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The artwork in this dossier brings together some of the publications we have produced over the past decade, reframing our logo at the centre of our work. Inspired by the Soviet artist El Lissitzky's poster 'Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge' (1920), in which the red wedge represents the advance of the Bolshevik forces (Red Army) against the monarchist forces (White Guard), the red wedge in the Tricontinental logo symbolises our intervention in the ongoing battle of ideas.

# How the World Looks from Tricontinental



Dossier n° 90 | Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research  
July 2025

From 28 to 31 July 2015, social and political movements from around the world gathered at the Landless Workers' Movement of Brazil's Florestan Fernandes National School for the Second Dilemmas of Humanity Conference. They assessed the global order and the state of the class struggle, which included an acknowledgment that movements of workers, peasants, and other oppressed peoples simply did not have a way to elaborate their view of the world or stimulate debate in the public domain. To this end, the delegates decided to create a number of processes and institutions, including a research institute, which became Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research. Ten years later, this dossier sets out to summarise our view of the world, which we have constructed in the decade since in conversation with hundreds of movements in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

# The Era of Hyper-Imperialism

Before he left office, US President Joe Biden gave a speech at the State Department in which he spoke about a ‘fierce competition’ that had been taking place in the world – one, he said, that Washington had won.<sup>1</sup> Yet Biden did not clarify who the parties to this competition were or what this competition was about. If you did not know the context of Washington’s anxiety, it would not be clear what Biden was talking about, and you might have been forgiven for thinking that this was just another of his great rambles. But despite Biden’s reticence to name the parties to the competition, he was precise in his assessment and in his assertion. The competition that Biden referred to was between the United States and its Global North allies on the one side and China and Russia on the other.

Since 2011, the United States has published one version or another of this worldview in its many strategic documents, speaking of China and Russia as ‘threats’ and ‘competitors’. Perhaps the most disturbing of these is the 2024 *Report on the Nuclear Employment Strategy of the United States*, in which Biden approved a nuclear weapons strategy that would allow the US to simultaneously strike China, North Korea, and Russia.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the US Office of the Director of National Intelligence released its *Annual Threat Assessment* in February 2024 in which it wrote of ‘an ambitious but anxious China, a confrontational Russia, some regional powers, such as Iran, and more capable non-state actors’ who are ‘challenging long-standing rules of the international system as well as US primacy

within it’.<sup>3</sup> This is the ‘competition’ to which Biden referred, one that is accepted as the norm by the entire US elite political spectrum.

It says a lot about Washington’s approach that it sees the emergence of Chinese economic dynamism and Russian anxiety about its borders as ‘threats’. Who is threatened by China’s growth rate, particularly when it comes to new quality productive forces?<sup>\*</sup> Who is threatened by Russia’s concerns about the eastward expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)? China has openly articulated its goal for a peaceful and mutually beneficial world order while Russia – despite its invasion of Ukraine in 2022 – has stated that it does not want to get into a major battle with NATO or, worse, with the United States directly. Neither China nor Russia wants to see world affairs as a ‘competition’, certainly not in military terms, and neither country has a programmatic need to draw the United States and its allies into a full-scale war. They might not see the current struggle as a ‘competition’, but Washington certainly does.

An important study published by Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research and Global South Insights in January 2024 found that the United States and its Global North allies account for 74.3% of global military spending. It is important to recognise that the United States is in a multilateral military pact with most of these countries (NATO) and has bilateral military alliances with others.

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<sup>\*</sup>The Chinese Marxist concept new quality productive forces (新质生产力) refers to the use of next-generation technology that will increase productivity and mechanisation – as well as robotics – to enable less human exploitation and more human leisure.

While the Global North operates as a military-political-economic alliance, the Global South does not. In terms of military power, the United States appears to be in competition with itself, with military spending that far outpaces any other nation. As we wrote in 2024, ‘the US spends 12.6 times per capita above the world average (Israel, coming in second, spends 7.2 times above the world average per capita)’ and 21 times per capita more than China.<sup>4</sup>

Only the United States has used nuclear weapons against another country, and only the United States and its allies have consistently overthrown political processes in the Global South that have tried to exert their sovereignty.<sup>5</sup> The existence of this massive military might – with over 900 known military bases around the world – should not be seen as innocent: it is consistently used to exert the power of the Global North over countries that are trying to overcome the neo-colonial structure of the international order.<sup>6</sup> US President Donald Trump’s desire to annex Greenland from Denmark and the Panama Canal from Panama are not idle threats, since the United States already operates military bases in both countries (the Pituffik Space Base in Greenland and the Naval Support Activity Panama City). Trump has reiterated his demand that Canada become the 51<sup>st</sup> state. Behind these three seemingly incoherent demands lies a sinister and highly intentional strategy.

On 27 January, Trump signed an executive order called The Iron Dome for America.<sup>7</sup> Deceptively referred to as a missile defence shield, this ‘iron dome’ would enable the United States to conduct nuclear and large bomb first-strike attacks on its adversaries and prohibit them from launching a counterstrike. The US has renounced

the strategy of mutually assured destruction and has instead adapted an offensive military counterforce strategy.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, since 2001, the United States has unilaterally destroyed the arms control regime set up between the US and the Soviet Union during the Cold War (the final nail in the coffin was when Trump exited the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 2019). Russia and China, on the other hand, view their nuclear weapons systems as defensive shields. China and Russia's nuclear deterrence strategies have been weakened by such withdrawals as well as the 'iron dome' and the US counterforce doctrine. This creates enormous instability in the global security landscape.







# A Changing Economic Geography

As the Third Great Depression began in 2007, the countries of the North Atlantic saw their growth rates splutter.<sup>9</sup> They stagnated near, and sometimes dropped below, zero. When they recovered slightly, it was largely because their governments funnelled enormous amounts of public funds into the economy, borrowing from the future. The household debt problems in the United States, illustrated by the mortgage defaults, suggested that the country would no longer be the buyer of last resort for the industrial products manufactured in the Global South. Several countries in the South – from China to Brazil – worried about their reliance upon exports to the North Atlantic and began to reconsider their economic models.

In 1999, in the wake of the financial crises in Asia (1997) and Russia (1998), the Group of Seven (G7) – made up of the core countries of the capitalist order that have subordinated themselves to the United States – gathered a group of other countries into the Group of Twenty (G20) – made up of nineteen countries of the Global South and North as well as the European Union and African Union which together account for 85% of the world's GDP.<sup>10</sup> The goal was to find a way to maintain the principles of neoliberalism and globalisation and to prevent a return to *dirigisme* or state intervention. The G20 was largely dormant until 2008, when it was revived to meet annually to discuss how to save the global order, which was now

in danger due to the depression that began the previous year. But the G7 never allowed the G20 to act as a genuine decision-making body or to challenge G7 dominance. It soon became clear that the G20 was designed primarily to ensure that Global South countries with trade surpluses would use their finances to shore up the Global North-dominated banking system, prevent them from erecting financial or trade barriers, and control these rising economies rather than integrate them into leadership of the world order.<sup>11</sup>

Governments in the Global South never really regained confidence in the Global North's ability to recover economically and began to consider other options. Older theories of South-South cooperation were put back on the table, and the larger Global South countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) formed the BRICS project in 2009.\* BRICS was designed as an instrument to encourage commerce across the Global South countries with trade and development as its focus. There was no immediate interest in any political issues, apart from the old demand that the countries of the South must be appointed as permanent members of the United Nations Security Council with full veto power.<sup>12</sup> Global South countries increasingly began to decouple their trade from the Global North and trade with each other. India is a good illustration of this given its political proximity to the United States: from 1991 to 1992, the country sold 16.4% of its exports to the US (its largest

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\* This realisation was first articulated in the South Commission (1987–1990). In May 1989, the South Commission's General Secretary Manmohan Singh said, 'The South Commission is convinced that the developed countries cannot play the role of the engine of Southern growth. The new locomotive forces have to be found within the South itself. South-South cooperation is therefore crucial'. See Vijay Prashad, *The Poorer Nations* (London: Verso Books, 2013), 143.

destination), but by 2023, this figure was down to 13.7%. Though the US remained the largest destination, India's exports diversified such that twenty countries now accounted for 67% of its total exports.<sup>13</sup> Even in India, which has subordinated its foreign policy to the United States since 1991, there has been a trend to move away from the US. Since 2017, when Trump first took office, the US share of global trade has shrunk to 15% while the country failed to settle trade agreements with Asia and Europe (in fact, since that date, the US has not signed even one major trade agreement).<sup>14</sup>

As long as the Global South countries continued to serve as factories for the Global North-based multinational corporations, they were allowed to trade freely with each other. The problem for the capitalist class in the Global North started when the forces of production in the Global South began to develop rapidly, as is evident with China's strides in the production of a range of high-tech goods. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute's Critical Technology Tracker, which has observed tech developments over the past two decades, found that:

The US led in 60 of 64 technologies in the five years from 2003 to 2007, but in the most recent five years (2019–2023) is leading in seven. China led in just three of 64 technologies in 2003–2007 but is now the lead country in 57 of 64 technologies in 2019–2023, increasing its lead from our rankings last year (2018–2022), where it was leading in 52 technologies.<sup>15</sup>

It is this tendency that led to Obama's 'pivot to Asia' (2011), Trump's 'trade war on China' (2018), Biden's export controls and investment bans on China (2022), and Trump's imposition of tariffs on Chinese

goods (2025).<sup>16</sup> The US-driven New Cold War, which has focused its crosshairs on China, has little to do with a call for ‘democracy’ in Hong Kong (2019), the allegations of genocide in Xinjiang (2021), or the Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis (2022) but everything to do with the existential threat that China’s technological developments and resource nationalism in other Global South countries pose to US unipolarity.<sup>17</sup>

The banning of Huawei and ZTE equipment by the United States government in 2018 demonstrates how the Silicon Valley tech sector sought government protection for its markets using allegations of corporate and political espionage.<sup>18</sup> The 2024 US government ban (following a 2023 executive order) on investments from the US into China’s tech sector and the transfer of ‘sensitive’ technologies to China is part of an overall attempt to prevent China’s economic advancement in the name of national security. The problem for the United States is that none of this seems to be working. By 2022, China-based scientists not only filed more patent applications but had more of their papers cited in leading science research journals. In 2022, Chinese companies filed 18,223 applications for semiconductor patents, or 55% of the world total, while US firms filed 26% of the total in this area.<sup>19</sup> In 2023, Huawei released a new 5G smartphone made mostly with Chinese parts (including a 7-nanometre chip manufactured by China’s Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation). China’s DeepSeek – built entirely by scientists and engineers trained in China using Chinese technology – has not only remained competitive with ChatGPT and on par with the hype around Trump’s Stargate Project; it is also far more efficient and innovative, consuming 20% of the resources of ChatGPT and

offering an open-source code and model that marks a significant advance in the democratisation of AI.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, DeepSeek is potentially a great threat to the Global North's monopoly, closed-source system that is based on the theft of human knowledge. In a sign of the times, the Indian government is considering using DeepSeek-V2 for fifteen AI initiatives.





## The Centre of Gravity

Since the 2010s, the world's centre of gravity has been shifting from the North Atlantic to Asia.<sup>21</sup> The character of these two regions is fundamentally different: the former has a history of colonising other parts of the world and operates in a global neocolonial structure that provides it with an economic advantage, while the latter has a history of being colonised and has no interest in building a system of unfair advantages. The old colonial powers blame these shifts in the economic geography on political factors (such as the nature of governance and corruption in the Global South) that bear little relevance and are merely talking points of a bloc that once held uncontested power.<sup>22</sup>

The principal feature of Global North-led development was the suspension of any move towards economic sovereignty by the newly independent countries. This manifested, for instance, in crushing these countries' demands, such as to increase the prices of raw material exports, and their attempts to diversify their economies. Coups, invasions, unilateral coercive measures, and denials of credit became the instruments for discipline from Iran (1953) to Chile (1973).<sup>23</sup> During this same period, a large part of the world experimented with socialism and tried to build a development agenda that promoted forms of sovereignty, including in the Global South.<sup>24</sup>

With the collapse of the Third World Project following the debt crisis of the 1980s and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, the Global North opportunistically pushed an agenda of globalisation. This agenda suited its capitalist bloc (the G7 countries



in particular) and allowed the capitalist firms to export their industrial capacity via arms-length control to the Global South. Global North firms took advantage of lower costs in Africa, Asia, and Latin America by offshoring industrial capacity and reduced transportation expenses through cheaper energy sources and the containerisation of ships. At the same time, the policy of neoliberalism allowed the capitalist class to go on a tax strike and refuse to pay into the social wages in their own societies, further suppressing the incomes of the working class and peasantry.<sup>25</sup>

These two methods – globalisation and neoliberalism – reduced the possibility of capitalist and state investments in the Global North, which – more than merely financialisation – were responsible for the economic slowdown in the heartlands of early industrial capitalism. After the Dotcom bubble burst in 2000–2001, the growth rate in the United States remained below 4% and then fell dramatically in 2008–2009 to –2.6% due to the 2007 financial crisis. In 2020 it fell to –2.2% due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these shocks, however, the rate remained between 2% and 3% from 2022–2023, still far lower than the rates in Asia, where net-fixed capital formation has been a part of the general logic of development.<sup>26</sup> The capitalist crisis in the North Atlantic has been sharper than elsewhere largely because the capitalist class in that region has almost complete control over the state apparatus and therefore does not permit the state to play even a moderately adjudicatory role in the class struggle (refusing, for instance, to transfer a higher share of the social surplus to social welfare or permit workers to build trade unions).

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was the first clear sign that the centre of gravity of the world economy had shifted from the

North Atlantic region to Asia. In 2013, three countries in Europe (Belarus, Moldova, and North Macedonia) signed memoranda of understanding with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI); by 2019 that number had increased to nearly thirty (out of forty-four European states). These states were Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, and Turkey in 2015; Georgia and Latvia in 2016; Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Slovenia, and Ukraine in 2017; Greece and Portugal in 2018; and Cyprus, Italy, and Luxembourg in 2019. What is striking is that almost all Eastern European countries decided to participate in building Eurasian infrastructure, and so did most Mediterranean countries (with particular interest in refurbishing their ports). As Europe's integration with the US economy began to fray, countries in the region – which had already become increasingly reliant upon Russian oil and natural gas and China's BRI – began to integrate more with the Asian continent. This was part of the broader weakening of the Atlantic bloc, further exemplified by the failure of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership in 2019, the fallout from Brexit in 2020, and Britain's shift away from Europe through the US-UK Economic Prosperity Deal of 2025.

The European Commission's Network and Information Systems (NIS) Cooperation Group – which was established in 2016 by the NIS Directive – cemented this shift away from Asian integration with a publication in 2020 called *Cybersecurity of 5G Networks EU Toolbox of Risk Mitigating Measures*, which obsessed over the 'risk profile of suppliers', and urged states not to use technology from so-called risky countries.<sup>27</sup> The natural tendency of Europe

to integrate with Asia threatened Europe's subordination to the United States. The increasingly militarised responses to Russia (around Ukraine) and China (around Taiwan and allegations over espionage) splintered that integration even more. Italy tore up its memorandum of understanding with China's BRI in December 2023, several Eastern European states began to back off from their eagerness for Chinese investments, and European states shifted from purchasing cheaper Russian energy to importing more expensive energy from the United States.<sup>28</sup> The Atlantic alliance was preserved at the cost of the socioeconomic life of the citizens of its member countries, and Europe's gradual integration with the Asian states was suspended.

Through this period of jockeying between the Atlantic alliance and Eurasian integration, NATO played a strong role in tilting the scales toward the former.<sup>29</sup> When the European Union opened discussions with a country about becoming a new member, NATO entered to draw that country into its orbit. The EU promised economic and political integration (despite low levels of EU investment compared to what could come from Asia), and NATO provided military security and political direction – particularly to draw these countries into the NATO mindset and US-driven New Cold War against China, Russia, and the emergence of sovereignty in the Global South. The joint expansion of the EU and NATO mostly took place across Eastern and Central Europe after 1999: the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland joined NATO in 1999 and the EU in 2004, and then a swathe of countries from Estonia to Slovenia joined both the EU and NATO between 2004 and 2013.



## Da América Latina para o mundo

O serviço dos generais ditadores na América Latina foi mais que suficiente para garantir a estabilidade no Chile, mas também para garantir a estabilidade no Brasil, onde os generais ditadores foram os responsáveis pela estabilidade do país. A estabilidade foi garantida por meio da repressão e da violência, mas também por meio da corrupção e do nepotismo. A estabilidade foi garantida por meio da repressão e da violência, mas também por meio da corrupção e do nepotismo.

## La desigualdad entre clases en el Norte y el Sur Global

### Ten Theses on Marxism and Decolonisation

**Thesis One: The End of History.** The collapse of the USSR and the communist state system in Eastern Europe in 1991 came alongside a terrible debt crisis in the Global South that began with the Mexico's default in 1982. These two events – the decline of the USSR and the weakness of the Third World Project – were part of the same process: the end of the Cold War and the end of the world project in the 1990s. For the left, this was a decade of weakness and could not only advance our theories around the world, but also the only possibility forward being the silence of the left, with the only possibility forward being the silence of the left. The penalty imposed upon the left by the surrender of Soviet leadership was heavy and led not only to the shattering of many left parties, but also to the widespread confidence of millions of people with the theories of Marxist thought.

**Thesis Two: The Battle of Ideas.** During the 1990s, Cuban President Fidel Castro called upon his fellow Cubans to engage in a battle of ideas, a phrase borrowed from the German Marxist (1843) by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. What Castro meant by this phrase is that people of the left must not only engage with the rising tide of neoliberal ideology but must considerably engage with the fact that neoliberalism is incapable of solving the basic

### L'Union Africaine

En 2002, l'Union Africaine (UA) a été créée à l'initiative de la Commission Africaine de l'Union Africaine (CAUA). L'Union Africaine a été créée à l'initiative de la Commission Africaine de l'Union Africaine (CAUA). L'Union Africaine a été créée à l'initiative de la Commission Africaine de l'Union Africaine (CAUA).

# The New Mood in the Global South

To exaggerate the shift in the world economy's centre of gravity or to overread the growth of the BRICS+ bloc is a great temptation. These are major developments in our times, but they must be understood with soberness. Seventy years after the 1955 Bandung Conference, without any sort of social democratic or socialist consensus or a mass anti-colonial struggle, the Bandung Spirit has long dissipated.<sup>30</sup> In many Global South countries, the working class and peasantry remain largely disorganised, trapped in disarticulated production regimes and precarious employment. Though there is evidence of growing confidence in some Global South states, it is not grounded in mass political struggle and does not inherently suggest the arrival of multipolarity – simply that the era of unipolarity, ushered in by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, is now ending. The United States and its allies continue to dominate in the arenas of military and communications power, but they no longer fully dominate the capacities of technology and science, raw materials, or finance.

Global South countries operate through a range of multilateral and regional organisations and platforms, rather than as a single or closely aligned bloc. They are not prepared to become poles in a global contest. For instance, Turkey, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, and the Philippines are for historical reasons part of the Global South,

yet two of them (South Korea and the Philippines) are practically military colonies of the US and Turkey is a NATO member that colluded with Western forces to remove Syria's President Bashar al-Assad and enable Israel's occupation of large border areas of Syria. Saudi Arabia, for its part, welcomed the weakening of Iran's allies.<sup>31</sup>

Nonetheless, in this new period, as the structures of unipolarity crack open, space has opened for countries of the Global South to assert their sovereignty. Though these assertions are mostly economic – for instance, Indonesia stating that it will not export unprocessed nickel and India refusing to stop buying Russian oil – they nevertheless have important political ramifications, such as Indonesia joining BRICS+ and India refusing to condemn Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. Examples of these assertions are legion, and they are indicative of the new mood in the Global South.\*

The temperature of this new mood is also exemplified by the kind of politics visible in Latin America.<sup>32</sup> Inspired by the example of the 1959 Cuban Revolution, wave after revolutionary wave has flooded Latin America with hope against US imperialism and for a left-wing breakthrough. The **first wave** was crushed by extreme violence that sought to make an example of the Cuban Revolution through

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\* One of the flashpoints of this new mood is the debate around the use of local currencies and therefore of de-dollarisation. However, these discussions are often exaggerated as they overlook the difference between the use of local currencies to denominate bilateral or even multilateral trade and a global currency that could anchor the global financial system. For a balanced discussion of the issue of BRICS and de-dollarisation, see 'The BRICS and De-Dollarisation: Opportunities and Challenges', *Wenhua Zongheng* 2, no. 1, May 2024, <https://thetricontinental.org/wenhua-zongheng-2024-1-brics-dedollarisation-opportunities-challenges-2/>, with essays by Paulo Nogueira Batista Jr., Gao Bai, Ding Yifan, and Yu Yongding.

military coups and the US-orchestrated campaign of abductions, torture, and assassinations known as Operation Condor. These coups, from Brazil (1964) to Argentina (1976), stayed the hand of the Cuban alternative. Yet, the illegal US blockade against Cuba did not prevent the island from accelerating its socialism or expanding its internationalism. The **second wave** – beginning with the Nicaraguan and Grenadian revolutions of 1979 – renewed hope, which was once more contested by imperialist forces through massacres in Central America and by alliances between these forces and narco-terrorists of the region. The **third wave** came with the election of Venezuela's Hugo Chávez in 1999 and the advancement of what was known as the 'pink tide' in Latin America. This tide was hindered by the United States' illegal hybrid war against Venezuela, the decline in commodity prices, and the weakened ability of social and political movements to effectively contest the entrenched bourgeoisie in much of the region. Yet in each of these waves, the example of Cuba shined. We are now at the end of the **fourth wave**, with the electoral victories of Chile's Gabriel Boric (2021), Colombia's Gustavo Petro (2022), and Brazil's Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2022) ending the dominion of the right wing but unable to move a left agenda. This wave is significant but should not be exaggerated. Even the mildest centre-left governments should have been forced to address the serious social crises in the hemisphere, crises deepened by the collapse of commodity prices and by the COVID-19 pandemic. Policies to address these crises would have been possible using funds either from the various domestic bourgeoisies or from the royalties raised from the extraction of natural resources, which would have forced these governments into a clash with both their own bourgeoisies and with US imperialism. Few of these governments stood up. The

test, therefore, was not what these governments said about this or that issue (such as Ukraine), but how they acted when faced with the refusal by the forces of capitalism to solve the major social crises of our time. The new mood in the Global South merely provides the space to begin to address these crises. Perhaps a **fifth wave** will emerge with more confidence.

This new mood is generated not by mass struggles of the working class and the peasantry, but by the vicissitudes of history and the necessity of exercising sovereignty and expanding development priorities. Most of the governments in Global South countries that have demonstrated this new mood are either not of the left or their main base is not rooted in the organised working class and peasantry. In most of these countries, the working class and peasantry have seen an increase in precarious labour practices, the weakening of their own class organisations, and a politics of defensiveness in their relationship to centre-right to far-right governments.<sup>33</sup> Widespread unrest continues because of the contradictions of capitalism, but it does not easily translate into a political agenda driven by mass-based left organisations.

The attrition of state institutions that provide social welfare has forced sections of the left to build service provision mechanisms, drawing the revolutionary left into the necessity of providing services for survival (often through cooperatives and collectives). Meanwhile, the right wing, better funded certainly by Western foundations, has built NGOs that promote a culture and world view for the working class and peasantry that is ruthless, petty, and often



rooted in forms of exclusionary religiosity or racial supremacy.<sup>34</sup> For that reason, in many countries of the Global South the working class and peasantry are drawn towards other, more hateful explanations for their despair and atomisation, pointing the finger away from the ruling class and squarely at those who are treated as Others (such as religious or ethnic minorities, and immigrants). The collapse of social welfare systems and the paltry to non-existent redistribution of resources has revived older patriarchal hierarchies that place the labour of childcare, household management, and eldercare on the shoulders of women, who continue to be underpaid and overworked in the labour market at the same time.<sup>35</sup> With electoral politics and democratic institutions in the bourgeois-landlord states of the Global South swamped by money power, the opportunity for the working class and peasantry to escape clientelism of different forms is minimal.

If growth rates remain relatively high, centre- to far-right governments in the Global South can maintain some redistributionist policies and invest considerable amounts of public funds in infrastructure. High growth rates, regardless of the quality of the investment, have a significant positive impact on life expectancy and social measures in general. But when the downward pressures of capitalism return, and when the bourgeoisie in these Global South states refuses to contribute to any counter-cyclical spending, the class struggle in these countries will be renewed. In what direction this class struggle will go depends entirely on the prospects for rejuvenating independent working-class and peasant movements as well as left-wing parties. It is only when the class struggle is more

intense, and when the working class and peasantry can put their stamp on state policy, that the gains that can be reaped from high growth rates will improve the *quality* of investments and not just their volume. That is the only scenario in which there is a possibility of moving in a socialist direction; today's nebulous new mood in the Global South is not, in and of itself, an indication of such a shift.<sup>36</sup>

Bursts of mass activity do take place, as they did in the Sahel, along the southern edge of the Sahara Desert. Here, in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, widespread protests against the French military and its bases led to a general rebellion against the established political elites, which then led to military coups led by popular officers. These popular coups brought in governments that are committed to building sovereign processes, inspired by the legacy of figures such as Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso (1983–1987) and by the possibilities of regionalism (such as the Alliance of Sahel States, established in 2023). This anti-French sentiment has spread across the region, with Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, and Senegal calling for a French military withdrawal over the last two years. Meanwhile, in Ghana, at the inauguration of the newly elected social democratic President John Mahama, the warmest applause of the event was for Ibrahim Traoré, the invited leader of Burkina Faso. It is inspirational to mass movements across the Global South, which are cautiously watching to see whether these states will be able to break from the Washington Consensus and its tentacles. Less dramatic, but equally significant, are the centre-left governments in places such as Sri Lanka which emerged on the back of inchoate mass struggles and drew the forces of the left to build patriotic platforms that are not programmatically left-wing but are at least rooted in demands for sovereignty.

Whether these popular fronts will be able to develop a clear agenda for their governments is yet to be seen.

Hope, of course, rests on countries like China, which has been able to successfully pursue its own form of social development under a state committed to socialism. But China, like other socialist projects, must navigate three core tasks: first, to protect itself from economic, political, and military threats to its sovereignty; second, to ensure the welfare of its own people; and third, to uphold its commitment to internationalism. These mandates are not easy to maintain at the same tempo. It is unrealistic to expect China, which has made great strides but is still nonetheless a developing country, to be the saviour of the Global South. China provides forms of investment and technology transfer that have already been useful to several countries in the Global South. The issue here is not Chinese investment and technology but what kind of development theory and strategy will be enabled by the political projects in the individual Global South states and by the regional experiments that they have already begun to develop.<sup>37</sup> What happens when the class struggle generates sufficient force to propel a left or even centre-left alliance to power? What will they do when they are in office? Will they be able to take advantage of the churning of the world order to construct new processes in their societies, strengthen the confidence and clarity of the working class and peasantry, and embolden other countries to stand up and prevent the imperialist bloc from asserting its old habits?

More and more of the world is in motion, seeking to break from neoliberalism and imperialism and assert sovereign rule and paths of development. More and more people across the world seem to

understand the futility of permanent austerity. But their projects are fragile and appear in ways that are not necessarily progressive. As of yet, the *quantity* of areas that seek to break from the current world order is not widespread or powerful enough to change the *quality* of the world order. But change is on the horizon. It is at the heart of the global class struggle. Something is bound to happen.





# Notes

- 1 'Remarks by President Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken on the Administration's Work to Strengthen America and Lead the World', The White House, 15 January 2025, <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2025/01/15/remarks-by-president-biden-and-secretary-of-state-antony-blinken-on-the-administrations-work-to-strengthen-america-and-lead-the-world/>.
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