

SAMIR AMIN

The increased strength of emerging countries of the South confronts the challenges of contemporary globalization

The current situation finds the decline of old centers (USA, Europe and Japan), in crisis, in opposition to the impetuous growth of emerging countries (China and others). There are three options: the current crisis spreads to the emerging countries and seriously hinders their development; they nevertheless continue to grow and lead to a revival of capitalism, more focused on Asia and South America; the development of emerging countries deconstructs globalization as it is now and produces a truly polycentric world in which they will combine and confront, progressing towards democratic and popular alternatives and violent restorations.

The most popular thesis argues that the victories of the anti-imperialist struggles of the past have paved the way not for socialism, but for a new rise of capitalism. The main argument of my criticism of this view stems from the finding that the historical capitalist model, which is now considered the exclusive model, was established from its beginning based on the production and reproduction of global polarization. This feature is itself the product of the mass expulsion of the peasantry from the land, upon which capitalism's expansion was founded. This model was sustainable only because the safety valve of mass immigration to the Americas allowed it. Reproduction of this same model is strictly impossible for the peripheral countries today -- they comprise nearly eighty percent of the world population with almost half of it rural -- five or six Americas would be needed to "catch up by imitation." Catching up is an illusion; progress in this direction can only lead to a dead end. This is why I say that the anti-imperialist struggles are potentially anti-capitalist. If you cannot "catch up," you must "do something else." Of course transformation in the sense of long-term visions of "development" of emerging countries is by no means "inevitable." It is only necessary and possible. The current success of emerging countries in terms of accelerated growth within global capitalism and by capitalist means reinforces the illusion that a catch-up is possible. The same illusion was accompanied by the experiences of the first wave of "the awakening of the South" in the twentieth century, even though they were experienced as a "catch-up by the socialist road."

Today the triad's collective imperialism deploys all economic, financial and military weapons in its possession to perpetuate its domination of the world. Emerging countries that deploy strategies to eliminate the advantages of the triad -- control of technology, exclusive access to the world's natural resources, and military control of the planet must come into conflict with the triad. This conflict helps dispel any illusions about these countries' ability "to advance within the system" and gives the popular democratic forces the possibility to influence the course of events in the direction of progress on the long road of transition to socialism. To date the emerging countries have seen that their growth has accelerated within capitalist globalization through capitalist measures. If these countries have been oriented to pursuing

this path, based on giving priority to exports, then the economic crisis that struck the old centers has in turn seriously affected them.

The conflict between centers and the countries in the periphery is a given of the first order in the history of capitalist deployment. This is why the struggle of the peoples of the South for their liberation must question capitalism itself. For imperialist rent associated with the global expansion of capitalism, historically still dominated by the triad, is not only a major source of profits for monopoly capital, it also conditions the reproduction of society as a whole. So it's no coincidence that the South is still "the storm zone," of repeated revolts, potentially effective ones. It is clear that the ruling classes of the so-called "emerging" South have chosen a strategy that is neither passive submission to the dominant forces in the world system, nor is it declared opposition to them: it's a strategy of active interventions upon which they base their hopes to accelerate their country's development. Yet, the societies of the South are now equipped with measures that enable them to eliminate the imperialist centers' means of control. These societies are able to develop on their own, without falling into dependence. They have a potential of technological expertise that would allow them to use technology for themselves. By recovering the control of their natural resources, they can force the North to adjust to a less harmful method of consumption. They can move out of financial globalization. They are already challenging the monopoly of weapons of mass destruction that the U.S. wants to reserve for itself. They can develop South-South trade -- goods, services, capital, and technology. More than ever before, delinking is the order of the day. It's possible. Will these societies do this? And who will do it? The ruling classes in place? The popular classes that come to power?

Probably at first it will be transitional regimes with a national /popular character.

From 1500 to 1900, only "Westerners" shaped the structures of the new world of historical capitalism. Of course, the conquered peoples of the peripheries resisted, but they were still ultimately defeated and forced to adjust to their status as subordinates. The twentieth century opened -- with the "awakening of the peoples of the peripheries" -- it was a new chapter of history: the Iranian revolution of 1907; that of Mexico (1910-1920); China (1911), a forerunner of 1949; 1905 in the "semi-periphery" nation of Russia, a forerunner of 1917; the Arab-Muslim Nahda; the founding of the Movement of Young Turks; the Egyptian revolution of 1919 and the founding of the Indian Congress Party were the first manifestations. The peoples of the peripheries rallied under the flag of socialism (Russia, China, Vietnam, Cuba) or those of national liberation associated with varying degrees of progressive social reforms.

Governments and peoples of Asia and Africa proclaimed in Bandung in 1955 their determination to rebuild the global system based on the recognition of the rights of nations that until then had been subjugated. This "right to development" was the basis of the globalization of that era, the implementation in a multi-polar negotiated structure, imposed on imperialism and forcing it to adjust to these new exigencies. Industrial progress initiated during the Bandung era did not follow imperialist logic but was imposed by the victories of the peoples of the South.

This first wave of awakening of the peoples of the peripheries was exhausted for multiple and combined reasons concerning both its own internal limits and contradictions and the success of imperialism, which managed to invent new ways of controlling the global system and reinforcing its control of technological innovation, access to global resources, control of the global financial system, of communications and information, and of weapons of mass destruction. But the moment of triumph of the new collective imperialism of the triad of the United States, Europe and Japan was short. A new era of chaos, wars and revolutions has opened. In this context the second wave of awakening of the nations of the periphery, already begun, is now prohibiting the collective imperialism of the triad from envisaging the possibility of maintaining its dominant position by means other than military control of the planet.

The history of the global expansion of historic capitalism is that of an accumulation financed mainly by the dispossession of peoples of the peripheries for the benefit of those of the centers. Its inception was the conquest of the Americas, followed by the slave trade and colonization. Dispossession has not just hit the peasant population -- the overwhelming majority of peoples in the past. It destroyed the capacity of industrial production (manufacturing and crafts) of regions at one time more prosperous than Europe itself: China and India among others.

The capitalist impasse manifests itself clearly with regard to the land question.

The path of development of historical capitalism is based on private ownership of agricultural land, the submission of agricultural production to the requirements of the "market" and, starting from there, the gradual and accelerated expulsion of the peasant population for the benefit of a small number of capitalist farmers, who were no longer peasants, and who end up as only an insignificant percentage of the population (five-ten percent), but were able to produce enough to feed all the people of the countries concerned, and could even export significant surplus production. This capitalist road was possible only because Europeans had the huge safety valve available represented by immigration to the Americas. Now this safety valve simply no longer exists for the peoples of today's peripheries. In addition, modern industrialization will be able to absorb only a small minority of the rural populations concerned, because, in comparison with industries of the nineteenth century, today's incorporate technological advances -- a necessary condition of their efficiency -- which minimizes the workforce they employ. The capitalist path can't produce here anything else but what "the planet of shanty towns" produces and reproduces indefinitely with cheap labor. In Europe, North America and Japan -- the capitalist road associated with the outlet of emigration and to the profit of imperialism -- created -- albeit belatedly -- the conditions for a social compromise between capital and labor (particularly visible in the post-Second World War era with the Welfare State). The conditions of a compromise following this model do not exist in the peripheries of today. This path can only find its social base among the new middle classes, which become the exclusive beneficiaries of this development.

Without doubt the dominant image of reality does not allow us to imagine that we could immediately question the global capitalist order. The ruling classes of the South, defeated, have largely agreed to accept their role as subordinate compradors; the peoples without recourse, engaged in the struggle for daily survival, often appear to accept their fate or even -- worse -- to feed themselves on the illusions that these same ruling classes swallow.

The emergence of China: challenges to the imperialist order?

China has a very special place in the heart of the so-called "emerging countries." Not only because of its size, but also because of the success of its profound industrialization and its particular method and effective response to the agrarian question, both of these made possible by the socialist revolution and Maoism. The relationship between the power exercised by the Party apparatus (a party that still claims to be "Communist"), the social sector on which it is based (basically the "middle classes," major beneficiaries of the ongoing development, but also the capitalists) on the one hand, and on the other hand the popular classes (workers and peasants), is, therefore, unique. Its transformation, in a negative sense (that of an open capitalist restoration) or positive (defined by the terms of a "social compromise" favorable to the popular classes) is still subject to possible divergent trends. The choice between the forms of democracy associated with social progress on the one hand, or "conventional" forms of democratization, to which the middle classes can perhaps aspire (but this is not even certain), is at the heart of the challenge which the social forces of right and left face here.

The dominant discourse claims that the legacy of underdevelopment is being overtaken by an Asia that is "catching up" by inserting itself in the heart of the capitalist system, not by breaking with it; and appearances reinforce this vision of the future. That would be a capitalism that thereby loses its imperialist character at least in regard to East Asia and South America. The future result of this evolution would be a multi-polar world, organized around at least four areas: the United States, Europe, Japan and China or seven areas if we also add Russia, India and Brazil.

I find the analysis on which this reasoning is based lacking. First of all, because the forecast does not take into consideration policies that Washington plans to put in motion to defeat the Chinese project. Ultimately, the permanent military installation of the United States in West Asia is a military threat directed primarily against China. In addition, Europe has still failed to conceive of itself breaking with the Atlantic Alliance, which places it in the wake of the United States, and for both similar and other special reasons Japan remains deferential towards its protector on the other side of the Pacific Ocean. Furthermore, the days of the triad's collective imperialism are still far from over. Second, it is misleading to measure "success" only by the economic growth rate and using this rate to project beyond a few years has doubtful validity. The possible continuation of growth in Asia depends on many internal and external factors that react in different ways depending on the one hand on the social modernization of strategic models chosen by the local ruling classes and also on external

reactions. Beyond what the quest for continued growth represented from the viewpoint of ecological balance of the planet, the conflict with the countries of the imperialist triad, that were up to now the exclusive beneficiaries of all the resources of the planet, is because of this fact only going to get sharper.

The dominant discourse attributes the success of post-Maoist China solely to the virtues of the market and the opening to the world. Yet during the three decades of Maoism (1950-1980), China had already experienced exceptional growth at rates double those of India or of any major region of the Third World. However, the performances during the last two decades of the century are even more extraordinary. These unique achievements would not have occurred without the economic, political and social bases constructed during the previous period.

But the imperialism of the triad is based on new ways mentioned above instead of the former monopoly of industry. The imperialist centers' new privileges are used to deepen the polarization in the world, not to reduce it. In this sense to characterize them as "emerging countries" is an ideological farce; these are countries which, far from "catching up," are building the peripheral capitalism of tomorrow. China is no exception; it is already a subcontracting workshop for the profit of capital and the consumption of the imperialist centers!

Market socialism: a step to socialist transition or a shortcut to capitalism?

The Chinese ruling class has chosen the path of capitalism and "market socialism" as a shortcut for the gradual introduction of the structures and the basic institutions of capitalism, while minimizing the pains and bumps of the transition to capitalism.

What possibilities does this route offer to today's China? Alliances between the powers of the state, the new class of large private capitalists, the farmers in areas enriched by the opportunities the available urban markets offer them and the already expanding middle classes are already in place. But this hegemonic bloc excludes the vast majority of workers and peasants. Any analogy with the historical alliances built by some European bourgeoisies with the peasantry (against the working class) is artificial, as is subsequently the historic compromise between capital and labor associated with social democracy.

The capitalist development model at work is based on giving priority to exports, upon which is grafted the growth of consumption of the middle class. This is the model par excellence of peripheral accumulation. Following this path implies what we see already: a barbaric exploitation of workers that recalls the nineteenth century, an ecological disaster. As a counterpoint, an authentic model of development is necessarily based on giving priority to expanding the domestic market for the benefit of the working classes, reinforced by the development of production of capital goods. These two paths are in opposition within the political and social conflicts in China. The weakness of a pro-capitalist hegemonic bloc in China is causing the difficult problem of political management of the system.

"China is a poor country in which only a few poor people are to be seen." China feeds twenty-two percent of the world's population even though it contains only six percent of the arable land on the planet. That is where the real miracle lies. To attribute its main origin to the great age of Chinese civilization is incorrect, for while it is true that until the industrial revolution China had a technological development more advanced overall than all other large regions of the world, its situation deteriorated for a century and a half and resulted in the spectacle of large scale poverty comparable to that of peripheral countries ravaged by the imperialist expansion, like India and others. China owes its remarkable recovery to its revolution. I would place Brazil, "a rich country in which you only see poor people," at the other end of the spectrum of situations created by the global capitalist expansion.

The Chinese revolution has brought modernity into the country's social system. Chinese society is well and truly modern and that can be seen in all aspects of the behavior of its citizens. By modernity I mean this historic and cultural break after which people consider themselves responsible for their history. This modernity explains why there is not seen in China the expression of these para-cultural neuroses that plague people elsewhere, for example, in Muslim countries, in Hindu India, in sub-Saharan Africa. The Chinese live in their moment, they do not nourish themselves with this sort of nostalgia for a reconstructed mythological past that characterizes their zeitgeist. They have no "identity complex." The modernity in which China swims is a major asset for its future. Revolution and the plunge into modernity transformed the Chinese people more than any other in the Third World today. The Chinese popular classes are self-confident; they know how to fight, and they know that struggles pay off. Equality has become a core value of the common ideology. The fighting in the social struggles is remarkable. The Chinese workers' combativeness in social struggles is remarkable. The authorities know it and simultaneously repress, try to prevent crystallization of struggle fronts that go beyond the local horizon (by prohibiting the autonomous organization of the working classes) and reduce dangers by the art of "dialogue" and manipulation.

The future of China remains uncertain. The battle of socialism in this respect has not yet been won. But neither has it been **yet** lost. In my opinion, as I have already tried to show above, it will not be lost until the day when the Chinese system renounces the right to land for all its peasants. Until then, the political and social struggles can sway the course of evolution. The ruling political class directs its efforts to controlling these struggles solely through wielding its bureaucratic dictatorship. Fragments of this class also consider circumventing the emergence of the bourgeoisie by the same means. The bourgeoisie and middle classes as a whole have not decided to fight for an "American style" democracy. With the exception of a few ideologists, these classes accept the "Asian style" autocratic model without difficulty, provided that it allows the deployment of their consumer appetites. The popular classes fight on the grounds of defense of their economic and social rights. Will they manage to unite their fights, devise suitable forms of organization, produce a positive alternative approach and define the contents and means of a democracy capable of serving it?

The only alternative option that can ensure the stability of the country's development can only

be based on giving priority to expanding the internal market, on the basis of social relations regulated so as to minimize social and regional inequalities and, consequently, the submission of relations outside those logically required for this impulse.

India: a great power?

Having already surpassed one billion people, and with an economic growth better than the global average, India is ranked among the rapidly rising powers of the twenty-first century. The reason for my doubts about this country derives from the crucial importance of the fact that independent India has not tackled the major challenge of radically transforming structures inherited from its shaping by colonial capitalism. British colonization essentially transformed India into a dependent agricultural capitalist country. To this end, the British systematically established forms of private ownership of agricultural land that excluded the majority of the peasantry from access to it. The majority of the peasants found themselves transformed into a poor, practically landless peasantry. The price paid for taking this "capitalist approach" to agricultural development is the incredibly poverty-stricken conditions in which the vast majority of Indian people live. And independent India reduced its promises to the peasantry to a semblance of agrarian reform with no real impact. This choice manifested itself fully through the "green revolution," which strengthened the position of the dominant rural classes. When, as in West Bengal and Kerala, the local communists went a little further -- as much as the Indian constitution permitted -- the positive results in social and economic terms were not negligible and popular support for the proponents of the reforms was strengthened.

In India, the hindrance to progress constituted by this colonial inheritance is aggravated by the persistence of the caste system. The "lower castes" (today known as the Dalit) and the tribal populations account for a quarter of the population of India (around 250 million people). Deprived of all rights, especially of access to land, they are a mass of "semi-slaves" and collective property of the "others." The persistence of this situation reinforces the reactionary ideas and behavior of the "others" and benefits the exercise of power by and for the benefit of the privileged minority, contributing to neutralizing any protest by the exploited majority who are stuck between the minority exploiters and oppressed Dalit people.

The Congress Party governments of independent India implemented a national plan typical of its time, influenced by the victories of the national liberation movements of Asia and Africa after the Second World War. From the outset, the colonial power had carried out a systematic de-industrialization of India -- which was advanced at the time -- to the benefit of Britain, which was in the process of industrialization. Independent India has given top priority to its industrialization. This process, designed with a high degree of systematization at least in the first period of the first Nehru Plans, associated large private Indian industrial capital to companies in the public sector, promoted to fill the gaps in the production system inherited from colonialism by accelerating growth and strengthening basic industries.

These differences between the national Indian model and that of Communist China account for the visible differences in the results in the two countries. The growth rate of industrial and agricultural production in India has remained roughly at levels far below those of China. Moreover, whereas growth in China was accompanied by a marked improvement in the popular classes' standard of living, this was not the case in India where growth exclusively benefited the new middle classes (who were the minority, although their expansion accelerated to the point of increasing in a period of some 30 years from five to fifteen percent of the overall population of the country). The poverty of the dominant popular classes

remained unchanged, even worsened slightly.

Unlike China, India is a multinational country and British colonization had managed to impose its power precisely by playing on the diversity of peoples (and states) in India. Regarding the assets of the national liberation movement: its success in this field is unparalleled elsewhere in the colonial world. This movement is actually managed to unite the ten major nations making up the country into one "Nation." Regardless of the qualities of that Nation ("Bharat" in Hindi, hence the concept of Bharatva, which can be translated as "Indianness"), which appear "questionable" from a "scientific" point of view. India has indeed been a nation from then on, the reality of which is binding on all its components. And to this day the feeling of belonging together outweighs the assertion of local characteristics (among others, language). The national liberation movement has had in this respect only one failure: that in its desire to involve Muslims in the creation of the new Indian Nation. Here the British managed to defeat the Indian national plan and impose the creation of the artificial states of Pakistan and Bangladesh. The fact remains that the Muslims who remained in India (15% of the total population), even if they sometimes seem to "pose a problem" (a problem that the cultural nationalist Hindus exploit, even when they aren't stirring it up), are actually and properly integrated into all aspects of social life and politics. The secular Indian state, that even the Hindu cultural nationalist wave failed to call into question, is the source of this success.

No doubt one might qualify this evaluation as broadly positive. The repression of the demands of the Sikhs (which cost the life of Indira Gandhi), and the Kashmir quagmire show the limits of the system's capacity to properly manage the "national question" (even if they characterize it differently). But it is still true that regarding all the great nations of the "Indo Aryan" North and "Dravidian" South, the powers of Delhi were able to find formulas to properly manage the problems, and thus give federal unity (in fact much more centralized than the terms of the Constitution suggest) a solid reality.

The experience of modern-day India demonstrates the unquestionable superiority of democracy and the futility of arguments in support of autocratic management often claimed to be more effective. This remains true despite the evident limitations and the class content of bourgeois democracy in general, and the reality of it in India's experience. To the credit of the national liberation movement (Congress and the communists), this option was probably the only effective way to manage the various social and regional interests (even if limited to those of the privileged classes) and to win popular support for the plan of the minority making up the hegemonic bloc.

The erosion of the national populist plan was as unavoidable in India as it was elsewhere on account of its inherent limitations and contradictions. This and the delegitimizing of power that accompanied it gave rise to an offensive by obscurantist forces that have a name: Hindutva. This term designates the affirmation of the priority of adherence to the Hindu religion defined as the "real identity" of the peoples of the country, as opposed to the concept of "Bharatva," which refers to the nation. Of course, this "Hindu" affirmation does not challenge the colonial legacy concerning land ownership or the respect for the hierarchical caste system in particular. In this respect the obscurantist illusions serve perfectly the interests of the comprador and imperialism powers. The "specificities" with which their para "national," even para-anti-imperialist, discourse is filled are absolutely worthless. They fuel a renewal of the practice of the (in this case anti-Muslim) "communitarianism" that the colonial

power used, in its day, to counter the rising aspirations of secular, democratic, modernist national liberation.

This regression, however, was accompanied by a renewed radicalization of social struggles. Evidence of this can be seen in the Naxalite offensive and the sudden entry of Dalits in the political and social struggle. Further evidence can be seen by the stated commitment of all the middle classes to democracy or even to secularism. This explains why the collapse of the almost exclusive legitimacy that Congress had enjoyed, failed to produce a “definitive victory” for the right. Building a progressive social alternative necessarily implies that appropriate responses are given to four sets of challenges.

First challenge: to find a radical solution to the Indian peasant problem based on the recognition of the right of all peasants to access to land in the most egalitarian conditions possible. This, in turn, means the abolition of the caste system and the ideology that legitimizes it. In other words, India must progress toward as radical a revolution as that of China!

Second challenge: to create a united labor front that integrates segments of the relatively stabilized working classes and those that are not. This challenge is common to all countries of the modern world and particularly all those of the periphery of the system, which is characterized by the enormously destructive effects of new pauperization (massive unemployment, lack of job security, excrescence of wretched “informal” conditions).

Third challenge: to maintain the unity of the Indian sub-continent, and to renew the forms of association of the various peoples that make up the Indian nation on a reinforced democratic basis. To defeat the strategies of imperialism which, as always, pursues, beyond its tactical options, its objective of dismembering the “great states,” which are better able than microstates to withstand the assaults of imperialism.

Fourth challenge: To focus international political options on the central issue of reconstructing a “front of the peoples of the South” (the solidarity of the peoples of Asia and Africa first and foremost) in circumstances that, of course, are no longer those that presided over the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement at the “time of Bandung” (1955 - 1979). To give the highest priority to the objective of derailing the U.S. plan for military control of the planet and thwart the political maneuvers of Washington whose purpose is to prevent any serious rapprochement between India, China and Russia.

The political and social forces that prevent India from moving in the above-mentioned directions are considerable. They constitute a “hegemonic block” that accounts for a fifth of the population -- behind the great industrial, commercial and financial bourgeoisie and the big landowners, the great masse of well-off peasants and middle classes, the high bureaucracy and technocracy. These 200 million Indians are the exclusive beneficiaries of the national plan implemented so far. No doubt, at the present time of extreme neoliberal triumph, this block is collapsing under the effect, among others, of the end of the upwards social mobility of the lower middle classes who are threatened with loss of job security, and even impoverishment if not outright poverty. This situation provides the left with the opportunity to develop tactics, if it can, to weaken the coherence of these reactionary forces in general and in particular their comprador approach, which is the transmission belt for globalised imperialist domination. However, it also offers opportunities to the Hindu right in the event the left fails.

The minority that makes up this block is, therefore, in a situation that excludes the reproduction in India of the historic capital/labor compromise on which the social democracy of the developed West was founded. The management of the coherence of this hegemonic block through political democracy, such as it is in India, does not lessen its reactionary class dimension. On the contrary, it is the most effective way to establish it. This hegemonic block is well and truly "integrated" into the rationale of dominant capitalist globalization and so far none of the various political forces through which it is expressed challenges it. The reasons are therefore clear as to why the "Indian national project" remains fragile, vulnerable and incapable of delivering its own stated objective: to transform India into "a large modern capitalist power."

This vulnerability results in the frequently opportunistic behavior of the Indian political class, justified most often by short term "real-politic" arguments. Faced with the United States plan for overall (military) control of the planet and the collective imperialist alignment of the triad (United States, Europe and Japan) -- despite the tooth-gnashing of some of its partners -- the Indian political class appears so far unable to conceive and implement the necessary counterattack. That would entail the creation of a front uniting India, Russia and China, all threatened in equal measure by the compradorization resulting from the expansion of the new imperialist collective. India's rulers do not properly value this perspective, including those associated with most determined government programs to undermine the Hindu/comprador right. They continue to give priority to their "conflicts" with China, perceived as a potential military adversary and a dangerous financial rival in the markets of globalised capitalism. They even believe they may be able to "use" a possible rapprochement with the United States in order to become its major ally in Asia.

Brazil and other "emerging" countries

Brazil's situation is quite different from China's. Here none of the problems inherited from the colonial past has so far found the smallest beginning of a solution, especially the fundamental agrarian question. The power of the arrogant bourgeois ruling classes -- capitalists and landowners, technocrats in their service, segments of the middle class who are beneficiaries of economic growth -- is indisputable. The characterization of Lula as "a model statesman" by the Western media is not surprising. The strategy he is carrying out -- the neoliberal capitalist option -- associated with measures to redistribute wealth designed as a means of "reducing poverty" (without addressing the sources of it) -- is exactly what advocates of intelligent sectors of those political forces in the service of maintaining the domination of imperialist oligopolies.

Next we come to a group of other "emerging" countries, or potentially such, which are -- aside from their diversity case by case -- at a double disadvantage. I am referring to countries in Southeast Asia (Thailand and Malaysia in particular) to South Africa, Iran and Turkey. First of all, they are not of continental size and therefore have less means to "negotiate" with the imperialist triad, when they are not simply excluded from this perspective (Iran). On the other hand, just as India and Brazil, they have never found a solution -- even a partial one -- to the legacy of earlier phases of imperialist domination, once more particularly regarding the agrarian problem. The powers in place in these countries suffer from a credibility gap, or at least they do in the eyes of their popular classes. They are therefore fragile and vulnerable, susceptible, if not to being overthrown by some "victorious revolution," to being forced to move to the left if the social struggles know how to put in place an alternative social block to those on which their power lies.

Another country -- even in Asia -- is certainly on track to emerge: Vietnam, whose revolutionary heritage (similar in many respects to that of China's -- a radical agrarian revolution) weighs positively in favor of potential solutions more favorable to the popular classes than elsewhere.

And the other countries of the South?

Another stratum of countries in the South is made up of a disparate yet similar group in that they are "rich" (in terms of GDP per capita) and that their wealth is based exclusively on the exploitation of abundant natural resources -- oil and gas in particular. These countries face a particularly difficult challenge to overcome: getting out of their integration in imperialist globalization based almost exclusively on this "wealth," to industrialize, create (or recreate) a non-existent agriculture. Some of these countries almost certainly cannot do so by themselves: the Arab countries of the Gulf with oil, Libya, Gabon. Venezuela belongs to this stratum, but it nevertheless decided to get out. The difficulty of succeeding in doing this is visible, and great. The temptation of a compromise half-solution -- to use a good portion of oil revenues for poverty reduction -- is strong. The desire to do more and better is just as visible. But it runs up against, in all the countries of this stratum, particularly strong economically dominant classes marked by their comprador culture and therefore ultra-reactionary.

The triad considers the countries of the former Soviet Union -- including Russia -- as destined to enter the world of the peripheries that it dominates, just as is happening with the countries of Eastern Europe -- the CEE -- "The Latin America of Western Europe," especially of Germany. It is still possible for Russia to successfully resist this fate, pulling the Ukraine, the Caucasus and Central Asia behind it. But it can only do this seriously if it develops the possibility of going beyond the horizons of a purely "national capitalist" plan to renew a disconnected social plan, oriented toward socialism.

The defeat of Mexico is currently one that is total, but not necessarily final. Annexed as "province outside of the United States" by the unacceptable NAFTA, to which the Mexican ruling class was nevertheless fully ready to submit, Mexico will no longer get out of its rut except through reviving its splendid revolutionary tradition, inaugurated in 1910, then suspended, that we could hope to see reborn with the New Zapatistas.

Argentina will remain "ungovernable." This country pays a heavy price for the "advance" which a century ago placed it in the lead of the peripheral countries enriched by their inclusion in the capitalist/imperialist system of that epoch. Peronism inherited these illusions and tried to prolong them with an early industrialization. It failed in that it did not create the necessary conditions to avoid recovery/reintegration of its modernized system in the global system that still dominates the country.

The countries of the South that were truly "excluded" from the benefits of capitalist/imperialist development make up another group facing challenges of a different nature. Here we find the majority of African countries and Arab and Islamic worlds. The interest that imperialism brings to these countries exclusively concerns their natural resources (agricultural land coveted by agribusiness, oil, minerals). The important thing to note is that the interventions of the imperialist powers are almost always of extreme brutality here. The difference that separates this world from the "marginalized" South of the emerging countries is that while in the latter the ruling class has a plan -- even if only a national bourgeois one --

in the first this class has really no plan other than that of adapting itself to the daily demands of existing globalization.

The image of the contemporary world is that steps forward being taken despite all, more marked in Latin American countries than elsewhere. The reason for this success -- despite their vulnerability -- is twofold. On the one hand it is the product of a strong sense that the continent must come out of its extreme dependence on the United States, which has been affirmed and reaffirmed every day from the Monroe Doctrine (1823) up to and including Obama. But these advances would have been unthinkable without the entry into action of powerful popular movements.

The alternative: towards a new wave of independent initiatives of the South

The terms in which the challenge is to be analyzed must consider three views of reality: peoples, nations and states.

It is possible to construct a hegemonic bloc made up of different dominated and exploited classes, a bloc alternative to the one that allows the reproduction of the system of domination of imperialist capitalism, exercised through the comprador hegemonic bloc and the state devoted to its service.

By nations we refer to the fact that imperialist domination denies the dignity of "nations" shaped by the history of societies of the peripheries. It systematically destroys the components that give them their originality, in favor of a trash "Westernization." The liberation of peoples is then associated with the nations that they make up. The slogan, "Nations want liberation," should be understood in a sense complementary to the struggle of peoples and non-confrontational with it. The liberation in question is not the restoration of the past -- the illusion of backward-looking cultural nationalism -- but the invention of the future starting from the radical transformation of the historical legacy, instead of the artificial importing of a false "modernity."

The reference to the State is based on the need to recognize its autonomy of power in its relations with the hegemonic bloc upon which it bases its legitimacy, even if this bloc is popular and national. Not only because the popular and national progress should be protected from the permanent aggression of still dominant imperialism in the world, but also-- and perhaps especially -- because "to make progress in the long transition" in turn requires "developing the productive forces," *i.e.*, to carry out what imperialism prohibits countries of the periphery from doing: erasing the legacy of the global polarization that is inseparable from the global expansion of historic capitalism. The program is not synonymous with "catching up" in imitation of models of the capitalism centers; a catching up that is impossible and moreover is undesirable. It requires a different approach to "modernization/industrialization" based on the effective participation of the popular classes for its implementation and for their immediate benefit at every stage of progress.

"States want independence." This must be understood as having a dual purpose: independence (extreme form of autonomy) with respect to the laboring classes and independence from the pressures of the capitalist world system. The "bourgeoisie" (more broadly, the ruling class in the commanding positions of the State, whose ambitions always take the path of bourgeois evolution) is simultaneously national and comprador. If circumstances allow it to expand its degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the dominant imperialism, it chooses the path of "national

interests." But if circumstances do not allow it, it chooses the path of "comprador" submission to what imperialism requires. The "new ruling class" (or "leading group") is still in an ambiguous position in this plan even when they are supported by a people's block, because of the "bourgeois" tendency that at least partially animates it.

The proper articulation of these three instances of reality determines the success of progress on the long road to liberation. It is possible to further strengthen the progress of the people, the liberation of the nation and the achievements of state power. If, on the contrary, the contradiction between the popular will and the state is allowed to develop, the advances in question may be foiled.

Because neither the people nor the nation nor the states of the periphery have a comfortable place within the imperialist system, "the South" is the "zone of storms" of permanent uprisings and revolts. And recent history has been mainly that of the revolts and independent initiatives (meaning independent of the dominant trends throughout the capitalist imperialist system in place) of peoples, nations and states of the peripheries. It is these initiatives -- despite their limitations and contradictions -- that have shaped the most crucial transformations in the contemporary world, far more than the progress of productive forces and the relatively easy social adjustments that accompanied the centers of the system.

The long decline of obsolete capitalism/imperialism and the long transition to socialism constitute two antagonistic poles of the challenge. The decline by itself does not produce progress on the path toward socialism; on the contrary, the logic of the responses that capital gives the answers to this challenge leads toward the slippery slope of barbarism -- "apartheid on a world scale." Nevertheless, this decline simultaneously creates the conditions for a commitment to take the path to the long transition to socialism.

How are these two possible futures entwined? "The other world" under construction is always ambivalent; it carries within it the worst and the best, both "possible" (there are no laws of history before the events occur). A first wave of initiatives of the peoples, nations and states of the periphery was put into action in the twentieth century until about 1980. A second wave of initiatives is already underway. Some "emerging" countries and others, like their peoples, are fighting against the tactics by which the triad's collective imperialism is using to perpetuate its rule. The military intervention of Washington and its subordinate allies in NATO have been frustrated. The globalized financial system is collapsing and autonomous regional systems are being formed in its place. Technological monopolies of the oligopolies have been set back. The recovery of control over natural resources is on the agenda. Grassroots organizations and parties of the radical left in struggle have in some cases already defeated neoliberal programs or are on the road leading to this defeat. These initiatives, primarily and fundamentally anti-imperialist, carry with them a potential that allows them to embark on the long road of socialist transition.

Translated by John Catalinotto

References:

More can be found, with full bibliographies, in :
Samir Amin, *Beyond US hegemony*, Zed, London 2006; particularly chapters 2 (China) and 4 (India).