

## **The Alternative to the neoliberal system of globalization and militarism Imperialism Today and the Hegemonic Offensive of the United States.**

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### 1. The alternative: Social Progress, democratization, and negotiated interdependence

What people need today, as well as yesterday, are society-wide projects (national and / or regional) articulated to regulated and negotiated globalized structures (while assuring a relative complementarity between them), which would simultaneously permit advances in three directions:

- a) Social Progress: this demands that economic progress (innovation, advances in productivity, the eventual expansion of the market) are necessarily accompanied by social benefits for all (by guaranteeing employment, social integration, reduction in inequalities, etc.)
- b) The democratization of society in all dimensions, understood as a never-ending process and not as a “blue print”, defined once for all. Democratization demands that its reach is felt in social and economic spheres, and not to be restricted to just the political sphere.
- c) The affirmation of society-wide economic and social development, and the building of forms of globalization that offer this possibility. It needs to be understood that the unavoidable auto-centric character of development does not exclude either the opening (on condition that it remains controlled) or the participation in “globalization” (“inter-dependence”). But it conceives of these as needing to be formulated in terms that would permit the reduction – not the accentuation – of the inequalities of wealth and power between nations and regions.

The “alternative” that we are defining by advances in three directions – demands that all three progress in parallel. The experiences of modern history, which were founded on the absolute priority of “National independence” whether accompanied by social progress, or even sacrificing it, but always without democratization, continually demonstrate their inability to go beyond the rapidly attained historical limits. As a complementary counterpoint, contemporary democracy projects, which have accepted to sacrifice social progress and autonomy in globalized interdependence, have not contributed to reinforcing the emancipatory potential of democracy, but have, instead, eroded it – even to discredit and finally delegitimize it. If, as the predominant neoliberal discourse pretends, submitting to the demands of the market presents no other alternative, and if, this idea would by itself produce social progress (which is not true), why bother voting? Elected governments become superfluous decorations, since “change” (a succession of different heads who all do the same thing) is substituted to alternative choices by which democracy is defined. The reaffirmation of politics and the culture of citizenship define the very possibility of a necessary alternative to democratic decadence.

It is therefore necessary to advance in the three dimensions of the alternative, each one connected to the other. Less can be more – developing step-by-step strategies which allow for the consolidation of progress, even ones that are so modest that they can be achieved immediately, to go even further while minimizing the risk of failure, going off-course or moving backwards.

Making this step-by-step strategy concrete means taking into account the evolution of science and technology and the acceleration of the revolutions it has brought (and this in all its dimensions – new riches, potential destructive forces brought on by these revolutions, transformations in the organization of the workplace and social structures, etc.). But to do it, we would need not to submit, in the vain hope that these revolutions would have the “magic” ability to by themselves resolve the challenges of social progress and democratization. It is the opposite in integrating the “new” in a mastered social dynamic that we can exploit their eventual emancipatory potential.

The social project abusively qualified as liberal (and in its extreme form – neoliberal) is founded on the sacrifice of social progress to the unilateral demands of the short-term profits of dominant segments of capital (the transnational capital of the 500 or 5,000 largest transnational companies). Through this unilateral submission of workers, human beings, nations, to the logic of the market, is expressed, without a doubt, the permanent utopia of capital (according

to which all aspects of life need to adapt to the demands of profit-making), in many ways an infantile utopia, without any scientific or ethical base. It is through this submission that social progress and democracy have been emptied of any reality.

On the global scale, this submission can only reproduce and deepen the inequalities between nations and regions, especially considering the new structures that conform to the demands of capital which has reached a new level of development. This means that “monopolies” (sometimes known as comparative advantages) to which the oligopolies from the dominant centers (the triad) benefit, is no longer simply about industry, but also about other forms of economic, social and political control (the control of technology, reinforced by abusive practices of industrial and intellectual property, the access to the planet’s natural resources, the ability to influence opinions by controlling information, the extreme centralization of the means to intervene financially, the select-few who have access to weapons of mass destruction, etc.)

“Market” economics and political power of the State, including the military, are today, as they have always been, inseparable. Faced with this unity that has been put in place by capital and transnational oligopolies and the political powers at their service, how then do we build people-centered counter-strategies, which, over and above “resistance” can actually advance the alternative defined here. This is the real challenge.

## 2. Combining the expansion of social movements and the rebuilding of the political citizen.

There is no modern society that is stuck in an absolute immutable stage. In this sense, the existence of “social movements”, visible or not, clearly organized or working under wraps, crystallized around a program of objectives defined in political or ideological terms or disregarding for the “discourses”, or “politician’s politics”, united or fragmented, is not new.

What is “new” and characterized by the present movement, is that “social movements” (or “civil society”) – to use the current fashionable terms – is fragmented, and disregards politics, ideologies, etc. This is, at the same time, the cause but more the product of the erosion of social battle and politics in the prior period of contemporary history (after the second world war), and, because of this, the weakening of their efficiency, and therefore their credibility and legitimacy. This erosion therefore happened within a fundamental disequilibrium, with dominant capital taking advantage of this vacuum, and submitting people and societies to the exclusive logic of its demands, to proclaim the eternity of its “reign”, to pretend that it is rational and even beneficial (the end of history, etc.), that is to say, the permanent utopia of capitalism. This conjuncture manifests itself with absurdities like “there is no alternative” or in the imagination of a “social movement” that has the ability to transform the world without defining its targets and plans.

“Social movements” – in plural – exist, and are reinforcing their presence and their actions everywhere throughout the world. It is not even necessary to give examples: classes, and class struggles, democracy movements, women’s rights, rights of nations, peasants, environmentalists, are just some of its expressions. The transformation of the world by the crystallization of the alternative can only happen by active involvement in these movements. But it also demands that they know how to progressively go from the defensive to the offensive, from fragmentation to convergence in diversity, in order to become decisive players in inventive and efficient projects to build political strategies aimed at citizens.

Recognizing the weaknesses in the present movement is neither to denigrate it, nor to take a nostalgic glance at a past that is over, but to choose to act to reinforce its emancipatory potential.

The people’s adversary is oligarchic and globalized capital and dominant imperialism, the totality of political powers which, for the moment, are totally at its service, that is to say the governments of the triad (since both the right and the left share the same penchant for “liberalism”), most notably the United States (in which the establishment of Republican and Democratic parties share the same vision of their hegemonic role) and those of the ruling classes throughout the South. This adversary deploys an economic, political, ideological and military strategy that uses all of the institutions set up to service it (OECD, the World Bank, IMF, WTO, NATO, etc.) It has its centers of “reflection” and its meeting places (Davos in particular, but also Universities with their conventional economic departments). They control the “fashions” and decide the catch words, the discourses they impose: “democracy” or “human rights” (understood as a manipulative term), “war against poverty”, “the erasing of nations” and parallel

promotion of “communities”, the war against “terrorism”, etc. The majority of the “movements” and the activists that lead them, are up until now, always one step behind, answering belatedly – well, or not so well – to their pieces of the strategy or discourse. We must liberate ourselves from these reflexive and defensive positions, taking away our turn and substituting our discourses, our strategies, our objectives, our language. We have a long way to go.

We will only be able to move in this direction if we are able to systematically analyze the adversary’s strategy in its global dimensions and its local and segmented expressions. These strategies are a long way from being a monolithic bloc without faille. They are interspersed with contradictions what we need to analyze, get to know, identify and isolate. We need to propose counter-strategies that can take advantage of these very contradictions.

Faced with this urgent need the “movement(s)”, seems to be still quite weak. Because it has not yet acknowledged the importance of this reflection, and the need to draw the conclusion of the necessity for united action, the movement remains fragmented, defensive, and soft in its discourse and propositions (which its adversary knows and takes advantage of). We must therefore advance to levels that make the crystallization of popular forces counter strategies possible, in their global vision and interdependence, and in their segmented and local expression. It is only when the principles of the alternative are defined and are consistent, and they take flight in programs and actions rich in diversity and convergence in their impact on society. This is when the “movement” will become a transforming force in history.

The opponent makes sure that our progress is difficult, not only by physical interventions when necessary (police violence, backward democratic steps, support to renewed “fascist” currents, wars) but also by soothing propositions so the “movement” remains “apolitical”, “soft” and one step behind. The “movementist” ideology contributes to this, since it rejects precisely, and by principle, what we are proposing: the convergence through diversity of a reconstruction of citizen politics. In these conditions, the movements and the organizational forms that support them (specifically the NGOs, which are now often considered to be the exclusive manifestation of civil society) must be examined critically. Do they adhere to the perspective of the construction of alternatives? Or, are they the system’s management technique for its real ambitions – using them as “anti-alternative” instruments?

Only the rebuilding of citizen politics will allow the “movement” to acquire the scope that calls into question the disequilibria operating to the favor of capital. Only this rebuilding will allow for the emergence of new social equilibriums and politics that constrain capital to “adjust” to demands that do not come out of its exclusive logic - forcing people to adapt to the demands of capital as opposed to forcing capital to adapt to the demands of people.

Our call is addressed to everyone – ourselves included – to everyone who finds themselves involved in various actions and meetings around the World Social Forum (Porto Alegre) and in National and Regional forums. The World Forum of Alternatives will act as a catalyst – with and among others – for the elaboration of popular, efficient and credible counter strategies.

The proposition which follow are just propositions – which some will evaluate as erroneous, extreme or provocative. However, in my opinion, they are worth discussion.

3. The collective imperialism of the triad, the hegemonic offensive of the United States and the militarization of globalization.

First thesis

The global system is not “post imperialist”- it is imperialist. It shares with other previous imperialist systems which always commanded the expansion of global capitalism several fundamental and permanent characteristics: it offers to the people on the periphery (the South, to use the current patois) - three quarters of the population – no chance to “catch up” and benefit, for better or for worse, the “advantages” of the level of material consumption reserved for the majority of the people in the centers; it only produces, and reproduces, the deepening of the “North/South” gap.

Imperialism, nevertheless, has, in many ways, entered into as new phase of its expansion. This has a direct relationship to transformations in capitalism and capital: technological revolution, transformation of the workplace, globalized financial domination, etc. These relationships are the subject of serious research and animated debates. But once again the overall tone are directed by economic obsession of some and the genteel “soft” politics of others.

This happens up to the point where the system is often presented as offering a chance to all those who want to take it. This speaks to the weakness of the “movement” and the efficiency of the dominant discourse.

I must insist on another new dimension of imperialism. Imperialism, which used to always be referred to in the plural, since permanent and violent, economic and political \conflict, between the imperial various centers, were always at the forefront of history, is now referred to in the singular – it has become the collective imperialism of the “triad” (the United States, Europe, and Japan).

The facts clearly illustrate the reality of the collective character of this new state of imperialism. In all the global economy’s managing institutions, Europe and Japan are never singled out for positions that are different than those of the United States, whether it be in the World Bank, the IMF, or the WTO (we remember the demands imposed in Doha in 2001 on the WTO by the European envoy Pascal Lamy on the Third World as being even more severe than those of the United States).

What are the reasons behind this common vision of the triad? Up to what point is the solidarity that they display defining a new stable step in imperialistic globalization? And where can we find the eventual contradictions within the triad?

It has been the custom to explain this solidarity by political reasons: the common concern about the Soviet Union and “communism”. But the disappearance of this threat did not end this “Northern” common front, however, Europe and Japan are no longer dependent on the United States, as they were immediately following the Second World War. Having become serious rivals, one could have expected that their conflicts would have destroyed the triad. By agreeing on the same globalized neoliberal project, they, in fact, did exactly the opposite. I am therefore strongly tempted to explain this choice by the new demands of capital accumulation by the dominant oligopolies. They have since forth attained a level of growth that has never before been seen. Their sheer size has forced the oligopolies (the large transnationals that have their anchors in the States of the triad) to need – for their own reproduction - access to a global open market. For some, this new fact means that an authentic transnational capital , and therefore transnational bourgeoisie , is in the making. This question clearly merits more profound research. For others (including myself),that extreme conclusion is not needed , since the common interests in managing the global market place are strong enough to be at the root of transnational capital’s solidarity.

The contradictions that could have destroyed the triad, or at least weakened its collective strength, do not lie in the divergent interests of the dominant segments of capital. Their origin should be found elsewhere, since if capital and States are inseparable concepts and realities, the triad – and even its European segment – remain constituted in singular political States. The State cannot be reduced to its functions as a service provider for dominant capital. Articulated by all the contradictions that characterize society – class conflicts, different aspects of the political culture of the people in question, the diversity of national “collective” interests, and the geo-political expressions of their defense – the State is a distinct player of capital. And what will this complex dynamic bring about? The submission to immediate and exclusive interests of dominant-capital? Or other combinations that regulate the demands of the reproduction of capital and those that manifest themselves in other fields?

In the first hypothesis, with the lack of an integrated common political institution for the States of the triad, the United States, the commander in chief, will be asked to fill the demands of this “global” State, indispensable for the “good governance” of globalized capitalism. And the partners in the triad will accept the consequences. However, in this case, I would argue that the “European project” would be devoid of content, reduced to, - in the best case – the European segment of collective imperialism, or - in the worst case – the European section of the American hegemonic project. For the moment, the ripples that we hear from time to time are due to the political and military management of globalization, not its economic and social management. On other words, certain European powers would prefer a “collective” political management of the global system, while others accept complete management by the United States.

Whereas in the second hypothesis, that is to say if the European people manage to impose on dominant capital the terms of a new historic compromise which defines the content of European States and the European Union, Europe could hope to be an autonomous player. In other words, the option (and the battles) for a “Social Europe” (that is to say if power was not simply about being at the immediate and exclusive service of dominant capital) is inseparable from a “non-American” Europe. And this can only happen if Europe distances itself from the management of

collective imperialism by which the interests of dominant-capital defines itself. In one sentence: Europe will be on the “Left” (with the understanding that this definition means taking into consideration the social interests of European peoples and innovations in North/South relations which will bring about a real post-imperialist evolution) or it won’t.

## Second Thesis

The hegemonic strategy of the United States is articulated on the collective character of new imperialism and to the profit of the insufficiencies and weaknesses of the “anti-neoliberal” social and political movements.

This strategy, barely recognized by the “pro-American” defenders, is, in the dominant discourse, the object of two “soft” propositions, not quite real, but operational, from the point of view of our opponent. The first is that this hegemony belongs to a “gentle” leadership, sometimes known as “benign hegemony” by the democratic fraction of the American establishment. Through this mix of false naivety and real hypocrisy, this discourse pretends that the United States only acts in the interests of the peoples who are associated with the triad, motivated by the same “democratic” pulses, and even the interests of the rest of the world, to whom globalization offers the chance of “development”, reinforced by the benefits of democracy that American powers promote everywhere, as we know. The second is that, in all domains, the United States benefit from enormous advantages – whether it be economic, scientific, political, military or cultural that legitimize their hegemony. In fact, American hegemony works from logic, and a system, that has little to do with the discourse it envelops.

The objectives of this hegemony have been proclaimed, and adhered to in innumerable productions from the US leaders (unfortunately, little read by its victims). After the fall of the USSR – their only potential military adversary – the US establishment evaluates that it has a period of about 20 years to put into place its global hegemony and reduce to nothingness the possibilities of its potential “rivals”, not that they are necessarily capable of an alternative hegemony, just capable of affirming their autonomy in a global system that would be “non-hegemonic” - in my language, a multi-centric system. These “rivals” are of course Europe (we no longer hear talks about a Japan hegemony !), but also Russia and most of all China, the principal designated adversary that Washington may have to envision destroying (militarily) if she continues to persist in her “development” and a certain independent will. Other rivals have also been noted, in fact, all Southern countries that may develop a resistance to the exigencies of globalized neoliberalism – India or Brazil, Iran or South Africa.

The objectives are therefore to vassalize the allies in the triad, to make them incapable of effective global initiatives, and to destroy the “large countries”, always by nature too “big” (the United States being the only one with right to be so). Dismantle Russia after the USSR, dismantle China, India, even Brazil; instrumentalising the weaknesses of each country’s power systems, manipulate the former States of the USSR, and stroke the centrifugal forces in the Russian Federation, support the Muslims of Xinjiang and the Tibetan monks, feeding the conflict with the Muslims of the Indian sub-continent, intervening in the Amazon (Plan Colombia), etc.

In this strategic perspective the United States decided that their first strike in the region that extends from the Balkans to central Asia, and traverses the Middle East and the Gulf. Why this region for the first American wars of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Not because the region could shelter serious enemies, exactly the opposite, because it is the soft under-belly of the global system, made up of societies, that, for different reasons, right now, are incapable of responding to aggression with even a minimum amount of efficiency. Striking against the weakest to begin a long series of wars – a clear and banal military strategy. Just as Hitler started by attacking Czechoslovakia, while his ambitions went above and beyond this to the United Kingdom, France and Russia.

Conquering the region also presents other opportunities. A major producer of oil and gas, the exclusive control of the United States would make Europe seriously dependent, reducing any eventual maneuverability. Additionally, the installation of American bases at the heart of Eurasia will facilitate the wars of the future, against China, Russia and others. The unconditional support of Israeli expansion is logical within this perspective, Israel being a de facto permanent military base at Washington’s service.

The decision to militarize the management of global system was not taken just by the team of Bush Jr. It has been the rallying call of the ruling classes of the United States since the fall of the USSR; Democrats and Republicans only differ on their choice of language. Moreover, contrary to what they would like naïve opinion holders to believe,

this option is meant to mitigate the insufficiencies of the American economy, in which the competitiveness of all the segments of the productive system have continually deteriorated, as witnessed by the trading deficit that characterizes it. By imposing themselves not as the “natural leader” via its economic advances, but as the military dictator of the world order, the United States is creating condition that force its vassalized “allies” (Europe, Japan), similar to others, to pay their deficit. The United States has become a parasitic society that can not maintain its level of consumption and waste without impoverishing the rest of the world.

### Third Thesis

The present time is one of extreme gravity. In this sense, comparisons with the 1930s are mostly justifiable. Like Hitler, the President of the United States has decided to replace the law with brutal military force; thereby erasing all the conquests that democracy’s victory over Fascism has permitted, condemning the United Nations to the same lamentable fate as the League of Nations.

Alas, the comparisons can continue. Fabrication and choosing minor adversaries to lay the ground work for major confrontations. Systematic lying. The dominant classes of the “allies” act like Chamberlain and Daladier with Hitler; they cede to, and even sometimes contribute to legitimizing American wars in the eyes of those they are deceiving.

The “movement” has to understand that faced with this coherent and criminal strategy of its opponent, no counter-strategy can be effective if it does have the battle against American wars as the principal axis of its action. Today, what are the discourses on “poverty” or “human rights” worth, when compared to what is in store for people in a far-worse future, which will be imposed by military violence? These wars, still “small” (despite the gigantic material and human destruction of its victims) – do not constitute “a problem among other”, but the harbinger of the enemy’s strategy.

#### 4. Elements for a popular counter-strategy

The aforementioned reflections – if they make sense – can only lead to one conclusion: the principal axis of actions to come can only be about the organization of actions against “American wars” and the construction of a large front, composed of all the forces that could be in opposition. In this spirit, I will offer three propositions:

First proposition: a priority in Europe for the reconstruction of a citizen politics, capable of converging the demands of the movements that remain terribly fragmented.

The construction of this political force and the gathering of the subject that could compose it is conditional on the success of the movements in their social and protest demands, that is to say, the ability to renovate a real left faced with European integration which would give a “social dimension” to aforementioned project. Equally, it is with this condition that the left could separate from the pro-imperialist right, which accepts the alignment of the United States’ imperialist strategies, or if it expresses the wish for “collective political management” of collective imperialism. In other words, there will never be a “Social Europe” if there is no simultaneous engagement toward “another politics” vis-à-vis the rest of the world, which would take up a real post-imperialist transition.

European people can and must make the United States aware of the fragility of their position in the economic system of globalized capitalism. If they manage to impose the use of their capital surpluses for social development, instead of its current role of supporting American waste, they will simultaneously constrain the United States and force them to abandon their excessive ambitions. This strategic objective clearly does not exclude the immediate support of the courageous men and women who, at the heart of the system, are saying “No to war”. Nevertheless, I remain skeptical about the effectiveness of the internal opposition in the United States, as long as the privileges of this parasitic society will remain guaranteed. The American ruling class has managed to obtain a dominant public opinion sufficiently foolish, that the protests of the conscious minority are not able to bring down the deployment of the United States’ hegemonic strategy.

Second Proposition: Encourage a rapprochement between the large Euro-Asian partners – namely, Europe, Russia, China, and India.

Russia, with its oil and gas reserves, offers Europe its only means to escape the American diktat, assuming that Washington is successful in its plans to have exclusive control over the Middle East. And since a majority of the foreign trade and investment Russia attracts is from Europe and not the United States, there is already favorable ground for a rapprochement between Europe and Russia, in spite of the difficulties (produced by the “comprador” management of the Russian economy in which important fractions of the new ruling class are associated with) and the manipulation of American imperialism, which brings its support to the centrifugal forces operating in Russia and other former states of the USSR. Here again, as in Europe, a favorable evolution benefiting the working class implies another foreign policy, which distances itself from Washington.

The rapprochement of Russia, China and India would find its *raison-d’être* in the – military – threat that these three countries will face with the eventual success of the United States’ deployments in Central Asia. American diplomacy is making this rapprochement as difficult as possible by mobilizing, to its benefit, the contradictions of the political visions of each of the three partners and in supporting the comprador fractions of the ruling classes. But, over and above the geo-political conflicts that make up the border questions between China and India, or Tibet and the Xinjiang,, over and above Washington’s manipulations that “support” India against China and at the same time agitate Pakistan and provoke conflicts between India’s Muslims and Hindus, the strategy of the popular forces – defined at this stage by the demands of the constitution of an anti-compradors front – has to take in once again, here and elsewhere, the measure of the direct relations that comprador management (in place in Russia and India, and threatening in China) maintains with the demands of American geo-political diktats.

Third proposition: Revive Afro-Asian peoples solidarity (the spirit of Bandung), bring back to life the “Tricontinental”

This solidarity between people of the South runs today through their struggle against comprador powers that is produced and supported by “liberal” globalization. The themes elaborated above concerning the alternative – social progress, democratization, national autonomy – will find here their *raison d’être*.

There is little doubt that the legitimacy of these comprador powers is being questioned in many countries of the South. Nevertheless, the responses of the people of the South to the challenges they face from the new imperial system and liberalization make it difficult to advance alternatives that are defined in terms of democratization, social progress and the construction of a just and negotiated global inter-dependence. For different reasons, including, the erosion of national populism formulas which were characteristic of the preceding period and that emerged from national liberation movements and autocratic practices of political management (despite the “democratic” rhetoric), still dominates in a number of countries, the disarrayed popular classes frequently find refuge in illusions that are “fundamentalist”, ethnic or religious, which are mostly manipulated by the local comprador ruling classes, which are supported by imperialism and particularly by the US. These consist of real step backs, which need lucidity and courage to fight; and today, they constitute a major obstacle to the rebuilding of solidarity between the Afro-Asian peoples (by intensifying the often criminal conflicts between Muslim and Hindus here, Hutu and Tutsi over there, etc.). The impasse that constitutes these communal regressions finds its extreme manifestation in questionable characters like the Taliban, Bin Laden, or Sadam Hussein, who were themselves the beneficiaries of the generous support of the CIA, only to become the United States’ “Public Enemy number one”, and could, by this fact, appear like that in the eyes of large swaths of popular opinion,

The counter-point is being drawn here from the reconstruction of national, popular and democratic alliances, like those that brought down some dictators (Mali being a prime example), but also Apartheid in South Africa, and that also brought about Lula’s victory in Brazil. These advances - modest when we consider the present dominance of imperialist aggression – are nevertheless potential harbingers of the renaissance of the Southern Peoples front.

**In conclusion:** The struggle for social justice, democracy, and a multi-centric equal international order are inseparable. The United States establishment understands it perfectly. This is why they are moving ahead to implement their own hegemonic international order, by substituting the use of brutal military force to international law and justice. And knowing that that, - for them – is the only means to impose an unequal neoliberal social order, condemning democracy, where it exists, to degradation, and making it impossible elsewhere. Resistance movements and people’s struggles must understand this. They must understand that their plans for social and democratic progress have no future, if the United States’ plan for military hegemony is not stopped.

