

## **NATIONAL STATES: WHAT IS THE WAY FORWARD?**

Global capitalism as practiced today is actually a complex construction of states (sovereign nations in principle), people and nations (“be they homogenous” or not), and social classes based on the capital/labour conflict which is the bedrock of true capitalism. As such, conflicts between states and class struggles are interwoven in a close relationship of interdependence. The interdependence of social struggles in various countries of the world therefore depends on how the various dominant blocs exploit the possibilities at their disposal on the international scene. This on its part will depend on the value of their political and social projects. The establishment of global alliances of dominated classes which will create a “better global alternative” is therefore confronted with serious obstacles worth analysing.

Africa is of course not left out of this issue. It is in no way “marginalized”, as hastily concluded, but very much integrated in the globalization process. Africa is even more integrated than the other regions of the world even though it occupies a lower position in the global hierarchy (cf S. Amin). The question of nationalism in Africa is a direct consequence of the history of this integration. Like Asia and Latin America, Africa is largely involved in the agrarian question on which depends the future of the peasant communities of the peripheries.

### **1. Global really existing capitalism is imperialist in nature**

#### *The origins and objectives of diversity within global capitalism*

The diversity of the social and political conditions in the states which make up the global system stems from the types of developments which define the global expansion of capitalism. Subjected to the demands of accumulation in the centre of the system, social groups of the peripheries have never been part of the central position of proletariat workers in the general production network. Victims of the system are the integrated peasant communities which are subjected to the logic of imperialist expansion and – at varying degrees – many other classes and social groups. More over, the history of the making of each country, be it dominant or dominated, has always been characterised by features which are unique to it. As such, hegemonic blocs of classes and interests that have enabled capitalism to assert its domination and those which victims of the system have established or tried to establish in order to face the challenges, have always been different from one country to another and from one period to another. These evolutions have shaped specific political cultures, setting up in their own ways, value systems, and “traditions” of specific forms of expressions, organisation and struggles. These diversities are very objective just like the cultures through which they are portrayed. Finally, the development of production forces in itself, through scientific and technological revolutions that define the contents, has on its part dictated changes in the

organisation of work and various forms of its subjection to the demands of capitalist exploitation. All these different realities prohibit the reduction of political actors to the bourgeoisie/proletariat conflict.

Capitalism is based on a market integrated in its three dimensions (market of social work products, financial markets, and the labour market). But really existing capitalism as a global system is based solely on the global expansion of the market in its first two dimensions, as the establishment of a real global labour market is hindered by the persistence of political state barriers, at the detriment of economic globalization which is as such always limited. For this reason, really existing capitalism is necessarily polarizing at the global level and the uneven development it creates is the most violent and growing contradiction of modern times that cannot be overcome within the framework of the logic of capitalism.

Development and “under development” are the two faces of the same reality: global capitalism. There is no scientific basis to the dominant speeches that links capitalism to the affluence of the countries of the centre and qualify others (developing countries) as “retarded”. Consequently, national liberation struggles of the people in the peripheries have always, objectively, been in conflict with the logic of capitalism. They are “anti systemic” (anti-capitalist), though at varying degrees of the conscience of the actors and the radicality of their projects. This situation calls for a long lasting transition to global socialism. If capitalism has set the foundation of an economy and a global society, it is however unable to carry on the logic of globalization to the end. Socialism, conceived as a qualitatively higher level of humanity, can for this reason, be considered universal. However, its construction will have to go through a very long historical transition by using a strategy of the contradictory negation of capitalist globalization.

In its manifestation as a political and social strategy, this general principle signifies that the long transition calls for the indispensable establishment of a popular national society associated to that of an auto-centered national economy. Such a creation is contradictory in every aspect: it associates capitalist criteria, institutions and operational modes to social aspirations and reforms which are in conflict with the logic of global capitalism; it also associates an external exposure (controlled as much as possible) to the protection of the demands of progressive social transformation which conflict with dominant capitalist interests.

Due to their historical nature, governing classes, generally formulate their visions and aspirations within the perspective of really existing capitalism and, willingly or unwillingly, subject their strategies to constraints of global capitalist expansion. This is the reason why they cannot really envisage a delinking. On the contrary, popular classes must give in to this whenever they try to use political power to transform their conditions and liberate themselves from the inhuman consequences which the polarizing expansion of capitalism subjects them to. The appraisal of the strategic choices of government policies and movements of the dominated masses in Africa and elsewhere should follow these criteria.

### *An inward-looking development option is indispensable*

Historically, an inward-looking development (“self reliant”) has been a specific feature of the capital accumulation process in core capitalist countries and has conditioned the modalities of the resulting economic development, which is mainly controlled by the dynamics of internal social relations and strengthened by the external relations at their service. On the other hand, in the peripheries, the capital accumulation process is mainly derived from the evolution of countries of the centre in a way “dependent”.

The dynamics of the inward-looking development model is based on a major articulation: one which puts side by side the close interdependence of the growth of the production of goods for production and that of the production of goods for mass consumption. This articulation falls in line with a social relationship whose main terms are set up by the two main blocs of the system: the national bourgeoisie and the labour force. Inward-looking economies are not water tight entities in themselves; on the contrary, they are aggressively open in this direction such that they shape the global system in its totality through their potential political and economic intervention on the international scene. However, the dynamics of peripheral capitalism – the antinomy of central inward-looking capitalism by definition – is based on another main articulation that puts side by side the capacity to export on the one hand and consumption of a minority– imported or locally produced- on the other hand. This model defines the comprador nature – in opposition to national – of bourgeoisies in the peripheries.

This contrast results in a divergent trend towards the integration of nations in the centres where centripetal forces dominate the inward-looking accumulation on the one hand, and on the other hand, towards the permanent disintegration threat of those of the peripheries due to effects of centrifugal forces of dependent accumulation. This is why one can equally see former warlords operating in China not long ago, in Africa today. Imperialist policies encourage such trends, defending them with arrogance and cynicism, with the excuse of the “right to interference”, “humanitarian” interventions, and (abusive) rights “to auto determination”.

## **2. External and internal colonisation**

Since its inception, the sharp contrast between the centres and the peripheries is inherent in the expansion of global really existing capitalism at all stages of its deployment. Imperialism, specific to capitalism, has properly and significantly successively taken different forms depending on the specific features of the successive phases of capitalist accumulation: mercantilism (from 1500 to 1800), classical industrial capitalism (1800 to 1945), the aftermath of the Second World War (1945–1990) and the on-going “globalization”.

Beyond the specificity of each of these phases, really existing capitalism has always

been synonymous to the conquest of the world by its dominant powers. It is therefore no surprise that “colonialist” dimensions (the general term with which I will qualify the conquest), constitute an important element in the establishment of the political cultures of nations concerned. Nevertheless, the articulation of this colonialist dimension to other aspects of the political culture is specific to each of the regions and countries in question. For Europe, colonialism was rather “external”, in America and South Africa; it was rather “internal”. A very significant and important difference.

In this analysis, colonialism is a special form of expansion of certain central countries (qualified as imperialist powers) based on the subjection of conquered nations (colonies) to the political power of the colonial nations. Colonisation is “external” where the colonial power on the one hand and the colonies on the other hand, are distinct entities, even if the latter are integrated into the political space dominated by the former. The imperialism in question is capitalist in nature and should not be confused with other forms – previous forms – of the eventual domination practiced by a power on other people. The argument that treats the imperialism of modern capitalism in the same way as Roman imperialism does not make much sense. Multinational states (Austro – Hungarian, Ottoman, Russian Empires and USSR) are also distinct historical phenomena (in USSR for example, financial transfers went from the centre - Russia- to the Asian peripheries, the contrary of what is the rule in the colonial system).

Capitalist colonialism first and foremost concerns the Americas, conquered by the Spaniards, Portuguese, English and French. In their respective American colonies, the ruling classes of the colonial powers set up specific economic and social systems, conceived to serve the accumulation of capital in the dominant countries of the time. The Atlantic Europe/colonial America asymmetry is neither spontaneous nor natural (produced by the “market” as commonly claimed), but perfectly constructed. The submission of the conquered Indian societies falls within this asymmetry. The grafting of slavery into this system was equally intended to consolidate its effectiveness as a peripheral system, subjected to the demands of accumulation in the major countries of the period. Black Africa, where slaves are reported to have come from, was the backbone of the American periphery. Colonisation was rapidly deployed beyond the Americas, among others, through the conquest of English India and Dutch India in the XVIII century and thereafter, towards the close of the XIX century, the conquest of Africa and South East Asia. Countries not completely conquered – China, Iran, and Ottoman Empire – were subjected to unequal treaties that genuinely justify their qualification as semi-colonies.

Colonisation is “external”, from the point of view of the colonial powers, highly industrialized nations and highly advanced countries in terms of social modernization which are the source of their labour and social movements and democratic conquests. However, these developments never benefited the people in the colonies. Slavery, forced labour and other forms of overexploitation of popular classes, administrative brutality and colonial massacres characterised this history of really existing capitalism. One should therefore talk at this point of a real “black book” of capitalism,

in which dozens of millions of victims will be counted (the Indian famine for example). Such practices frankly speaking, were carried out due to the influence of devastating tendencies in the colonial countries themselves; they provided the basis for the racialisation of the cultures of the ruling elites and even the popular classes, a means of legalizing the democratic contrast in the colonial countries/brutal autocracy in the colonies. The exploitation of colonies boosted the capital of the countries as a whole, and the colonial countries drew additional profits that determined their positions in the global hierarchy (Great Britain enjoyed hegemony because of the size of its empire while Germany, the late comer on the scene, was struggling and very ambitious to catch up).

Internal colonisation was the result of the specific combinations of settlement colonisation on the one hand and the logic of imperialist expansion on the other. The primitive accumulation in the centres took the form of a systematic expropriation of poor classes of the rural population, and created an excess population that local industrialization was never able to totally absorb, thereby opening up very powerful emigration trends. Subsequently, the demographic revolution associated to social modernisation was manifested by the drop in death rates before that of birth rates, but strengthening the same figures through emigration. England was an early example of such an evolution, with the generalization of “enclosures” from the XVII century.

The United States in its creation associated a new capitalist/imperialist centre with its own internal colony. The late abolition of slavery did not in any way wipe out this internal dichotomy but however gave it a new form associated with the massive immigration of blacks from the South towards the industrial cities of the North, which was followed by that of poor people from European regions hit by capitalist development. Similar features could partially be seen in Latin America and South Africa.

Internal colonisation in Latin America led to political and social consequences similar to those generated by colonisation in general: racism against Blacks (especially in Brazil), misapprehension against Indians. This internal colonisation was challenged only in Mexico where the Revolution (1910-1920), for this reason, counts as one of the “major revolutions in modern times”. It is perhaps at the verge of being challenged in countries in the Andes, with the rebirth of contemporary “indigenous” claims, but of course in modern local and global difficulties.

The first form of settlement colonisation in South Africa – that of the Boers – was more in view of establishing a “Pure White state” by the expulsion (or extermination) of Africans rather than their colonisation. On the contrary, the British conquest out rightly mandated itself with the objective of subjecting Africans to the demands of the imperialist expansion of Britain (the exploitation of mines in the first place). Neither the former settlers (Boers), nor the new arrivals (the British) were authorized to establish themselves as autonomous centres. After the Second World War, the Boer Apartheid State tried to do this by exerting its power on the internal colony (the

Blacks in particular). They however did not succeed in their mission given their numerical disadvantage (a much greater number of Blacks) and the growing resistance of the subjected people who finally came out victorious. After the collapse of Apartheid, the ruling government took over this issue of internal colonisation but is still unable to find a radical solution to the issue till date. This is however a new chapter in history.

The South African situation is particularly interesting from the point of view of the effects of colonialism on the political culture. It is not only that internal colonialism is very visible here even to the blind, nor that it produced the political culture of Apartheid. It is equally due to the fact that the Communists in this country had made a clear and competent analysis of what really existing capitalism should be all about. In 1920s, the South African Communist Party was the promoter of the theory of internal colonialism (a theory adopted in the 1930s by a black leader of the Communist Party in the United States – Haywood - but not followed by his “White” comrades). The party came up with the following analysis: that the high incomes of the minority “Whites” and undoubtedly low incomes of the majority “Blacks”, constituted the different faces of the same situation.

Taking issues a little further, the Communist Party even attempted to make an analogy with the contrast opposing – in the British Empire – salaries of the English and earnings from work in India. To it, as was the case with the III International of the period, these two aspects of the same issue – the issue of really existing capitalism – were inseparable. The South African Communist theory on internal colonialism arrived at the conclusion that at the level of the global capitalist system colonialism, though considered external by major imperialist powers, was evidently internal. The South African Communist Party and the III International of the period internalised this conclusion in the political culture of the left (communist). This situation sharply contrasted with that of the socialist left of the II Social-colonialist International, whose political culture challenged this inherent association to the global reality.

I have written that “South Africa is a microcosm of the global capitalist system”. It brings together on its territory, the three components of the system as follows: a minority benefiting from the position advantage of the imperialist heartlands, two majority components, almost evenly split between an industrialised “third world” (emerging countries of today) and an excluded “fourth world”(within the former Homelands), compared to the non industrialised regions of contemporary Africa. Whatever the proportions between the figures of the population of these three components and those describing their earnings hierarchy per head, they are almost the same as those that characterise the current global system. This fact no doubt contributed in giving the South African Communist Party of the period, the much needed insight it deserved. This political culture is very much absent today. The situation is not particular to South Africa with the homing (however delayed) of the CP to the common propositions on “racism” (giving the status of cause to what is normally an effect), but has also been concretised at the international level with the merging of the Social Democrats and the communist majorities.

Colonisation and accumulation through dispossession is still going on before our eyes in Palestine where the people face extermination like the “Red Skins” of America.

Is the global contemporary system evolving towards a new generalisation of the internal colonial systems? The deepening of the social crisis in its peripheries which harbour the rural population of the world (almost half of mankind) caused by the generalised offensive nature of capitalism (the strategy of “enclosure at the global level”), gives rise to a great migratory pressure that will help compensate the relative demographic stagnation of the countries in the triad (USA, Europe, Japan). The hypothesis of a generalised internal colonisation that would mark the future phase of global capitalism remains questionable, given the real political and ideological resistance to the adoption of such a model in Europe, which institutionalises “racism”. However, the “communitarianists” model inspired by the practice of the United States seems to constitute a real danger for an “Americanization of Europe”.

### **3. The Awakening of the South**

The deployment of imperialism was manifested from 1492 (not the date of the “discovery” of America, but the date of its conquest and the destruction of its people), and in the four centuries that followed, by the conquest of the world by Europeans. The people of Asia and Africa, American Indians who survived the genocide, and later on, the new nations of Latin America and the Caribbean, had to try and adjust to the demands of this subjection.

Such deployment of global capitalism/imperialism was for the affected people, the greatest tragedy in human history, thus demonstrating the destructive nature of the accumulation of wealth. For this reason, capitalism can only be a moment in history, with its continuous development leading to barbarism. It is an unsustainable system in the long term (and not the “end of history”!), not only for ecological reasons – though reasonable – but above all, for the devastating effects of the mercantilism of individuals and whole peoples rendered “useless”.

The catastrophe manifested itself through the destruction of complete populations and the reduction of the proportion of non European populations from 82% of the world population in 1500, to 63% in 1900. Chinese industries were not ruined by “market” forces, but by European gun boats.

Simultaneously, the misfortune of some was the delight of others. Accumulation through dispossession of total populations did not only lead to the wealth of the dominant classes of the Old Order, but above all, to the administrative and military reinforcement of European countries. The industrial revolution of the end of the XVIII century could not have been without this first period of imperialist deployment. On its part, the military supremacy of Modern Europe made the XIX century the peak of capitalism. The North-South gap widened and the apparent wealth ratio moved from 1 to 1.3 in 1800 (a ratio not always favourable to Europeans) to 1 to 40 today.

The pauperization law formulated by Marx was more evident in the system than could be imagined by the father of the socialism!

This page in history is now closed. The people of the peripheries no longer accept the fate reserved for them by capitalism. This crucial change in attitude is irreversible. This signifies that capitalism has reached its period of decline. A decline initiated by the 1917 Revolution, followed by the socialist revolutions of China, Vietnam and Cuba and by the radicalisation of national liberation movements in the rest of Asia and Africa.

The concomitance of these two forms of transformation is not by chance. This does not exclude the persistence of various illusions: that of reforms capable of giving a human face to capitalism (something it has never been able to do for the majority of the people), that of a possible “catching up” within the system, which is the dream of the ruling classes of the “emerging” nations, exhilarated by the success of the moment; and that of old fashioned folding (para religious or para ethnic) into which a vast majority of the “excluded” people of today have fallen. Such illusions seem to persist due to the fact that we are passing through its low point. The wave of revolutions of the XX century is over, that of the modern radicalism of the XXI century is still to come. And like Gramsci wrote, there are monsters in the twilight of transitions. The awakening of the people of the peripheries was manifested from the XX century not only by their demographic growth, but also by their expressed intentions to reconstruct their country and society, wrecked by the imperialism of the four preceding centuries.

#### *Bandoung and the first globalisation of struggles (1955-1980)*

In 1955 in Bandoung, governments and people of Asia and Africa expressed their intention to reconstruct the global system on the basis of the acknowledgment of the rights of countries previously under domination. Such “rights to development” formed the basis of the globalisation of the period, implemented within a negotiated multi-polar framework and consequently imposed on imperialism which was forced to adjust to these new realities.

The industrialisation progress initiated during the Bandoung period was not the result of the logic of imperialist deployment, but was imposed by the victories of people of the South. Such progress undoubtedly nurtured a “catching up” illusion that seemed to be underway, where as imperialism, forced to adjust to the realities of the development of the peripheries, was recomposing itself around new forms of domination. The old contrast of imperialist countries/ dominated nations synonymous to the contrast of industrialized/unindustrialized countries, gradually gave way to a new form of contrast based on the centralisation of advantages associated to the “five new monopolies of imperialist countries” (the control of modern technologies, natural resources, the global financial system, means of communication and weapons of mass destruction).



The Bandoung period is that of African Renaissance. Pan-Africanism should be situated within this perspective. Initially the product of the American diasporas, Pan-Africanism achieved one of its main objectives (the Independence of the countries of the continent) if not the other (their unity), as declared by Mkandawire (art cit). It is not by chance that African countries are involved in renovation projects with inspiration from the values of socialism, for the liberation of the people of the peripheries is actually anti-capitalist. There is no need to denigrate these numerous attempts on the continent, as is the case today: in thirty years, the horrible regime of Mobutu led to the production of an education capital in Congo 40 times higher than what the Belgians achieved in 80 years. Whether we like it or not, African countries are at the origin of the creation of veritable nations. And the options (trans-ethnic) of the ruling classes favoured such crystallization. Ethnic deviations came later, caused by the erosion of the Bandoung models, leading to the loss of legitimacy of powers and the recourse to ethnicity by some of those in power to reconstitute power for their interests. I hereby refer to my book titled *L'Ethnie à l'assaut des Nations* (Ethnicity assaulting Nations).

With the page of the aftermath of the Second World War closed, it is worth coming back to what is today described as the new forms of the challenge.

*New era, new challenges?*

The contrast centres/peripheries is no longer synonymous to industrialised/unindustrialised countries. The polarization centres/peripheries which marks the imperialist character of the expansion of global capitalism is still underway, and is even gaining more ground through the help of the "five new monopolies" imperialist countries benefit from (mentioned above). In such conditions, the continuation of accelerated development projects in emerging peripheries, which has been an undisputable success (in China in particular, but also in other countries of the South), does not abolish imperialist domination. This deployment instead sets up a new centres/peripheries contrast rather than erode it.

Imperialism cannot be conjugated in the plural as in the previous phases of its deployment; it is henceforth a "collective imperialism" of the "triad" (United States, Europe and Japan). In this way, the common interests of the oligopolies which have their roots within the triad triumphs over ("mercantile") conflicts of interests that may oppose them. This collective character of imperialism can be seen through the control of the global system by common instruments of the triad; at the economic level the WTO (Colonial Ministry of the triad), the IMF (Colonial Agency of collective monetary management), the World Bank (Ministry of propaganda), OCDE and the European Union (set up to prevent Europe from coming out of liberalism); at the political level, the G7, the armed forces of the United States and their subordinate instrument represented by NATO (the marginalisation/domestication of the UNO completes the picture). The deployment of the project of the United States' hegemony through the military control of the planet (involving among others, the abrogation of

International Law and the right that Washington has assigned itself to carry out “preventive wars” where it chooses), centres around collective imperialism and gives the American leader the means of overcompensate for its economic deficiencies.

*Objectives and means of a strategy to develop convergence in diversity*

The people of the three continents (Asia, Africa and Latin America) are today faced with the expansion project of the imperialist system described as a globalised neo-liberal system which is nothing but the development of “Apartheid at the global level”. Will the new imperialist order in place be challenged in future? Who can challenge it? And what will be the outcome of such a challenge?

Does the image of the dominant reality not give room for the idea of an immediate challenge to this order? The ruling classes of the defeated countries of the South have largely accepted their positions as subordinate compradors; the people, helpless and fighting for daily survival, usually tend to accept their fate or even – worse – nurture new illusions which these same ruling classes shower on them (Political Islam is the most dramatic example). However, from another angle, the rise of resistant movements and the fight against capitalism and imperialism, the successes recorded – up to their electoral terms – by the new leftist governments in Latin America and Nepal (whatever the limits of the victories), the progressive radicalisation of many of these movements, and the critical positions taken by governments of the South within the WTO, are proof that “another world”, a better one for that matter is possible. The offensive strategy necessary for the reconstitution of the peoples of the South’s front requires the radicalisation of social resistance in the face of capitalism’s imperialist offensive.

The governing classes in some countries of the South have visibly opted for a strategy that is neither one of passive submission to the dominant forces in the global system nor one of declared opposition: a strategy of active interventions where they base their hopes in order to accelerate the development of their country. Through the solidarity of national construction produced by its revolution and Maoism, the choice to preserve the control of its currency and capital flow, the refusal to challenge the collective ownership of land (main revolutionary gain of the peasants), China was better equipped than others to positively exploit this option and to draw unquestionably brilliant results. Can this experience be followed elsewhere? And what are some of the possible shortcomings? An analysis of the contradictions purported by this option has pushed me to conclude that the project for a national capitalism capable of asserting itself as that of the dominant powers of the global system is very much an illusion. The objective conditions inherited from history do not enable the implementation of a historic social compromise of capital/labour/rural population which will guarantee the stability of the system which, for this reason, can be directed to the right (and be confronted to growing social movements of popular classes) or evolve towards the left by constructing “market socialism” as a stage in the long transition to socialism. The apparently similar options formulated by the governing classes of other “emerging” countries are still very fragile. Neither Brazil

nor India – because they did not experience radical revolutions as in China – are able to efficiently resist the combined pressures of imperialism and reactionary local classes.

Meanwhile, the nations of the South – at least some of them – now have the means that can enable them to reduce to nought the “monopoly” of technology of imperialist countries. Such nations are capable of developing themselves, without falling into the dependence trap. They have a technological mastery potential that can enable them to be able to use their own resources for themselves. They can also compel the North, by recuperating the usage of their natural resources, to adjust to a less harmful consumption method. They can equally come out of financial globalisation. They have already started challenging the monopoly of the weapons of mass destruction that the United States is planning to conserve. They can develop South-South exchange – of goods, services, capital and technology – which could not be imagined in 1955 when all these countries were deprived of industries and the mastery of technology. More than ever before, the delinking is on the agenda of possibility. .

Can these nations achieve this? And who will do it? The governing bourgeoisie classes in place? I strongly doubt. The popular classes who have come to power? This could probably begin with transitional regimes of national/popular natures.

The agrarian question is at the centre of problems to be resolved and this constitutes the main area of the national issue. The capitalist option of the private appropriation of land by a minority and the exclusion of others is totally a borrowed option from Europe. But this was however only feasible thanks to the possibility of the massive emigration of the rural population. Capitalism is unable to resolve the peasant problem of the peripheries that contain half the population of humanity in the same way. In order for these countries to succeed in their objectives, they need to have four Americas for their emigration! The alternative is the peasant system based on the access to land for all peasants. In fact the possibility of progress on this basis is potentially higher to those of the capitalist system. If we could divide the growth in productivity of modern farmers, who are few, amongst the millions of excluded people who have today become “useless”, it would be more modest than we imagine. The peasant system is one of a “socialist orientation” development, to quote the Chinese and Vietnamese formula; superior and the sole guarantor of the solidarity of national construction. I will hereby refer to my article on “the Land Tenure Reforms in Asia and Africa”.

#### **4. National states: what is the way forward today?**

According to most of what is said today, national states can no longer be the place for the definition of major choices that dictate the evolution of the economic, social and even political life of communities due to “globalization” which is a product of the expansion of the modern economy. There can therefore be no alternative, as Mrs. Thatcher used to say. In reality, there are always other alternatives which by their nature can define the action margin of the National state within the global system.

There is no "capitalist expansion law" which serves as a supernatural force. There is equally no previous historical determining factor to this. Inherent trends to the logic of capitalism are challenged by resistance factors that do not accept the effects. Real history is however a product of this conflict between capitalist expansion logic and those that result from forces of social victims of its expansion.

The effective response to the challenges facing communities can only be found if one understands that history is not controlled by the infallible deployment of the laws of "pure" economy. It is produced by social reactions to trends expressed by these laws, which on their part define all social relationships within the framework in which these laws operate. "Anti systemic forces" – if one could as such qualify this organised, coherent and effective refusal of the unilateral and total subjection to the demands of these so-called laws (in fact simply the law on private profit which characterises capitalism as a system) – shape real history as much as the "pure" logic of capitalist accumulation. They dictate possibilities and forms of expansion which are then deployed in the areas which they organise. The future is fashioned through transformations in the relationship of social and political forces; produced on their part by struggles whose outcomes are not known in advance. This however deserves some reflection, so as to contribute to the crystallisation of coherent and possible projects, while at the same time, helping social movements to overcome the "dummy solutions" where in the absence of this one, there is a risk of getting bogged down.

There are of course various interests and visions of the social and political forces under consideration, and the centre of gravity of the representativeness of the geometry of their conflicts and convergences determine on its part, the content and consequently the role of the nations concerned.

This can be, as it is presently, the unilateral spokes person for the interests of the dominant trans-nationalisation of capitalism (in countries within the imperialist triad) or its subordinate "comprador" allies (in countries within the periphery). In this situation, the role of most countries has been reduced to the maintenance of internal order, while the super power (the United States) solely exerts the responsibilities of a type of a "para-world state". The United States thus solely dispose of a greater margin of autonomy while the others have nothing.

Apparently, the development of social struggles can bring to power hegemonic blocs different from those governing the globalised neo-liberal order in place, based on compromises between social interests known to be diverse and divergent (compromise blocs of capital-labour in capitalist countries, national-popular-democratic blocs, that is to say anti-compradors in the peripheries). In such a situation, the state has more possibilities. It is necessary to strive for this to happen.

I will add here that there are also "national interests" which legitimately recognise the establishment of a multi-polar world order. These "national interests" are usually voiced by ruling governments to justify their own specific options. Political experts of

the “geo-political” set up at times such interests as “invariants” inherited from geography and history. This does not cancel the fact that they exist and play a role in determining the geometry of alliances and international conflicts, increasing and limiting at the same time the action margin of states.

The ancient world systems have always been multi-polar, even if such multi-polarity has never truly or generally been equal till date. For this reason, hegemony has always been a desired ambition of states rather than a reality. These hegemonies, even when they did exist, were always relative and temporal. Partners of the multi-polar world of the XIX century (extended till 1945) were exclusively “the major powers” during the period. Within the contemporary world of the triad, there are probably those who still cherish fond memories of this period and a return to this system of “balance of powers”. This is not the multipolarity desired by the vast majority of the planet (85 %!).

The multipolar world brought about by the Russian revolution, and later dictated partially by the liberation movements in Asia and Africa, was of a different nature. I am not hereby analysing the period after the Second World War in the conventional terms of the “bipolarity” and of the “Cold War” which does not give the progress of the countries of the South during the period, the respect it deserves. I am rather analysing this multipolarity within the terms of the conflict of basic civilization which, beyond distorting ideological expressions, deals with the conflict between capitalism and the possibility of its being eroded by socialism. The ambition of the people of the peripheries, whether they staged a socialist revolution or not – abolish the effects of polarization produced by capitalist expansion – falls within an anti-capitalist perspective.

Multipolarity is thus synonymous to real autonomy margin of states. This margin will be used in a given manner as defined by the social content of the state in question. The Bandung period (1955-1975) in this way, enabled countries of Asia and Africa to forge new ways which I have described as auto-centred development and delinking, coherent with the national-populist project of powers resulting from national liberation. There is certainly a link between the “internal” conditions defined by the national social liberation alliance at the root of the specific project of the country concerned, and the favourable external conditions (the East-West conflict was neutralising the aggressiveness of imperialism). I speak here of autonomy which is by definition relative independence, whose shortcomings are jointly determined by the nature of the national project and by the authorized action margin within the global system. This is because it remains very present and oppressive (globalization is not a strange thing!). For this reason, there is a tendency in schools of International Political Economy and of Global-Economy to challenge the importance of this action margin, and reduce it to nought. This indicates that within the globalization system (of all times); the “total” determines the “parts”. I prefer an analysis in terms of complementarity/conflictuality which restitutes all the powers to the autonomy of national and international social and political struggles.

The aftermath of the war (1945-1980) is now history. The collective imperialist project within the triad is currently being deployed (United States, Europe, Japan) with the hegemony of the United States, which abolishes the autonomy of the countries of the South and greatly reduces those of countries associated with Washington within the imperialist triad.

The current moment is characterised by the deployment of a North American hegemony project at the international level. This project is the only one that occupies the centre stage today. There is no longer a counter project to limit the areas subjected to the control of the United States as was the case during the bipolar period (1945-1990); beyond its original ambiguities, the European project itself is fading out; countries of the South (the group of 77, the Non – Aligned) which had the ambition during the Bandung period (1955-1975) to mount a common front against western imperialism have renounced it; China itself currently acting alone, is only interested in protecting its national project (itself ambiguous) and does not make itself an active partner of the transformation process of the world.

The collective imperialism of the triad is the result of a real evolution of the production system of capitalist countries which has not produced the emergence of a “trans-nationalised” capitalism (as speeches made by Hardt and Negri tend to claim), but the solidarity of the national oligopolies of countries of the system expressed in their desire to “jointly control” the world for their own self interests and profit. But if “the economy” (understood as the unilateral expression of the demands of the dominant segments of capitalism) brings together countries within the triad, politics divides their nations. The deployment of social struggles can thus challenge the role the state plays at the exclusive service of huge capital in Europe in particular. Within this hypothesis, one would expect once more to see the emergence of a polycentrism granting Europe a considerable margin of autonomy. But the deployment of “the European project” does not fall within this framework, needed to bring Washington back to reason. This project is nothing but “a European wing of the American project”. The “setting up” project is one of a Europe that is implanted in its double neo-liberal and Atlanticist options. The potential advanced by the conflict of political cultures, effectively requesting the end to atlanticism, remains undermined by the options of a vast majority of the left wing (in electoral terms the European socialist parties), rallied behind social-liberalism. These terms are in themselves contradictory given that liberalism is in itself non-social or even anti-social if not reactionary.

Russia, China and India are the three major strategic opponents of the Washington project. The ruling governments in these three countries are becoming more and more conscious of this. But they give the impression that they can operate without directly hurting the administration of the United States or even “tapping into the friendship of the United States” in conflicts opposing them to one state or the other. The “common front against terrorism” – which they all tend to adhere to – undermines things. The double game of Washington is clearly visible here: the United States on the one hand, supports the Tchetchens, Taranchis and Tibetans (just as they support Islamist movements in Algeria, Egypt and elsewhere!) and on the hand, it waves the flag of

Islamist terrorism in order to rally Moscow, Peking and Delhi behind it. But more or less, this double game seems to be working till date.

A rapprochement of Europe and Asia (Europe, Russia, China and India) which will certainly open up to the rest of Asia and Africa and isolate the United States is certainly desirable. There are certainly some signs in this direction. But we are surely still very far from seeing its crystallisation put an end to the Atlanticist choice made by Europe.

Can countries of the south play an active role in the desired defeat of the military projects and ambitions of the United States? The people attacked are presently the only active opponents capable of curbing the ambitions of Washington. Even then – and partially by the fact that they are active and feel it – the methods used in their fight remain of questionable efficiency and appeals to means which will delay the crystallisation of the solidarity of people of the North in their genuine fight. On the other hand, the analysis I have made of the “generalised compradorisation” of dominant classes and authorities in all the regions of the South leaves us with the conclusion that there are no great things to be achieved from ruling governments or those likely to be in place in the nearest future, even if they are of course “fundamentalists” (Islamists, Hindus or ethnic groups). These governments are certainly shaken at the same time by the unending arrogance of Washington and worried by the hostility (not to say hatred) of their peoples towards the United States. Is there anything they can really do other than to accept their fate?

For the time being, the South in general no longer has its own project as was the case during the Bandung era (1955-1975). No doubt, the ruling classes of countries qualified as “emerging” (China, Korea, South East Asia, Brazil and some others) have objectives they have set for themselves and which their countries are working to achieve. The objectives can be summarised in the maximization of growth within the globalisation system. These countries have – or believe to have – a negotiation power that will enable them to benefit more from this “selfish” strategy than from a vague “common front” established with countries weaker than them. But the advantages they could get from this situation are specific to particular domains they are interested in and do not oppose the general structure of the system. They are thus not an alternative and do not make of this vague project (an illusion) of the construction of “national capitalism”, a consistency that defines a real community project. The most vulnerable countries of the South (the “Fourth World”), do not even have their own similar projects, and the eventual product of “substitution” (religious or ethnic fundamentalism), does not merit to be qualified as such. More over, it is the North that solely takes the initiative to set up “for them” (one ought to say “against them”) their own projects, like the European Union – ACP association (and “economic partnership agreements” called upon to replace the Cotonou Agreements with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries), the “European-Mediterranean dialogue”, or the American-Israelis projects in the Middle East and even the “Greater Middle East”.

The challenges facing the establishment of a reliable multi-polar world are more

serious than could be imagined by many “anti-globalization” movements. They are considerably many. For the time being, there is great need to rout Washington’s military project. This is an indispensable condition to open up the much needed freedom margins without which any social and democratic progress and any progress towards a multipolar construction will remain very vulnerable. Given its inordinate nature, the United States’ project will no doubt collapse, but certainly at a terrible human price. The resistance of its victims – people of the South – will go a long way and will be strengthened as Americans will continue to be bogged down in the numerous wars they will be compelled to be involved in. Such resistance will end up defeating the enemy and perhaps awaken opinions in the United States, as was the case with the Vietnam War. It would however be better to stop the catastrophe sooner; a situation international diplomacy can do, especially if Europe takes its responsibility as a major player seriously.

In a much longer term, “another globalization” will mean challenging the options of liberal capitalism and the management of issues of the planet through the collective imperialism of the triad within the framework of extreme Atlanticism or of its “readjusted” version.

A reliable multi polar world will only become a reality when the following four conditions must have been fulfilled:

(i) Europe should truly embrace the social path of “another Europe” (and thus be committed to the long transition to global socialism) and should start dissociating from its imperialist past and present. This is obviously more than simply coming out of Atlanticism and extreme neo-liberalism.

(ii) In China, “market socialism” should triumph over strong trends of the illusory construction of “national capitalism” which will be impossible to stabilise as it excludes the majority of workers and the rural population.

(iii) Countries of the South (people and states) should be able to build a “common front”, which will enable movement margins of popular social classes not only to impose “concessions” in their favour, but also to transform the nature of the ruling governments, replacing dominant comprador blocs with “national, popular and democratic” ones.

(iv) At the level of the re-organisation of the systems of national and international rights, there should be progress both in the respect for national sovereignty (by moving from the sovereignty of nations to that of the people) and individual, collective, political and social rights.

Notes:  
Related articles and books by Samir Amin:

1. Is Africa really marginalized?; in, Helen Lauer (ed), History and Philosophy of Science; Hope pub., Ibadan, Nigeria, 2003.
2. L’Ethnie à l’assaut des Nations: Harmattan, Paris 1994.



3. In French :
- La nouvelle question agraire; in F. Polet (ed), Mondialisation des résistances, Syllepse 2004.
  - Les réformes foncières nécessaires en Asie et en Afrique, to be published.

In English:

- The new Agrarian Question; in, F. Polet (ed), Globalizing Resistance, Pluto 2004.
- Land Tenure Reforms, a proposal for Asia and Africa; to be published.

4. In French:

- Pour un monde multipolaire; Syllepse, 2005
- Le Virus libéral; Le temps des cerises, 2003

In English:

- Beyond US Hegemony; Zed, 2006
- The Liberal Virus, Pluto 2004