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BEYOND LIBERAL GLOBALISATION: A BETTER OR WORSE WORLD?

1 The Future as Seen by the Dominant Powers

1.1 The CIA gathers an unparalleled mass of information of all kinds on all the countries in the world. However, its analysis of this material is banal in the extreme. This is undoubtedly because its leaders cannot see beyond their prejudices or their Anglo Saxon world view and lack critical interest and imagination.

The CIA report on the world in 2020 does not contemplate the possibility that the principles of liberal globalisation in force, described as the “Davos Project”, could be called into question because, according to Washington and its allies, these principles are perfect and there is therefore no credible alternative to them. Those that do not share this view can only be irrational nonconformists or unprincipled demagogues. Globalised liberalism is considered the means of good economic growth everywhere it is seriously implemented. Liberal globalisation is by definition favourable.

Of course, in reality this project, which constitutes “the end of history” (according to its defenders), suffers from shortcomings that lead to failures - albeit temporary - and produces absurd reactions (because they call into question the sound principles of liberalism) that result in chaos. According to this view, it is the “people”, “politicians” and “ideologues” alone who are responsible for the failures and the chaos as the spread of globalised liberalism (that is to say the accumulation of capital) can only be a good thing for all (or almost all).

This type of reasoning and these world views are certainly not only held by the teams in power in Washington. They reflect the prevailing discourse of the large majority of powers and the narrow-mindedness of the prejudices on which they are based. An analysis of reality intended to be as true as possible must begin by challenging these prejudices and subjecting the views that they inspire to rigorous analysis.

The “differences” between the world in 2020 as seen by the United States establishment and the world today are therefore of relative importance only. Moreover, these “differences” only affect the place of Asia (China and India in particular) in world economics on account of the pursuit of high growth in the case of these two large countries. This growth would take place in the context of liberal globalisation and would be entirely compatible with the preservation of United States leadership. At no time is the question raised as to whether this model is sustainable indefinitely without the internal contradictions in the countries concerned branching out in new and unforeseen directions.

Elsewhere, almost “nothing to report”.

Europe will continue to flounder in its “powerlessness” (radical liberal reforms would not be carried out and an immigrant management model based on United States practice would not be adopted, etc.), resulting in an economy blighted by persistent apathy. Yet at no time is it envisaged that the latter might become unsustainable to the point at which liberalism on a national or European scale, or in relations with the rest of the world, is called into question. Neither does it contemplate that Europe might leave Atlanticism and United States protection

from the terrorism that Washington alone is capable of stamping out by waging preventive wars.

Russia, still resistant to democracy, would be incapable of becoming a dynamic, modern industrial power once again and would become an exclusively oil-based power (like Saudi Arabia). Handicapped by its declining population, bogged down by strained relations with the new Central Asian and Caucasian states and definitively separated from the Ukraine, it would prefer to follow in Washington's wake rather than seek a rapprochement with Europe which, at present, is not interested in it.

Latin America would remain as we know it today. Growth in liberalism in the South Cone and Mexico, progress towards the integration envisaged by All America Free Trade Area, project and acknowledgement within this context of the leadership of Washington. The "vestige of the past" (Cuba) will disappear, (Chavez type) populist uprisings will come to nothing, the increase of indigenism will be absorbable.

Being incapable of following the examples of Asia and Latin America, black Africa will still not have entered the first era of industry. Undermined by the spread of the AIDS pandemic and the persistent tradition of "poor governance", its only area of growth will be in raw materials (oil) and possibly some agricultural products.

Finally, Arab and Muslim countries from Morocco to Indonesia will remain paralysed by the massive rallying of their peoples to the fantasy of the reconstruction of a mythical "Caliphate". The constant failure of this project will result in political instability (making democratic progress impossible) and mediocre economic performance, although the accompanying permanent drift towards terrorism will not pose a real threat to the rest of the world. There is always a price to pay for terrorism: the permanent occupation of Iraq (envisaged by Washington even before its attack) and the indefinite postponement of democracy in this country; the failure to resolve the Palestinian problem! The restriction of democratic rights in "civilised" western countries is also the price people pay.

The "probable" developments described above lead to the conclusion that the leadership of the United States will not be threatened. Not even by a triumphant Asia, let alone a stagnating Europe bound because of this by its allegiance, in practice, to Atlanticism and United States military policies.

The decline of the UNO will continue, the political governance of the world system will be taken upon by the United States with the possible (but not essential) support of NATO. Preventive war, duty of intervention (described as humanitarian), the propagation (manipulation in fact) of human rights will form the basis of discourse legitimising the new imperialism in 2020 as it does today.

1.2 This view of the future of the world poses a problem. This future is presented in the context of so-called "scenarios", which in fact summarise the alternative "world according to Davos" (meaning the consolidation of global liberalisation ensuring the more or less exclusive leadership of the United States) or "chaos". This is a misleading comparison as in actual fact it is the pursuit of the "Davos project" that causes chaos ("populist" reactions to social failure, terrorism, etc.). It is therefore, in fact, a single scenario: the pursuit of the liberal project

guaranteed by that of United States leadership and the management of chaos through the militarisation of globalisation.

The United States establishment (like the majority of political forces currently in power) refuses to see the real comparison to be drawn between precisely this project and those that would be brought about by significant changes in relations in social and political forces which are currently a prerequisite for reducing the “chaos”. Moreover, the establishments in question also refuse to consider the opportunities, impact and consequences of a “rightist solution” to globalised liberalism in crisis, such as solution supported by the Neocons of the United States.

In these conditions, one would, no doubt, be quite entitled to ask the following questions: Why have the “experts” of the United States establishment proposed such a uninspiring vision of the future? Who are their documents intended for? What are their aims? Are they sincere or are they hiding their intentions?

For my part, I believe that the real purpose of the document is not to make the reader think, but rather to convince him “that there is no alternative to globalised liberalism and United States leadership”. Its authors are also more likely to be democrats than republicans. Although both some have the same objectives, the former are careful to avoid the arrogant style of the team currently in power in Washington. Do they believe that globalised liberal capitalism can be “good” for everyone (or nearly everyone), even if at the expense of a few regulations (as the “fight against poverty” would require)? Do they believe that the United States has a historic mission to spread the message of democracy for all? Do they believe that the hegemony of Washington is really “benign” as they say? Or are they cynics who are well aware that the current system guarantees maximum returns on the capital of large multinationals, this being their sole concern despite the social rights of the popular classes? Cynics who ridicule “democracy” for all peoples of the planet and do not hesitate to give priority to the plundering of natural resources in countries under their protectorate for the sole benefit of United States consumers?

Because of their training and background, these individuals probably do by and large believe that there is no alternative to capitalism, this being the “best possible system” in terms of efficiency and fairness, the one that is most suited to “human nature” and which leads to democracy etc. They often believe in the historic mission of the United States. Their way of “analysing” reality separates the purpose of sound “economics” (meaning the expansion of markets) from that of good “politics” (meaning representative democracy and good governance). The concept of “contradiction” is foreign to their way of thinking so they find the idea that, because of the very nature of its implementation, the contradictions inherent in really existing capitalism are destined to become more serious entirely incomprehensible. Because they do not see the “problems and difficulties” as resulting from the nature of the system, they consider them to be associated with the circumstances of the time and place. This explains why, in their view, responsibility for the cause of these problems always lies with the “people” and solutions should therefore be found without departing from the essential nature of the system. It will not be denied that there may be discrimination on the grounds of race or gender, that the demands of sound environmental management may be forgotten; but it is always a question of “particular problems” that are distinct from each other.

This plea in favour of the “innocence” of those responsible must not allow the fact to be overlooked that their culture serves private interests promoted by policies that it legitimises. In this respect, this culture can reasonably be seen to be a cynical expression of prevailing

capital interests and certain promoters of the policies in question are without doubt capable of sufficient lucidity to know which interests they are defending.

Beyond these questions of morality are the shortcomings I would attribute to the failure of those responsible for United States establishments to see beyond their Anglo-Saxon mindset. The document is remarkable for its ignorance of all civilizations on the face of the earth. Banal racism as regards “Africans” (meaning “blacks”) and “Hispanics” broadly dictates the conclusions reached regarding the peoples concerned. There is also a good measure of mistrust of “old Europe”.

The conclusion which this establishment reaches - that the world in 2020 will be no different from the one we know today, with the exception that the commercial position China and India will be more significant (to the detriment of Europe but not the United States) - may seem “plausible”. Fifteen years is not a long enough period of time in which to expect qualitative transformation in societies, especially when - as is the case today - there appears (at least) to be no coherent and credible alternative (as was the case with the model of socialism in the 20th century) on the horizon.

My analysis of really existing capitalism leads me to a completely different conclusion. This system - in its globalised liberal form - is not viable, inasmuch as the chaos that it engenders, far from being “controllable” by the means contemplated by the system's ruling classes, can only become rapidly worse in dramatic proportions. The military and political failure in Iraq, the increasing rejection of the “European project” by the peoples concerned, the outbreaks of violence (as occurred in November 2005 in the suburbs of France) and many other phenomena that have become daily occurrences are evidence of this. Having said that, I am not led to conclude that an acceptable solution will “necessarily be found”. Tomorrow's world, probably even as soon as 2020, will be different from today's but not necessarily any better. It could also be worse.

Scenarios which take the best and the worst into account and identify their causes are a worthwhile and useful tool for deliberation.

The method and prejudices on which the view of the ruling classes (in particular the United States establishment) is based does not allow for this. It is not that harsh judgements of both European and third world states (and societies) are not justified. They are, and those that I propose to examine below are no less so. Yet harshness alone is not enough. The nature of the real challenges facing societies must be understood, which is precisely what the prejudices that typify dominant ideology refuse to do.

2 Is the European Project Viable?

2.1 Euphoric discourse concerning the “European project” is the daily bread of the large majority of both left and the right wing politicians on the continent. Only the extremists of “populism” (shared by the far right and the far left it is said), it seems, would reject the project to which there is no alternative for the future of the peoples concerned. Yet indication of growing disillusion among these peoples is not lacking.

In fact, the European project is extremely perplexing: it has applied itself, since the treaty of Maëstricht (1992) in particular, to restricting national economic policies without delivering

any replacement government at European level in counterpoint! In other words, the European Union operates like the most perfectly “globalised” region in the world in the most brutal sense of the term (annihilation of the extent of state autonomy). This is certainly not the case in the United States, nor even other regions of the world where the state, even if fragile and vulnerable, in principle retains control over its decisions, limited “only” by the rules of the World Trade Organisation (which also aim gradually to annihilate states' rights and prerogatives). Europe has, however, gone further than the rest of the world in terms of this big step backwards.

The mutilation that European states have inflicted upon themselves affects all areas of economic life: Europe no longer has any monetary policy, foreign exchange policy, budgetary policy, employment policy or industrial policy.

The European Central Bank is prohibited from implementing any monetary policy, which it has replaced with the sole objective of guaranteed “price stability”, it claims, by strictly prohibiting member states from financing their deficit by recourse to “their” central bank. Operating in these conditions, the latter no longer has a public representative body (neither the states nor the Union) to which it must justify its policy. This in principle deflationist option is an additional permanent obstacle to the dynamism of the economy.

The ECB cannot implement an active foreign exchange policy, the objectives of which (“strong” euro or “weak” euro) are determined by a public representative body as this no longer exists. The government of the United States, on the other hand, has maintained all its prerogatives in the field of monetary management so it is Washington that decides if the dollar will be weak or strong whereas the euro can only record the decision and adjust accordingly. It should be added that the dollar standard is in fact the oil/dollar standard: the price of oil is quoted in dollars and the United States directs its efforts towards, through military intervention if necessary (as in the case of Iraq), to preventing oil-producing countries from selling their oil for payment in euros. In fact, European states have, up till now, refused to take part in this game and “hurt” their friend on the other side of the Atlantic. Fettered in this way, the euro cannot become an international currency like the dollar.

The “stability pact” sounded the death knell for any possibility of implementing budgetary policies. This option was justified by recourse to a dubious theory on the equivalence of covering a deficit in public finances through taxation or borrowing. In actual fact, this justification is redundant since the pact capped the maximum allowable deficit at 3% and the debt ceiling at 60% of the GDP! Neither the United States nor any other country in the world (except the semi-colonies subject to IMF administration!) have subjected themselves to such a handicap, rightly described by Prodi simply as “stupid”.

European Community policy has not even partially compensated for the elimination of all forms of national industrial policy (under the pretext that transparent “competition”, meaning no protection or subsidies, leads to a more efficient allocation of investment) employment policy, left to market forces alone (on the assumption that flexibility will resolve the problems!), and the dismantling of public services and privatisation. Neither “industrial Europe”, nor “social Europe” is on the agenda. Europe is clearly drawing closer to the perpetual United States model, having long been engaged in the break with all of the traditions that underpinned its success during the 19th and 20th centuries. Although the United States does have a military-industrial strategy which has considerable state backing (in spite of “liberal” discourse) which is unparalleled in Europe. Note that the two major

achievements of European technology (Airbus and the Ariane rocket) were the result of public service intervention. Had it been left to private initiative, these two events would never have come about!

In one area, however, - that of agriculture - Europe has effectively implemented a dynamic Community policy that is free from doctrinaire liberalism. This policy has produced remarkable results; it has modernised family farming, increased cultivated acreage, intensified the use of equipment and favoured specialisation, guaranteed prices ensuring equivalence between peasant and urban workers' income, and, finally, removed major export surpluses (excessive!) What has this cost? Half of the European Community's budget it is true, but this is insignificant (less than 1% of the GDP of the countries concerned). Today, as we know, the CAP is under review.

Enjoying second place in the European Union's expenditure raking (with one third of the budget), regional policy is undermined by serious ambiguities and belied by questionable political ambitions. Its objective is not so much the reduction of inequality between member states and the regions that make them up as support for their capacity to "meet competition", which is assumed of itself to bring progress for all (doctrinaire liberalism is never called into question in spite of the flagrantly obvious examples to the contrary both past and present). Support for less developed states is also expected to be reduced (relatively at least) following the incorporation of central and eastern European countries into the Union. Focusing mainly on the subsidisation of regional infrastructure and education costs, the regionalisation policies implemented have accentuated inequalities rather than diminish them and favour "regions with a future" in areas which are receptive to globalised competition (such as Bavaria, Lombardy or Catalonia). The political objective pursued here is the reduction of the influence of "national units" in favour of "regional" loyalty. Globalised liberalism always prefers small states to large ones because it is easier to dismantle the functions of the state in the case of the former. In the European Union, "Bavarian", "Catalonian" or "Lombardian" assertion is preferred over that of the nations (which are always suspected of chauvinism).

What is certainly true is that the major concepts concerning the enlargement of the Union are no different from those that underpin the United States' plans for the integration of Latin America into a vast American Free Trade Area. These methods are applied to accentuate the rift between peripheral partners (in this case Latin America and Eastern Europe) between small, well integrated and favoured zones, controlled by the dominant capital of the centres (in the former case the United States, in the latter, Germany), and vast neglected reserves. The sole purpose of discourse according to which "catching up" will take place of its own accord through the increasing flow of direct private foreign investment, is clearly propaganda.

The politics of cooperation between the European Union and Sub-Saharan Africa have never been anything other than "neocolonial" and have served only to keep the African continent mired in a "pre-industrial" state. The liberal alignment of the European Union underpinning the Cotonou agreements (2000) and those described as "signatories to the Regional Economic Partnership Agreement" (REPA) makes this adverse development worse. Africa is, in this respect, subject to "deliberate exclusion" (Cf. S. Amin et alii, *Afrique : renaissance ou exclusion programmée*, 2005). In fact, there can be no doubt that the "open globalisation" associated with keeping the African continent in a pre-industrial state is a strategy implemented to make it easy for dominant transnational capital to plunder the continent's natural resources. However, it should be pointed out that this plundering will be of greater benefit to United States' multinationals than European ones. From the perspective of the

persistent decline of Africa, cooperation policies (today described as “partnerships”!) between European Union and ACP states will gradually diminish to the benefit of other initiatives in the direction of Latin America, Asia and the Mediterranean region. But to date, there has been nothing to suggest that these initiatives might break new ground and distance themselves from the expansionist intentions of transnational capital. The so-called Euro-Mediterranean projects, for their part, are deprived of any potential influence by the rallying of Europeans to the initiatives of Washington and Tel Aviv, in spite of a few rhetorical contortions here and there. (Cf. S. Amin and A. El Kenz, *Europe and the Arab world*, Zed 2005).

2.2 As it stands, the European project takes support for practices that are systematically detrimental to the successful economic development of the continent to absurd limits, so we bound to ask why these choices (which Prodi described rightly as stupid) have been made.

The only reasonable answer to this question is that they were made by large dominant capital as this was the means - the only possible means - available to it to crush the social force that European workers (working classes first and foremost) fought for two centuries to obtain. The collapse of the Soviet system provided this opportunity. The choices were therefore entirely “rational” but clearly based on a short term political approach which has always spontaneously benefited from capital preference. What is absurd is the behaviour of the European socialist and social-democrat parties which believed they stood to benefit from the collapse of the communist parties whereas the liberal strategy intended to liquidate all of them.

So, in its present form, the project suits the United States’ purposes perfectly and this is why Washington sees no “threat” emerging from an “effective competitive” Europe. Furthermore, the relative stagnation that Europe has brought upon itself as a result of this extreme liberal option facilitates the financing of the United States’ deficit brought about by Washington’s determination to assert its leadership. This stagnation, in fact, produces a surplus in profits which, as they cannot find an outlet in the expansion of European productive systems, are placed on United States financial markets.

Dominant discourse attributes Europe's handicap to the difficulty that its societies are facing in firmly and fully embracing the principles of “American” liberalism and never makes the slightest allusion to the lack of symmetry that characterises relations either side of the Atlantic. In point of fact, if the Europeans decided to use the surplus that they lend to the United States at home - and this is the only decision that could get the continent out of stagnation - the United States would then be forced to readjust their economy and cut back their wasteful mode of consumption and military expenditure. That could not happen without a major political crisis.

The policies implemented by Europe do not go in the direction required for its potential economic power to establish itself, quite the opposite in fact. The privatisation and dismantling of highly efficient European public services (SNCF, EDF, among others, are fine examples) are providing United States’ financial capital, and Pensions Funds in particular, with an exceptional opportunity to cream off profits from the most profitable of the economies in question, thereby reducing the means of getting out of the crisis available to the Europeans.

So should we despair and accept Washington's prediction that nothing will call the Europeans' choices into question, however absurd they are? There is a risk of this, and it should not be underestimated by alterglobalist movements. The dominant ruling class (in the strict sense of the term; the corporated capital of the oligopolies) is sorely tempted to lock itself into this dead-end approach, which offers no way out for European peoples as, in return, it benefits from the advantages provided by its participation in the collective imperialism of the triad. There is no doubt that the policeman that neutralises the effects of the chaos resulting from this deployment of imperialism - the United States - is in a position to pass on the cost of their services to its subordinate partners. The latter have no alternative and therefore accept the servile position reserved for them. After all, it will be neither the first time in history nor the first time in the world we know today in which this is the case.

The current depressing geopolitical options that reduce Europe's degree of autonomy and force it to follow in Washington's wake must be assessed. Europe did not opt to construct a Eurasia in which the United States would not have had much influence and which would have meant a rapprochement with Russia and China. On the contrary, Europe chose to support - and even to encourage - "anti-Russian" Baltic and Polish chauvinism (one might think we had returned to the 1920s and the anti-Soviet cordon sanitaire of Versailles!). It consents to Israeli expansionism and the military presence of the United States in Iraq, central Asia and the Caucasus.

The most serious thing is certainly Europe's support for the plan for military control of the planet by United States armed forces. This alliance was endorsed on the day, during the Yugoslavian wars, that Europe agreed to NATO's being invested with new powers to police the world in association with the United States' own forces. One might have expected NATO to have lost its reason for being with the collapse of the USSR ("the defence of Europe from possible Soviet attack"). The decision taken was quite the reverse: replace the UN with NATO, henceforth responsible for the management of international political relations. From that moment on, decline was difficult to avoid.

And this decline has reached proportions that public opinion in Europe is generally unaware of, for what followed has been nothing less than the unilateral annulment by Western powers of the United Nations Charter proscribing war. The United States in effect granted themselves the "right" to take the initiative with "preventive wars" without NATO allies responding, as should have been the case, by officially dissociating themselves from this decision. More serious still is the fact that Washington has also granted itself the right to a first nuclear strike in the event it deems this to be "useful". Daniel Ellsberg made it known on this occasion that official Pentagon documents estimate that the number of "possible victims" of such initiatives would be no less than six hundred million human beings! (One hundred holocausts, according to D. Ellsberg). By remaining silent on this decision, Europe and NATO are accomplices of the United States' criminal aims. The only effective response to this adverse state of affairs is the organisation of a global campaign for the absolute prohibition of the use of nuclear (and, of course, chemical) weapons as it goes without saying that the "non-proliferation" treaty promoted by NATO powers on these terms is unacceptable to the peoples of Asia and Africa who are fully aware of the fact that they face the threat of a holocaust from the United States and NATO.

Can the servility of the dominant ruling classes and those politically indebted to them (both on the left and right) continue indefinitely in European societies? I doubt it very much and this, in my view, is the crux the matter as these same European political cultures cannot allow it. I

will not repeat my arguments to this effect here as they are already presented in *The Liberal Virus* (Pluto 2004) and *Beyond US Hegemony* (Zed 2005), the conclusions of which I summarised in the following sentence: while the economic system implemented by the dominant oligopolies brings the United States and the European Union closer together, their political cultures divide them.

2.3 So, I do not believe the European project is viable either in its extreme liberalism or in its alignment with Washington's geostrategy.

As for how it will be called into question and what developments will constrain it, that is as yet unknown.

This brings me to the point of my analysis which has to do with “political cultures”. Those of a large part of the European continent can be seen as a series of major developments that led to the right/left split: the Philosophy of the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and in particular the Montagnarde Convention, the formation of the socialist workers’ movement in the 19th Century, Marxism and the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution and the formation of the Communist Parties. The right formed in counterpoint during the Restoration (the “Holy Alliance”), through the formulation of “anti-Marxist” ideologies (veering towards fascism), pro-colonial (and racist) ideological corruption and anti-Sovietism. The stages in which political culture developed in the United States are quite different. This culture emerged through a different series of major developments: immigration to New England of anti-Enlightenment sects, the genocide of the Indians and slavery within society (the impact of which is much more devastating than that of the slavery practiced in distant colonies), the collapse of the conscience of the political class, which successive waves of immigrants replaced with communitarism. The political culture produced by this history is not that of a strong (potentially socialist) left/right contrast but a pro-capitalist “consensus” which puts the electoral bipolarity (Democrats/Republicans) clearly into perspective.

The question being asked in Europe today is whether the legacy of its political culture will crumble away (and the left as deliverer of a post-capitalist project disappear) to the benefit of the “Americanisation” currently in progress (social-liberal parties joining the chorus of defenders of “eternal capitalism”), or whether a “new left” will be capable of uniting behind programmes that are up to the challenges. Either case, in my opinion, is possible.

The ideological offensive of the new right (which includes the majority of the electoral left) has developed a harmful “anti-French” discourse because, justly, this right sees in France, which played a major role in the formation of political cultures in Europe, the “weak link” in a European system which is committed to the route of Americanisation. “Colbertism” (meaning a system which in its time - along with absolute monarchy - laid the foundations for the capitalist modernity that replaced feudalism), “Jacobinism” (which understood that as economic liberalism was the enemy of democracy, the Revolution had to be popular and not strictly bourgeois as had been the case in England), “secularism” (whose “radicalism” hinders the maturing of “community” identities desired by the pro-American right model) and even “Gaullo-communism” (to which Mr Cohn Bendit no doubt prefers anti-Soviet Pétainism!) are the themes repeated ad nauseam by this media propaganda. It is noteworthy that all these topics predominate in “European” discourse (meaning pro-European Union, as it is).

Besides the implementation of the European project, it would be worth examining the discourse with which it surrounds itself. Any reference in this discourse to the legacy of

European political culture is described as “out of date”: the defence of class-based interests (unrelentingly treated as “corporatism”!), respect for the nation (regionalism, which is powerless against capital, communitarism or even ethnocracies such as in the Baltics, Croatia etc. being preferred). On the other hand, the following are considered “modern”: praising competition between workers, regions and countries (regardless of the social price), and anti-secular concepts of religion (such as Polish pope worship).

The rebuilding of a European left clearly requires a radical, critical assessment of all this discourse. It also means identifying the principles on the basis of which an alternative can be built and, in particular, envisaging consequences thereof in terms of short and long-term programmes.

The above considerations take a dim view not only of the “European project” such as it is, but also of the response to it even from within committed progressive social movements. The project as it stands should surely be described not as the “European project” but as “European part of the Atlanticist project under United States hegemony”. Major critical reactions to the project seem to me to be more focused on the search for a less asymmetric balance within the imperialist triad (by means of an adjustment in this context in relations between Europe and the United States) than on that of a global equilibrium that is less disadvantageous for the “rest of the world”.

In these conditions the question remains open: can the European project change direction or, in order for this to come about, must it go through the phase of open recognition of its failings?

3 Can the South Push Back Imperialism?

The collective imperialism of the Triad (United States, Europe and Japan) is on the offensive and is actively directing its efforts towards reshaping the world to suit its own purposes. It has already managed to reduce the powers in almost all countries of the South to the status of “compradore”. In this context, because it is spearheading this offensive, the United States is in a position to implement its specific hegemonistic project. This project depends on the implementation of “military control of the planet” (the very terms in which Washington unashamedly states its ambitions).

In order to accomplish its project, Washington has chosen the Middle East as the first region in which to strike for various reasons that I have presented elsewhere (Cf. S. Amin, *L'hégémonie des Etats Unis et l'effacement du projet européen*, 2000, also *Confronting the Empire*, Monthly Review Vol 5 No.3, 2005). Nonetheless, the aims of the project stretch far beyond the Middle East: the entire “South”, meaning all of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The collective new imperialism has no other means, in the long run, of ensuring the countries concerned retain their dominated status and this is why the partners of the triad have aligned themselves definitively with this project, however demerital and criminal it is, despite the reservations expressed from time to time. The “South” remains the “tempest zone” inasmuch as uprisings by its peoples, who are the victims of unprecedented social devastation, are bound to increase. They will therefore have to be crushed by military violence - a real new “hundred years' war” between the “North” (while it remains imperialist) and the “South”.

From this perspective, the United States establishment considers China to be its major strategic adversary. It is, however, divided on this central question. Some think that China could continue its accelerated economic development by participating in liberal globalisation, such as it is, and that because of this it will agree to play the game and accommodate United States leadership. In this case, China would be more of an ally than an adversary, albeit one that can demand (and obtain) special concessions to its advantage. A form of complementarity would then emerge between the United States and China that would cover an increasing proportion of imported consumer goods manufactured by China and the United States being suppliers of advanced technologies and capital. However, others in Washington's ruling class fear that China is playing its own game, trying to acquire advanced technologies and simultaneously reinforce its military might. A preventive war against this strategic adversary would then be envisaged before it was too late.

Considering what is happening within Chinese society itself in order to identify the contradictions arising there, can more light be shed on the question concerning China's place in the system of its relationships with the imperialist centres of the system on the one hand and the latter's other peripheries on the other?

These questions are not taken into account by the discourse of conventional economics which contents itself with simple and superficial truths such as the growth of GDP. The ruling classes of the countries concerned - China in this case - do have a tendency to be satisfied with the image of the future that people think they can derive from this type of "forecast", especially when "things are going well" (i.e. when the growth recorded is strong). They cannot see beyond the eternal "path of catching up".

The present is characterised, in general, by the break-up of the South and the growing contrast between a group of so-called "emerging" countries (such as China, India and Brazil but also smaller countries such as Korea) on one hand, and a stagnating, even regressing, "fourth world", on the other. Can we conclude from this that the emerging countries are developing in the sense of catching up? My analysis, which is concerned with the characteristics of a new centres/peripheries system, leads me to give a negative response to this question. In this analysis, the decisive new advantages that define the dominating postures of the centres are no longer made up of the monopoly of industry as in the past when the centres-peripheries contradiction was almost synonymous with industrialised/non-industrialised countries, they are defined by the control of technologies, flow of funds, access to natural resources, information and weapons of mass destruction. By these means, the imperialist centres effectively control the industries that have relocated to "emerging" peripheries - the real peripheries of the future.

The emerging countries in question are very much looking forward to the future that current developments will bring. In the case of China, the success of the option of what could be a national capitalist perspective - that of a powerful capitalism having become active player in the world system - comes up against obstacles that will become increasingly serious. On one hand, this option cannot include the very large popular peasant and urban masses in economic growth. The resistance of the latter will have to protest with increasing force. I have drawn attention here to the particular resistance of the peasants, the beneficiaries of a radical revolution in their favour, who are threatened by the plan to privatise agricultural land (an "enclosure" project). The development of these struggles could deflect the Chinese project in the direction of real "market socialism", i.e. a combination giving all its force to social priority (social justice) in the development model, supporting the priority expansion of the

internal demand of the popular classes. This would lead far from the Chinese model and simply become part of liberal globalisation. I refer here to debates on the subject which in China are heated (S.Amin, *Theory and Practise of Chinese Market Socialism*, 2005).

On the other hand, it would be naïve to think that dominant imperialist powers will stand by and watch a country the size of China become an “equal partner”. When China thought it was in a position to purchase a multinational oil company in order to integrate further into liberal globalisation and ensure provision for itself in this context, the United States, in violation of all its principles which only doctrinaires of liberalism believe to be those that govern the reality of economic relations, overturned the attempt through a brutal political intervention. Clashes between China and the imperialist powers in all areas concerning access to the planet's natural resources, control of modern technologies and industrial property rights are bound to become violent. Undoubtedly more so than the conflicts which will also emerge as China gradually makes its mark on international markets of commonplace products.

The illusions held by the inhabitants of other emerging countries are even more alarming. In Brazil, for example, but also often elsewhere in Latin America, major segments of the left imagine it will be possible to construct hegemonic blocks managed according to good social democratic tradition (that of the Welfare State of the European post-war period, not the one we know today that is aligned with liberalism). They forget the entirely exceptional conditions that enabled the social democratic Welfare State to come about. The western societies in question were more advanced than others which made possible both commitment of capital to work and the pursuit of their imperialist domination of the rest of the world. Social democracy was social-imperialist and even social-colonialist to the very end of liberation movement struggles. The threat posed by the communist alternative was a decisive factor in this shift of power towards the historic capital/labour compromise that characterises this exceptional moment in history. For the first time the cause of the working classes had acquired a “respectability” which it had never had before. These conditions do not exist in the societies of today's peripheries, even in “emerging” countries which are far from equality with imperialist centres. In addition, the page of the historical compromise in question has been turned in the developed centres. Social democracy became social liberal because liberalism is the means by which developed centres proceed with their imperialist domination of the rest of the world. Social democracy does not stray from the context of its social imperialist tradition; and because social imperialism today is social liberal, the shift in question was entirely to be expected. The fact remains that, even if the devastating effects were to some extent attenuated by the social liberals, liberalism returns the popular working classes of the centres to the status of being dominated and practically excluded from power which had been theirs until 1945. The new conditions could, therefore, form the objective basis for the reconstruction of a (Northern and Southern) people's internationalist front, provided, of course, that the political forces which have the workers' support in the North categorically break with the ambitions of imperialism.

The fate that the imperialist project reserves for the “non-emerging” peoples of the peripheries is even more dramatic. The “marginalized” regions of the world are in fact subject to the systematic implementation of policies by dominant forces that I consider to be strategies “of programmed exclusion” of the peoples concerned, which facilitate the more rapid integration of their natural resources which are intensively plundered. The implementation of this project relies on aggression and military occupation (as in the case of Iraq), and supervision because of debt (in the case of African countries). In this context, Europe and Japan have virtually aligned themselves with Washington. The Euro Med conference held in Barcelona (end

November 2005) is evidence of this. Europe tried to impose the agenda preferred by Bush giving priority to the “fight against terrorism”. The Arab governments, which are today extremely docile as regards the demands of the masters of the system, were forced to point out that the rights of the Palestinian and Iraqi peoples could not be disregarded to this extent. So Europe puts its “interests” in the Arab region after those of the United States which are contained in what is known as the “Greater Middle East” project. The same is true of Sub-Saharan Africa, as illustrated by the Cotonou agreements (2000) and the so-called partnership projects between the European Union and African regional communities. The alignment of all behind the same insipid discourse on the “reduction of poverty” and “good governance”, the arrogant adoption of stances by the new general director of the WTO (the “socialist” Pascal Lamy!), which would make those of the ambassadors of the Bush administration pale into insignificance by comparison, are evidence of the view shared by the partners of the imperialist triad.

Faced with this challenge of unequalled brutality, the response of the South in question is either extremely timid or inappropriate. The governments, like those of the protectorates before them, have only a limited range of movement and are careful not to question the economic liberalism their countries are paying for. Having been abandoned, large sectors of the popular classes are caught up in para-religious or para-ethnic rhetoric that aggravate the divisions between the peoples of the South.

In these conditions, the peoples of the South have sometimes brutally opposed violent imperialist interventions alone. This is the case in Iraq, in particular, and in Palestine. Although their (partially armed) resistance is heroic, it is not given the moral and political support it deserves. Here we are paying the price of the current decline in progressive conscience both in European and Southern countries. The relative isolation of those fighting on the front line against the imperialist project sometimes adds to the adverse trends in the methods of resistance that they promote. In turn, this certainly does not facilitate the necessary reconstruction of the internationalism of the peoples.

Rebuilding the united front of the South against the collective imperialism of the triad and the militarist offensive of the United States is the challenge currently facing the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

During the “Bandung era” (1955 - 1975), the peoples of Asia and Africa successfully managed to push back the imperialism of the time thanks to the united front that they put up. But the conditions that made these successes possible are no longer the conditions governing the current situation. At the time, because the origins of those in power lay in national liberation movements, and sometimes even genuine popular revolutions, they enjoyed a certain degree of legitimacy and the confidence of their people. In addition, the states that they governed could count, up to a certain point, on the support of the Soviet Union, obliging the imperialist aggressors to practise a certain degree of restraint. We know that after this, following the disappearance of the Soviet Union, the imperialist powers returned to their tradition of brutal aggression.

Through the Non-Aligned movement, the front of the states and that of the people concerned were of one voice. Bandung cannot be recreated today. The erosion of national populism that defined the contents of the policies implemented at the time and the imperialist offensive, which began in the 1980s and stepped up its violence as of 1990, led to the comprador decline of local powers. Because of this, the latter have largely lost their legitimacy in the

eyes of their people. In addition, the communist left largely (and even “critically”) supported the national populist regimes of the Bandung era and therefore do not seem credible or capable of offering a real new alternative. The ideological vacuum had to be filled, enabling para-religious and para-ethnic culturalism to respond to the confusion through dangerous illusions portrayed in their speeches.

The real alternative - which I will call a people's Bandung (and a Tricontinental) therefore comes up against serious obstacles. The tasks that the left have to accomplish in the countries of the South are no easier than the challenges faced by the European left.

4 On the Cultural Front: Decline

The possible decline of European culture and the Americanisation of the world manifest themselves as the generalisation of the principle of the “broad consensus” based on the robust assertion of “community identity”. We must not underestimate the serious danger for human civilisation of the possible success of development in this direction, which I would describe as an adverse trend. This decline, which moreover has already begun, may represent a right-wing solution to the crisis of senile capitalism and allow it to be overtaken not by progress in the direction of socialism but by the construction of a new “tributary” (“neo-tributary”) type of system, the main characteristics of which I will describe later. In other words, not only is an “other world possible” but an “other world” is certain and it might be better but might also be worse than the one in which we are currently living.

My view of this subject is based on a rejection of the linear version of “fatal human progress from stage to stage as history unfolds”, whether this version is based on Reason (of European origin) associated with the economism of bourgeois modernity or on the vulgar Marxist interpretation of the succession of modes of production. At the turning points of history, in other words, when the deployment of a system reaches its term due to the accumulated contradictions it has produced (in other words, when this system enters the age of senility), there is more than one possible future. At these turning points, the options for subsequent development are numerous and the directions diverse. This multiplicity of options has become the subject of strict mathematical formulation (chaos theory). The pertinence of this formulation (most probably established for the purpose of studies such as meteorology) in the area we are concerned with (the history of human societies) is debatable. For my part, I very much doubt its pertinence, although I arrive at the same conclusion (the diversity of possible futures) via a non-doctrinaire interpretation of historic materialism based on what I have described as “under-determination of instances” –instances being referred here in the Marxist terminology (Cf. S. Amin, *Spectres of Capitalism*, MR 1998).

In the analysis that I propose, the ideological and political “instance” has real autonomy in its relationship with the economic instance. A particular combination of these different instances, among several possibilities, then makes it possible to describe the system which comes out in response to the crisis of the model in place, which has become senile.

As I have already said, in my opinion, the capitalist system has definitely entered the advanced stages of senility, inasmuch as the seriousness of the contradictions resulting from the implementation of said system is such that their management entails the permanent use of the greatest political and military violence that the system’s masters can muster, including permanent war of the North against the South.

It does not necessarily follow that the crisis of the current senile global capitalist system will lead to its being overcome by equally global socialism. This is a possibility. Which, in the analysis that I propose, would require: (i) from the point of view of political and social developments, the association of social progress, the consolidation of democracy and the reinforcement of the degree of autonomy of nations in a negotiated multipolar globalisation; (ii) from the ideological and cultural point of view, the renewal of the values of universalism.

In this second dimension, dominant evolution is currently going in precisely the opposite direction. The manifestations of this great step backwards are visible in what is proposed by “post modernism”, at least as far as its predominant trends are concerned, by questioning “objective truth” through recognition of the “multiplicity of discourses”. Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont propose a caustic assessment of this failure of Reason (cf A. Sokal, *Pseudosciences et postmodernisme*, 2005).

Science claims to make use both of Reason (logic) and observation to enable it to discover objective truths, although it is well aware that the latter are always partial and relative (science does not seek to know the “absolute truth”), the discoveries it makes and the theories that it derives must be constantly reviewed in order for errors to be corrected and to enable progress. According to this definition, science has its roots in human behaviour dating back to the most ancient of all societies on the face of the earth. The fact remains that science has taken a gigantic step forward in modern Europe since the Renaissance. It is in this context that it has broken in the most systematic way with the methods of reasoning by analogy, substituting metaphor for the rigours of observation and reasoning which characterised (and still characterise) “para-sciences” (like astrology) and magic. It is not by chance that this step forward is closely linked with the critical assessment of religious dogma (based on the interpretation of “sacred texts”) or that it is associated with the birth of capitalism. This leap forward is, as a result, simultaneously associated with a strong Euro-centrist tendency, which claims that for one reason or another it could have been the fact of the “Europeans” alone. It is also associated with other characteristics of modern society in which science is deployed, patriarchal chauvinism in particular. All these limits of science such as it is, can themselves also be subject to scientific analysis, that is to say, it is also based on the employment of reason, observation and sceptical doubt.

Yet in this version, post modernism, benefiting from a tail wind, does not propose this type of analysis. It claims to call into question the privileged status of science in the matter of knowledge. It claims that “objective truth” simply does not exist and that “truth” is what people hold to be true. In other words, it places scientific discourse (described as narration) on a par with other types of narration (such as magic, para-sciences, religions). It even claims that the de facto multiplicity of narrations effectively under way annihilates all claims to universality. It puts all these discourses on the same par and, strangely (but not incomprehensibly), abstains from subjecting those who describe themselves as counter hegemonic to the same critical rigour it reserves for “dominant discourse”.

Most modernist discourse accompanies and legitimises current major developments, i.e. the emergence of “culturalisms” (always in the plural). I understand by that, the assertion according to which “cultures” constitute transhistoric realities based on diverse, incommensurate and permanent values. Nothing in peoples' real history confirms this a priori aberration. “Culturalism”, which must not be confused with the banal and evident fact of cultural diversity, legitimises the discourse of the pursuit of the absolute by which all para-

religious movements are nourished (political Islam, Hindutva, the fundamentalist Christianity of the United States, the innumerable “sects” of all kinds) or para-ethnic movements. It is nothing less than the super-reactionary discourse which has no part in aspirations to liberate human beings, dominated classes or peoples in particular, on the contrary, it shuts them in an impasse and makes them accept the real domination which they are victims of, namely, that of senile capitalism.

The nature of questions concerning cultural diversity and counter hegemonic discourse is such that they often lead to confusion which it is necessary to avoid. So let us be clear on the subject. Yes, the really existing modernity produced by imperialist capitalism is culturally biased, Eurocentric, masculine, patriarchal and Promethean in the sense that it treats nature as an object. Yes, the counter hegemonic discourse that demonstrates it (feminism, ecologism, cultural anti-imperialism) constitutes the unavoidable positive elements of any humanist alternative. But this alternative, far from being the negation of modernity, is the rational and radical development abolishing Eurocentrism, male chauvinism and contempt for nations.

Faced with this challenge, calling for the renunciation of universalist aspiration is fundamentally reactionary. It is to agree to a place being given to counter hegemonic discourse provided that it remains stuck in the ghettos it is assigned to. United States-style democracy encourages this powerless “diversity”. “Women's studies” and “black studies”, will be proclaimed at the same time as the conventional discourse of dominant economics will continue its route without experiencing the slightest disturbance. This so-called post-modernist ideology cannot inspire the radicalism required to change the world.

This explains why this “ideology” is the one promoted by the dominant forces and the United States establishment in particular. Nothing could work better than this ideology to keep the dominant forces in place because it gives form to apparent consensus of groups of individuals who are defined by their “irreducible particular identity”. I will express the reality of this functionality through the following image: if you hold the emblem of your alleged identity (the Koran, the Bible or some other ethnic insignia) in one hand, as long as you hold a bottle of coca-cola in the other, you are not dangerous (even if you think you are!).

As a counterpoint, the affirmation of the need for science and universality as the only possible foundations for human civilization in no way implies an uncritical concept of “modernity”, because if the date of birth and the conditions for the formation of really existing modernity can be recognised, the latter has not reached the end of its journey (moreover, there is no end for the latter, history has no end). And since really existing modernity to date is that of capitalism, it falls to the societies of the world to go beyond this with a superior post-capitalist modernity.

If the reactionary involutions under way were to become dominant and reduce their opponents to silence, they would then contribute to overcoming capitalism through a process which I would qualify as the construction of a neo-tributary system.

The analogy in the choice of qualification refers to the characters by which I have identified the specific nature of pre-modern (pre-capitalist) systems, in counterpoint to (modern) capitalism. Moreover, in my opinion, this distinction is what Marx himself proposes in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, as in all his writings (in particular *The German Ideology*). Determination, in the final analysis, by economic factors does not exclude the diversity of forms of dominance of different “instances”: where capitalism is concerned,

economics is the dominant instance (and therefore the method of alienation that defines the system is economic alienation - in the market in vulgar terms), in preceding systems the dominant instance is political (and the method of alienation that permits it is religious alienation).

The new ideology is preparing the way for a return to political dominance. That of economics, belonging to capitalism, is in fact necessarily called into question by the very development of productive forces, that is to say by what is called the new technological revolution currently in progress. Yet, the dominance of politics (or rather, and more precisely, culture and politics) may take different forms associated with social contents which are themselves diverse.

It may take the (superior) form of dominance of socialisation through democracy (in counterpoint to socialisation through market), dominance of solidarity (in counterpoint to that of the competition) and therefore provide a solid basis for a communist society. This, I believe, was Marx' vision; and it is in this sense that I said that communism is defined by cultural dominance (Cf. Spectres of Capitalism).

However, this dominance can take another form, that defined in the United States Neocons programme: absolute market dictatorship (meaning, of the corporated capital of the oligopolies), consensual “democracy” devoid of any antiestablishment and reforming impact, violent assertion of identification with (religious and “racial” to use the Neocons own language) communities. One would be very wrong to underestimate the danger that these options represent because even though their expression by Neocons is clearly extreme and on occasion bordering on extravagance, developmental trends are going in this direction everywhere, in the United States, in Europe, in the rest of the world. The “democracy-human rights” model proposed by the ruling classes provides that basis and the masquerade that it is in reality far from being seen as such by many. This model of political domination is strengthened - and not opposed - by the reduction of the role of the state, which the liberal doctrine claims to legitimise, in terms of strengthening democracy implemented by civil society. The latter is designed and built in a pyramid of sub-assemblies of para-citizens who appear to be active but are stripped of any real power and work together to construct consensus devoid of content. The model also treats “culture” in the plural, having rejected universalism, glorified “difference” and adopted the “culturalism” point of view. This allows the politics of domination that it promotes to make use of the “differences” in question.

The main probable characters of the method of economic management of this ultra-reactionary alternative can already be seen in the “new age of capitalism”: financialization that reinforces the centralisation of positions of power to the benefit of small groups, assertion of new types of ruling class “mafias” taking over from traditional bourgeois values, etc. Globally, the economy in question is that of “apartheid on a world scale”. It therefore implies, as expressly envisaged by the Washington project and NATO, the “permanent war” of the North against the South. D. Ellsberg reminded us that it could cost six hundred million lives!

It is a different world from the one we knew yesterday, yet clearly not a better one, rather a more inhuman and criminal one.

5 Rebuilding the Internationalism of the Peoples against Imperialism

Economic liberalism and imperialism are the two indissociable faces of the same reality of dominant capitalism of our era. Whether it is called “new capitalism” (to praise it in some way), “cognitive” capitalism, or something else does not change the nature of the challenge with which people are confronted.

So there will be no humane way out of the “post liberal” global system without the latter opening the way for really “post-imperialist” international relations. Otherwise, the crisis of the system will lead to an even darker future, a neotributary system and, of course, a super-imperialist system.

Judging by the analyses that I have put forward here regarding both Europe and the South, it seems that protest and opposition “movements” are far from having developed a coherent, solid and alternative strategic vision that is up to the challenges. We must be courageous enough not to harbour illusions about this. Too many “movements” congratulate each other on their actions (which is perfectly legitimate) but do not see the need to go further, far less highlight any shortcomings. A certain ideology of the “movement” claims the addition of all this resistance and opposition will, of its own accord, produce the alternative. Neither history nor theoretical reflection and observation of reality reinforce this simplistic point of view.

It has been said that people make their own history but within the limits of the objective possibilities offered by their time. The objective possibilities offered by modern technological development are immense: all of the major material problems of all humanity could be resolved. The barrier to this is the capitalist insistence on financial viability. If people were not subject to this system, they would produce the desired humane outcome to the crisis of the system. In other words, the future depends on the ideological options and the invention of suitable forms of political organisation or again: global socialism is not only necessary, it is objectively possible.

This proposal by no means pretends that the response to the challenge is “easy”. The necessary change in direction of the system of dominant ideas and values that the proposition implies is, in fact, enormous. It depends on the people at the centres of the system (Europeans in particular) reinventing a real left culture and breaking with capitalism and imperialism, and, after the long series of successive chapters that constituted the “political culture of the European left” (the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the workers' movement and Marxism and the Russian Revolution), the imagination of the European people being capable of inventing a new chapter. It means people on the peripheries - the tempest zone - ridding themselves both of the illusion that development is possible in the context of capitalist globalisation and alternative backward-looking fantasies, and coming up with alternatives for a breakthrough that measures up to the challenges and opportunities of our time. It means everyone reinventing suitable and effective modes of organisation and political action, whose agenda of demands is full of questions for which there are still no convincing answers.

I will mention, very briefly, only a few of the main points of the challenge as I see them.

(i) Defining new historic subjects capable of mastering developments and giving them the directions desired.

(ii) Defining the political strategic challenge that I propose to “summarise” in the following terms: coming up with programmes that associate (rather than dissociate): a) social progress, b) democratic advances, c) respect for nations and peoples. This means, among other things, creating a European Union that is for nations rather than against them.

(iii) Combining market socialisation and socialisation by democracy that becomes gradually dominant.

(iv) Combining “competition” and “solidarity” by assessing the superiority of solidarity which, throughout history, has been the origin of progress much more than competition.

(v) Translating effective regulation and protection policies into specific terms in order to progress towards socially equitable, ecologically sustainable, multidimensional development which means giving the “law” greater authority than that of the “contract” (in accordance with the European tradition in conflict here also with that of the United States).

(vi) Accurately assessing the demographic development of the European continent (the “ageing” which is not “negative” - except for those who are interested solely in maximising profit - but the result of human progress), give the right response in terms of migration (based on the rejection of the communitarist perspective) and in terms of “financing retirement” (based on the principle of redistribution and not on that of pensions funds that pit generations against each other).

(vii) Identifying the constituent parts of anti-imperialist, popular and democratic, national hegemonic blocks in specific conditions of the various countries of the South and formulating the right strategic objectives for their stage.

Progress in these directions becomes synonymous with the progressive construction of the internationalisation of the peoples. It is, in fact, a question of structuring the struggles of the peoples of the North (through the recomposition of the culture of the European left) and those of the peoples of the South. This necessary internationalism of the peoples - of all peoples - cannot be based on vague concepts of “human solidarity on a global scale”, often bordering on charitable or impoverished analysis. The fight against “poverty”, “good governance”, the assertion of the common interests of humanity in the face of ecological challenges (increasing scarcity of resources, deterioration of climates) are emblematic of this “idealistic” (in the pejorative sense of the term) method which ignores the interests of the social groups concerned and their possible conflicts. The internationalism in question must be based on the identification of common interests in the face of a common adversary that can only be described as “imperialist capitalism”.

In its time, the third Leninist then Maoist International formed global alliances which - in theory and to some extent in practice- responded to an analogous challenge formulated within the conditions and limitations of the time. It is not a question of producing a “remake” of this chapter of history, which is definitively closed. The new structure of the anti-imperialist struggles in the North and South have still to be invented almost from A to Z.

Without claiming to be capable of more than formulating the question we are concerned with here, I propose to consider that this construction depends first of all on derailing the United States' plan for military control of the planet. This, in my opinion, is the necessary condition without which any democratic or social progress made anywhere will remain extremely vulnerable.

The internationalism of the peoples does not rule out acknowledgement of “contradictions within peoples”. The people we are dealing with here being all those on the planet, these contradictions are expressed not only within one particular people but also between the peoples of the world. This explains why respect for national autonomy is the only solid basis on which internationalism can be built. The argument put forward here is not that of “culturalism” by which cultural singularity becomes a reason for rejecting aspiration to

universalism. It is true, the singularity of historical journeys is a reality and as such must never be ignored or disregarded. But, well beyond this platitude, because the modernity built by capitalism is based on the unequal integration of peoples into globalism, emancipation (in the name of universal values which it sublimates) depends on the construction of a multipolar world. The liberal recipe which consists of subjecting the entire planet to the same “rules” (at least in appearance if not in reality since the reality is always one of “double standards” benefiting those in power, of course), necessarily increases inequality.

If the construction of the internationalism of the peoples comes definitively under people's (as distinct to “government”) responsibility, meaning working classes and their movements and organisations, the struggle to make progress in this direction cannot disregard contradictions (even if “minor”) between the ruling classes (i.e. the states). I refer here to the view that I proposed of the North-South conflict in the process of crystallization (Cf. interview of S. Amin par Rémy Herrera , *50 Years After Bandung*, International Research 2004).

Another world, a better one of course, is possible. Objective conditions exist for it to be so. There is no historic determinism prior to history. Tendencies inherent in the capitalist system clash with the resistance of forces that do not accept the effects of these. Real history is therefore produced by this conflict between the capitalist expansionist approach and those derived from the resistance of social forces that fall victim to that expansion. The development of social struggles may bring different hegemonic blocs to power from those that govern the globalised neo-liberal order in place, based on compromises between social interests whose diversity and divergence is acknowledged (capital-labour compromise blocs in capitalist centres, anti-compradore democratic-popular-national blocks in the peripheries). In this case, the state finds considerable room for manoeuvre in the context of a global system based on the principle of negotiated multipolarity. We must work to bring this about. Multipolarity is therefore synonymous with a real degree of autonomy for the states. This degree will be used in a given way defined by the social content of the state in question.

The present is characterised by the deployment of an American hegemonistic plan on a global scale. This is currently the only plan to occupy the entire scene. There is no longer any counter plan that aims to limit the area subjected to United States control, as was the case at the time of bipolarity (1945-1990); beyond the ambiguity of its origin, the European project has entered a phase of self-effacement; the countries of the South (Group 77, the non-aligned countries) whose ambition during the Bandung period (1955-1975) was to put up a common front to western imperialism have given up; China itself, which is going its own way, has barely the ambition to protect its national plan (which is itself ambiguous) and does not present itself as an active partner in the global system.

The collective imperialism of the triad is the product of a real evolution in the productive system which resulted in the solidarity of the national oligopolies of the centres of the system which is expressed in their concern to “manage” the world together and to their benefit. However, while “economics” (understood as the unilateral expression of the demands of dominant segments of capital) unites the countries of the triad, politics divides them. The potential brought by the conflict of political cultures calling effectively for an end to Atlanticism is still handicapped by the options of the majority left (in electoral terms, the European socialist parties), that rallied to social-liberalism.

Russia, China and India are three strategic adversaries to Washington's plans. The powers in office in these three countries are probably increasingly aware of this, yet they seem to think

that they can manoeuvre without clashing directly with the United States administration. A Euro-Asian rapprochement (Europe, Russia, China and India) that would probably bring the rest of Asia and Africa with it and isolate the United States is certainly desirable and there are some indications in this direction but we are still a long way off from seeing its manifestation putting an end to Europe's Atlanticist choice.

In fact, the South in general no longer has its own plan as was the case during the Bandung era (1955-1975). The ruling classes of these “emerging” countries (China, Korea, South-East Asia, India, Brazil and some others) are pursuing objectives that they do seem to set themselves and in view of which these states do take action. These objectives would be summarised in the maximisation of growth within the globalisation system. These countries have - or believe they have - negotiating power that enables them to derive greater benefit from this “selfish” strategy than from a vague “common front” associating them with the weakest of the South. However, the advantages that they may have obtained in this way are specific to the singular domains which interest them and do not call into question the overall structure of the system. Such projects therefore do not constitute a consistent alternative; they are only vague (illusory) projects of building a “national capitalism”. The most vulnerable countries of the South (the “Fourth world”) do not even have similar plans of their own. Substituting to this gap a so-called religious or ethnicist fundamentalism alternative certainly does not meet the real challenges. So, it is the North alone that is taking the initiative “for them” (we should say “against them”) to advance its own projects such as the EU-ACP “economic partnership agreements” called upon to replace the Cotonou agreements with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, the “Euro-Mediterranean dialogue”, or American-Israeli projects concerning the Middle East and even the “Greater Middle East”.

The challenges with which the construction of a real multipolar world is confronted are more serious than many “alterglobalists” think. In the short term, it is a matter of derailing Washington's military plan. This is the condition that must be addressed in order to provide the degree of freedom necessary and without which any social and democratic progress and any advance in the direction of the construction of a multipolar system will remain extremely vulnerable.

In the longer term, “another globalisation” therefore means challenging the options of liberal capitalism and the management of the affairs of the planet by the collective imperialism of the triad in the framework of extreme Atlanticism or a “re-balanced” version thereof. I return here to developments that I proposed elsewhere concerning the construction of the desirable multipolar world (Samir Amin, *Beyond US Hegemony*, 2005).

The real multipolar world will only become a reality when the four following conditions are fulfilled:

- i. Once Europe is well and truly on the way to “another social Europe” (and therefore engaged in the long transition to global socialism) and it has begun its disengagement from its imperialist past and present. Clearly, this means more than simply abandoning Atlanticism and extreme neo-liberalism.
- ii. That in China the path of “market socialism” will prevail over the extremely adverse and illusory trend towards building “national capitalism” that would be impossible to stabilise because it excludes the working class and peasant majorities.
- iii. That the countries of the South (peoples and states) succeed in rebuilding a “common front”, which in turn would provide room for manoeuvre and enable the popular classes not only to impose “concessions” in their favour but, beyond that, transform the nature of the

powers in place, replacing the dominant compradore blocks with “national, popular and democratic” blocks.

iv. That as regards the reorganisation of the systems of national and international rights, progress is made in a direction that reconciles respect for national sovereignty (by progressing from the sovereignty of the states to that of the people) with that of all individual and collective, political and social rights.