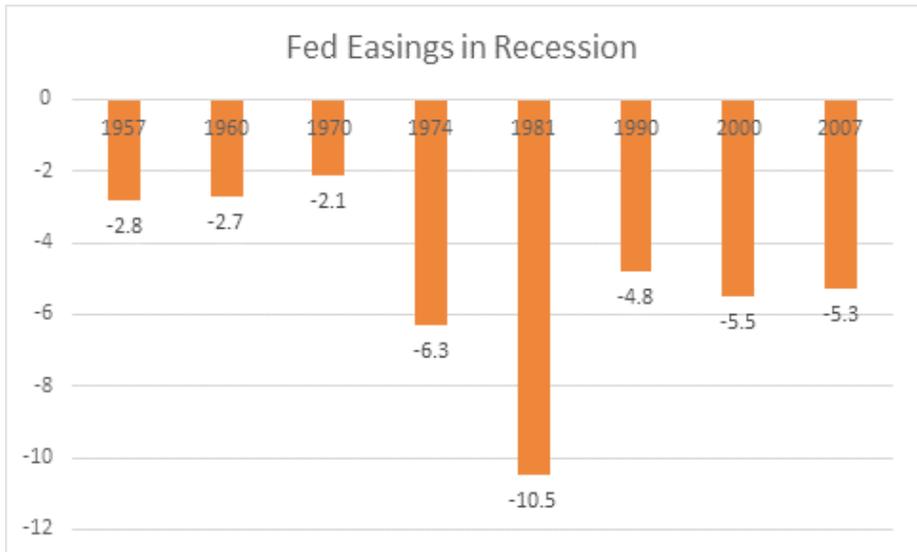
42. Secondly, the dramatic effects on the world economy in 2008/09 could be softened by the massive state-capitalist intervention. The capitalist governments were prepared to bail out the banks, take over their debts and pump money into the economy since then (the so-called “Quantitative Easing”, as we have explained in past documents on the world economy). However, again, this

<sup>70</sup> IMF: Global House Price Index, <http://www.imf.org/external/research/housing/index.htm>; see also IMF: Global Housing Watch, Q2-2017, p. 1

instrument is no longer available. The governments are now much higher indebted than they were last time and therefore their room for maneuver is much more limited.

43. Thirdly, the central banks were able in past recessions to lower the interest rates. This monetary instrument made it easier for banks and corporations to take new loans and to soften the effects of the recession. However, this instrument too is no longer available since the central banks already lowered the interest rates to nearly 0% in the past years! Former U.S. Treasury Secretary Larry Summers noted in a recent speech that the Fed typically has lowered interest rates by 5 percentage points over time to stimulate the economy in recessions. As we can see in Figure 14 the U.S. Fed lowered interest rates in every recession since the mid-1970s between 5 and 10%. This is no longer possible as the Fed had lowered the federal funds rate close to zero and just recently raised it to 1.25-1.5%. Other Central Banks – like the European Central Bank, the Bank of Japan and the Bank of England – are in an even worse position since their interest rates are currently even lower than the Fed's.

**Figure 14. U.S. Fed lowering of Interest Rates in Recession, 1957-2007** <sup>71</sup>



<sup>71</sup> Steve Liesman: The Fed, worrying about the next recession, considers changes, 10 Jan 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/01/10/the-fed-worrying-about-the-next-recession-considers-changes.html>

44. There can be no doubt that the capitalist world economy is heading towards a new Great Recession which will be most likely more devastating than the last one. An increasing number of economists already get nervous. Jean-Claude Trichet, the former President of the European Central Bank from 2003 to 2011, recently warned in an interview about the *“a very serious risk of a new crisis.”*<sup>72</sup> We can not say if the next Great Recession will happen in 2018 or later. In fact, the massive state-capitalist interventions and the huge global indebtedness, which reminds one to a Ponzi scheme, make a precise prognosis difficult. Furthermore, as the IMF pointed out in a recent report, geopolitical crises like wars or political crisis can also provoke recession: *“Rising geopolitical tensions and domestic political discord can hurt global market sentiment and confidence, burdening economic activity.”*<sup>73</sup>

45. The Marxist economist Evgenij Preobrazhensky pointed out in his last book, before he was silenced by the Stalin regime, that *“the monopolistic structure of capitalism so curtails—or perhaps it would be better to say, so distorts—the action of the law of value, that today this law can no longer regulate the process of reproduction as it once did in the epoch of free competition.”*<sup>74</sup> Such a distortion of the law of value as a regulator results in *“changing the character of the economic cycle under monopolism”*.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, Preobrazhensky concludes, the business cycles in the epoch of monopoly capitalism takes *“inevitably longer and assumes a more agonizing character”*.<sup>76</sup> It seems to us that these observations of this great Marxist economist are particularly relevant for understanding the stagnant and protracted nature of the cycle since the new historic period opened up in 2008/09. In any way, we are convinced that whenever the next Great Recession will explode, it will tremendously shatter the bourgeois order and open a new phase of major attacks by the capitalists as well as of class struggles.

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72 Interview mit Jean-Claude Trichet: „Es gibt ein sehr ernstes Risiko einer neuen Krise“, Wiener Zeitung, 27. January 2018, p. 15

73 IMF: World Economic Outlook October 2017. Seeking Sustainable Growth, p. 24

74 Evgenij Preobrazhensky: The Decline of Capitalism (1931); Translated by Richard Day (1983), p. 23

75 *ibid.*, p. 41

76 *ibid.*, p. 75

## IV. Accelerating Rivalry Between the Imperialist Great Powers

46. We have elaborated in previous works with much factual evidence that the past decade has been characterized by the decline of the U.S. as the absolute hegemonic imperialist Global Powers and the emergence of Russia and China as global rivals. We have explained that in the context of a historic revolutionary period opening in 2008 in which the productive forces are in decline, the rivalry between the imperialist monopolies and the Great Powers inevitable accelerates and provokes a crisis of the global political order.

47. We have predicted in our last World Perspective document that this tendency, with Trump becoming US President, will intensify. *“Trump’s victory also represents a watershed in the rivalry between the imperialist Great Powers. As we have stated in our pamphlet on the outcome of the US presidential election, the rise of this politician with a protectionist and unilateralist platform calling for an end of “unlimited humanitarian interventions around the globe” – in contrast to Hilary Clinton who stood for a continuation of Obama’s foreign policy – was an implicit recognition of the US’s inability to continue its role as the “world’s policeman.” At the same time, Trumpism expresses the will of the ruling class to reverse this trend.”* In this document we will not repeat our analysis of the present historic period and its central contradictions and refer readers to our past works on this issue which are mentioned in footnotes above. At this place we will only give an update of the most important factors reflecting the relation of forces between the Great Powers and deal with the most important political developments of the recent past.

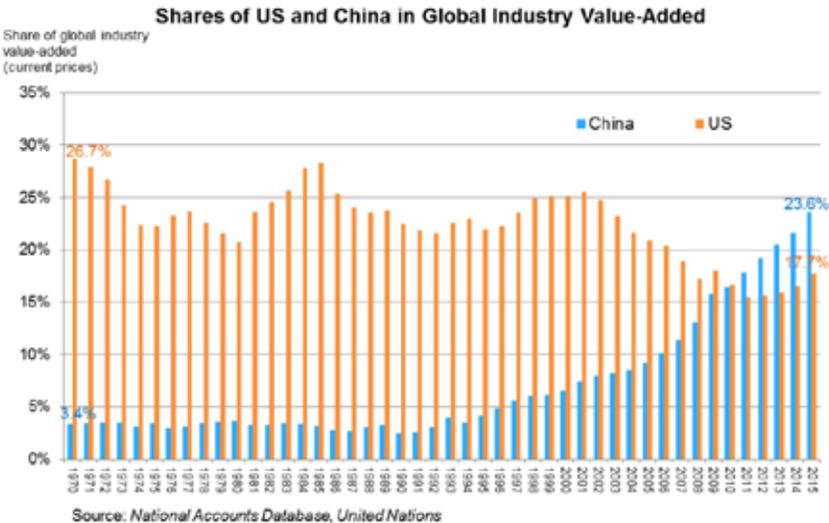
### The Decline of the U.S. and the Rise of China in Numbers

48. The trend of the decline of the old imperialist powers (US, EU and Japan) and the rise of new imperialist powers (China and Russia) is continuing. A reflection of the change in the relation of forces is the share of the Great Powers in global capitalist value production and trade. In Figure 15 we can see the development of industrial production between the years 1970 and 2015 and the dramatic rise of China’s share in this period. In Figure 16 we see the turnaround of the relation of force between the US and China in the past decades. While the US’s share in global industrial production decreased from 25.1% (2000) to 17.7% (2015) and Western Europe’s share declined from 12.1% to 9.2%, China’s share grew from 6.5% (2000) to 23.6% (2015)! A similar transformation took place in world trade. While the U.S.’s share declined from 15.1 (2001) to 11.4% (2016), China’s share rose in this period from 4.0% to 11.5%. (See Figure 17)

Figure 15. Global Industrial Production, US, Western Europe and China 1970-2015 (in Current Prices)<sup>77</sup>



Figure 16. Share of the US and China in Global Industrial Production, 1970-2015 (in Current Prices)<sup>78</sup>



77 Hong Kong Trade Development Council: Changing Global Production Landscape and Asia's Flourishing Supply Chain, 3 October 2017, p.1

78 Hong Kong Trade Development Council: Changing Global Production Landscape and Asia's Flourishing Supply Chain, 3 October 2017, p.1

Figure 17. Share of the US and China in World Trade, 2001-2016 <sup>79</sup>

49. Let us look now to the national composition of the world's biggest corporations – another important indicator for the relation of forces between the monopoly capitalists of different Great Powers. A comparison of the *Forbes Global 2000* list – a list the world's 2000 largest corporations – of the year 2003 and the year 2017 reveals dramatic changes. (See Table 3) While the US remains the strongest power, its share has declined substantially from 776 corporations (38.8%) to 565 (28.2%). A similar development took place in other old imperialist countries like Japan (from 16.5% to 11.4%), Britain (from 6,6% to 4,5%), France (from 3,3% to 2,9%), and Germany (from 3,2% to 2,5%). On the other hand, China was hardly represented at all in the list for 2003 (0.6%). However, by 2017 China had 263 corporations on this list and became the second ranking power (13.1%). The same dynamic is reflected in another widely-used list of the largest capitalist monopolies – the so-called *Fortune Global 500*. While in 2001, 197 corporations among the *Fortune Global 500* had their headquarters in the US, this number decreased to 132 by 2017. China, on the other hand, was able to dramatically increase the number of its corporations from 12 (2001) to 115 (2017), becoming the second-ranking power closely behind the U.S. (See Table 4)

<sup>79</sup> Hong Kong Trade Development Council: Changing Global Production Landscape and Asia's Flourishing Supply Chain, 3 October 2017, p.4

**Table 4. National Composition of the World's 2000 Largest Corporations, 2003 and 2017 (Forbes Global 2000 List)** <sup>80</sup>

	2003		2017	
	Number	Share	Number	Share
USA	776	38.8%	565	28.2%
China	13	0.6%	263	13.1%
Japan	331	16.5%	229	11.4%
Britain	132	6.6%	91	4.5%
France	67	3.3%	59	2.9%
Canada	50	2.5%	58	2.9%
Germany	64	3.2%	51	2.5%
South Korea	55	2.7%	64	3.2%
India	20	1.0%	58	2.9%

**Table 5. US and China: Their Share among the World's 500 Largest Corporations, 2001 and 2017 (Fortune Global 500 List)** <sup>81</sup>

	USA		China	
	Number	Share	Number	Share
2001	197	39.4%	12	2.4%
2017	132	26.4%	115	23.0%

50. Likewise, China remains the country with the largest number of billionaires, or the second largest – according to which list you take – in the world. According to the 2017 issue of the *Hurun Global Rich List*, 609 billionaires are Chinese and 552 are US citizens. Together they account for half of the billionaires worldwide. <sup>82</sup> The *Forbes Billionaire List*, which is US-based while *Hurun* is China-based, sees the U.S. still ahead. However, the trend is the same: the weight of China's monopoly capitalists is increasing. According to Forbes: “*The U.S. continues to have more billionaires than any other nation, with a record 565, up*

80 Fortune Global 500 List (2017), <https://www.forbes.com/global2000/list/45/#tab:overall>; see also Josie Cox: Chinese banks dominate Forbes ranking of world's biggest public companies, 24 May 2017, The Independent Online, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/china-banks-forbes-ranking-world-biggest-companies-industrial-commercial-bank-of-china-china-a7752896.html>; Tzu-Han Yang and Deng-Shing Huang: Multinational Corporations, FDI and the East Asian Economic Integration, National Taipei University Academia Sinica, Feb. 4, 2011, p. 3; <http://hi.knoema.com/nhmovec/the-world-s-biggest-public-companies-2017>

81 Fortune 500 List in 2017, <http://fortune.com/global500/list/>; see also Bai Ming: More Global 500 Firms from China, Beijing Review, No. 32, August 10, 2017, [http://www.bjreview.com/Opinion/201708/t20170807\\_800101899.html](http://www.bjreview.com/Opinion/201708/t20170807_800101899.html)

82 Hurun Global Rich List 2017, <http://www.hurun.net/EN/HuList/Index?num=8407ACFCBC85>; see also Zhu Wenqian: Beijing listed as billionaire capital of world once again, China Daily, 2017-03-08, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2017-03/08/content\\_28470987.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2017-03/08/content_28470987.htm); Michael Pröbsting: China's “Socialist” Billionaires, 16.11.2015, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/china-s-billionaires/>

from 540 a year ago. China is catching up with 319. (Hong Kong has another 67, and Macau 1.) Germany has the third most with 114 and India, with 101, the first time it has had more than 100, is fourth.”<sup>83</sup>

51. Finally, China’s rise as an imperialist power relative to its rivals is also reflected in its massive increase in capital export. As Table 5 shows, China’s capital export (without the figures for Hong Kong) grew dramatically since the year 2000, and has come close to reaching the volume of capital export of all imperialist rivals except the U.S.!

**Table 6. Foreign Direct Investment Stock of Great Imperialist Powers, 1990, 2000, 2016 (Millions of \$US)**<sup>84</sup>

Country	FDI inward stock		
	1990	2000	2016
USA	539,601	2,783,235	6,391,293
Japan	9,850	50,322	186,714
Britain	203,905	63,134	1,196,520
Germany	111,231	271,613	771,010
France	97,814	390,953	697,579
China	20,691	193,348	1,354,404
Russia	-	32,204	379,035

Country	FDI outward stock		
	1990	2000	2016
USA	731,762	2,694,014	6,383,751
Japan	201,441	278,442	1,400,694
Britain	229,307	923,367	1,443,936
Germany	151,581	541,866	1,365,375
France	112,441	925,925	1,259,385
China	4,455	27,768	1,280,975
Russia	-	20,141	335,791

<sup>83</sup> Luisa Kroll and Kerry A. Dolan: Forbes 2017 Billionaires List: Meet The Richest People On The Planet, 20.3.2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kerryadolan/2017/03/20/forbes-2017-billionaires-list-meet-the-richest-people-on-the-planet/#2084cc6362ff>; see also <https://www.forbes.com/billionaires/list/#version:static>

<sup>84</sup> UNCTAD: World Investment Report 2014, pp. 209-212 and UNCTAD: World Investment Report 2016, pp. 200-203 (The figures for China do not include those for Hong Kong which is listed in the UNCTAD statistics separately.)

52. As a result, Chinese monopolies have become major players in the world market. As we have already pointed out in other works, China became the third-largest investor in Latin America in 2010.<sup>85</sup> China is also Africa's biggest trading partner and buys more than one-third of its oil from that continent.<sup>86</sup> According to a recently published study from McKinsey, Chinese corporations already play a dominant role in Africa. About 10,000 Chinese corporations (90% of which are private capitalist firms) operate in Africa. They control about 12% of the continent's total industrial production and about half of Africa's internationally contracted construction market. In Africa, China is also a leader in "*green field investment*" (i.e., when a parent company begins a new venture by constructing new facilities outside of its home country); in 2015-16, China invested USD 38.4 billion (24% of total green field investment in Africa).<sup>87</sup>

53. However, China's capital export is not only growing to countries of the South but also to the old imperialist economies. Foreign direct investment in the European Union traced back to mainland China hit a record €35 billion in 2016, compared with only €1.6 billion in 2010. In a historic shift, the flow of Chinese direct investment into Europe has surpassed the declining flows of annual European direct investments into China.<sup>88</sup> As a result, a growing number of bourgeois figures become nervous about China's increasing political and economic influence in Europe.<sup>89</sup>

54. Another indication for China's rise as a Great Power is the growing use of its currency, the *yuan*, as foreign exchange reserves. For the past seven decades, the US dollar has been the world's dominant currency. Two-thirds of the world's \$6.9 trillion allocated foreign exchange reserves are held in US dollars. However, the yuan took a major step towards broader international adoption in 2016 when the IMF decided to include it in the basket of currencies that make up the Special Drawing Right, an alternative reserve asset to the dol-

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85 Miguel Perez Ludeña: Adapting to the Latin American experience; in: EAST ASIA FORUM QUARTERLY, Vol.4 No.2 April-June 2012, p. 13

86 The Chinese in Africa: Trying to pull together. Africans are asking whether China is making their lunch or eating it; in: The Economist, Apr 20th 2011, [http://www.economist.com/node/18586448?story\\_id=18586448](http://www.economist.com/node/18586448?story_id=18586448); see also SA, not China, Africa's biggest investor: study, 23 July 2010, [http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=9049:sa-not-china-africas-biggestinvestor-study&catid=7:Industry&Itemid=116](http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9049:sa-not-china-africas-biggestinvestor-study&catid=7:Industry&Itemid=116); Sanne van der Lugt, Victoria Hamblin, Meryl Burgess, Elizabeth Schicklerling: Assessing China's Role in Foreign Direct Investment in Southern Africa, Oxfam Hong Kong and Centre for Chinese Studies 2011, pp. 68-74; UNCTAD: Asian Foreign Direct Investment in Africa. Towards a New Era of Cooperation among Developing Countries (2007)

87 Irene Yuan Sun, Kartik Jayaram, Omid Kassiri: Dance of the lions and dragons. How are Africa and China engaging, and how will the partnership evolve? McKinsey & Company, June 2017, p. 10 and pp. 29-30

88 John Seaman, Mikko Huotari, Miguel Otero-Iglesias: Chinese Investment in Europe A Country-Level Approach, ETNC Report, December 2017, p. 9

89 See e.g. Thorsten Benner, Jan Gaspers, Mareike Ohlberg, Lucrezia Poggetti, Kristin Shi-Kupfer: Authoritarian Advance, Responding to China's Growing Political Influence in Europe, Global Public Policy Institute, Stiftung Mercator, February 2018

lar. While the yuan's share is still small with just over 1% of foreign exchange reserves there are signs that this is about to increase. The German Bundesbank already announced that it would include the yuan in its reserves for the first time. Likewise, the French Central Bank revealed that it already holds some reserves in yuan. And in June 2017, the European Central Bank announced that it had exchanged €500 million (\$611 million) worth of US dollar reserves into yuan securities. This was a small shift—the ECB has €44 billion in foreign exchange reserves—but nonetheless it reflects China's growing prominence in the global financial system.<sup>90</sup>

55. China's and Russia's position as main rivals for the U.S. and other old imperialist powers is also reflected in their military strength. For example China and Russia are ranked as second respectively third, only behind the U.S., in export of weapons as well as nuclear weapons. Here, too, the US remains No. 1, but Russia and China are ranked right behind it and in front of all other imperialist powers (with the exception of France with regard to nuclear weapons; see Tables 6 and 7) It is however noteworthy that the Trump Administration tries to counteract against its decline by increasing its military spending. Last year, Trump boosted the Pentagon's budget by 10%.

**Table 7. The World's 10 Top Exporters of Weapons, 2012–16**<sup>91</sup>

<i>Exporter</i>	<i>Global Share (%)</i>
1 USA	33
2 Russia	23
3 China	6.2
4 France	6.0
5 Germany	5.6
6 UK	4.6
7 Spain	2.8
8 Italy	2.7
9 Ukraine	2.6
10 Israel	2.3

90 Eshe Nelson: Europe's central banks are starting to replace dollar reserves with the yuan, January 16, 2018 <https://qz.com/1180434/europes-central-banks-are-starting-to-replace-us-dollar-reserves-with-the-chinese-yuan/>

91 SIPRI Yearbook 2017 (Summary), p. 15

**Table 8. World Nuclear Forces, 2016** <sup>92</sup>

<i>Country</i>	<i>Deployed Warheads</i>	<i>Other Warheads</i>	<i>Total Inventory</i>
USA	1,800	5,000	6,800
Russia	1,950	5,050	7,000
UK	120	95	215
France	280	20	300
China	–	270	270

56. The U.S.'s decline and China's and Russia's rise has also been reflected in the global political developments. One of the most important developments has been the decision of US President Trump to withdraw from the negotiations process over the *Trans-Pacific Partnership* (TPP). At the same time, China is advancing the alternative *Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership* (RCEP) and hopes to conclude the negotiations in 2018. <sup>93</sup>

## Russia Expanding its Influence

57. As we have pointed out in past documents Russia is economically weaker than China but stronger as a military power. While their interests are certainly not identical, they have intensified their cooperation given the aggressive efforts to keep their economic and political domination. STRATFOR, an US imperialist think tank, observes in its forecast for 2018: *"In fact, lately Russia and China have found more reason to cooperate than compete with each other. Both countries are working to insulate themselves from U.S. pressure and reduce Washington's influence in strategic theaters around the globe. To that end, they have hashed out a division of labor of sorts: Where both states share interests, Russia addresses security issues as it deems fit while China takes the lead on economic matters. Moscow and Beijing also have deepened their cooperation in finance, trade, energy, cybersecurity and defense."* <sup>94</sup>

58. Russia was also able to expand its influence, in particular in the Middle East. This has not only been reflected in its dominating position in Syria and the expansion of its military bases – both its naval bases in Tartus as well as its air base in Hmeimim. Its expansion has also resulted in intensifying relations with various states in the Middle East like Israel, Egypt and even Saudi Arabia. It has also built closer relations with the ex-Gaddafi general and arch-reactionary militia leader in Eastern Libya, General Haftar.

<sup>92</sup> SIPRI Yearbook 2017 (Summary), p. 16

<sup>93</sup> See on this e.g. Michael Pröbsting: The China-India Conflict: Its Causes and Consequences; RCIT: The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a Project of Chinese Imperialism for the Colonialization of Pakistan! 22.1.2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/pakistan-cpec/>

<sup>94</sup> STRATFOR 2018 Annual Forecast, 26.12.2017, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/2018-annual-forecast>

## “Make China Great Again”

59. The political leadership of China is fully aware of its increasing global role. China’s strong man, Xi Jinping, explicitly spoke about China’s global leading role. He said: *“It is time for us to take centre stage in the world and to make a greater contribution to humankind.”*<sup>95</sup> The Chinese patriotic ideologists link to the old Chinese concept of *Tianxia*, an ancient Chinese concept that views the country as the center of the world and of civilization. Recently, *People’s Daily*, the Chinese Communist Party’s flagship newspaper, published a 5,500 word long editorial – a kind of manifesto. This document expresses without disguise China’s imperialist ambition to become the world dominating power. It states, referring to China’s past empire which considered itself as the center of the world, that China faces an *“historic opportunity”* to *“restore itself to greatness and return to its rightful position in the world.”* It emphasizes: *““The world has never focused on China so much and needed China so much as it does now”*. It states: *“The historic opportunity is an all-round one, which refers to not only economic development but also the speeding up of science, technology and industrial revolution, the growing influence of Chinese culture and the increasing acknowledgement to the Chinese wisdom and Chinese approach (...) We are more confident, and more competent, than any time in history to grasp this opportunity.”* Furthermore, the editorial points out that *“the global governance system is undergoing profound changes; and a new international order is taking shape.”* Fittingly, *South China Morning Post*, Hong Kong’s biggest daily newspaper, titled a report about this manifesto *“Make China great again”!*<sup>96</sup>

60. An increasing number of Western ideologists become aware that the old imperialist states are losing geopolitical influence and that Chinese imperialism is seen by a growing number of states as an alternative leading global power. The *Eurasia Group* writes in its latest report: *“Still, since 2008, we’ve seen a gradual erosion in global perceptions of the attractiveness of Western liberal democracies. There is now a viable alternative. For most of the West, China is not an appealing substitute. But for most everybody else, it is a plausible alternative. And with Xi ready and willing to offer that alternative and extend China’s influence, that’s the world’s biggest risk this year.”*<sup>97</sup> Edward Wong, the *New York Times’* former Beijing bu-

95 BBC: Xi Jinping: ‘Time for China to take centre stage’, 18 October 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-41647872>

96 All quotes are taken from Bill Bishop: China wants to reshape the global order, in: *Axios China*, Jan 19, 2018, [https://www.axios.com/chinas-growing-global-aspirations-in-the-xi-jinping-era-1516305566-aa5be206-c156-4313-8229-cfa88af9b75a.html?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=&stream=top-stories](https://www.axios.com/chinas-growing-global-aspirations-in-the-xi-jinping-era-1516305566-aa5be206-c156-4313-8229-cfa88af9b75a.html?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=&stream=top-stories); Nectar Gan: Make China great again: Communist Party seeks to seize ‘historic’ moment to reshape world order. High-profile comment piece urges country to rally around Xi and realise nation’s global aspirations, 18 January, 2018, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2128711/make-china-great-again-communist-party-seeks-seize>; Xinhua: CPC newspaper says China should “grasp historic opportunity”, 15.01.2018, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/15/c\\_136897189.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/15/c_136897189.htm)

97 Eurasia Group: *Top Risks 2018*, p. 5

reau chief, warns: “China is shaping the world in ways that people have only begun to grasp. Yet the emerging imperium is more a result of the Communist Party’s exercise of hard power, including economic coercion, than the product of a gravitational pull of Chinese ideas or contemporary culture. Of the global powers that dominated the 19th century, China alone is a rejuvenated empire.”<sup>98</sup>

61. While various reformists and centrists continue to deny the imperialist character of Russia and China and rather believe that Russia and China are weak, non-imperialist states (and some muddle-heads like the Spartacist school of ICL, IG/LFI and IBT even claim that China is still a “deformed workers state”!<sup>99</sup>), the imperialist bourgeoisie knows better. As they recognize people of their ilk, they are aware that the US, EU, Japan, China and Russia are imperialist Great Powers which are rivaling against each other for world domination. This is why various strategy papers and forecasts by imperialist think tanks express pessimism about the decline of the US, the crisis of the global order and the increasing tensions between the Great Powers. The WEF, for example, warns in its recently published annual report: “The intensification of strong-state politics has the greatest disruptive potential among the world’s major powers: relations between them are changing, mostly for the worse. As each of these states becomes increasingly assertive of its own interests, consensus is fraying on the rules that govern their interactions and the directions in which the world might converge. As a result, there is evidence of a general breakdown in trust and an erosion of respect for global norms designed to govern peaceful international interactions.”<sup>100</sup> Another imperialist think tank, the *Eurasia Group*, is even more explicit in its worries for an end of the Western-dominated global order as a result of the US’s decline and China’s surge: “Last year, we wrote that the world was entering a period of geopolitical recession. After nearly a decade of a slowly destabilizing G-Zero framework, the election of Donald Trump as US president has accelerated the descent into a Hobbesian state of

98 Edward Wong: A Chinese Empire Reborn, Jan. 5, 2018, New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/05/sunday-review/china-military-economic-power.html>

99 In our studies on China, we have demonstrated in detail the capitalist character of China economy. (See e.g. Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South, chapter 10, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/great-robbery-of-the-south/>) It is absurd to claim that China is still a post-capitalist workers state when the majority of China’s industrial output is produced by the private sector, as is attested to by figures published by the *World Bank* and the *Chinese Development Research Center of the State Council*. Both of these institutions attribute 70% of the country’s GDP and employment to non-state sectors. The state sector’s share in the total number of industrial enterprises (with annual sales over 5mn RMB) fell precipitously from 39.2% in 1998 to 4.5% in 2010. During the same period, the share of State Owned Enterprises in total industrial assets dropped from 68.8% to 42.4%, while their share in employment declined from 60.5% to 19.4%. (The World Bank, Development Research Center of the State Council, the People’s Republic of China: China 2030. Building a Modern, Harmonious, and Creative High-Income Society, p. 104) We do not deny that the state sector continues to play a central role in China’s economy. But this is not a “socialist” but a state-capitalist sector! The ultra-left muddle-heads might believe that the Chinese leadership is still “communist”. But the imperialist ideologists know better which is why they characterize the regime in Beijing as an “authoritarian and state capitalist Chinese government.” (Eurasia Group: Top Risks 2018, p. 5)

100 World Economic Forum: The Global Risks Report 2018 13th Edition, p. 38

*international politics. The world is now closer to geopolitical depression than to a reversion to past stability. (...) The decline of US influence in the world will accelerate in 2018. The mix of soft power and economic and political liberalism faces a crisis of credibility. With little sense of strategic direction from the Trump White House, US global power, used too aggressively by George W. Bush, then too timidly by Barack Obama, is sputtering to a stall. (...) For decades, many in the West have assumed that the emergence of a Chinese middle class would force China's leaders to liberalize the country's politics in order to survive. Instead, China's political model, despite its domestic challenges, is now perceived as stronger than it has ever been—and at a moment when the US political model is weakened. Today, in terms of the legitimacy of government in the eyes of its citizens, the US may be in at least as great a need of structural political reform as China. It's a shocking statement; all the more for its obviousness once you think about it. It's also one we've not once heard uttered in Washington, from either side of the aisle. Combine that with the strongest Chinese president since Mao Zedong and one of the weakest US presidents in modern history, and you end up with a moment of global reordering.”<sup>101</sup>*

## The Aggressive Strategy of the Trump Administration

62. Russia's and China's rise as imperialist rivals is also reflected in the latest strategy documents of the White House and the Pentagon. While in the past 15 years, the U.S. has emphasized the struggle “against terrorism” as the main priority of its military policy, this has shifted now to the struggle against China and Russia. Naturally, this does not mean that the “traditional” enemies of US imperialism have disappeared as the recent *National Security Strategy* document of the White House makes it clear: “A central continuity in history is the contest for power. The present time period is no different. Three main sets of challengers—the revisionist powers of China and Russia, the rogue states of Iran and North Korea, and transnational threat organizations, particularly jihadist terrorist groups—are actively competing against the United States and our allies and partners.”<sup>102</sup> However, the inter-imperialist rivalry is now the priority number one as U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis summarized in a speech on 19 January 2018: “Great-power competition - not terrorism - is now the primary focus of U.S. national security.”<sup>103</sup> The *National Security Strategy* document states: “The United States will respond to the growing political, economic, and military competitions we face around the world. China and Russia challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity.”<sup>104</sup> And: “China and Russia want to shape

101 Eurasia Group: Top Risks 2018, pp. 3-4

102 The White House: National Security Strategy of the United States of America, December 2017, p. 25

103 Anthony Capaccio: Terror Loses Top Spot to Russia and China on U.S. Threat List, Bloomberg, 19. January 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-01-19/rising-threat-from-china-russia-dominate-trump-defense-strategy-jcm1xi6v>

104 The White House: National Security Strategy of the United States of America, December 2017,

a world antithetical to U.S. values and interests.”<sup>105</sup> Likewise, the Pentagon’s *National Defense Report* makes clear what the number one priority for the U.S. is: “Long-term strategic competitions with China and Russia are the principal priorities for the Department, and require both increased and sustained investment, because of the magnitude of the threats they pose to U.S. security and prosperity today, and the potential for those threats to increase in the future.”<sup>106</sup> It accuses its rivals: “China and Russia are now undermining the international order from within the system by exploiting its benefits while simultaneously undercutting its principles and ‘rules of the road.’”<sup>107</sup> Consistent with our view of the world political situation as one which is marked by acceleration of inter-imperialist rivalry, the U.S. Defense Secretary warns of increased “global volatility and uncertainty, with great power competition between nations a reality once again.”<sup>108</sup> Another example of the growing aggressiveness of U.S. imperialism is the new *Nuclear Posture Review*. It expands the circumstances in which the US might use its nuclear arsenal, to include a response to a non-nuclear attack that caused mass casualties, or was aimed at critical infrastructure or nuclear command and control sites.<sup>109</sup>

63. US imperialism also tries to halt the advance of China and Russia in its traditional spheres of influence. Before starting a tour of the region, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said in early February that Russia’s growing presence in Latin America was “alarming.” He also said the region did not need “new imperial powers,” in reference to its fluid commercial relations with both Russia and China.<sup>110</sup> Expressing the imperialist arrogance of Washington, he even went so far to praise the old *Monroe doctrine* which originated in 1823 and

p. 2

105 The White House: National Security Strategy of the United States of America, December 2017, p. 25

106 U.S. Department of Defense: Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America. Sharpening the American Military’s Competitive Edge, p. 4

107 U.S. Department of Defense: Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America. Sharpening the American Military’s Competitive Edge, p. 2

108 Helene Cooperjan: Military Shifts Focus to Threats by Russia and China, Not Terrorism, New York Times, 19 January 2018 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/19/us/politics/military-china-russia-terrorism-focus.html>

109 See e.g. Ernest Moniz and Sam Nunn: Three Steps to Avert an Accidental Nuclear War, Bloomberg, 1. Februar 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2018-02-01/three-steps-to-avert-an-accidental-nuclear-war>; Julian Borger: US to loosen nuclear weapons constraints and develop more ‘usable’ warheads, The Guardian, 9 Jan 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jan/09/us-to-loosen-nuclear-weapons-policy-and-develop-more-usable-warheads> Jessica Corbett: Rising Concerns About Nuclear War as Trump Prepares to Loosen Constraints on Weapons, Common Dreams, January 10, 2018, <https://www.commondreams.org/news/2018/01/10/rising-concerns-about-nuclear-war-trump-prepares-loosen-constraints-weapons>; see also the leaked draft *Nuclear Posture Review*, January 2018 (this document was originally leaked to and published by Huffington Post at [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trumpnuclear-posture-review-2018\\_us\\_5a4d4773e4b06d1621bce4c5](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trumpnuclear-posture-review-2018_us_5a4d4773e4b06d1621bce4c5)).

110 Robbie Gramer, Keith Johnson: Tillerson Praises Monroe Doctrine, Warns Latin America of ‘Imperial’ Chinese Ambitions, Foreign Policy, February 2, 2018, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/02/02/tillerson-praises-monroe-doctrine-warns-latin-america-off-imperial-chinese-ambitions-mexico-south-america-nafta-diplomacy-trump-trade-venezuela-maduro/>

which declares that Latin America is a U.S. sphere of influence where other Great Powers must not interfere. In a speech in Austin (Texas), Tillerson emphasized the *“importance of the Monroe Doctrine and what it meant to this hemisphere and maintaining those shared values. So I think it’s as relevant today as it was the day it was written.”*<sup>111</sup>

64. The ruptures in the global order and the lack of a dominating Great Power makes it urgent for the capitalist states, on one hand, to look for geopolitical alliances but, on the other hand, it also makes such alliances more instable. Capitalist states, which are strong enough so that they don’t have to subjugate themselves completely to one Great Power but which are too weak to dominate an alliance themselves, are sometimes in a position to shift or to split their loyalty. Israel, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, for example, are long standing allies of the U.S. But the later decline and Russia’s rise as an important power in the Middle East have led to the situation that these countries are also looking for collaboration with Putin. Turkey’s shift from Washington to Moscow, while remaining a member of NATO, is another case in point.

65. Another important example is India. While it has close political relations with Moscow for many years and it has been a member of the China-Russia dominated BRICS alliance, it is increasingly turning to Washington and Tokyo since Modi and his Hindu-chauvinist BJP came to power in 2014. While South Korea remains an ally of US imperialism, it is increasingly worried about Washington pressure to renegotiate a trade agreement as well as Trump’s war threats against North Korea since it would be the Southern neighbor, and not the US, which would bear the brunt of such a devastating confrontation. Furthermore, China is becoming a crucial country in terms of foreign investment and trade, so that Seoul might also look for accommodation, instead of confrontation, with Beijing.

66. However, for the time being there seems to be some axes which will determine the geopolitical developments in the next phase. As mentioned before, these alliances are not set in stone and new developments can, and in one way or another will, alter them. Having said this we can recognize, on one hand, an alliance centered on China and Russia. These two powers are bound together by their opposition against the US hegemony. They can only increase their sphere of influence at the cost of Washington. In their camp, to name the more important states, are Iran, Venezuela, South Africa and, to a certain degree, North Korea (see more on this below in the chapter on Asia). Increasingly, Erdoğan’s Turkey is also moving closer to this camp.

67. On the other hand, there is an alliance centered on the United States. Japan is aligned with the US as it faces the same rival – China – and because it remains for the time being militarily relatively weak. Other important states in

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111 Rex W. Tillerson (U.S. Secretary of State): U.S. Engagement in the Western Hemisphere, Remarks, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, February 1, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2018/02/277840.htm>

this alliance are Israel, Saudi-Arabia, Australia and, increasingly, India.

68. The European imperialist powers are also in motion. The EU has faced a number of difficulties as has been seen with London's Brexit or the opposition of several states against an increasing political and institutional cohesion. As we have dealt with this issue in past documents, we want to remark at this point only the following notes:<sup>112</sup> It is without doubt true that centrifugal forces could bring the EU to a collapse. In such a case its individual states have to look for an alliance, as a subordinated state, with stronger Great Powers. It is however clear, that the only chance for European imperialism to play any independent role in the global economic and political developments is a deepening of the EU integration process and steps towards the creation of pan-European political and military institutions. Contrary to our viewpoint, various centrist opponents (e.g. the CWI, IMT, etc.) have always stubbornly emphasized that the EU will unavoidable collapse. In fact, they have been predicting a collapse of the EU since several decades (only to be disappointed every year). And when Brexit won in the referendum in summer 2016, they felt confident to make again such predications. However, the developments of the past 18 months have again demonstrated, once more, that the majority of the monopoly bourgeoisie of the main European powers is determined to deepen the EU integration. Macron is certainly pushing the EU integration forward. And even if the EU in its present forms collapses, it is likely that it would be replaced by a smaller version which would probably include Germany, the Benelux countries and some other European states.

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112 See e.g. Michael Pröbsting: Marxism, the European Union and Brexit. The L5I and the European Union: A Right Turn away from Marxism, in: Special Issue of Revolutionary Communism No. 55, August 2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/eu-and-brexit/>; Michael Pröbsting: Does the EU Represent "Bourgeois Democratic Progress"? 16.09.2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/eu-brexit-article/>; Michael Pröbsting: The British Left and the EU-Referendum: The Many Faces of pro-UK or pro-EU Social-Imperialism. An analysis of the left's failure to fight for an independent, internationalist and socialist stance both against British as well as European imperialism, August 2015, in: Revolutionary Communism No. 40, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/british-left-and-eu-referendum/>; Michael Pröbsting: The EU Reform Treaty: what it is and how to fight it, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/eu-reform-treaty/>; Michael Pröbsting: 'Americanise or bust'. Contradictions and challenges of the imperialist project of European unification, 2004, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/eu-imperialism-americanise-or-bust/>;

## V. Middle East and North Africa: Reactionary Offensive, Wars and Popular Uprisings

69. As we stated above, the RCIT considers the Middle East and North Africa as a powder-keg.<sup>113</sup> It is one of the two most crucial regions where the global contradictions between the imperialist powers clash and where wars and revolutions are a central characteristic. As we have dealt with many of these issues in numerous separate pamphlets, statements and articles, we will focus at this point only on the most important developments and conclusions for the liberation struggle. The Middle East and North Africa are characterized by three, inter-connected, features:

i. *An ongoing reactionary offensive of the imperialist powers and local bourgeois regimes in the whole region against the democratic and social rights of the working class and the popular masses.* This includes plans of a new Sykes-Picot Agreement to “solve” the Palestinian issue by a new *Nakba*. Furthermore, there exists the imminent danger of the final annihilation of the Syrian Revolution by an unholy alliance of the Assad regime, its Russian and Iranian masters, Turkey and the Western powers.

ii. *An increasing number of wars and potential wars.* Currently there are ongoing just wars of oppressed people (Syria and Yemen) against reactionary dictatorships and regional or great powers standing behind them. In addition, there are several potential wars (Israel against the Palestinians in Gaza; US and/or Israel against Iran; wars involving Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, Turkey, Sudan and other states; Saudi Arabia against Qatar). The Middle East currently strongly resembles the Balkans shortly before 1912/13 with a series of wars looming.

iii. *Most importantly, a new wave of popular uprisings against austerity programs, national oppression and reactionary regimes* (Palestine, Tunisia, Iran, Morocco, and Sudan).

70. The Middle East and North Africa remains marked by the counter-revolutionary offensive of the ruling class. The imperialist Great Powers – in particular the U.S. and Russia – as well as the local reactionary regimes try to crush the remnants of the Arab Revolution and the new uprisings. They strive to reorder the region in their respective interests. However, these efforts of the U.S., Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Egypt inevitable clash with each other.

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113 For reasons of space, we will partly use the category “Middle East” when we refer to the whole region of Middle East and North Africa. Since there are different definitions in use, we want to make it clear that we include in the category “Middle East” not only the Arab countries but also Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan.

71. Related to this are the efforts of the imperialist monopolies as well as all local regimes to impose harsh austerity packages on the working class and the poor resulting in dramatic price hikes and social cuts. At a recent conference in Dubai, IMF chief Christine Lagarde called on Arab states to slash public sector wages and subsidies to offset the effects of low oil prices on state budgets. She welcomed the “promising reforms” of some Arab states, but said “more sweeping changes were needed”.<sup>114</sup> In fact, the Arab capitalist governments did already implement a number of austerity measures. According to the chairman of the *Arab Monetary Fund*, Abdulrahman al-Hamidy, the value of Arab energy subsidies already dropped from \$117 billion in 2015 to \$98 billion last year.<sup>115</sup>

72. Hence, all these efforts provoke domestic and foreign policy crisis including revolutionary upsurges and the danger of new wars. It resembles Marx’s description of the situation where the whip of the counter-revolution provokes the revolution.<sup>116</sup>

## A new Sykes-Picot Agreement?

73. Until a few years, U.S. imperialism was the undisputed hegemonial power in the Middle East. With the global decline of the American hegemony and the emergence of new imperialist powers, Washington’s sole domination of the Middle East and North Africa is a thing of the past. The Trump Administration hopes to counteract this trend as the region is of strategic importance for U.S. imperialism. Or to put it in the words of the conservative *Heritage Foundation*, a leading American conservative think tank: “Strategically situated at the intersection of Europe, Asia, and Africa, the Middle East has long been an important focus of United States foreign policy. (...) The U.S. also maintains a long-term interest in the Middle East that is related to the region’s economic importance as the world’s primary source of oil and gas.”<sup>117</sup> According to a report of the *Newsweek Magazine*, President Trump has increased the number of U.S. troops and civilians working for the Pentagon in the Middle East to 54,180 from 40,517 in the second half of

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114 IMF chief calls on Arab leaders to cut spending, 11 February, 2018 <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/2/11/imf-chief-calls-on-arab-leaders-to-cut-spending>

115 The Independent: IMF chief urges Arab states to slash spending, February 10, 2018 <https://www.independent.co.uk/imf-chief-urges-arab-states-slash-spending/>

116 “With the exception of only a few chapters, every important part of the revolutionary annals from 1848 to 1849 bear the heading: Defeat of the revolution! What succumbed in these defeats was not the revolution. It was the pre-revolutionary traditional appendages, results of social relationships which had not yet come to the point of sharp class antagonisms — persons, illusions, conceptions, projects from which the revolutionary party before the February Revolution was not free, from which it could be freed not by the victory of February, but only by a series of defeats. In a word: The revolution made progress, forged ahead, not by its immediate tragicomic achievements but, on the contrary, by the creation of a powerful, united counterrevolution, by the creation of an opponent in combat with whom the party of overthrow ripened into a really revolutionary party.” (Karl Marx: *The Class Struggles in France 1848 to 1850* (1850), in: MECW Vol. 10, p. 47, [www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/class-struggles-france/index.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/class-struggles-france/index.htm))

117 The Heritage Foundation: 2018 Index of U.S. Military Strength, Washington 2018, p. 141

2017, representing a 33-percent rise.<sup>118</sup>

74. Furthermore the Trump Administration tries to create a major Sunni-Israel alliance. It shall serve as a counterbalance to the victorious “Shiite” axis (Iran, Syria, Iraq, Hezbollah-Lebanon) which is part of the camp led by imperialist Russia and China. Hence its recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital was not only a concession to the Evangelic-fundamentalist-Zionist lobby in order to reestablish some domestic support. It was also part of a comprehensive plan which Jared Kushner, Trump’s son-in-law and “special advisor”, has negotiated with Israel, Saudi Arabia and Egypt and tried to impose on the Palestinian people. While not all aspects of this evil plan – which Kushner seem to have elaborated in consultation with the extreme right-wing Zionist billionaire Sheldon Adelson (according to Wolff’s *“Fire and Fury”*) – are known, several details of it have seen public light. One of these is the idea that the Palestinians should accept Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and take instead the Jerusalem-adjacent village of Abu Dis as an alternative capital in their future state! But this is not the only provocation. Another crucial aspect of this plan is the idea of extensive territorial exchanges. For example, Egypt would cede a piece of the Sinai Peninsula to the Gaza Strip. With this, Gaza’s territory would extend southward along the seashore, making it three or four times larger than it currently is. In exchange, the Palestinians would give up territories in the West Bank, allowing Israel to annex the settlement blocs along with a generous amount of land around them, thereby maintaining some degree of territorial integrity between the various blocs. At the same time, Israel would give Egypt a narrow strip of territory along the lengthy southern border between the two countries. There is also the possibility that Saudi Arabia and Jordan would also participate in these territorial exchanges, with various ideas proposed.<sup>119</sup> In short, such a “peace” plan (what an Orwellian language!) would represent a new Sykes-Picot Agreement – similar to the agreement between British and French imperialism in 1916 dividing the Middle East among themselves.

75. It is not difficult to understand that such a plan is a pure provocation not only for the Palestinians, but for all Arabs and Muslims outside the corrupt elite. Any Palestinian leader would find it hardly possible to explain to his people that they should accept Abu Dis (of which the world has not heard before!) instead of Jerusalem as their capital or the loss of parts of the West Bank

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118 John Haltiwanger: Trump’s Secret War? U.S. Military’s Presence In Middle East Has Grown 33 Percent In Past Four Months, Newsweek Magazine, 21.11.2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/trumps-secret-war-us-militarys-presence-middle-east-has-grown-33-percent-past-718089>

119 See on this e.g. Mustafa Abu Sneh: Abu Dis: The Palestinian ‘capital’ Saudi Arabia wants to force on Abbas, Middle East Eye, 19 December 2017 <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/abu-dis-talked-of-as-capital-palestinian-state-east-jerusalem-israel-58487833>; Ben Caspit: Trump’s peace deal: A Gaza-centered Palestine, Al-Monitor, January 8, 2018 <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/01/israel-palestinians-us-egypt-saudi-arabia-mahmoud-abbas.html>, Anne Barnard, David M. Halbfinger and Peter Bakerdec: Talk of a Peace Plan That Snubs Palestinians Roils Middle East, New York Times, 03.12.2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/03/world/middleeast/palestinian-saudi-peace-plan.html?mtref=www.google.at&gwh=0905E672E177BADF58AA507823E1CAAF&gt=pay>

(in exchange for some square kilometers of sand in Sinai!). It would be also a very difficult challenge for the Egypt regime to justify another give-away after General Sisi already faced massive domestic criticism for selling two islands to Saudi Arabia.

76. The whole plan sounds completely bizarre and adventurist. It is however an unmistakable roadmap to a region-wide mass popular intifada and a great war in the Middle East! Because such a plan will certainly provoke an uprising of the workers and oppressed in Palestine and other countries. Furthermore the only possible condition were one could imagine the realization of such a counterrevolutionary re-ordering of the Middle East would be the aftermath of a catastrophic war resulting in an Israeli victory (with Saudi/Egypt compliance) and a historic defeat of the Palestinian and other resisting people. If, let us say, Israel conquers Gaza and annihilates the resistance forces and does the same in the West Bank, provoking a new *Nakba* creating more millions of Palestinian refugees, these arch-reactionary forces could succeed in imposing such a new Sykes-Picot Agreement. However, even in such a scenario it is difficult to imagine that such a “solution” could lead to stability in the region. The reason for this is that given the fundamental rivalry between the Great Powers – and, related to this, between various regional powers like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, and Israel – any victory of Israel (with Saudi support) would provoke Iran or other rivals to increase their support for the Palestinians and other anti-Israeli forces. In short, no stability in the Middle East as a result of a counter-revolutionary “peace” plan is possible. This is also true in a more general sense: as long as an accelerating rivalry exists between the imperialist Great Powers, i.e. as long as we are living in the current historic period, there will be an accelerating rivalry between the regional powers in the Middle East.

## Wars with different characters

77. While Russia and China do not push for such a new Sykes-Picot Agreement, they are intervening to radically change the regional order of the Middle East by other means. Russia’s massive military intervention in Syria since 2015 has dramatically increased Moscow’s influence in the region. According to Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, Russia has deployed a total of 48,000 troops in Syria since it began its military operation in September 2015.<sup>120</sup> Russian imperialism was able to consolidate its alliance with Iran, the Assad regime and Hezbollah, it succeeded in drawing Turkey closer and it has become accepted as a Great Power by Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Likewise, this bloc made also huge advances by Iran’s expansion of influence in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon – the so-called *Shia Crescent*. Furthermore, the growing division between the “Sunni” powers Saudi Arabia and Egypt, on one hand, and Turkey and Qatar, on one

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120 48,000 Russian Troops Took Part In Syrian Campaign – Defense Minister, 2017-12-22, <https://southfront.org/48000-russian-troops-took-part-in-syrian-campaign-defense-minister/>

other hand, has also massive influence for the increasing political instability of the region. While Turkey and Qatar are not in Russian camp, they are clearly open for collaboration with them given the increasing hostility they face from the US/Saudi/Israeli bloc.

78. The global decline of capitalism and the accelerating rivalry between the Great Powers constitute the basis for the acceleration of the contradictions between the regional powers in the Middle East as well as for the intensified efforts of the capitalist class to increase the exploitation and oppression. These tensions undermine the regional order and push states to look for adventures. Hence, we observe a steadily rising bellicosity of the U.S., Israel and Saudi Arabia against Iran and its allies (e.g. Hezbollah, Houthis) or potential allies (e.g. Qatar). Likewise, we have seen a massive increase of Iran's foreign operations – in particular in Syria where it operates about 125,000 fighters and is establishing a number of military bases.<sup>121</sup> In fact, here we have an intermix of different lines of confrontations which have different characters and which, hence, require different tactics from Marxists:

- i. The rivalry between Great Powers (U.S. vs. Russia);
- ii. The rivalry between regional non-imperialist powers (Saudi Arabia vs. Iran);
- iii. The aggression of imperialist powers (U.S., Israel) against semi-colonial countries (Iran);
- iv. Civil wars and national liberation wars against foreign occupation (Syria, Yemen, Palestine, Lebanon)

Finally, to take an example, an attack on Iran can also be combined with an aggression against Gaza and/or Hezbollah.

79. Marxists have to make a concrete analysis on which basis they should apply the revolutionary military program.

- i. An open war between the Great Powers U.S. and Russia in the Middle East, i.e. a kind of world war focused in one region, would constitute a reactionary war on both sides and Marxists couldn't support any side. In such a scenario, other conflicts would become subordinated to this inter-imperialist war. However, such an open confrontation between the Great Powers is rather unlikely in the near future.

- ii. A war by US or Israeli imperialism against Iran (without the open involvement of imperialist Russia) would constitute a reactionary war of the US resp. Israel and a just war of Iran. Hence, Marxists would support the later.

- iii. A war between regional non-imperialist powers (e.g. Saudi Arabia vs. Iran), in which the ruling class on both sides struggle for the expansion of their sphere of influence, would also constitute a reactionary on both sides. However, as we said above, there can be various factors – the role of imperialist powers, liberation struggles of oppressed people, etc. – which could complicate

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121 Andrew Malcolm: Trump's national security plan: Iran threat is the sleeper issue for 2018, McClatchy, December 19, 2017, <http://www.macon.com/opinion/article190452699.html>

the character of such a war and hence give it a different or combined character, requiring revolutionaries to employ different tactics.

iv. A reactionary war of aggression of a non-imperialist power against an oppressed people like the current war of Saudi Arabia against Yemen or of Iran against the Syrian people. In such a case, Marxists unconditionally defend the oppressed people.

## **The Middle East as a powder keg of social-economic contradictions**

80. As already mentioned, there has been a massive rise of tensions between the regional powers in the Middle East in the last years. The basic reasons for this are a) the domestic political and economic crisis of regimes in the region and b) the increasing rivalry between the imperialist powers. The general stagnation of the capitalist world economy and, in particular, the decline of prices for raw materials like oil and gas as well as the slump in the tourism sector, all these have put enormous pressure on the capitalist class in the region. Likewise, they face massive political pressure since the beginning of the Arab Revolution in 2011.<sup>122</sup>

81. The region is characterized by an economy distorted by the Great Powers. The imperialists manipulated, first directly as colonial powers and later indirectly, when the countries had become formally “independent”, the development of the whole region. As a result the countries of the Middle East and North Africa were obstructed in having an organic industrial development and developed a strong reliance of raw materials exports. Associated with this the imperialists helped to conserve various reactionary structures (kingdom, etc.) and helped to keep an extraordinary inflated state apparatus with massive repression forces.

82. The decline of raw material prices had dramatic effects particularly for the Middle East as many of these countries are highly dependent on the export of oil and gas. In Figure 18 we can see that the oil price in fact collapsed since the last recession in 2008/09. Between 2010 and 2017, the oil price in fact halved from about 130US\$ per barrel to 60US\$. This had unavoidable dramatic consequences for the countries of the Middle East as it substantially reduced the state revenue. As we see in Table 6 below, gross oil export revenues in the Arab region nearly halved from \$815.7 billion (2013) to \$413.4 billion (2016).

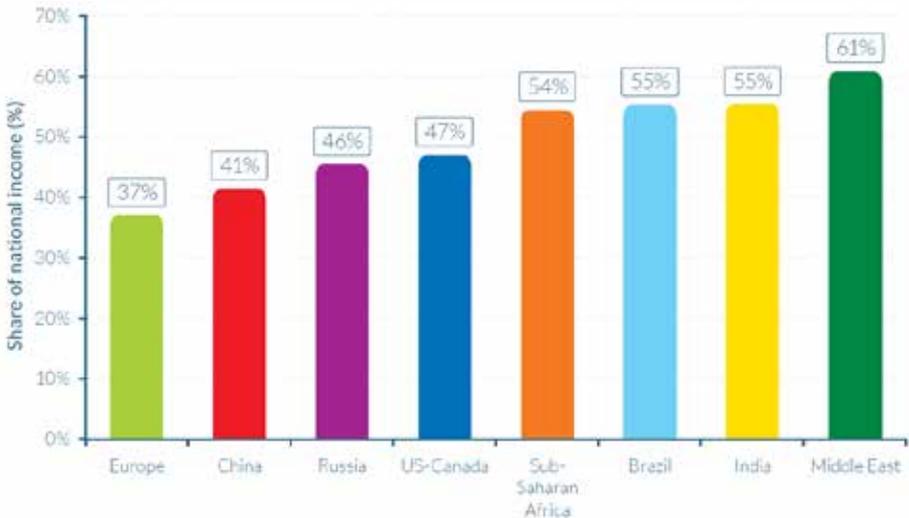
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122 See on this e.g. RCIT: Revolution and Counterrevolution in the Arab World: An Acid Test for Revolutionaries, 31 May 2015, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/theses-arab-revolution/>; Michael Pröbsting: Die halbe Revolution. Lehren und Perspektiven des arabischen Aufstandes, May 2011, <https://www.thecommunists.net/publications/werk-8/>

Figure 18. Real Oil Prices 1970-2017 <sup>123</sup>



Figure 19. Top 10% income shares across the world, 2016 <sup>124</sup>



<sup>123</sup> World Bank: Global Economic Prospects, January 2018, p. 51

<sup>124</sup> Facundo Alvaredo, Lucas Chancel, Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez, Gabriel Zucman, The Elephant Curve of Global Inequality and Growth, January 2018 AEA Meetings, p. 6

**Table 9. Gross oil export revenues in the Arab region, 2013-2018 (billions of US dollars)** <sup>125</sup>

Country/subregion	2013	2014	2015	2016a	2017b	2018b
<b>Bahrain</b>	15.1	14.3	7.7	6.1	8.2	8.7
<b>Kuwait</b>	108.5	97.6	48.9	39.9	49.7	55.4
<b>Oman</b>	32.5	30.5	17.6	14.8	20.0	21.1
<b>Qatar</b>	32.4	28.8	13.2	10.9	13.9	14.8
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	321.9	284.6	152.9	129.0	167.5	177.5
<b>United Arab Emirates</b>	116.5	99.0	55.0	46.3	54.8	59.0
<b>GCC countries</b>	627.0	554.8	295.4	246.9	314.0	336.3
<b>Egypt</b>	13.1	10.9	6.7	5.7	7.8	8.3
<b>Iraq</b>	89.6	83.8	43.2	47.0	60.9	67.3
<b>Syrian Arab Republic</b>	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Mashreq</b>	102.6	94.7	49.9	52.7	68.7	75.6
<b>Algeria</b>	40.1	35.4	19.1	15.5	18.9	21.0
<b>Libya</b>	33.8	11.3	5.9	4.5	9.7	11.8
<b>Morocco</b>	1.1	0.8	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4
<b>Tunisia</b>	2.6	2.2	1.0	0.8	1.0	1.1
<b>Maghreb</b>	77.6	49.7	26.3	21.0	30.1	34.2
<b>Mauritania</b>	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
<b>Sudan</b>	1.7	1.4	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.6
<b>Yemen</b>	6.5	4.5	2.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Arab LDCs</b>	8.5	6.1	3.0	0.4	0.6	0.7
<b>Arab region total</b>	815.7	705.3	374.6	321.0	413.4	446.9

83. Against this background, it is not surprising that the Middle East and North Africa is the region where the social contradictions are particularly sharp. A recently published study which compared inequality in the different regions of the world demonstrated that the Middle East and North Africa is the one with the highest inequality. (See Figure 19) It is likewise one of the regions with the highest rates of youth unemployment. In 2016, unemployment among youth in North Africa was 29.3%. <sup>126</sup> According to official statistics, which certainly underestimate the real situation, 30.4% of all workers in North Africa and 17.8% in the Middle East are working in vulnerable employment. <sup>127</sup> It is therefore only logical that the region's ruling class has to rely on open dictatorships and an inflated repression apparatus in order to suppress the explosions

125 UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia: Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region 2016-2017, Beirut 2017, p. 23 (The figures for 2017 and 2018 are estimations.)

126 ILO: Youth and Employment in North Africa: A Regional Overview, September 2017, p. 16

127 ILO: World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2018, p. 65

of these social contradictions.

84. *Egypt's* President Sisi is in power since 2013 and rules with iron fist. But his regime hasn't been able to improve the living standard at all. It is so discredited and lacks any popular support, that it survives only by throwing nearly 80,000 people into prison and disallows any meaningful alternative candidate, like e.g. the former General Sami Anan<sup>128</sup>, at the upcoming presidential election in March this year. Even the "moderate" opposition parties, i.e. those who are allowed by the regime, have now withdrawn their candidates from the election and call for the boycott.<sup>129</sup> It is hardly surprising that there are constant conflicts between different sectors of the state apparatus and that Sisi can only continue to rule with massive repression. In order to finance his arch-reactionary regime, General Sisi has been forced to massively increase public debt. Today, Egypt's Total Government Gross Debt is one of the highest in the whole region with 101.2% of GDP.<sup>130</sup> While the government's fiscal deficit has slightly declined since 2013, it is still very high with nearly 10% of GDP (2016).<sup>131</sup> Despite the massive repression, there is a powerful local insurrection taking place in the Sinai which already cost the lives of 1,000 people. As became known recently, the Sisi regime is secretly collaborating with Israel in military crushing this insurrection.<sup>132</sup> This demonstrates once more the reactionary character of the bourgeois Arab regimes which collaborate with the Zionist Apartheid state. Furthermore the regime has been discredited because it sold two islands in the Red Sea to Saudi Arabia. While there are no indications for a collapse of the regime in the near future, it is certainly casting the seeds for another popular uprising.

85. The arch-reactionary character of the Sisi regime as an enemy of the Egypt people as well as of all oppressed people was revealed, once more, by the publication of audio tapes by the *New York Times*. These tapes demonstrate how the Egyptian secret service attempted to shape public opinion in the wake of US President Donald Trumps' controversial decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. An intelligence officer secretly called a number of influential Egyptian television hosts and informed them of both Cairo's public and private stance on the controversial decision - which they were to convey to viewers. We

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128 Jillian Kestler-D'Amours: How Egypt presidential election is rendered irrelevant, Al Jazeera, 2018-01-24, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/egypt-presidential-election-rendered-irrelevant-180122125426620.html>

129 Egypt opposition figures call for boycott of Sisi presidential election, 28 January, 2018 <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/1/28/egypt-opposition-call-for-boycott-of-sisi-presidential-election>; Several high-profile Egyptians call for presidential election boycott, January 28, 2018 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-politics/several-high-profile-egyptians-call-for-presidential-election-boycott-idUSKBN1FH0WR>

130 IMF: Regional Economic Outlook. Middle East and Central Asia, October 2017, p. 106

131 Simon Constable: Egypt set to continue economic 'reforms', 26 January 2018 <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/analysis-egypt-set-stick-economic-reforms-487159884>

132 David D. Kirkpatrick: Secret Alliance: Israel Carries Out Airstrikes in Egypt, With Cairo's O.K., *New York Times*, 3 February 2018 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/03/world/middleeast/israel-airstrikes-sinai-egypt.html>

will quote from the audio recordings as they speak for themselves:

*“Captain Ashraf al-Kholi “I was just calling to tell you what our public stance is, so if you go on TV or speak in an interview, I am telling you what is the stance of Egypt’s national security apparatus and what it stands to benefit from in this matter of announcing Jerusalem to be the capital of Israel, O.K.?” the officer told one of the hosts, according to recordings obtained by NYT.*

*“Give me orders, sir,” the host, Saeed Hassaseen replied. “I am at your command.”*

*“We, like all our Arab brothers, are denouncing this matter,” Captain Kholi continued. But “after that, this thing will become a reality. Palestinians can’t resist and we don’t want to go to war. We have enough on our plate as you know.”*

*“The point that is dangerous for us is the intifada issue,” Captain Kholi explained. “An intifada would not serve Egypt’s national security interests because an intifada would revive the Islamists and Hamas. Hamas would be reborn once more.””<sup>133</sup>*

This excerpt demonstrates very clearly how much the ruling class of the Arab states fear a new surge of the Intifada of the Palestinian people. Clearly, the struggle for the liberation of Palestine is a struggle which must be waged not only against the Zionist state but also against the reactionary ruling class in the Arab world!

86. *Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman understands that he has to overcome his country’s total reliance on oil production and export. According to the CIA World Factbook, the petroleum sector accounts for roughly 87% of the country’s budget revenues, 42% of GDP, and 90% of export earnings.<sup>134</sup> However, in order to modernize the economy and to overcome the total reliance on oil export, he has to break-up the traditional social contract in the country, to attack social benefits for the ordinary population and to deprive a whole sector of the traditional political and religious establishment of its power. The degree of the growing socio-economic tensions can be seen by the fact that the unemployment rate for Saudi nationals has already increased to more than 12%.<sup>135</sup> At the same time, Saudi Arabia constantly loses influence in the region as Iran is expanding. This creates enormous domestic tensions and pushed Prince Salman to start various foreign policy adventures of which none has resulted in success until now. (Yemen war, boycott of Qatar, pressure on Lebanon via the temporary arrest of Prime Minister Hariri, collaboration in Trump’s arch-reactionary Middle East “Peace” Plan, etc.)*

87. *Likewise, Iran’s ruling capitalist class faces enormous economic and social contradictions. Its capitalist regime, colored with religious rhetoric, strong-*

<sup>133</sup> Egypt intelligence official directs television hosts to accept Jerusalem decision, 6 January, 2018 <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/1/6/exposed-egypt-moved-to-change-public-opinion-on-jerusalem>

<sup>134</sup> CIA: The World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sa.html>, accessed 26.01.2018

<sup>135</sup> Shanta Devarajan, Lili Mottaghi: Meeting the Development Challenge for Refugees in Middle East and North Africa; Middle East and North Africa Economic Monitor (October 2017), World Bank, p. 81

ly relies on the revenue from the petroleum sector. Before the introduction of the sanctions by the US and the EU, oil accounted for 80% of the Iranian exports and up to 60% of fiscal revenues. The figures for today are similar.<sup>136</sup> Oil accounted for 67% of all export revenues in 2014.<sup>137</sup> Despite its wealth in oil and gas, the mass of the workers and peasants are living in poverty. While official estimates of poverty levels in Iran range from 30% to 40% percent, experts believe that close to two-thirds of the Iranian population lives below the poverty line. According to some reports, between 11 million and 25 million people in Iran live in slums.<sup>138</sup> While official unemployment has risen to over 12% today, youth unemployment rate hovers around 30%!<sup>139</sup> Hence, we see the bourgeois-theocratic regime sitting on a social powder keg.

88. *Turkey* is the industrially most advanced of the regional powers in the Middle East. However, it also can not escape the iron laws of the capitalist world economy. Its economic growth has slowed in the past decade (see Figure 20). Turkey's current account balance has dramatically worsened since the early 2000s – the time when Erdoğan's AKP took power. As foreign investment is declining, the government as well as the business sector have to massively increase their debts in order to avoid a slump. (See Figure 21) Consequently, Turkey's gross external debt, measured as a share of GDP, has substantially grown in the past years – from about 38% in 2007 to about 57% in 2016. (See Figure 22) The capitalists' debts – measured by the non-financial corporations' debt as a share of GDP – grew even more dramatic: from about 40% in 2010 to about 74% in 2015, i.e. it nearly doubled in five years! (See Figure 23) At the same time, youth unemployment has reached 25% and the severe material deprivation rate – a statistic similar to the monthly poverty threshold that tracks families' abilities to afford at least several basic material essentials such as food and heating – was 30.3% in 2015.<sup>140</sup> Inflation is also on the rise with currently 12%. In such a situation, Erdoğan's rule has a fragile basis. This is why he is pushing so hard to build a Bonapartist regime and this is why he needs to wipe up Turkish chauvinism and militarism with his anti-Kurdish rhetoric and his invasion in Northern Syria.

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136 Christian Dreger and Teymur Rahmani: The Impact of Oil Revenues on the Iranian Economy and the Gulf States, Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung, 2014, p.4; Iran Economy Profile 2018, [https://www.indexmundi.com/iran/economy\\_profile.html](https://www.indexmundi.com/iran/economy_profile.html)

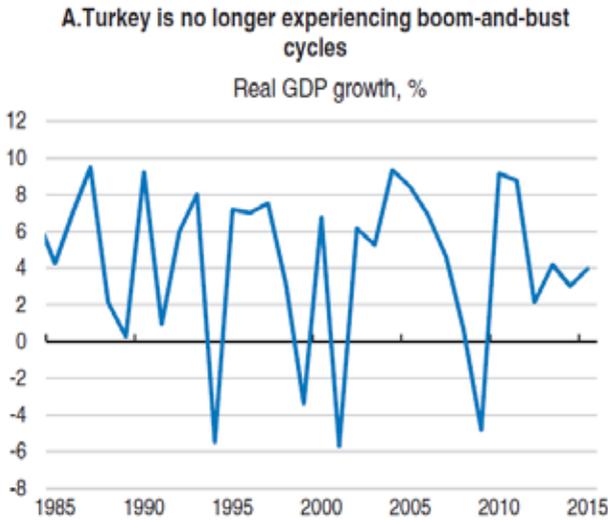
137 Islamic Republic of Iran, IMF Country Report No. 17/62, February 2017, p. 31; Iran's Economy, By the Numbers, May 2015, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2015/may/11/irans-economy-numbers>

138 Majid Mohammadi: Iran's Freefall Into Poverty, Radio Farda, August 06, 2017 <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iran-population-sliding-into-more-poverty/28661812.html>; Amir Taheri: Iran: Anatomy of a National Revolt, 14 January, 2018 <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1143256/amir-taheri/iran-anatomy-national-revolt>

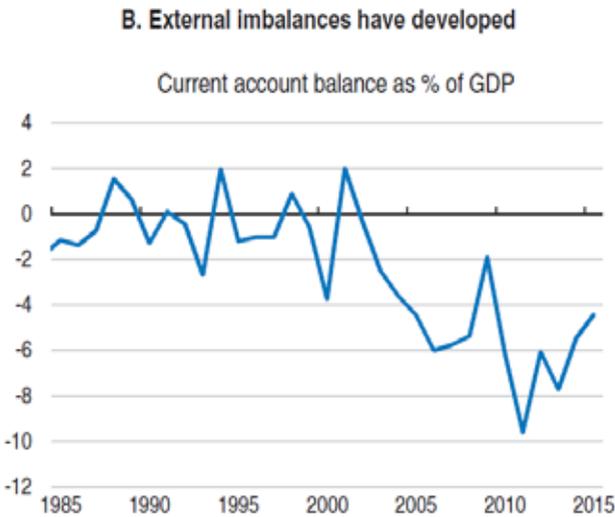
139 John Feffer: Trump & Neocons Are Exploiting an Iran Protest Movement They Know Nothing About, Foreign Policy in Focus, Jan. 8, 2018, <http://fpif.org/trump-neocons-exploiting-iran-protest-movement-know-nothing/>

140 Nesrin Nas: Poverty is being institutionalised in Turkey, Nov 21 2017, <https://ahvalnews.com/economy/poverty-being-institutionalised-turkey>; Erik Halberg: Causes of Poverty in Turkey, 05 Aug 2017 <https://borgenproject.org/causes-of-poverty-in-turkey/>

**Figure 20. Turkey Real GDP Growth 1985-2015** <sup>141</sup>

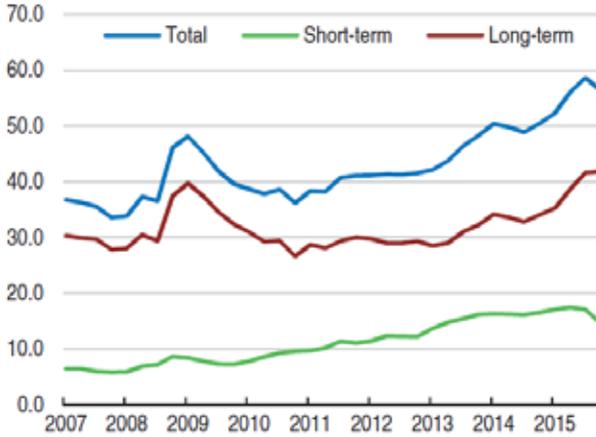
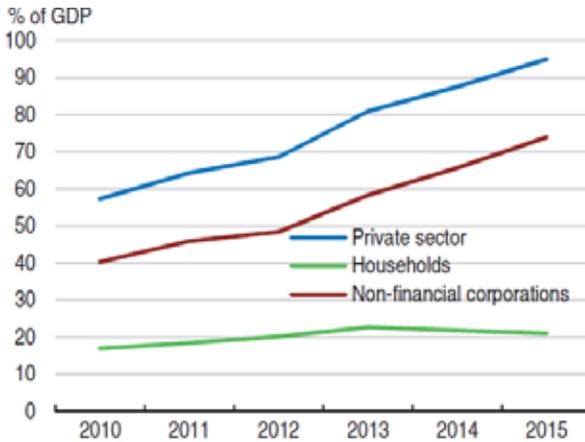


**Figure 21. Turkey Current Account Balance as % of GDP, 1985-2015** <sup>142</sup>



141 OECD Economic Surveys, Turkey, July 2016 (Overview), p. 6

142 OECD Economic Surveys, Turkey, July 2016 (Overview), p. 6

**Figure 22. Turkey's Gross External Debt as % of GDP, 2007-2016** <sup>143</sup>**Figure 23. Turkey's Private Sector Debt as % of GDP, 2007-2016** <sup>144</sup>

143 OECD Economic Surveys, Turkey, July 2016 (Overview), p. 20

144 OECD Economic Surveys, Turkey, July 2016 (Overview), p. 21

## Wars and Rivalry in the Middle East

89. In summary, the Middle East is a region where the interests of several imperialist Great Powers as well as regional powers clash, where social-economic contradictions are accelerating and repeatedly erupt in revolutionary explosions and where the ruling class looks for salvation in foreign policy adventures. All these are the prescript of major wars and diplomatic crisis – events which, in turn, can provoke new revolutionary crisis. Friedrich Engels once observed about the Russia Tsarist regime that because of its fragile domestic social base it was always forced to appear as very strong through foreign policy adventures. When it suffered a defeat, this has disastrous domestic consequences. *“To rule absolutely at home the Tsar must be more than unconquerable abroad; he must be uninterruptedly victorious, must be in a position to reward unconditional obedience by the intoxication of Chauvinist triumph, by conquests following upon conquests. And new Tsardom had miserably broken down, and that too in its outwardly most imposing representative; it had laid bare the weakness of Russia to the world, and thus its own weakness to Russia. An immense sobering down followed. The Russian people had been too deeply stirred by the colossal sacrifices of the war, their devotion had been appealed to far too unsparingly by the Tsar, for them to return there and then to the old passive state of unthinking obedience.”*<sup>145</sup> To a certain degree the ruling classes in the Middle East are in a similar situation like Tsarism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

90. Two major wars have been already waged since years: the war in Syria and in Yemen. The war in Syria started as a popular democratic uprising in 2011 which soon was transformed into a civil war because Assad opened the gates of hell against his own people. While the liberation struggle against the dictatorship is continuing until today, the character of the civil war has been complicated by the military intervention of imperialist powers as well as regional powers. Russian imperialism as well as the Iranian regime saved Assad from defeat and today these two powers are the dominant forces. Russia in fact controls the air space and Iran controls militias with about 125,000 troops. In addition, US imperialism also tries to get a foothold in Syria and uses the YPG/SDF as its proxy. Finally, Turkey is increasingly collaborating with Russia and Iran (Astana negotiations, Sochi conference) and also launched its own military intervention in the north of Syria. All these forces share an interest in liquidating the revolution and, in order to achieve this, they have joined forces to smash those resistance forces (denounced as “terrorists” and “extremists”) which reject the Astana betrayal and vow to continue the struggle against Assad and his foreign masters. In addition, these powers strive to grab a share of the country. This is reflected by the energetic efforts of Russia, the U.S., Turkey and Iran to establish military bases in Syria. In Map 1 we can see how many foreign military bases these powers have already created in North Syria.

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145 Friedrich Engels: The Foreign Policy of Russian Tsardom (1890), in: MECW 27, S. 37

91. The war against the Yemeni people which the Saudi-led coalition waged in March 2015 is still continuing. The Saudi-led forces were able to push the Houthis, a petty-bourgeois Islamist forces at the top of the popular insurrection which drove out the pro-IMF President Hadi in spring 2015, back. However, despite massive military superiority – particularly concerning air force and navy – and a nearly total blockade resulting in hunger and cholera epidemic, the Saudis have failed to defeat the Houthis. Their hope to split the resistance when ex-President Saleh switched sides and betrayed his Houthi allies were in vain when the later succeeded in smashing Saleh’s rebellion in a few days and get him killed. Furthermore, the Saudi-led camp is increasingly divided itself between the Hadi government, backed by Riyadh, and the Southern separatists, backed by Abu Dhabi. This conflict recently resulted in armed clashes in Aden with a number of dead. While Iran supports the Houthis, the character of the war can not be reduced to a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran. It remains primarily a national liberation war against the Saudi-led invasion which socialists must continue to support.<sup>146</sup>

**Map 1. Foreign Military Bases in North Syria, November 2017**<sup>147</sup>



92. Add to this the ongoing insurrection of the Afghan people against the more than 16-year long occupation by U.S. imperialism and its allies. In August

<sup>146</sup> See on the RCIT statements: After the Death of Saleh: Continue the Defense of Yemen against the Al-Saud Gang of Aggressors! 12.10.2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/yemen-after-the-death-of-saleh/>; at the end of this statement you find a list with links to other RCIT articles and statements on Yemen.

<sup>147</sup> Suriye Gündemi: SDF spokesman tells about the USA-PKK relations in Syria, 02.12.2017, <http://www.suriyegundemi.com/2017/12/02/sdf-spokesman-tells-about-the-usa-pkk-relations-in-syria/>

2017, the Trump Administration announced to send additional 4,000 troops to aid the occupation forces (nearly 13,500 NATO troops plus 25,000 contractors). This is only the latest attempt to avoid the defeat of the pro-imperialist puppet government of Ashraf Ghani and its foreign backers by the hand of the resistance forces which have constantly gained strength in the past years. Despite the huge costs of the war – the US pays currently \$45 billion per year for its military intervention in Afghanistan – the Trump Administration is determined to do whatever possible in order to avoid defeat.<sup>148</sup> Even bourgeois analysts like Robert Malley, President of the International Crisis Group, are highly skeptical about Trump's strategy: *"This strategy faces serious obstacles. While hitting the Taliban harder might bring tactical gains, it is unlikely to change the war's course or the incentives of a locally rooted and potent insurgency. The Taliban currently controls or is contesting more territory than at any time since 2001; it is better equipped and, even if pressured through conventional fighting, it would retain the ability to mount spectacular urban attacks that erode confidence in the government. Besides, between 2009 and 2012, the Taliban withstood more than 100,000 U.S. troops."*<sup>149</sup> As Marxists and anti-imperialists, we have always unambiguously denounced the US occupation as a reactionary war of aggression. Therefore the RCIT has supported the Afghan resistance against the imperialist aggression from the very beginning when the first US bombs were dropped on Kabul on 7 October 2001. While supporting the resistance struggle, socialists in Afghanistan have to build, under the most difficult circumstances, a progressive alternative to the petty-bourgeois Islamist Taliban who is the dominant force among the resistance movement.<sup>150</sup>

93. As mentioned above, there are a number of additional wars in the pipeline. In January US President Trump set an ultimatum to fix the so-called "disastrous flaws" in the deal on Tehran's nuclear program. He said he would waive sanctions against Iran that were lifted as part of the international deal in 2015 for the last time and demanded that the pact should be "strengthened" with a separate agreement within 120 days. However, Iran as well as all other backers of the treaty – the European powers as well as Russia – oppose Trump's ultimatum. Furthermore, the U.S Administration announced new sanctions against 14 entities and people, including the head of Iran's judiciary, Sadeq Amoli Larijani, a close ally of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Likewise, Israel as well as Saudi Arabia are eager to launch a major war against

148 Associated Press: Afghan war costing US \$45 billion per year: Pentagon, 2018-02-07, <https://www.dailysabah.com/americas/2018/02/07/afghan-war-costing-us-45-billion-per-year-pentagon>

149 Robert Malley: 10 Conflicts to Watch in 2018, International Crisis Group, January 2, 2018, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/01/02/10-conflicts-to-watch-in-2018/>

150 See on this our statements: Afghanistan: Drive the US Occupants Out! US President Trump escalates the imperialist crusade against the Afghan people! Support the resistance against the occupiers and their stooges! 23.08.2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/us-occupants-out-of-afghanistan/>; Defend Afghanistan! Defeat Imperialism! October 2001, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/afghan-war-lrci-ft-ks/>; Questions & Answers on the Afghan War, 30.09.2001, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/q-a-afghan-war-2001/>; Stop the Invasion of Afghanistan! 30.09.2001, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/afghanistan-invasion-2001/>

Iran as it is a chief rival in the region which has been able to expand, as an ally of Russian imperialism, his influence in the region. There is no doubt that a major war of the US, and/or Israel and/or Saudi Arabia against Iran and its allies is a realistic possibility in the near future.<sup>151</sup>

94. However, given Iran's military strength it is difficult to imagine an attack by Saudi Arabia and even by Israel without the military support of the U.S. As we see in Yemen, Saudi Arabia is not even capable to defeat the Houthis in Yemen so they should be no match for the battle-hardened Iranian army. Israel, of course, is militarily much stronger than Saudi Arabia. However, if it launches limited air strikes against Iran, this would hardly deter Teheran and risks a prolonged period of war against a formidable enemy which is backed by Russia and China. If it begins a full war, it could not sustain it for long given the burden of such a war for a small country. For all these reasons, it seems unlikely to us that a war against Iran can be launched without the active participation of US imperialism.

95. The blockade of Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain against Qatar – a kind of economic warfare – is also continuing. In the initial phase of the aggression, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi even considered a military invasion which was only stopped when Turkey sent troops and Trump warned them to back off.<sup>152</sup> While it does not look likely at the moment that this conflict might be transformed into an open war, it is difficult to imagine an end as both sides have to lose a lot of prestige.

96. Israel, a small imperialist power in the Middle, is eager to wage war against the Palestinians in Gaza, against Hezbollah in Lebanon as well as Iran. Israel's geostrategic position has developed in an ambivalent way. On one hand, it has been strengthened by the inauguration of the strongest pro-Israeli Administration in modern U.S. history as well as by the current extremely reactionary regimes in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. On the other hand, domestically the ruling class faces huge internal divisions given the extremely corrupt and discredited character of the Netanyahu government. Furthermore, the Palestinian resistance is unbroken – despite three wars against Gaza. And, finally, Iran and Hezbollah could substantially strengthen their position in Syria close to the border with Israel. Another war against Hezbollah would become much more challenging for the Israeli army than the one in 2006 (and even this war it failed to win). While an Israeli war against the Palestinian people in Gaza or

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151 See on this e.g. the RCIT's analysis in our article: Yossi Schwartz and Max Bonham: On the new Cold War between Saudi Arabia and Iran, 26.12.2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/new-cold-war-between-saudi-arabia-and-iran/>

152 See e.g. Jennifer Jacobs: Trump Warned Saudis Off Military Move on Qatar, Bloomberg, 19. September 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-09-19/trump-is-said-to-have-warned-saudis-off-military-move-on-qatar>; Lally Weymouth: Qatar to Saudi Arabia: Quit trying to overthrow our government, The Washington Post, February 2 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/qatar-to-saudi-arabia-quit-trying-to-overthrow-our-government/2018/02/02/05a1a848-0759-11e8-8777-2a059f168dd2\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.d835c0c156e5](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/qatar-to-saudi-arabia-quit-trying-to-overthrow-our-government/2018/02/02/05a1a848-0759-11e8-8777-2a059f168dd2_story.html?utm_term=.d835c0c156e5)

against Hezbollah could contain elements of a proxy war, as the later would be supported by Iran and others, such wars would nevertheless be national liberation wars on the side of the Palestinian or the Lebanese people. Socialists would stand for their military victory and for the defeat of the Zionist enemy. The shot down of an Israeli warplane – the first time such a thing happened since 1982 – during an attack in Syria on 10 February demonstrates how explosive the situation has become.<sup>153</sup> The *International Crisis Group* warned in a recent study of the growing danger of a war between Israel and Iran and/or Hezbollah: “A broader war could be only a miscalculation away.”<sup>154</sup>

97. Against the background of domestically embattled regimes, the region-wide acceleration of tensions and power rivalry, new fronts of conflicts have opened up in addition to those mentioned above. An important conflict is currently building up in the Red Sea region which involves Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Eritrea on one hand and Sudan, Turkey, and Ethiopia on the other hand. It results both from domestic reasons as well as regional power rivalry. Recently a conflict has escalated between Egypt vs. Sudan and Ethiopia. The trigger has been the project of the regime in Addis Ababa to build the so-called *Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam* which should become the largest hydroelectric power plant in Africa when completed, as well as the 7<sup>th</sup> largest in the world. This dam, to be built close to the border with Sudan, should help Ethiopia not only to satisfy its need for electricity but also to become Africa’s biggest power exporter. While Sudan stands to benefit from the dam and has sided with Ethiopia on most issues, Egypt is strongly opposed as it fears that the upstream dam at the head of the Blue Nile will interfere with its critical water supply from the Nile River. The negotiations between the three countries have stalled as Egypt pulled out of the tripartite negotiations in November 2017.

98. In addition, this conflict has been accelerated by rising tensions about the long-running land dispute between Egypt and Sudan about control of the the *Halayeb triangle*, an area that encompasses the cities of Halayeb, Abu Ramad and Shalateen. It is situated at the official border between the two countries on 20,000 square kilometers on the Red Sea coast. In addition, Egypt accuses Sudan of harboring supporters of former Egypt President Morsi who was overthrown by a military coup in July 2013. Recently, Sudan withdrew its ambassador from Egypt and reiterated its complaint against Egypt to the United Nations Security Council in early January 2018.

99. This conflict has been accelerated by the growing interference of other regional powers. In order to get support against the powerful Egyptian army,

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153 See on this the RCIT statement: Israeli Warplane Shot Down over Syria. Stop the Israeli aggression! In any conflict between imperialist Israel and Syria, Iran or Hezbollah: Defeat Israel! Continue to support the Syrian Revolution! Victory for the Palestinian Liberation Struggle! 11.02.2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/israeli-warplane-shot-down-over-syria/>

154 International Crisis Group: Israel, Hizbollah and Iran: Preventing Another War in Syria, Middle East Report N°182 | 8 February 2018, p. ii and p. 20

Sudan has intensified its cooperation with Turkey. In December 2017, Khartoum and Ankara agreed last month that Turkey would get temporary control of Suakin Island in the Red Sea. In return, Sudan will enjoy Ankara's military, economic and political support. Turkey plans to rebuild a ruined Ottoman port city, to develop shipyards for both civilian and military ships in the Red Sea and to build a hospital, a university, a free-trade zone in Port Sudan, power stations and a new airport.

100. Furthermore, there are long-standing tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea which already resulted in a major war in 1998 to 2000 with about 80,000 people killed. Since Ethiopia is its historic arch-enemy, the Eritrean regime immediately sided in this conflict with Egypt. Egypt already sent troops to its military basis in Eritrea a few weeks ago. As a result of this escalation between the ruling classes of all these states, they all sent troops to the borders of their enemies in recent weeks. The region is close to military provocations resulting in major a war.

101. These developments have to be understood as part of a massive militarization of the whole Red Sea zone. There are a number of countries seeking to establish a significant military presence around the Red Sea. The UAE currently has a presence in the greatest number of Red Sea neighboring countries. It has military bases in Yemen (Aden, Mokha and Mukalla and the Red Sea island of Perim), in Assab in Eritrea as well as in the autonomous northern Somali region of Somaliland. As a result, the UAE surrounds every side of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait – through which all traffic between the Suez Canal and Asia and Africa must pass – with military bases.<sup>155</sup>

102. As mentioned above, Turkey is building now a military basis in Sudan. This is in addition to its military basis in Somalia with 3,000 troops. Furthermore, 200 Turkish soldiers have been deployed in Somalia since October 2017, training Somalia's military. In addition, Turkey has currently based some hundred soldiers in Qatar's Al-Udeid military base since the beginning of the Saudi blockade on Qatar. This is part of a long-term plan. In January 2018, the Turkey's National Security Council adopted a plan to deploy 60,000 armed soldiers in four military bases abroad until the year 2022.<sup>156</sup> This does not mean that Turkey would be an imperialist power. As we have explained somewhere else, it is an advanced semi-colonial country.<sup>157</sup> However, it is obvious he case that Turkey's ruling class does attempt to increase its influence in the region and to become a regional power.

103. Add to this, the military bases of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Eritrea as

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155 Pesh Magid: Turkey plays catch-up with militarization in Red Sea, January 23, 2018, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/01/increasingly-dangerous-militarization-red-sea-egypt-turkey.html>

156 Middle East Monitor: Turkey to deploy 60,000 soldiers in bases abroad, including in Qatar, Jan. 19, 2018, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180118-turkey-to-deploy-60000-soldiers-in-bases-abroad-including-in-qatar/>

157 See on this e.g. Michael Pröbsting: *The Great Robbery of the South*, pp. 222-229

well as the military bases of several imperialist Great Powers (U.S., China, and France) in Djibouti. Given the steps of more and more countries to bolster their military presence around the Red Sea, the threat of a regional conflict that could draw in at least seven countries continues to grow. If a war around the Red Sea would break out, it would have disastrous consequences not just for the actors directly involved, but for the global economy. It would shut down the most important shipping line and provoke a sharp recession.

## **The Syrian Revolution: In danger of annihilation**

104. While the RCIT has always opposed those defeatist centrists who deserted the Syrian Revolution in the past years and called it as finished, we also warned many times about the growing danger of a final defeat. The recent developments unfortunately have brought us closer to such a scenario. The Syrian Army, with the massive and devastating aid of the Iranian militias and the Russian Air Force, was able to conquer important parts of the last significant liberated pocket of resistance in the province Idlib in the north of the country (including the strategically important military airport Abu Duhur). Furthermore, another liberated pocket East Ghouta is close to collapse as the population is systematically bombed and starved by the regime.<sup>158</sup>

105. Furthermore, all Great Powers and regional powers agree now that Assad should stay in power and that the rebels should lay down their arms. This is the real substance of what they call a “political solution”. At the various conferences in Astana, Sochi, or Geneva the ruling class of Russia, Iran and Turkey, sometimes with UN and U.S. and European participation, negotiate about the details of such a “political solution”. Worse, a sector of the opposition is allied to Turkey’s Erdoğan regime and hence supports the Astana negotiations. As they are under considerable pressure from the popular forces, these opposition factions can not openly accept all dictates from those powers respectively. However, the truth is that a considerable sector of the opposition leadership is prepared to accept a sell-out on the negotiations table. Even worse, they agree to an important clause of the Astana agreement which calls to hunt down and smash those forces which are determined to continue the struggle against Assad and his backers (these forces are denounced in this document as “Al-Qaida”, “terrorists”, etc.) It is part of the Astana plan that Turkey invades Idlib and takes over control so that the liberation forces there are disarmed and can’t continue the resistance against the Assad regime.

106. This does not mean that the imperialist and regional powers have unanimous agreement among each other. Quite the opposite. In fact, the differences among them open a certain space for the resistance struggle and are, in addi-

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158 The RCIT has published numerous pamphlets, statements and articles on the Syrian Revolution. The links to them are collected at a special sub-section of our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/collection-of-articles-on-the-syrian-revolution/>

tion to the stubborn resistance struggle of the liberation forces in the remaining pockets, an important reason for the ongoing war in Syria. The Assad regime wants to utilize the advances it made in the recent past in order to military smash the popular uprising. Their problem is that they simply are not capable to achieve a military victory by their own forces. They are completely dependent on the Iranian-led forces – about 125.000 soldiers with a much higher discipline than Assad’s thugs – as well as the Russian air force and mercenaries (the notorious PMC Wagner group, a kind of Russian equivalent to the American Blackwater killers). The Iranian regime largely agree with Assad’s goal as they want to establish a strong presence in Syria so that they can create the so-called *Shia Crescent* via Iraq, Syria to Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea. However, the Putin regime, which is the most important power in this alliance, is more open for a “political solution”, i.e. one which integrates sectors of the rebel’s leadership and which brings Turkey and possibly the YPG leadership on board. The reason for this is that Putin wants to bring the war rather sooner than later to an end as he fears the political and economic costs at home of an ongoing and increasing involvement of Russia in a foreign war (the memory of the lost Afghanistan war in 1980-88 is still fresh in Russian people’s mind). This is even truer after the liberation fighters in Idlib recently succeeded to shot down the first Russia warplane and the mysterious killing of 100 pro-Assad fighters by the US military in Syrian Deir-ez-Zor which allegedly included Russian Wagner mercenaries.<sup>159</sup>

107. In the first years of the Syrian Revolution, Turkey verbally, and also with some material aid, supported the resistance forces and called for the overthrow of the Assad regime. Its air force even shot down a Russian Sukhoi Su-24M in November 2015. But the deterioration of its relations with Washington – in particular after the failed military coup in July 2016 and the ongoing U.S. collaboration with the Kurdish YPG – as well as the military victories of the Assad/Iran/Russia bloc in the civil war have forced Ankara to switch camps. Since one year, the Erdoğan regime is part of the so-called Astana negotiations and aims to liquidate the Syrian Revolution. Erdoğan is under increasing pressure to sell some successes to his domestic audience in order not to undermine the popular support for his increasingly Bonapartist regime. Furthermore, the regime is determined to smash the Kurdish forces as it faces an uprising of the Kurdish minority in the south-east of its own country. This is the background why the Turkish army has invaded Afrin and threatens to attack the YPG also in other sectors of north Syria. The Erdoğan regime sees anti-Kurdish chauvinist

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159 See on this e.g. Michael Pröbsting: Syrian Liberation Fighters Shot Down Russian Warplane – A Small Victory, 4 February 2018, <https://www.thecomunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/syrian-liberation-fighters-shot-down-russian-warplane-a-small-victory/>; On the rumors of Russian Wagner mercenaries among the dead in the incident in Deir-ez-Zor see e.g. Maria Tsvetkova: Russians killed in clash with U.S.-led forces in Syria, say associates, Reuters, February 12, 2018 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-russia/russians-killed-in-clash-with-u-s-led-forces-in-syria-say-associates-idUSKBN1FW2DC>

militarism as the most promising instrument to gain popular support at home. All this constitutes the background for Ankara's threats against the US which has been the strongest supporter of the YPG in the past years. As we have stated in our statement, the RCIT opposes the Turkish invasion in Afrin. We sharply denounce those Syrian rebel forces that join the Turkish army as foot soldiers against the Kurds instead of defending Idlib against Assad's killing machinery. However, we also support the resistance of the Arab population against the occupation of their land by the YPG militias. Currently about one million Arabs are living in YPG-occupied land and they have launched protests against the occupation numerous times.<sup>160</sup>

108. The U.S. is certainly in a very difficult position. While it has accepted the Assad regime and shares the Russian/Iranian/Assadist desire to smash the radical Islamist forces, it views the northern and eastern part of Syria as a territory it wants to keep occupied with its officially 2,000 soldiers as well as the YPG foot soldiers.<sup>161</sup> Its goal is to obstruct the Teheran's efforts to create a *Shia Crescent* and to utilize this part of Syria as a springboard for an attack against Iran. Furthermore it controls important economic resources of the country. Joshua Landis, one of the leading US analysts on Syria, remarks: "*By controlling half of Syria's energy resources, the Euphrates dam at Tabqa, as well as much of Syria's best agricultural land, the US will be able to keep Syria poor and under-resourced. Keeping Syria poor and unable to finance reconstruction suits short-term US objectives because it protects Israel and will serve as a drain on Iranian resources, on which Syria must rely as it struggles to reestablish state services and rebuild as the war winds down.*"<sup>162</sup> However, the recent developments have put Washington in a cul-de-sac. If it keeps its alliance with the YPG it will drive Ankara even more in the Russian camp. Furthermore, the relation of forces for the U.S. and the YPG are less and less favorable in Syria. On the other hand, dropping the Kurdish allies – the only reliable force in the past years – and gaining a very unreliable ally in Ankara is also a bad option. Washington can only lose in the current situation. Furthermore, the U.S. occupation is vulnerable to guerilla resistance. STRATFOR warns: "*In the absence of U.S.-Russian-Syrian cooperation to end the war in Syria, U.S. troops on the ground will be hostages to guerrilla warfare against them. There is a precedent for successful Syrian covert action against the United States and Israel. It was set in Lebanon after Israel's 1982 invasion when assassination, suicide bombings and direct attacks drove the United States out in 1984 and forced a total*

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160 RCIT: Syria: No to Turkey's Attack on Afrin! Defend the Syrian Revolution against Annihilation! 22.01.2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/no-to-turkey-s-attack-on-afrin/>

161 We are fully aware that the PDY/YPG includes many honest activists in its ranks and that one, therefore, has to differentiate between the treacherous pro-imperialist leadership and the rank and file. However, until now, there has been no public protest against the leadership's subordination to the U.S. command.

162 Joshua Landis: US Policy Toward the Levant, Kurds and Turkey, January 15, 2018, <http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/us-policy-toward-the-levant-kurds-and-turkey-by-joshua-landis/>

*Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon 16 years later.”*<sup>163</sup>

109. In summary, we see that the civil war in Syria contains both the ongoing popular liberation struggle against the Assad regime and its backers as well as a competition between different imperialist and non-imperialist powers to divide the country and to get an as big as possible share of it. The RCIT calls Syrian revolutionaries to combine the struggle against the Assad dictatorship with the struggle to drive all foreign powers – Russia, Iran, Turkey and the U.S. – from Syrian soil. The struggle is both a democratic as well as a national liberation struggle and has to be combined with the strategic goal to create a workers and peasant government.<sup>164</sup>

110. The fate of the Syrian Revolution will be decided in Idlib – the last big bastion of the Syrian Revolution. While the Astana deal intended to put Idlib under the control of Turkey, the triumphant Assad regime would also like to take over the region. Given the current focus of Turkey on Afrin and the YPG-controlled areas in the north, it is unclear if Ankara will follow the Astana plan. However, a combination of both is also possible: for example there exists the idea that the Assadists take the part of Idlib east of the railway line and Turkey the area to the west of it. (See Map 1) Either scenario would represent the final liquidation of the main part of the remaining liberated areas and, hence, the end of the Syrian Revolution. This does not mean that the struggle would be over. It is quite possible, even likely, that an underground and guerilla campaign would continue. However, in such a scenario the popular liberation struggle would face a severe defeat and revolutionaries have to continue the struggle under different conditions.

111. Anyway, the Syrian Revolution is not over yet – contrary to the wishes of the centrist doomsayers. While the relation of forces in Syria itself is very disadvantageous, it is important to point out to the international dimension. The RCIT has always emphasized that the ongoing liberation struggle in Syria is part of the revolutionary process in the whole Middle East. This revolutionary wave started in 2011. It suffered numerous setbacks, starting with the reactionary military coup of General Sisi in Egypt in 2013. However, we currently see an important revival of the revolutionary struggle in the Middle East with new popular uprisings in Palestine, Iran, Tunisia as well as Sudan in addition to the ongoing national liberation struggles in Yemen and Afghanistan. A significant victory in one of these struggles can have positive repercussions on the relation of forces in Syria itself and strengthen the liberation struggle in Idlib and the other remaining liberated pockets which is currently in the defensive. For

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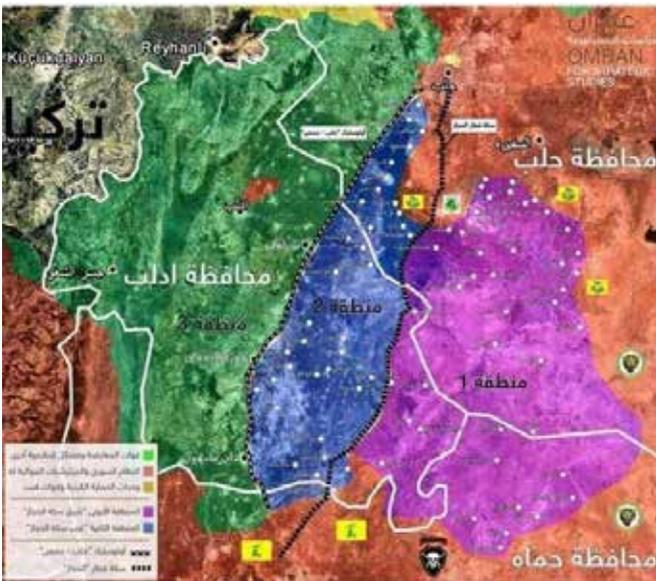
163 STRATFOR: Another Long War Unfolds in Syria, 22nd January 2018, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/another-long-war-unfolds-syria>

164 See also the discussion of the Syrian Revolution and its contradictions in our pamphlet Michael Pröbsting: *Is the Syrian Revolution at its End? Is Third Camp Abstentionism Justified? An essay on the organs of popular power in the liberated area of Syria, on the character of the different sectors of the Syrian rebels, and on the failure of those leftists who deserted the Syrian Revolution*, 5 April 2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/syrian-revolution-not-dead/>

example an ongoing wave of mass protests in Iran could force the regime to substantially reduce its military intervention in Syria and hence weaken the Assadist camp (which indeed has been one of the demands of the protests).

112. Since some time Ankara is working hard to buy and pressurize, with significant success, the leadership of the rebel factions. Most FSA factions, Ahrar al-Sham, etc are now allied with the Turkish regime. They have now formed a so-called “National Army” and a “Syrian Interim Government”. However, these forces have massively lost ground and popular support. Without the aid of Turkey they would have no relevance. It is characteristic for their treacherous character that thousands of their fighters have left the front in Idlib and currently serve in Afrin as Turkey’s foot soldiers against the YPG. It is the more consistent sector of the resistance forces – in particular the “Syrian Salvation Government” and its backers, the petty-bourgeois Islamist *Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham* (HTS) led by Abu Mohammad al-Julani, the *Turkistan Islamic Party*, as well as others – who have become the strongest force in the liberated areas in the north. They have become the hegemonial force because, until now, they have rejected the Astana betrayal and continue the liberation struggle against Assad as well as the imperialist powers. It is no accident that they are so hated by all reactionary powers!

Map 2. Plan for the Division of Idlib<sup>165</sup>



165 Zaman A Wasl: Tahrir al-Sham halted Turkish army deployment in Idlib, gave Russia pretext to bomb Idlib. 2018-01-05 <https://en.zamanalwsl.net/news/32091.html>

113. However, the massive pressure from the difficult military situation, a series of assassination attempts against HTS leaders (most likely organized by the Turkish secret service MIT and their treacherous FSA lackeys) as well as the political limitations given the petty-bourgeois Islamist nature of HTS have led to important divisions inside the movement. While HTS is a broader movement of Islamists, its core force is the al-Nusra Front which originated from al-Qaida cadre in January 2012. These Islamist cadre adhered to the strategy of the so-called “*popular Jihad*”, a concept which opposes the “old” al-Qaida elitist conception. The later strategy, developed and implemented by Osama bin-Laden, focuses on individual terrorist attacks around the world. The “*popular Jihad*” concept, on the other hand, focuses on building roots among the population of a given country by orientating towards the struggle there and by combining the military struggle with efforts to build civil and social structures led by a Shura Council. These differences unavoidable led to tensions inside al-Qaida, since the “*popular Jihad*” concept undermines the international centralist structure and puts the forces on the ground primarily under national, local and popular pressure. In the end, this conflict led to a formal split of al-Nusra with the central al-Qaida leadership of Aiman az-Zawahiri in 2016. While contacts of sectors of al-Nusra with al-Qaida remained, the conflict recently escalated when the al-Julani leadership arrested several pro-al-Qaida cadres in the last months. The looming invasion of the Turkish army in Idlib has also accelerated the tensions inside HTS. The Julani leadership attempts to pragmatically avoid an open clash as their forces are already stretched by the offensive of the Assadists in the south of Idlib. The more radical, pro-al-Qaida, wing rejects compromises and favors open attacks on the Turkish army. Some of them have constituted themselves now as a new faction called *Ansar Al-Furqan Fi Bilad Al-Sham*. If the Assadist forces and/or the Turkish army will occupy Idlib, the HTS will either be driven underground as a whole and continue a guerilla campaign (as the Taliban have done successfully in Afghanistan since 2001) or it will split and a sector of the leadership will capitulate and join the Turkish camp.<sup>166</sup>

114. The whole tragic development of the Syrian Revolution demonstrates once more the profound crisis of leadership given the lack of authentic revolutionaries. However, this does not relieve revolutionaries from their duties. Only those who are conscious or unconscious lackeys of the imperialist powers will cynically stand aside or even join the traitors. All honest fighters for free-

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166 We remark, as a side note, that nearly all liberals, reformists and centrists are incapable to understand the nature of such petty-bourgeois Salafist-Islamist forces like HTS. They usually reduce it to a CIA (or Turkish) conspiracy or simply an “evil” fascist force. This is the political equivalent of the biblical myth of the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Hence they are incapable of dialectical understanding of the contradictory relationship between these forces and their popular support base. On the nature of Islamist movements see also Michael Pröbsting and Simon Hardy: Theses on Islamism, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/theses-on-islamism/>; Yossi Schwartz: The Marxist View of Religion in General and Islam in Particular, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/marxism-and-islam/>; ISL: Islam, Islamism and the Struggle for Revolution, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/islam-and-revolution/>.

dom will continue to support the ongoing liberation struggle! The RCIT calls all forces to continue supporting the liberation struggle against the Assad regime and its imperialist backers. We call all resistance forces to boycott the charade conferences in Sochi, Astana and Geneva. There can be no solution under the bayonets of the Great Powers. We say: Down with any “solution” imposed by the imperialist Great Powers Russia and US, by Iran and Turkey and the Assad regime! Continue the liberation struggle against the butcher Assad, against Russian and US Imperialism and the local Allies!

115. Most crucially, all Syrian revolutionaries should learn the lessons of the defeats which the liberation struggle experienced in the past years. The way forward is not submission and capitulation to the Great Powers and their regional allies. Instead of hoping for support by this or that foreign power or by focusing on a militarist guerilla strategy, revolutionaries should fight for the organization of the popular masses in independent councils and armed militias. The goal of the liberation struggle must be the creation of a multinational, independent workers’ and peasants republic in Syria as part of a socialist federation of the Middle East! We call for an international workers and popular solidarity movement in support of the Syrian Revolution. Most importantly, the most advanced workers and youth in Syria need to unite into a revolutionary party based on a program for socialist liberation.

## **A new revolutionary upsurge of popular uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa**

116. As mentioned above, we have seen a *new upsurge of class struggles* on a global scale in the last few months. The most important region of this wave has been the Middle East and North Africa which has seen several popular uprisings, some of them coming close to pre-revolutionary situations. There has been a surge of the Palestinian liberation struggle against the Zionist state (first, the Al-Aqsa protests in summer 2017 and, more recently, the regular mass demonstration for Jerusalem since Trump’s announcement on Jerusalem). There have been important popular uprisings in Tunisia as well as in Iran (where people also protested against the regime’s support for Assad). In addition, in the past weeks there have been militant mass demonstrations against price hikes on food in Sudan as well as against unemployment and poverty in Morocco. Add to this the ongoing democratic and national liberation wars in Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan. This new wave of revolutionary mass struggles, if it continues, could turn around the counter-revolutionary trend which has swept the region since the strategic defeat of the Egyptian masses in 2013.

117. The strategic task of revolutionaries in the Middle East and North Africa is to unite these struggles into a single Intifada in the whole region and to fight for a socialist program of permanent revolution and working class power directed against *all* imperialist Great Powers (U.S., EU, Russia, China, Japan)

as well as the local bourgeois regimes! Revolutionaries have to explain to the activists in each country that they must view their struggles not in national isolation but as part of an international struggle. The RCIT emphasizes that this demonstrates the actuality of the international, permanent revolution – not only a correct theoretical conception but a very practical concrete strategy for the struggles today!

118. The surge of the mass struggle in *Palestine* is of particular importance not only for the people itself but, given the significance of Palestine for the whole Arab and Muslim world, also globally. The massive character of the protests has forced the official leaderships – even the treacherous Palestinian Administration of Abbas – to halt negotiations on a “peace process” and to call for mass protests. Hamas already talks about a “*Third Intifada*”. While both Fatah as well as Hamas are calling for protests, the movement has a significant spontaneous character as the main burden of the fighting is done by youth who are not aligned with any faction. More than two dozen demonstrators have already been killed and nearly 1,000 people arrested.

119. It is urgent to avoid the mistakes of the past. The mass struggle must not become focused on individual terrorist acts as this would be a self-defeating strategy inviting massive repression by the Zionist state without mobilizing the masses and international solidarity. It is crucial to build popular committees and self-defense committees composed of Palestinian workers, poor peasants, and youth in places of work, towns, and villages. The masses must force the Palestinian Authority to immediately stop all forms of collaboration of the Palestinian Authority with the Israeli state! Furthermore it is of utmost importance to build a massive international solidarity movement in order to pressurize Israel and the U.S. The RCIT calls for an international popular boycott campaign against the Israeli state and its economy. Such a campaign must also strive to force the governments around the world to stop their open and hidden economic, political and military aid for the Zionist state! Such a popular mass campaign must also pressurize the Arab states to break all forms of collaboration with Israel and to reject any negotiations about a “peace plan” with the Zionist state. Furthermore they must demand from them – in particular Egypt – to break the disgraceful blockade against Gaza which is starving the Palestinian people since 2007.<sup>167</sup>

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167 For the RCIT's analysis of the new uprising of the Palestinian people see e.g. Jerusalem is the Capital of Palestine! Trump's Recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's Capital “Will Open the Floodgates of Hell to the West”! Mobilize for a Popular Intifada – in Palestine, in the Arab and Muslim World, Globally! Joint Statement of the International Secretariat of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT) and the Internationalist Socialist League (Israel / Occupied Palestine), 06.12.2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/jerusalem-is-the-capital-of-palestine/>; Yossi Schwartz: Palestine: A New Intifada is a Real Possibility! Long Live the Palestinian Heroic Struggle! 7.12.2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/long-live-the-palestinian-heroic-struggle/>; many more statements and articles on the Palestinian liberation struggle can be read at the Africa and Middle East section of our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/> as well at <http://the-isleague.com>.

120. The popular uprising in *Iran* has provoked the most serious crisis the capitalist-theocratic regime since the “*Green Revolution*” in 2009. In fact, the recent protests have been much more important than those nine years ago because they are much more widespread (reaching 80-100 cities and towns across the country). Furthermore they are much more proletarian in its composition. Finally, they are also more radical. While they started as protests against the high cost of living, poverty, unemployment and graft, they soon added political demands which were directed against all factions of the regime and its foreign policy. They raised slogans like: “*Death to Rouhani*”, “*Death to the dictator*” (i.e. Khamenei), “*Not Gaza, not Lebanon, my soul is the redemption of Iran*”, “*Leave Syria and think about us*”, “*You have used religion and humiliated the people*”, “*The government is lying and its promises are not implemented*” and “*Unity Unity, No Fear, No fear of the police*”. The demonstrators burned pictures of Khomeini and Khamenei, overturned police cars and set police motorcycles ablaze. According to official reports, at least 22 protesters and two security force members had been killed. Additionally, 3,700 demonstrators were arrested. While the regime was able to suppress the protests in early January, it is quite possible that the movement will experience a new upsurge in the next months. In any case, it has sent a warning to all faction of the ruling class that it sits on a powder keg and must be cautious in implementing of its austerity policy as well as its reactionary foreign policy adventures like in Syria. There is no organized political force of any significance which has played a role in this movement.

121. As we have stated in the RCIT statement on the popular uprising in *Iran*, socialists should call for the formation of action committees in the workplaces, neighborhoods, schools and universities in order to organize the workers and oppressed. Such committees should organize the struggle and decide about the main demands, the forms of protests, the perspectives etc. They should also organize self-defense units in order to defend the demonstrations against the regime’s repression apparatus. Furthermore, socialists must explain that the solution is not national isolation but extending the struggle for liberation internationally which includes support for the Syrian Revolution as well as the Palestinian struggle against the Zionist enemy. Finally, socialists should explain that the liberation struggle must be directed against all factions of the ruling class and against all imperialist powers. They should combine such demands with the perspective of a workers and poor peasants government based

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com/. Furthermore we refer readers to the following theoretical and programmatic documents on Palestine: Yossi Schwartz: *Israel’s War of 1948 and the Degeneration of the Fourth International*, in: *Revolutionary Communism, Special Issue on Palestine*, No. 10, June 2013, [www.thecommunists.net/theory/israel-s-war-of-1948-1](http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/israel-s-war-of-1948-1); Yossi Schwartz: *Israel’s Six-Day War of 1967. On the Character of the War, the Marxist Analysis and the Position of the Israeli Left*, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 12, July/August 2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/israel-s-war-of-1967/>; *Summary of the Program of the Internationalist Socialist League*, February 2014, <http://www.the-isleague.com/our-platform/>; Michael Pröbsting: *On some Questions of the Zionist Oppression and the Permanent Revolution in Palestine*, in: *Revolutionary Communism, Special Issue on Palestine*, No. 10, June 2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/permanent-revolution-in-palestine>.

on popular councils and militias.<sup>168</sup>

122. The uprising in *Tunisia*, starting on 7 January, has been another spontaneous mass protest. Like in other countries it started as a response to the government's new budget, which raised the prices of numerous goods. Beginning spontaneously after activists tagged the phrase #Fech\_Nestanneu ("What are we waiting for?") on walls and on social media, demonstrations spread to more than 20 cities and towns. In Tunis, a crowd stormed a Carrefour market. In Nefza, demonstrators stormed a police station. The brutal repression of the state resulted in the killing of a 55-year old man in Tebourba and the arrest of nearly 1,000 people. About 50 police were wounded in clashes. While the protests have subsided in past weeks, the mood for a new upsurge still exists. The movement was supported by *Ej-Jabha* (Popular Front, short for "The Popular Front for the Realization of the Objectives of the Revolution"), a left-wing petty-bourgeois opposition alliance representing a coalition of parties mostly coming from a Stalinist/Hoxhaist as well as Nasserist/Baathist tradition. Some protests were also supported by the trade union federation UGTT.

123. In *Tunisia* too, it is a crucial task of socialists to call these parties and unions to fully support the movement, to create a united front and to transform the protests into a general strike. Furthermore the masses should form *action committees in the workplaces, neighborhoods, schools and universities* in order to organize the struggle democratically. Furthermore, the movement needs to create *self-defense units* so that it can defend itself against the attacks of the repression apparatus. In addition, such committees should organize self-defense units to fight against state repression. For now, the central demands should be the withdrawal of all austerity measures. In order to fight unemployment and poverty, activists should call to establish a *public employment program under the control of the UGTT and other mass organizations, financed by the expropriation of Tunisia's super-rich*, many of whom are close to the Ben Ali clan. Revolutionaries should combine such demands with the perspective of fighting for an authentic *workers and popular government*. Such a government would *exclusively* serve the interests of the popular masses and would remove power and wealth from the hands of the small corrupt elite of super-rich politicians and army generals. It would also expropriate the foreign imperialist corporations which are exploiting semi-colonial *Tunisia*.<sup>169</sup>

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168 See also RCIT: Long Live the Popular Uprising in Iran! For Committees of Action of the Workers and Poor! For Organized Self-Defense against the Police Repression! Down with the Capitalist-Theocratic Regime! Unite the Struggle of the Iranian Masses with the Arab Revolution! 01.01.2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/long-live-the-popular-uprising-in-iran/>; For the Iranian Revolution! Down with the capitalist Mullah dictatorship! Down with Imperialism! For a working class revolution in Iran! Action Platform for Iran by the RCIT, February 2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/iran-platform/>

169 RCIT: Tunisia: Solidarity with the Mass Protests! Down with the Price Hikes! For the Creation of Action Committees and Self-Defense Units! For a United Front to Organize a General Strike! Unite the Popular Struggles in Tunisia, Palestine, Syria, Iran and Yemen! For a single Intifada in the whole Middle East! 10.01.2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/>

124. *Sudan* has also experienced a wave of mass protests after the government's devaluation of the local currency which resulted in rising bread prices. This move by the government has been one of the requests of the International Monetary Fund. A number of protesters have been arrested, including opposition politicians like Siddig Youssef, a leader of the Sudanese Communist Party. The protests are supported by the Communist Party, the National Umma Party, as well as forces like the "*No violence against women*" organization. Here too, revolutionaries should call for the creation of popular action committees as well as an emergency action program to solve the social economic crisis. They combine such a perspective with the struggle for a *workers and popular government*.

125. In *Morocco* we see upsurge of mass protests too. They were first directed against high electricity bills. However, after the deaths of two miners (and later a third) in Jerada the protests have transformed into regular demonstrations of miners and their families. In this region, people are risking their lives scraping coal from abandoned mines.<sup>170</sup> These protests could and should link with the movement of the Amazighs ("*Berber*") living in the Rif in the north of the country where regular protests have taken place since 2016. Revolutionaries should support the demands for an end of the austerity measures and the restoration of the public subsidies. They should combine this with the demand for a *public employment program under the control of the workers and popular mass organizations, financed by the super-rich*. Likewise, revolutionaries should combine such demands with democratic demands for the *release of all political prisoners*, in particular those who have been arrested in the past year when the Amazighs in the Rif rose up. Such a perspective should be combined with the slogan of *national self-determination of the Amazighs* as well as for a *workers and popular government*.<sup>171</sup>

126. All these uprisings have in common that they have a strongly spontaneous character. This is, on one hand, their strength as it reflects that they are truly popular mass movements. On the other hand, we know from experience, both in history as well as actually from the Arab Revolution since 2011, that such protests can not last for long on a spontaneous basis. Sooner or later they will either be smashed or they will be led by organized forces. The question is only, which force will take over a leadership role. This is why the RCIT has

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[solidarity-with-the-mass-protests-in-tunisia/](#)

170 See e.g. Protests over mining deaths heat up in Morocco, 8 February, 2018 <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/2/8/protests-over-mining-deaths-heat-up-in-morocco>; Third coal miner death in Morocco sparks mass protest, 2 February 2018 <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/third-coal-miner-death-morocco-sparks-mass-protest-790083582>; Zakia Abdennebi, Ulf Laessing; Miners' protest raises political temperature in Morocco, February 2, 2018 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-morocco-protests/miners-protest-raises-political-temperature-in-morocco-idUSKBN1FM01M>

171 See also the RCIT Statements on Morocco: Free Nasser Zefzafi and all other political prisoners! Long Live the Popular Protests in Morocco! 13.06.2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/morocco-unrest/>; RCIT: Following the Murder of Mousine Fikri: Solidarity with the Mass Protests in Morocco! 13.06.2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/morocco-mass-protests/>

always stressed the importance of revolutionaries to unite and to fight together for the formation of a revolutionary party based on an action program for the current situation. Such a party must help the working class and the oppressed to organize and fight independently of *all* imperialist powers and local bourgeoisie. They must explain that all imperialist Great Powers (U.S., EU, Russia, China, and Japan) as well as the local bourgeois regimes are the enemies of the working class. Hence it must not align itself with any of them but organize in an independent way. Such a party must combine the ongoing mass struggles with the perspective of a socialist revolution and its internationalization towards the creation of a socialist federation of the people of the Middle East and North Africa.

## VI. The Korean Peninsula: Imperialist Aggression, Capitalist Restoration and Revolutionary Defensism

127. As we stated above, the Korean peninsula constitutes the second focus of the present world situation. The reasons for this are:

The central position of the Asia-Pacific region <sup>172</sup> as the most populous continent and a key region for the world economy;

It's geographical position as a direct neighboring country to all four imperialist states in Asia (China, Russia, South Korea and Japan);

For this reason US imperialism tries to utilize the conflict with North Korea in order to threaten the latter's allies (China and Russia) and to subjugate its own, militarily relative weak, allies South Korean and Japan;

Long standing historical tensions stemming from the Korea War in 1950-53 and the division of the country which emerged from it.

128. The main reason for the recent escalation of the North Korea conflict is the aggressive determination of US imperialism to utilize this issue in order to re-establish its dominance in East-Asia. Of course, it has nothing to do with any real threat emerging from the small Asian country. Even if North Korea would have already succeeded to possess nuclear weapons, their number would not exceed 10-20, according to the latest SIPRI report. Compare this to this 6,800 nuclear heads owned by US imperialism! <sup>173</sup> The hysterical U.S. campaign about the North Korean threat is a mockery of history! While North Korea never attacked the USA, this biggest imperialist power indeed waged war against North Korea in 1950-53 in which one million people died. Since then the USA has built numerous military bases in South Korea and currently stations there 28,500 soldiers. It is US imperialism and its allies who pose a threat to North Korea and not the other way round!

129. The Trump Administration is seriously considering a military attack on North Korea and one wing is actually advocating it strongly. According to a report of the Reuters news agency, *"National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster has been the most vocal of Trump's aides arguing for a more active military approach, while Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and the military leadership have urged caution, stressing the need to exhaust diplomatic options, according to five officials who spoke on condition of anonymity."* <sup>174</sup> Various neo-conservative

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<sup>172</sup> We remark, as a side-note, that we deliberately use the term "Asia" or "Asia-Pacific" and not "Indo-Pacific". The later is a term introduced by US imperialism and advocated by its allies like Japan, Australia and India.

<sup>173</sup> SIPRI Yearbook 2017 (Summary), p. 16

<sup>174</sup> John Walcott, David Brunnstrom: Korea talks ease war fears in Washington, but for how long? Reuters, January 12, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles-usa/korea-talks-ease-war-fears-in-washington-but-for-how-long-idUSKBN1F033N>

ideologists are already beating the war drum. Edward Luttwak, one of their leading figures, recently published an article with the self-explaining title: *"It's Time to Bomb North Korea. Destroying Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal is still in America's national interest"*.<sup>175</sup> During an interview with ABC News on the last day of 2017, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen claimed that Trump was willing to launch an attack and concluded: *"We're actually closer to nuclear war with North Korea and in that region than we've ever been."*<sup>176</sup> And another expert reported: *"At a conference on international security last month in the US, I was privately told by a number of US experts with links to Washington that the Trump administration is determined to attack North Korea. The question was of when, not if."*<sup>177</sup>

130. One option discussed by the Pentagon, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, *"is known as the "bloody nose" strategy: React to some nuclear or missile test with a targeted strike against a North Korean facility to bloody Pyongyang's nose and illustrate the high price the regime could pay for its behavior. The hope would be to make that point without inciting a full-bore reprisal by North Korea."*<sup>178</sup> However, even the military die-hards are aware that such a strike bears an enormous risk of escalating into a full-blown war. As we mentioned above, a research institute of the U.S. Congress calculates that even a war with conventional weapons "only" could result in up to 300,000 dead in the first few days. Another, older study from the Pentagon arrives to the estimation that *"a conflict on the peninsula would lead to at least 52,000 American and 490,000 South Korean casualties within the first ninety days. Former CIA chief James Woolsey has argued that 4,000 daily air strikes over a period of thirty to sixty days would be required to demolish North Korea's nuclear programme as the US believes it exists, and to blunt its capacity to retaliate."*<sup>179</sup>

131. Naturally, all these estimations are speculations to a certain degree. However, there can be not the slightest doubt that a war on the Korean peninsula would have devastating consequences. It would be a catastrophe, first and foremost, for the Korean people who would have to bear the brunt of the American aggression. Secondly for the whole region in East Asia. And thirdly, it would certainly provoke a crash of the world economy as the peninsula is close to one of the, if not the, most important routes of shipping traffic for world trade. We emphasize once again our thesis that this lunatic war-mongering is

175 Edward Luttwak: *It's Time to Bomb North Korea. Destroying Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal is still in America's national interest*, Foreign Policy, January 8, 2018, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/01/08/its-time-to-bomb-north-korea/>

176 ABC: Interview with former Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen, 31.12.2017, <http://abcnews.go.com/ThisWeek/video/chair-joint-chiefs-staff-admiral-mike-mullen-joins-52069186>

177 Se-Woong Koo: Trump wants war, Moon wants peace, 11 Jan 2018, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/renewed-talks-prevent-war-korean-peninsula-180111080802535.html>

178 Gerald F. Seib: Amid Signs of a Thaw in North Korea, Tensions Bubble Up, Wall Street Journal, January 9, 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/amid-signs-of-a-thaw-in-north-korea-tensions-bubble-up-1515427541>

179 Paul French: *North Korea: State of Paranoia*, Zed Books Ltd, London 2014, p. 421

another example of how desperate and aggressive U.S. imperialism is becoming when faced with its decay. It shows once more that the Armageddon faction of the American bourgeoisie has taken over the command in Washington.

132. As China and Russia are neighboring countries and strongly opposed to a US war against North Korea, it is unlikely that they would stand idle in such a case. While we do not consider a World War III as likely in the near future, such a scenario can not be excluded. In any way, a military conflict on the Korean peninsula would have massive repercussions for the world political situation. It would not only escalate the tensions between the U.S. and China and Russia. It would likely provoke mass protests in Asia and around the world. Such an attack against the Korean people could provoke the emergence of a global mass anti-imperialist movement and result in an abrupt change of the world situation.

133. U.S. imperialism is beating the war drums against North Korea for several reasons.

First, it wants to subjugate a nation which is a historic enemy since the Korean War in 1950-53 and which has since then refused to subordinate to Washington. Dealing a “*bloody nose*” to Korea would also send a message to other people in the South that Washington knows no mercy with people resisting its dictates.

Secondly, waging a war at their borders could serve as deterrence against Moscow and Beijing.

Thirdly, it could strengthen the U.S. political and military hegemony over its imperialist allies – first and foremost South Korea and Japan. For all these reasons, the Trump Administration is looking very favorable to launching a war against North Korea.

Fourthly, it could rally some patriotic support for the battered Trump Administration.

134. China’s and Russia’s main interests in this conflict are that they want to stop the U.S. waging war in front of their borders. They want to keep North Korea as a buffer state to South Korea, i.e. a state which is allied to Washington and which is home to a number of U.S. military bases. In order to defuse the tensions, they have agreed several times to vote for economic sanctions against North Korea at the U.N. Security Council. While they have links with the North Korean regime it would be wrong to see the latter simply as their proxy. In fact, Moscow and Beijing consider Kim Jong-un as unreliable. According to reports, China backed a plot by Kim Jong Un’s half-brother and uncle who, however, were both killed after the North Korean ruler uncovered it in 2013.<sup>180</sup> Currently, both China and Russia try to defuse the situation by, on one hand, appeasing the U.S. by agreeing to economic sanctions and, on the other hand, by opposing Washington’s saber-rattle and secretly supporting North Korea’s trade.

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180 Greg Heffer: North Korea leader Kim Jong Un ‘killed relatives over China coup plot’, 24 August 2017, <http://news.sky.com/story/north-korea-leader-kim-jong-un-killed-relatives-over-china-coup-plot-11002869>

## Capitalist Restoration in North Korea and the ruling Stalinist-Donju Class

135. In past statements, the RCIT has characterized North Korea as a *De-generated Workers State*. By this we meant that the political regime represents a counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy ruling over the working class. However, in contrast to capitalist states, its economic basis was a planned economy. We do not longer consider such a characterization as accurate. In fact, in the past years – in particular with Kim Jong-un coming to power in 2011 – the North Korean bureaucracy has made a decisive turn towards capitalism. Since then, the ruling elite attempts to copy the Chinese model, i.e. to combine the preservation of the one-party regime with the introduction of market reforms.

136. In the early 1990s North Korea suffered a dramatic social and economic crisis when Soviet and Chinese aid was suddenly withdrawn. Being deprived of subsidized fuel, electricity and spare parts, the economy collapsed, with many factories coming to a complete halt. Things were ultimately exacerbated by a series of devastating floods in 1994 and 1995, which destroyed around 1.5 million tons of grain and ruined much of the nation's infrastructure. Around 85% of North Korea's power generation capacity was lost as a result. Harvests plunged and hence the government soon had no food to feed much of its population. The result was a serious famine between 1994 and 1998 that claimed the lives of between 200,000 and three million North Koreans.<sup>181</sup> As a result, the regime allowed a number of market reforms which resulted in the emergence of numerous official or hidden private enterprises in the 2000s. Hence in many places markets – called *jangmadang* ("marketplace") – emerged illegal, yet tolerated. "A 2009 study came to the conclusion that some 58.5 percent of all restaurants in North Korea are *de facto* privately owned. Similar trends exist in the retail industry. While the fiction of state ownership is maintained, many shops are, essentially, private. The managercum-owner buys merchandise from wholesalers as well as (technically) state-owned suppliers, and then sells it at a profit. The earnings are partially transferred to the state, but largely pocketed by the owner himself (or rather, herself). The above-mentioned study estimated that in 2009 some 51.3 percent of shops were actually private retail operations. Transportation underwent similar changes."<sup>182</sup> According to a 2008 estimate, by that time the average North Korean family drew some 80% of its income from the private economy, not from salaries and rations from the state.<sup>183</sup>

137. However, at that time the ruling Stalinist caste had not definitely de-

181 Daniel Tudor and James Pearson: *North Korea Confidential*, Tuttle Publishing, North Clarendon 2015, p. 19

182 Andrei Lankov: *The Real North Korea. Life and Politics in the Failed Stalinist Utopia*, Oxford University Press, New York 2013, p. 85

183 Andrei Lankov: North Korea: Not so 'Stalinist' after all. North Korea's burgeoning black market has effectively 'opened' the country's economy, 13 Apr 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/04/n-korea-not-so-stalinist-after-a-20144210422363163.html>

cided about its economic policy and a strong faction still existed which opposed the market-reforms. In the second half of the 2000s, various counter-reforms were undertaken and pro-market politicians were purged.<sup>184</sup> Andrei Lankov, an expert on North Korea, describes the situation as follows: “*However, the North Korean state looked upon these developments with great unease, and never explicitly approved market activities. Between 2004 and 2009, the North Korean government even tried to push the genie back into the bottle by getting rid of the private economy and returning to the old Leninist economic model. These efforts ended in failure, and after 2010, the government decided to leave the economy alone.*”<sup>185</sup>

138. Since then, i.e. effectively with Kim Jong-un coming to power in 2011, the restorationist faction clearly got the upper hand and has since then advanced the introduction of capitalism. Obviously, they face various difficulties, in particular as North Korea suffers from international sanctions, the country receives only few foreign investment. Hence, the process of capitalist restoration is rather characterized by primitive accumulation and semi-legal profiteering. Nevertheless, a combination of state-capitalist, private market and grey-market sector is becoming the dominant characteristic of North Korean capitalist economy.<sup>186</sup> According to a recent assessment of Lee Byung-ho, director of South Korea’s intelligence service, at least 40% percent of the population in North Korea is now engaged in some form of private enterprise. Today the rising class is the so-called *Donju*, the word North Koreans use to describe the new class of traders and businessmen that has emerged. These “red capitalists” have close relations with the regime and often receive medals and certificates in return for their donations. A North Korean defector appropriately observed: “*Donju wear the socialist hide, operating as part of state-run companies. But inside, they are thoroughly capitalist.*” A Korean journalist reports: “*A growing class of merchants and entrepreneurs is thriving under the protection of ruling party officials. Pyongyang, the capital, has seen a construction boom, and there are now enough cars on its once-empty streets for some residents to make a living washing them. (...) Since 2010, the number of government-approved markets in North Korea has doubled to 440, and satellite images show them growing in size in most cities. In a country with a population of 25 million, about 1.1 million people are now employed as retailers or managers in these markets, according to a study by the Korea Institute for National Unification in Seoul. ‘Competition is everywhere, including between travel agencies, taxi companies and restaurants,’ Rüdiger Frank, an economist at the University of Vienna who*

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184 An interesting description of the bizarre circumstances of this crisis in 2009/10 can be read in Andrei Lankov: *The Real North Korea. Life and Politics in the Failed Stalinist Utopia*, Oxford University Press, New York 2013, pp. 126-132

185 Andrei Lankov: North Korea: Not so ‘Stalinist’ after all. North Korea’s burgeoning black market has effectively ‘opened’ the country’s economy, 13 Apr 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/04/n-korea-not-so-stalinist-after-a-20144210422363163.html>

186 See on this also Andrei Lankov: Capitalism in North Korea: Meet Mr X, one of the new business elite, *theguardian.com*, 29 April 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/29/north-korea-capitalism-new-business-elite>

*studies the North, wrote recently after visiting a shopping center there.”*<sup>187</sup> Another journalist who interviewed many North Korean defectors concludes: *“In theory, North Korea is a bastion of socialism, a country where the state provides everything, including housing, health care, education and jobs. In reality, the state economy barely operates anymore. People work in factories and fields, but there is little for them to do, and they are paid almost nothing. A vibrant private economy has sprung up out of necessity, one where people find ways to make money on their own, whether through selling homemade tofu or dealing drugs, through smuggling small DVD players with screens called “notels” over the border or extracting bribes. (...) North Korea technically has a centrally planned economy, but now people’s lives revolve around the market. No one expects the government to provide things anymore. Everyone has to find their own way to survive. (...) The ability to make money, sometimes lots of money, through means both legal and illegal has led to visible inequality in a country that has long touted itself as an egalitarian socialist paradise. This could be a potential source of disruption. Bean traders and drug dealers and everyone in between have the prospect of making a decent living. Those working only in official jobs, whether they be on a state-owned ostrich farm or in a government ministry in Pyongyang, earn only a few dollars a month and get little in the way of rations to supplement their meager salaries.”*<sup>188</sup>

139. In our book on the capitalist restoration in Cuba, as well as in other works, we have discussed in detail the complex nature of the process of social transformation from a workers state towards capitalism. It would go beyond the scope of this document to reproduce the Marxist discussion on this issue and on our own experience given the process of capitalist restoration in the former Stalinist countries after 1989-91. At this place, we limit ourselves to quote the conclusion of the RCIT’s analysis: *“When can we state that such a capitalist restoration has taken place? The answer is: when a Stalinist bureaucratic workers’ government is replaced by or transforms itself into a bourgeois restorationist government. Such a bourgeois restorationist government is one which is firmly resolved, both in words and deeds, to reestablish a capitalist mode of production, i.e., to move decisively against planned property relations in favor of creating a capitalist economy based on the law of value.”*<sup>189</sup> Such an approach is in accordance with Trotsky’s method when he discussed the possibility of capitalist restoration in the USSR in the later 1930s. He also insisted that the decisive criterion is not the exact degree of privatization of the economy: *“Should a bourgeois counterrevolution succeed in the USSR, the new government for a lengthy period would have to base itself upon the nationalized economy.”*<sup>190</sup> It is rather the class character of property relations which

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187 Choe Sang-Hun: As Economy Grows, North Korea’s Grip on Society Is Tested, The New York Times, April 30, 2017 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/30/world/asia/north-korea-economy-marketplace.html>

188 Anna Fifield: Life under Kim Jong Un, Washington Post, Nov. 17, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/world/north-korea-defectors/?utm\\_term=.f62e25578ac7](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/world/north-korea-defectors/?utm_term=.f62e25578ac7)

189 Michael Pröbsting: Cuba’s Revolution Sold Out? The Road from Revolution to the Restoration of Capitalism, August 2013, p. 54, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/cuba-s-revolution-sold-out/>

190 Leon Trotsky: Not a Workers’ and not a Bourgeois State? (1937); in: Trotsky Writings, 1937-38, p. 63

the regime is defending: “The class nature of the state is, consequently, determined not only by its political forms but by its social content; i.e., by the character of the forms of property and productive relations which the given state guards and defends.”<sup>191</sup> As we saw the transformation of the old Stalinist regimes into Stalinist/Capitalist regimes in China, Vietnam, Laos or some Central Asian countries, we see a similar development taking place in North Korea.

140. It seems to us that such a restoration of capitalism has taken place in North Korea in the last years, effectively with Kim Jong-Un coming to power. With some differences but essentially similar, the North Korean bureaucracy has gone along the Chinese road and has transformed itself into a new ruling class. This means that the ruling elite keep the political superstructure with its one-party dictatorship intact but today this regime serves the restoration of the capitalist mode of production.

141. In the case of North Korea the regime is even more grotesque as it represents a dictatorship in the form of a monarchy where only one and the same family rules the state since its foundation in 1945 respectively 1948. Such a development is not without historic precedent as the French House of Bourbon comes into one’s mind: it first ruled the feudalistic monarchy before the revolution in 1789 and later, after the restoration in 1815, the same family – actually the brothers of the executed King Louis XVI – ruled the capitalist state for another 15 years.

142. In summary, the Stalinist regime transformed from a bureaucratic caste into a ruling class. Naturally, this class is certainly not without inner contradictions as it combines – as it has been the case in China and Vietnam – both party functionaries related to the “old” sectors of the planned economy as well as those who are closely connected or partly even identical with the new layer of *Donju*, i.e. “red capitalists”. As a result of this process the task of the North Korean working class has changed – similar to China and Vietnam: on the table is no longer a political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy but a social revolution against the ruling Stalinist-Donju Class.

143. This does not mean that the process of capitalist restoration has been completed. In fact, such a process usually takes a number of years. We have seen this is in Russia and even more so in China and Vietnam that it can take many years until all enterprises in the industrial and banking sector are subjugated to the capitalist law of value and until the whole working class is transformed into labor commodities. Likewise there are still many tasks for the restorationists in North Korea to complete. But the Rubicon has definitely been crossed and North Korea has to be characterized as a capitalist semi-colonial state.

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191 Leon Trotsky: Not a Workers’ and not a Bourgeois State? (1937); in: Trotsky Writings, 1937-38, p. 61

## South Korea: an Imperialist State

144. In a comprehensive study about the development of capitalism in South Korea (and Taiwan) in the post-war period, published in 1996, we have elaborated how – due to specific historic circumstances related to the Cold War<sup>192</sup> – South Korea has been able to become a relatively advanced capitalist economy.<sup>193</sup> Since then we have recognized that South Korea has become an imperialist state given the dominance of the *chaebols* (as the country's monopolies are called) as well as their global role. This analysis has been confirmed as we saw that South Korea, a country with a population of 51 million, has become one of the top economies in the world behind the leading states like the U.S. and China. Today, South Korea's economy is the fourth-largest in Asia and the 11<sup>th</sup> largest in the world. Its Per Capita Gross Domestic Product is expected to edge past Italy's in 2018.<sup>194</sup> In the ranking of the biggest monopolies in the world, South Korea is number 5 (Forbes Global 2000) respectively number 7 (Fortune Global 500). There can be no doubt that South Korea has become an imperialist nation.

145. However, while South Korea has become an advanced capitalist country due to the specific conditions of the Cold War, its political characteristics are also peculiar for the same reasons. Given the history of the Cold War and the ongoing tensions with Pyongyang, South Korea has been always strongly subordinated to Washington's foreign policy interests. The U.S. military has 28,500 troops, hundreds of tanks and air forces stationed in dozens of bases. Recently, Washington deployed the so-called THAAD Missile Battery in South Korea. In short, South Korea faces a strong political dominance by Washington.

146. The South Korean bourgeoisie itself is divided about the approach to the northern neighbor. A traditional right-wing conservative faction, closely linked to several influential *chaebols* families, still looks favorable to the "good old days" of the military dictatorship (1950-1987) when the ruler did not have to worry about elections but only about a coup by another general. These conservatives are strongly anti-communist and support the American war-mongering. However, another sector of the bourgeoisie considers these military tensions as an unnecessary obstacle for doing business. The background for this is, first, that China has become South Korea's biggest trade partner (both export as well as import) and, second, that these capitalists would like to use the Northern neighbor as a place for super-exploitation of its cheap labor. Between

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192 These factors have been in particular the massive economic support for South Korea by the Western imperialists given its nature as a front state in the Cold War. Furthermore decades of iron rule of military dictatorships, fully supported by U.S. imperialism, created the necessary conditions for a rapid capital accumulation based on the super-exploitation of the working class.

193 Michael Pröbsting: Capitalist Development in South Korea and Taiwan (1997), <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/capitalism-in-south-korea-taiwan/>

194 South Korea's Per Capita GDP to Overtake Italy in 2018, August 07, 2017, <https://financialtribune.com/articles/world-economy/69808/south-korea-s-per-capita-gdp-to-overtake-italy-in-2018>

2003 and the recent escalation in 2016, North Korea ran the so-called “*Kaesŏng Industrial Park*” at the border to South Korea in which 123 South Korean corporations operated. The South Korean capitalists made huge profits from the super-exploitation of 53,500 North Korean workers employed at the industrial park who received wages of only about \$160 per month. This is one-fifth of the South Korean minimum wage, and about a quarter of an average Chinese wage.

147. Last year, the right-wing President Park Geun-hye was forced to resign after a huge corruption scandal provoked a wave of mass protests. In the subsequent election, the liberal candidate Moon Jae-in was elected as new President. He tries to improve the relations with China. Beijing imposed unofficial economic sanctions against South Korea after the U.S. deployed the THAAD system. However, Moon Jae-in could improve relations with Beijing at a recent visit in China, despite the massive pressure by Washington. Beijing lifted the sanctions after Moon Jae-in accepted several military constraints known as the “*three No’s*”. Concretely, Seoul agreed “*there will be no further anti-ballistic missile systems in Korea, no joining of a region-wide US missile defence system and no military alliance involving Korea, the US and Japan.*”<sup>195</sup> Likewise, Seoul improved relations with Pyongyang resulting in collaboration around the upcoming Winter Olympics. Hence, we see that Washington saber-rattle also serves the purpose to stop this accommodation and to bring Seoul back into line.

148. Finally, it is important to bear in mind that South Korea’s working class and student movement have a proud tradition of militant struggle for their social and democratic rights. Take for example the famous *Kwangju Uprising* in 1980, when the people in this southern city took over local control for ten days in May 1980 in protest against the dictatorship of General Chun Doo-hwan. The regime finally succeeded to smash the insurrection and to kill up to 600 people. However, later the dictatorship was brought down by mass protests and since then South Korea has experienced a series of militant class struggles, resulting in the formation of the militant KCTU trade union federation and a left-wing student movement. A military attack of U.S. imperialism against North Korea could provoke a revolutionary upsurge of the South Korean working class and youth.

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195 David Josef Volodzko: China wins its war against South Korea’s US THAAD missile shield – without firing a shot, South China Morning Post, 18 Nov 2017, <http://www.scmp.com/week-asia/geopolitics/article/2120452/china-wins-its-war-against-south-koreas-us-thaad-missile>

## Amid Sanctions and War Threats: Defend North Korea! Defeat U.S. Imperialism!

149. The RCIT has put forward its position on the North Korean crisis in several statements. We unreservedly oppose all attempt of the imperialist Great Powers – first and foremost the USA – to pressurize and subjugate North Korea. We call for an end of all sanctions and for mass protests against the military provocations by the U.S. and its allies. In case of a military conflict the RCIT calls for the defeat of the imperialist forces and their allies and for the defense of North Korea. A successful defense of North Korea against US imperialism would weaken the biggest power and hence the biggest enemy of the world's working class and oppressed people. It would encourage the anti-imperialist liberation struggle all over the world. This is why the international workers movement – including the social democratic, Stalinist, Maoist and centrist parties and trade unions – must unite in waging all forms of class struggle resistance. *For demonstrations, strikes, sabotage etc. in order to stop such a reactionary imperialist war!* They must strive to turn such a war into a defeat for the imperialist rulers.<sup>196</sup>

150. The international workers movement – in Asia and around the world – must respond to a looming imperialist war against North Korea with global mass protests. The war-mongers must be attacked wherever possible. The Leninist maxim “*Turning the imperialist war into a civil war against the ruling class*” must be followed wherever possible. Naturally, South Korea and Japan are the places where such a strategy is most appropriate given the fact that these countries are allied with Washington and, at the same time, they are directly affected by such a war.

151. We reject all those reformist and pacifist strategies which appeal to the UN to solve any of the world's conflicts. It is only the consistent proletarian class struggle against imperialism and against reactionary ruling regimes leading to the international socialist revolution which can remove these threats to

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196 The RCIT's position on the North Korea crisis has been summarized in several documents: RCIT: North Korea: Stop the American Warmongers! Defend North Korea against the Madman of US Imperialism! Down with the imperialist sanctions against North Korea! No political support for the Stalinist Kim Regime! 11 August 2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/stop-us-madman-threatening-north-korea/>; RCIT: US Sanctions against Russia, Iran, and North Korea are an Economic Declaration of War, 30 July 2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/north-america/us-sanctions-vs-russia-iran-north-korea/>; RCIT: North Korea: Stop the War Mongering of US Imperialism! 4 April 2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/us-aggression-vs-north-korea/>; RCIT: New Imperialist Threats in East Asia: Hands off North Korea! 12.3.2013, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/defend-north-korea/>; RCIT: No War against North Korea! Call for Protests on the Day when a War starts! 6.4.2013, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/no-war-against-north-korea/>; Michael Pröbsting: US Aggression against North Korea: The CWI's “Socialist” Pacifism. Hippy Day-Dreaming is an Impotent Tool in the Struggle against Imperialist War! Authentic Socialists say: Defend North Korea! Defeat US Imperialism! 12.09.2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/cwi-and-north-korea/>

peace for once and all.

152. Our defense of North Korea against any imperialist aggression must not be confused with any political support for the regime of Kim Jong-Un that rules the country. This grotesque form of monarchic dictatorship only serves to defend the interests of the Stalinist-Capitalist bureaucracy. The North Korean working class, while defending its country against imperialism and its allies, must aim to prepare for a social revolution with the goal to overthrow this regime and to create a healthy workers state based on workers and peasant councils and militias. Part of such a revolution must be its extension to South Korea whose proletariat has demonstrated a proud tradition of class struggle in the past decades. The rallying cry must be: *“For the revolutionary unification of the Korean peninsula!”* and *“For a Korean Workers and Peasant Republic!”*

## VII. Building the Revolutionary World Party in the Present Period

153. The RCIT has pointed out many times that – contrary to the cries of the reformist and centrist naysayers – the central problem of the present period is not a so-called “*crisis of struggle*” or a “*lack of confidence in socialism*” of the working class. The central problem is rather the crisis of proletarian leadership. The working class and the oppressed have given proof in the past years in numerous uprisings, general strikes and militant class struggles – from India, Iran, the Arab world, South Africa, Brazil, Argentina to Catalonia – that they are willing to fight. However, what they are lacking is a revolutionary party with a program and cadres able to fight and lead them to victory. Building such a revolutionary party – nationally and internationally – is therefore the most important task for all authentic liberation fighters in the present period.<sup>197</sup>

154. If there exists any temporary “*crisis of struggle*” or “*lack of confidence in socialism*”, it is rather the result of the crisis of proletarian leadership and not the other way around. Wherever the working class brings its official leaderships to power they get nearly immediately betrayed by the reformist and populist bureaucrats. SYRIZA, the Greek flagship of the former Stalinist and now social-democratized *Party of the European Left* (which has also the Communist Party in France, the German Linkspartei and others among its members), is a prime example. Since it came to power in January 2015 it created an unprecedented record in neoliberal “successes”! The SYRIZA government, in coalition with the right-wing ANEL party, implemented more privatization projects than all the other, open bourgeois, governments before. It paid the imperialist banks more interest rates than its predecessor governments. And, recently, it even attacked the workers’ constitutional right to strike! With “friends” like this, the Greek workers hardly need any enemies! And the SYRIZA leadership is no exception! Just think about Zyuganov’s Communist Party in Russia who flatters the arch-reactionary Orthodox Church or Viktor Tyulkin’s RKRPP-RPK which supports Russian imperialism in Syria and the Ukraine. The same is true for India’s CPI(M) which implemented the IMF program when it was in power in West-Bengal. And let us not forget the “Communist” Party of Egypt which hailed General Sisi’s coup and their Syrian “comrades” who lick Assad’s boots until today.

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197 The RCIT’s history and understanding of party building has been summarized in a book by Michael Pröbsting: *Building the Revolutionary Party in Theory and Practice*. Looking Back and Ahead after 25 Years of Organized Struggle for Bolshevism, Vienna 2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/rcit-party-building/>

155. All these are powerful demonstrations that not everyone who swears to God in words also serves his goals in deeds. It is a widespread misunderstanding of people to imagine that an “agreement in principle” on the ideas of Marxism, Leninism or even Trotskyism would be sufficient. In fact, the experience of the big social liberation movements in history serves very well today. Take the different wings among the Jews during the time of the Roman occupation. They all praised *Yahweh* but the *Pharisees* collaborated with the Empire while the rivaling *Zealots* fought heroically against them. Or take the two opposing wing in the early Christian church: Their joint reference to Jesus’ teachings didn’t stop them that the official representatives prostituted themselves and served the Emperor while the *Donatists*, rooted among the poorer classes (particularly in North Africa) renounced any collaboration with Rome and one sector of them, the “extremist” *Agonistici* (also called “*Circumcellions*” by their enemies), led an armed struggle against the slave holders, big land owners and treacherous bishops in the name of God. The same has been the case with Taosim in China in the epoch of the Han Dynasty when is served both as a state religion as well as a spiritual inspiration for the major peasant uprising of the *Yellow Turbans* led by Zhang Jue and his brothers who were fighting for social equality. Or compare *Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī*, the loyal and dedicated companion of the Prophet Muhammad with the corrupt caliph *‘Uthmān*; or take *‘Ali ibn Muhammad* and the social revolutionary *Zanj Rebellion* of the slaves and poor against the corrupt *Abbasid* Caliphate. Both sides praised Allah in words, but, in fact, they served completely opposite causes. Later we saw *Thomas Münzer* leading the revolutionary uprising of the poor peasants against the ruling feudal class in Germany and *Martin Luther*, compromising with the same class. The same with the “moderate” Hussites and the Taborites in Bohemia. Both sides did so in the name of Christianity and the struggle against the corrupt Catholic Church. All this is the result that different classes and factions of classes pursued their goals in the name of the same ideology.

156. This is no different in the history of Marxism. Both the Mensheviks as well as the Bolsheviks praised Marx and Engels as well as the early works of Plekhanov. Similarly, both Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht as well as Karl Kautsky publicly esteemed the works of the founders of scientific socialism. But when they were tested by war and revolution, the found themselves on opposite sides of the barricades serving the revolution respectively the counter-revolution! Likewise, let’s remember how much the banner of communism has been misused by the Stalinist bureaucracy who brutally suppressed the working class and slaughtered hundreds of thousands of honest communists. Today they continue to mock the ideas of Marx and Lenin by their deeds. Things are no better among the so-called “Trotskyists”. As we have mentioned before, such so-called “Trotskyists” are dragging the name of the founder of the Red Army through the mire when they combine their praises for the Fourth International’s foundation program of 1938 with practical support for the military

putschists in Egypt or with cowardly “Third Campism” in face of the coup in Brazil 2016 or the Syrian Revolution. All these pseudo-socialist forces are a modern version of the mendicant orders in the Middle Ages. The mendicant orders, like the Franciscans or the Dominicans, emerged in a time when the Catholic Church was totally discredited in the eyes of the popular masses. They were crucial to regain the influence of the papacy as the monks lived among the masses under modest circumstances and hence were able to win the trust of the people. While the fat and openly corrupt bishops were despised by the people, the monks were able to win respect and confidence as they appeared as coming from the mid of the people. The mendicant orders acted as pro-Papacy forces pacifying the popular masses and fighting against the social revolutionary Christian heretical movements which at that time gained strong influence. Like the mendicant orders in the Middle Ages, the so-called “left” today uses radical phrases so that it appears as serving the interest of the oppressed. But in fact, they are spreading confusion and serving the ruling class. No, we repeat: praying to the same God does in no way mean serving the same goals!

157. This is why the RCIT insists that an abstract agreement on the principles of “Trotskyism” is in no way sufficient to unite the forces of revolutionaries. What is at least as important, if not even more important, is agreement on the tasks in the class struggle today. Agreement on the principles of the Transitional Program of 1938 is worthless if one stands on different sides of the barricades in the class struggle today! Agreement on Lenin’s theory of imperialism is meaningless if one isn’t capable to recognize the new imperialist Great Powers China and Russia as such! Praising the “Communist Manifesto” is useless if one does not divide the world in classes but rather shares the approach of bourgeois geopoliticism and divides the world, and corresponding tactics, in the main enemy, U.S. imperialism, and all its opponents in order to support the latter.

158. This is why the RCIT considers it as crucial to conduct the struggle for a new Revolutionary World Party in combination with the fight against all revisionist deviations of the reformists and centrists in the name of “Marxism”. Trotsky’s statement in the Fourth International’s *Transitional Program* is fully valid today: “*The Fourth International declares uncompromising war on the bureaucracies of the Second, Third, Amsterdam and Anarcho-syndicalist Internationals, as on their centrist satellites; on reformism without reforms; democracy in alliance with the GPU; pacifism without peace; anarchism in the service of the bourgeoisie; on “revolutionists” who live in deathly fear of revolution. All of these organizations are not pledges for the future, but decayed survivals of the past. The epoch of wars and revolutions will raze them to the ground.*”<sup>198</sup>

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198 Leon Trotsky: *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International: The Mobilization of the Masses around Transitional Demands to Prepare the Conquest of Power (The Transitional Program)*; in: *Documents of the Fourth International. The Formative Years (1933-40)*, New York 1973, pp. 215

159. The RCIT calls revolutionaries around the world to unite in a single international organization in order to advance the struggle to build a Revolutionary World Party as soon as possible. Such a party is highly needed for the working class to march forward in its struggle for liberation. It must have a common approach to the all major issues of the class struggle in the three axes of the world situation in the epoch of imperialism: the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the struggle between the imperialist states and the oppressed people, and the rivalry between the Great Powers. The RCIT has elaborated its program and its method in numerous Manifests and documents.<sup>199</sup> We are not ultimatists. We consider every concrete step of joint struggle on a clear foundation and every rapprochement on the basis of agreement on the present tasks as highly valuable. For this reason we have elaborated a document which summarizes our positions on the major issues of the world class struggle today. We present these “*6 Points for a Platform of Revolutionary Unity Today*” to all liberation fighters around the world as a proposal for discussion and, hopefully, basis for joint activities. Forward in building the Revolutionary World Party!

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<sup>199</sup> For a more extensive overview of the RCIT’s viewpoints we refer those who are interested to our website [www.thecommunists.net](http://www.thecommunists.net). We want to draw particular attention to our two programmatic documents: *The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto* (2012), <http://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto/> and the *Manifesto for Revolutionary Liberation. The Tasks of the Liberation Struggle against Decaying Capitalism* (2016), <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-program-2016/>). Both programs have been published in seven different languages.

## Appendix:

### 6 Points for a Platform of Revolutionary Unity Today

*A Proposal from the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency, February 2018*

We are living in a world of rapidly accelerating contradictions and sudden turns. As capitalism is decaying, the capitalist robbers try to raise their wealth by aggressively attacking the working class and the oppressed, by increasingly destroying the environment and, at the same time, by aggravating their rivalry against each other. The survival of humanity is endangered with the uncontrolled climate change and the accelerating rivalry between the Great Powers which creates the danger of an imperialist World War III. This is why we say that the alternative is “*Socialism or Stone Age!*”

This dramatic situation makes the organized struggle for socialism more necessary than ever. This means that the working class and the oppressed must have a party dedicated to the international struggle for a socialist future!

In our opinion, it is highly urgent that revolutionaries all over the world immediately start collaborating in laying the foundations for a principled unification, so that we drive forward the process of creating a new Revolutionary World Party with stronger forces. The starting point for the creation of such a party has to be agreement on the most important issues of the global class struggle. The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) considers the following issues as such programmatic keystones in the present political phase:

#### **1) Recognition of the Accelerating Rivalry between the Imperialist Great Powers – the US, EU, Japan, Russia and China**

It is *only* possible to understand the driving dynamic of the present period of capitalist crisis and to take a correct position if one recognizes the imperialist character not only of the US, EU and Japan but also of the new emerging powers, Russia and China. Only on such a basis is it possible to arrive at the only correct, anti-imperialist program on this issue – *proletarian internationalism* and *revolutionary defeatism*, i.e., the perspective of consistent struggle of the working class independent of and against *all* imperialist powers. This means that revolutionaries refuse to lend support to *any* Great Power in inter-imperialist conflicts under the slogan “*The main enemy is at home!*”

A similar approach is necessary when India enters into a conflict with imperialist China, as India – a non-imperialist regional power – acts under such circumstances as a proxy for US imperialism.

Those who fail to recognize the reactionary and imperialist character of these Great Powers will inevitable fail to take a consistent anti-imperialist, i.e. Marxist, line and will end up, consciously or unconsciously, supporting one or the other imperialist camp as a “lesser evil”.

## 2) Consistent Struggle against Imperialism and for the Liberation of the Oppressed People

Revolutionaries stand for the *defeat* of imperialist states and their proxies in any conflict with forces representing oppressed people and for the *military victory* of the latter without, at the same time, giving any *political* support to the non-revolutionary leadership of the oppressed (e.g., petty-bourgeois Islamists, nationalists). This is true both in domestic conflicts (e.g., against an oppressed nation like the Chechen people in Russia or the East Turkestanis/Uyghurs in China) as well as in wars abroad (e.g., North Korea, Afghanistan, Syria, Mali, Somalia). Such an approach is not only valid in the countries of the South but also in cases of national oppression and discrimination inside the old imperialist states (e.g. Blacks and Native Americans in the U.S.; Catalonia's struggle for independence against the imperialist Spanish State.)

Likewise, revolutionaries have to fight for *Open Borders* in the imperialist countries and for *full equality for national minorities and for migrants* (e.g. *citizenship rights, language, equal wages*).

Furthermore, revolutionaries refuse to lend support to one imperialist camp against another in any given conflict (e.g., Brexit vs. EU; Clinton vs. Trump).

Those who fail to support the popular struggles against oppression, referring to their bad leaderships as an excuse, desert the class struggle as it concretely takes place today and hence leave the camp of the working class and oppressed.

## 3) Continuing the Revolutionary Struggle in the Middle East and North Africa against Reactionary Dictatorships, Imperialism and Zionism

The mass popular uprisings in Palestine, Tunisia, Iran, Syria, Egypt, Yemen, Sudan and other countries have been the most important and progressive class struggle development so far since the beginning of the new historic period in 2008. True, given the lack of a revolutionary leadership, the masses have suffered a number of terrible defeats – like the coup d'état of General al-Sisi in Egypt in July 2013, or the ongoing slaughter of the Syrian people at the hands of Assad and his foreign backers. However, the revolutionary process is continuing. This is reflected in the ongoing popular resistance in Palestine, Syria, Yemen, Egypt, etc as well as its spreading to new countries like Tunisia, Iran, Sudan and Morocco. The Palestinian and international mass movement provoked by Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital opens a new chapter of the revolutionary struggle against the imperialist powers and against the Zionist Apartheid state and for the creation of a single Palestinian state from the river to the sea (a "*Free, Red Palestine*"). The spontaneous popular uprisings in Tunisia as well as in Iran against the capitalist regime show that the revolutionary wave in the Middle East might be revived and spreads even to non-Arab countries. Authentic revolutionary forces must give unconditional support to these popular struggles against dictatorships and reactionary forces, without giving any political support to their non-revolutionary leaderships

(e.g., petty-bourgeois Islamists and nationalists).

Those “socialists” who have failed to support the Arab Revolution since 2011 or who declare it as already finished and defeated, prove to be socialists and democrats only in words but not in deeds.

Revolutionaries oppose any reactionary war between regional power (e.g. Saudi Arabia, UAE, Iran, Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, etc.). They will determine their revolutionary tactics in any given war by analyzing the concrete character of the war and its political background as well as the role of imperialist powers (in particular the U.S., Russia, China) in it.

#### **4) Revolutionary Struggle against Reactionary Attacks on Democratic Rights**

Revolutionaries can only serve the interests of the working class and the oppressed if they are able to recognize the class enemy and to mobilize against it. Thus they must consistently fight against all reactionary dictatorships and corrupt and authoritarian pseudo-democracies (e.g. Syria, Togo, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe), against all forms of national and racial oppression (e.g. indigenous people in Latin America, Rohingya in Myanmar, African slaves in Libya), against all coup d'états (e.g. Egypt 2013, Thailand 2014, Brazil 2016) and against all authoritarian attacks (e.g. state of emergency in France since 2015).

All those who fail to recognize and to fight against these reactionary attacks but rather support them or take a neutral position, are traitors of the working class. Between them and us is a line of blood!

#### **5) Application of the United Front Tactic in all Mass Struggles**

Revolutionaries oppose *all* forms of sectarianism which refuses participation in mass struggles under the pretext of their non-revolutionary leaderships. Instead they apply the united front tactic in the struggles of the workers and peasants led by reformist or populist forces (e.g., trade unions, mass organizations of the peasants and the urban poor, but also political parties like PT, CUT, MST in Brazil; CGT, CTA, FIT in Argentina; MORENA in Mexico; Islamists in Egypt; rebels in Syria; EFF in South Africa; SYRIZA in Greece before 2015, PODEMOS, Basque and Catalan nationalists in the Spanish State). Such an orientation must be combined with a consistent struggle against all forms of popular-frontism and petty-bourgeois populism, and for the breaking of workers and peasants away from these non-revolutionary leaderships and to advance the formation of an independent and revolutionary Workers' Party.

Those who fail to apply the united front tactic in such mass struggles, render their support for these struggles to an abstract statement without any concrete meaning.

### **6) Start Building a Revolutionary World Party Now!**

The struggle for repelling the reactionary offensive of the ruling class and for the liberation of the working class and the oppressed can only succeed if it is combined with the struggle for the socialist revolution. This means nothing less than taking power by the working class and the oppressed and the overthrow and expropriation of the capitalist class so that the road towards socialism will be opened. History teaches us that all struggles of the masses for liberation will ultimately end in failure if they are not led by a revolutionary party. Such a party should organize the most politically conscious and dedicated fighters of the working class and oppressed, it must be free of any bureaucratic degeneration; and it must exist as an international party in order to avoid the dangers of national-centeredness.

Hence we call upon all organizations and activists which honestly strive towards the creation of a new Revolutionary World Party to join forces on the basis of these programmatic keystones. Concretely, the RCIT proposes that revolutionaries constitute a *Joint Contact Committee* in order to politically prepare and organize an *International Conference* which will discuss concrete steps to advance the formation of a Revolutionary World Party. The RCIT is committed to serious discussions and the closest possible collaboration with all forces who share such an outlook.

## About the Author

Michael Pröbsting was born in Vienna (Austria) in 1967. He became politically active when he was 14 years old and has been an organized Trotskyist militant since the age of 16. After five years of membership in the *United Secretariat of the Fourth International* of Ernest Mandel, he joined the *League for a Revolutionary Communist International* (later renamed to *League for the Fifth International*) in February 1989. He served on the leadership bodies of the Austrian section from 1989 and of the LRCI/LFI since 1994, until he and his comrades-in-arms were expelled by the majority of this organization in April 2011. Soon after this, they founded the *Revolutionary Communist Organization for Liberation* in Austria and the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* which has sections and activists in 11 countries. He serves as the International Secretary of the RCIT.

As part of his international political work, Michael Pröbsting has spent lengthy periods in Occupied Palestine (Israel) in 1985, Eastern Germany during the political revolutionary process of 1989-91, Britain in 1994, and during the revolutionary period in Argentina in 2002. In addition, he gained experience in workers' and anti-imperialist movements during numerous visits to Zambia, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Turkey, Greece, Kosovo, Serbia, Ukraine, Russia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Germany, Britain, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Sweden, and the USA.

Michael Pröbsting is the author of many articles and pamphlets in both German and English. He has also authored a number of books:

- \* *Marxismus, Migration und revolutionäre Integration* (2010)
- \* *Die halbe Revolution. Lehren und Perspektiven des arabischen Aufstandes* (2011)
- \* *Rosa Luxemburg – "Ich bin ein Land der unbeschränkten Möglichkeiten"* (Co-Author, 1999)
- \* *The Credit Crunch – A Marxist Analyses* (Co-Author, 2008)
- \* *The Great Robbery of the South. Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital* (2013)
- \* *Cuba's Revolution Sold Out? The Road from Revolution to the Restoration of Capitalism* (2013)
- \* *Building the Revolutionary Party in Theory and Practice. Looking Back and Ahead after 25 Years of Organized Struggle for Bolshevism* (2014)
- \* *Greece: A Modern Semi-Colony. The Contradictory Development of Greek Capitalism, Its Failed Attempts to Become a Minor Imperialist Power, and Its Present Situation as an Advanced Semi-Colonial Country with Some Specific Features* (2015)
- \* *Marxism and the United Front Tactic Today. The Struggle for Proletarian Hegemony in the Liberation Movement in Semi-Colonial and Imperialist Countries in the present Period* (2016)

# What The RCIT Stands For

The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) is a fighting organisation for the liberation of the working class and all oppressed. It has national sections in various countries. The working class is the class of all those (and their families) who are forced to sell their labour power as wage earners to the capitalists. The RCIT stands on the theory and practice of the revolutionary workers' movement associated with the names of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Capitalism endangers our lives and the future of humanity. Unemployment, war, environmental disasters, hunger, exploitation, are part of everyday life under capitalism as are the national oppression of migrants and nations and the oppression of women, young people and homosexuals. Therefore, we want to eliminate capitalism.

The liberation of the working class and all oppressed is possible only in a classless society without exploitation and oppression. Such a society can only be established internationally.

Therefore, the RCIT is fighting for a socialist revolution at home and around the world.

This revolution must be carried out and led by the working class, for she is the only class that has nothing to lose but their chains.

The revolution can not proceed peacefully because never before has a ruling class voluntarily surrendered their power. The road to liberation includes necessarily the armed rebellion and civil war against the capitalists.

The RCIT is fighting for the establishment of workers' and peasant republics, where the oppressed organize themselves in rank and file meetings in factories, neighbourhoods and schools – in councils. These councils elect and control the government and all other authorities and can always replace them.

Real socialism and communism has nothing to do with the so-called "real existing socialism" in the Soviet Union, China, Cuba or Eastern Europe. In these countries, a bureaucracy dominated and oppressed the proletariat.

The RCIT supports all efforts to improve the living conditions of workers and the oppressed. We combine this with a perspective of the overthrow of capitalism.

We work inside the trade unions and advocate class struggle, socialism and workers' democracy. But trade unions and social democracy are controlled by a bureaucracy. This bureaucracy is a layer which is con-

nected with the state and capital via jobs and privileges. It is far from the interests and living circumstances of the members. This bureaucracy's basis rests mainly on the top, privileged layers of the working class - the workers' aristocracy. The struggle for the liberation of the working class must be based on the broad mass of the proletariat rather than their upper strata.

The RCIT strives for unity in action with other organizations. However, we are aware that the policy of social democracy and the pseudo-revolutionary groups is dangerous and they ultimately represent an obstacle to the emancipation of the working class.

We fight for the expropriation of the big land owners as well as for the nationalisation of the land and its distribution to the poor and landless peasants. We fight for the independent organisation of the rural workers.

We support national liberation movements against oppression. We also support the anti-imperialist struggles of oppressed peoples against the great powers. Within these movements we advocate a revolutionary leadership as an alternative to nationalist or reformist forces.

In a war between imperialist states (e.g. U.S., China, EU, Russia, Japan) we take a revolutionary defeatist position, i.e. we don't support neither side and advocate the transformation of the war into a civil war against the ruling class. In a war between an imperialist power (or its stooge) and a semi-colonial country we stand for the defeat of the former and the victory of the oppressed country.

The struggle against national and social oppression (women, youth, sexual minorities etc.) must be led by the working class. We fight for revolutionary movements of the oppressed (women, youth, migrants etc.) based on the working class. We oppose the leadership of petty-bourgeois forces (feminism, nationalism, Islamism etc.) and strive to replace them by a revolutionary communist leadership.

Only with a revolutionary party fighting as its leadership can the working class win. The construction of such a party and the conduct of a successful revolution as it was demonstrated by the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky in Russia are a model for the revolutionary parties and revolutions also in the 21 Century.

For new, revolutionary workers' parties in all countries! For a 5<sup>th</sup> Workers International on a revolutionary program! Join the RCIT!

*No future without socialism!*

*No socialism without a revolution!*

*No revolution without a revolutionary party!*



This book is a major contribution of our organization to keep the Marxists' analysis of the world situation and its accelerating contradictions updated. As we emphasize in the document, we consider it as crucial for revolutionaries to understand the nature and the inner dynamics of the current historic period. Without such an understanding it is impossible for socialists, indeed for all liberation fighters, to possess the necessary political compass on which they can base their program, strategy and tactics.

Since several years does the RCIT publish annual studies on the world situation in which it analysis its most important developments and changes. This book updates the Marxist analysis of the state of the world economy, of the relations between the Great Powers, of the struggle between the classes and the tactics of revolutionaries. We also deal in depth with new issues respectively extend our theoretical analysis on several questions. In particular we have deepened in this book, among others, our understanding of the nature respectively the transitional character of the present world political phase, of the nature of different types of wars and the tactical conclusions arriving from this, of the complex nature of the conflicts in the Middle East, of the capitalist restoration in North Korea and, finally, we have elaborated a new proposal for an international platform for the unification of revolutionary forces in the present phase.



Michael Pröbsting has been a revolutionary activist for 35 years. He is the author of numerous articles and pamphlets in German and English. He has published books on the World Economy (2008), Migration (2010), the Arab Revolution (2011), Imperialism and the Third World (2013), Cuba (2013), on the revolutionary party (2014), Greece (2015) and the United Front Tactic (2016). He is the International Secretary of the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency*.