

Why a drive to a Global War Armageddon -and How to Defeat it¹

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1. The imperialist drive to a global war Armageddon shapes the world situation bringing humanity to the brink of the abyss. In an uneven but combined way, it is advancing from the center of Europe to the Middle East, from the Baltic and the North Sea to the Red Sea, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indo-Pacific preparing to enter the South China Sea.

The inflection point of history, the famous *Zeitenwende*, according to German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, was in 2022, when exploded in Ukraine the conflagration provoked by US led NATO imperialism with post-Soviet Russia for domination in the former Soviet space and with ultimate target China, recognized by the US as its “primary strategic rival” for world hegemony.

The following year, after the Hamas-led “Operation Al Aqsa Flood” on October 7, 2023, the on-going war in Ukraine became combined with the genocidal war waged by the far-right Zionist regime against the Palestinian people in Gaza, a mass massacre fully supported by US imperialism, the “collective West” and their stooges

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in the region. The Zionist ethnic cleansing rapidly extended to the West Bank, and to all occupied Palestine. In 2024 it escalated further in the massive bombing and the seventh barbaric ground invasion of Lebanon. In the same period, non-stop war operations engulfed the entire region, with bombings, a campaign of assassinations of the leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah, Zionist military attacks, assisted by US, British, French, EU naval and air forces against the “Axis of Resistance” in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, aiming particularly at and clashing with Iran with incalculable consequences spreading chaos not only regionally but world-wide.

2. Both in the Middle East and in Europe, the war appears escalating and endless.

After a thousand days of battles in Ukraine, no end is in sight. The conflagration continues despite the vast devastation of the country, reduced to a ruined military bastion and a colony of Western imperialism, despite the growing rivers of blood of Ukrainian and Russian people, despite the deepening of the world capitalist crisis produced by the war, with dramatic effects especially in the Global South but also in the Global North, particularly in Germany and the EU but also in the deeply divided America. The so-called “Ukraine fatigue” among the instigators of the war in the West is fed by enormous financial, social and political costs, the Ukrainian military reversals at the fronts, the resilience of the Russian war economy despite the sanctions. There is a lot of speculation that a possible re-election of Trump as US President will bring an end of the war with negotiations with the Kremlin. Historical development is not linear, and all kinds of zigzags could evolve. But nobody should ignore the contradictory tendencies and strategic needs behind the US-NATO war drive. The expansion of NATO to the East up to the borders of Russia started from the Day 1 of the disintegration of the USSR.

The Ukrainian historian Serhii Plokhy, now at Harvard University, an academic far from any suspicion for communist or even pro-Russian sympathies had rightly stressed: “*The former Soviet space remains a tinderbox, still reckoning with **the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which should be thought of not as an event but as a process***”. In November-December 2021, the time that US and NATO rejected a Russian proposal for negotiations to avoid a war on Ukraine, an essay by Michael Kofman and Andrea Kendall-Taylor was published in *Foreign Affairs*². They quote Serhii Plokhy’s above mentioned estimation, stressing: “***Even if China proves to be the more significant long-term threat, Russia will remain a long-term challenger, too***”

Then an important and puzzling question is raised by the *Foreign Affairs* authors: “***Why have the victors of the Cold War lost the post-Soviet peace?***”

They insist that the “process” unleashed by the 1991 disaster had to go to its completion.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, in the aftermath of the demise of the USSR, had developed an entire geopolitical doctrine, published in 1997 as *The Great Chessboard*, stressing that the demise of the USSR was not sufficient for the strategic needs

² Michael Kofman and Andrea Kendall-Taylor, “The Myth of Russian Decline: Why Moscow Will Be a Persistent Power, *Foreign Affairs*, November-December 2021.

of US imperialism. To eliminate forever the “threat”, Russia and the entire former Soviet space had to be fragmented and subjugated. The developments that followed show that the paranoid Brzezinski doctrine has not died with him but officially it is endorsed and put in practice by all US administrations and NATO.

In 1929, Trotsky had made a warning more actual than ever: the process of capitalist restoration in the former Soviet Union cannot be a return to the conditions of pre-1917 Russian capitalism with or without a Czar³. It would be completed by its fragmentation, colonization by Western imperialism, and rule by a stooge semi-fascist regime. A warning which applies not only to Zelensky’s Ukraine celebrating the Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera and today’s Nazis, not only to the entire former Soviet space but to China as well.

The central historical dilemma posed in the NATO proxy war in Ukraine is: ***either completion of the 1991 disaster or its revolutionary reversal, and a renaissance of genuine Soviet power. The latter is viewed as the main common threat both to imperialism and to the Russian Bonapartist regime of oligarchic capitalist restoration.***

3. The other exploding volcano, the endless Zionist war nightmare in the Middle East cannot be “pacified” by hypocritical American, British, and European calls for “a ceasefire and negotiations” after the killing of the leader of Hamas, Yahya Sinwar, presented as the “architect” of the 7th of October armed operation.

The often publicly-declared plan of Zionist expansionism is to impose a so-called “***New Middle East***” by eliminating the Palestinian national question, crushing by all means Palestinian and all popular resistances and anti-imperialist obstacles in the region. The plan has the full political-military and financial support of US imperialism, with the complicity of the EU and of the Arab reactionary regimes.

In September 2023, a few weeks before the Gaza war, Netanyahu presented at the UN the map of this “New Middle East”, where Palestine has disappeared, replaced by Israel from the river to the sea uniting the Indian Ocean and the Gulf with the Mediterranean and Europe, disrupting the “new Silk Road” of China. A few days after Netanyahu, US National Security Adviser Jack Sullivan supported the plan and praised the new era of Middle East... “stability” and “peace”. Then the hell of war erupted. Following a year of an escalating war of genocide, Netanyahu again, at the UN promoted the same plan, presenting the same map and counter-posing it as a colorful “blessing” to the black “evil” forces around Iran at the head of the “Axis of Resistance”.

The new Israeli invasion in Lebanon is part of this plan to reconfigure the Middle East, after the serious blows given by murdering the leaderships of Hezbollah and Hamas, and in preparation of the direct confrontation with Iran.

In an essay at the weekend edition of the *Financial Times*, on October 19, 2024, titled “Israel, Lebanon and the mirage of the new Middle East”, Lebanese academic and diplomat Ghassan Salamé warns:

³ Leon Trotsky, *Can Bourgeois Democracy Replace the Soviets?*, Writings 1929, New York: Pathfinder Press.

Starting the re-engineering of the region with an incursion in Lebanon has, in particular, been a curse for Israeli politicians: Begin and his defense minister Ariel Sharon had to resign after their 1982 large-scale invasion of their northern neighbor, which had been justified in terms very similar to Netanyahu's now. Shimon Peres was defeated in the elections that followed his 'grapes of wrath' campaign of 1996 and Ehud Olmert's misadventure there in 2006 combined with corruption cases to bring about his downfall. The repeated promise of a 'new Middle East' after each of these invasions has naturally not seen daylight.

Nevertheless, the Zionist settler colonialism, at the advanced stage of its brutalization and internal crisis, moves in that direction. In today's world historical conditions, it will be not just a repetition of past failures, but possibly a qualitative leap in the implosion of the Zionist colonial project itself.

Running to catastrophe, its dystopian plan converges with the strategic needs of US imperialism to reverse its decline and reconfigure its crumbling hegemony in a world shaken by an insoluble global capitalist crisis.

The US-led NATO war in Europe and the US-supported Zionist war in the Middle East are interlinked, in a unity of their diversity. They are *crucial different moments of the same uneven and combined world historical process*.

To paraphrase Trotsky's words on Hitler, in the 1940 "Manifesto of the Emergency Conference of the Fourth International", through Netanyahu with his fascist allies Ben Gvir and Smotrich "world capitalism, driven to desperation by its own impasse, has begun to press a razor-sharp dagger into its own bowels."

4. Usually, the current global imperialist war drive is viewed and analyzed *solely in political and geopolitical terms*, as rivalry between Great Powers forming around them antagonist blocs of States, military expansionism, competition for material resources and markets, for geo-economic hegemonic position in the world market. *The primary source, the historical development of the driving contradictions and contradictory tendencies within the mode of capitalist production itself, prevailing in the world economy and determining at the last instance world politics remain invisible.*

Marx has brought into light these driving contradictions of capital, the intensifying contradiction between its "tendency to universality" clashing with the internal and external limits of the capital relation⁴, and driving the transition beyond capital as a "self-abolishing contradiction".

Lenin, in the debates on imperialism during World War I insisted against Kautsky that imperialism is not just a policy but *an epoch of historical development of world capitalism, an epoch of transition from a "decaying", "parasitic", "rotten", "agonizing" capitalism - the adjectives are Lenin's- to Socialism.*"

Lenin also warned against any formal, a-historical misuse of the well-known definition of the five economic features of imperialism: "...imperialism can and must be defined differently if we bear in mind not only the basic, purely economic

⁴ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*.

concepts -to which the above definition is limited- but also the historical place of this stage of capitalism in relation to capitalism in general, or the relation between imperialism and the two main trends in the working class movement”⁵, namely the opportunist and the revolutionary trend.

(See our previous contribution, in 2024, on the occasion of the centenary of Lenin’s death.⁶)

It is this most important historical-dialectical materialist approach to modern imperialism as an epoch of capitalist decline, which is most commonly ignored, rejected, or, in some left currents just mechanically repeated as a ritualistic formula, emptying it from its dialectical content and ever-developing dynamics.

Rejection as false or obsolete of Lenin’s concept of imperialism as declining capitalism was prevailing in the post-World War II period of the Keynesian Bretton Woods settlement, and after its collapse, during the forty years of neoliberal-finance capital globalization, But after the 2008-world Crash and the global financial crisis, the Great Recession, the failure of Neo-liberalism and the eruption of the international war in Europe disrupting the global supply chains, mainstream bourgeois discourse is dominated by debates on “*de-globalization*”, “*de-coupling*”, “*de-risking*”, “*friendly or home-shoring*”, and anxiety about global trends of disintegration. These are not debates in the abstract, but they go together with growing practices of economic nationalism, protectionism and trade wars.

Fragmentation or integration tendencies prevail in the world economy and politics today? A mechanical separation between opposite trends, or impressionistic approaches to global shocks and disruptions in world trade can only compound the prevailing confusion. They reveal, rather, the shortcomings, even the failure of mainstream bourgeois economics amid an unprecedented, insoluble global systemic-structural crisis producing successive shocks. It cannot grasp the contradiction of a capitalist globalization in crisis appearing simultaneously as ending and endless.

Global trends of fragmentation and integration cannot be arbitrarily separated. Permit us to quote:

Fragmentation collides with the reality of an already established integration of international social economic life, the already advanced interconnectedness of world social economic processes, which, at the same time, in its present historical-social form generates further fragmentation. This “double bind” is the unsolved Sphinx riddle of the present.⁷

Precisely this “double bind” is the sharpest expression of the insoluble crisis of a social mode of production in ***historical decline***.

US capitalism is the highest point of the historic development of global capitalism. Its manifest decline now, making it the center of the global crisis, expresses not

⁵ V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Chapter VII. “Imperialism as a special stage of Capitalism”, www.marxists.org/archive/lenin

⁶ Savvas Michael-Matsas, “*Imperialism, War and the Permanent Revolution*”, International Conference on Lenin by the Center “Christian Rakovsky”, 21 January 2024.

⁷ Savvas Michael-Matsas’ presentation in the *Saint Petersburg Economic Congress 2024* dedicated to this important question.

solely the decline of a national capitalist Great Power to be replaced by another as a global hegemon. It is the deepest point reached by declining global capitalism. As Trotsky had predicted *Americanism can be replaced only by world Socialism*.

Modern capitalism has advanced, in our epoch, two main political-economic strategies – Keynesianism and neoliberalism with all their variations - to avoid a repetition of the great disasters and convulsions of the 20th century, a repetition of the 1929 Crash, the Great Depression with all their explosive political consequences- revolutions, fascism, world war. After the collapse of the post-World War II Keynesian order in the early 1970s, the decades of neoliberal world-wide offensive has failed as well in 2008. Despite the “heterodox” emergency measures of quantitative easing and stimulus packages, the empirical defensive tactics return into boomerangs. Mainstream bourgeois economics is at a dead-end to confront the ongoing global crisis. This total confusion is what is currently called by some “radical uncertainty”, by Adam Tooze “cognitive dissonance”, or, by well-known others “libertarian anarcho-capitalism”. *Capitalism lacks now a real alternative long-term strategy of exit* out of the still insoluble post-2008 global crisis, which is moving through convulsions from one shock to another worst and unexpected shock. The inability of the system to face the climate catastrophe, manifested dramatically by the global pandemic shock of 2020, is a clear manifestation of the exhaustion of the capitalist form of social metabolism of human society with Nature.

It is this historic strategic impasse that global capitalism in its imperialist decay tries to break *manu militari*- by means of global war.

5. The ruling class knows very well, as Trotsky pointed out the truth of Lenin’s line: “The main enemy is at home”. For this reason, militarization and war economy go together with growing State authoritarianism, growth of the far right and rising fascism. Xenophobia against the migrants, racism of all kinds, hatred of the socially excluded and marginalized, all means are used to mobilize the impoverished in a war against the poorest and weakest, for the benefit of a tiny super-rich minority on the top of the world.

The structural inability of the ruling class to politically manage the uncontrollable social economic “perfect storm” destabilizes all bourgeois political systems, producing constant regime crises, or to use Michel Foucault’s term a “crisis of governability”, poses the question of the struggle for political power itself: what social class force fighting against what enemy and how it can open an exit out of the impasse of permanent disaster? Who, whom?

As on the eve and the beginnings of the First and Second World Wars, now under the specter of a Third World War, the vast majority of the international Left as an organized political expression of the working class and the impoverished popular masses has *failed* the acid test posed by the challenges of our times, particularly in front of the threatening global war Armageddon.

There is an adaptation to the powerful pressures of imperialism taking various forms and degrees, either as a direct capitulation and alignment or as an “equidistant” position between two “equal evils”.

NATO’s primary aggressive role in Ukraine in a war for colonization and

fragmentation of the former Soviet space is ignored together with the central question: ***imperialist completion of the 1991 disaster or revolutionary reversal of it?*** The latter is a task which cannot be achieved by restorationists and Kremlin Bonapartism negotiating with imperialism for a Minsk 3 but by defeating NATO and creating the conditions for a rebirth of a genuine Soviet power that will expropriate the oligarchs and defeat capitalist restoration advancing the socialist unification of the European Continent from Lisbon to Vladivostok, without capitalists, oligarchs or bureaucrats.

In the Middle East and the Global South, it is impossible for revolutionaries to keep an “equidistant position” between butchers and victims pretending that Zionism and the popular armed resistance to the genocide are both reactionaries. No revolutionary can ignore that the imperialist epoch as Lenin stressed is marked by the division between oppressor nations and the oppressed. At the same time no revolutionary internationalist force should disregard that this oppression is refracted through the class divisions within the oppressed nation, making absolutely necessary, in the liberation struggle the political independence of the working class and its vanguard fighting for the permanence of the revolution.

To navigate in the tempest of our times, ***a creative Marxist theory of the epoch is the necessary compass for orientation.*** And it is well known that after the collapse of the USSR, dominates, as Alain Badiou has aptly called it, “a general disorientation of the world”.

Lenin had called our epoch “an epoch of wars and revolutions”. Apart from regional or local wars and revolutionary uprisings, it will be right to remark that the epoch opened by the First World War and the October 1917 socialist Revolution as the epoch of ***world wars*** - two already happened in the 20th century and a third is becoming a visible menace in the 21st-- ***and of the world socialist revolution.*** The latter moved outside of the political horizon of mass consciousness and particularly of the Left after the demise of the USSR and of the so-called “actually existing socialism”.

“Revolution seems always impossible”, the great revolutionary Leon Trotsky warned, “until it becomes inevitable”⁸. Revolution is constantly repressed by a dominant social order – and it permanently comes back in an unexpected Return of the Repressed. It is not an arbitrary or contingent disruption of the status quo. It is driven, as the Marxian historical materialist dialectics has discovered, by unsolved material contradictions leading into an explosive manifestation of the deepest needs of the actual social life process itself.

As we have argued on another occasion⁹, in *Trotsky em Permanência* in 2021:

the Concept of Permanent Revolution reflects bourgeois modernity, evolving and maturing throughout its entire historical development. From the epoch of bourgeois ascent, when, in the Great French Revolution “The world struggle of the

⁸ Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*.

⁹ Savvas Michael-Matsas, *Trotsky's Permanent Revolution in the 21st century*, Encuentro Trotsky II online- Trotsky em Permanência- 2 a 6 agosto de 2021 Sympósio Temático 9, August 6, Sao Paulo, Brasil.

bourgeoisie for domination, for power, and for undivided triumph found its classical expression"¹⁰ to the Jacobin call for Révolution en permanence, to the apogee and turning point of capitalism, in the middle of 19th century with the European Revolution of 1848 and the 1850 Address by Marx and Engels, till the imperialist epoch of capitalist decline and Trotsky's theoretical re-elaboration of Permanent Revolution in the 1905 Russian Revolution, its vindication in 1917 and its later developments in the struggle against Bukharin's and Stalin's doctrine of "socialism in a single country" [...] *Permanent Revolution becomes the dialectical self-reflection of the epoch.*

This the dialectical red thread in today's labyrinth of contradictions.

It should be the Marxist theoretical *guide* for our international revolutionary action and the *strategic* line in our struggle to defeat imperialist war.

It does not forbid *tactical flexibility* in relation to peace movements making the distinction between the genuine hatred of war by the popular masses and the hypocritical imperialist bourgeois pacifism. The same applies to solidarity with anti-imperialist resistance and liberation movements in the Global South, including the Axis of Resistance in the Middle East. These tactics should be subordinated and serving the strategy of the world socialist revolution, keeping always our political and class independence and the right to criticism.

Without the masses in action no revolution is possible. To raise their political consciousness and action, to respond to the challenges of historical times, the most advanced detachments of the international working class and of the oppressed need to be organized and trained in *revolutionary parties of a revolutionary International.*

We must remain "faithful to our fatherland in time" as Trotsky said: to the deepest demands of our epoch and urgently fulfill the tasks to make the Revolution Permanent until its victory all over a world in flames.

¹⁰ Leon Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, 1906.

Twentieth Congress of the CCP, wave of social unrest in November 2022, and the future of China

Burak Gürel

The 20th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was held between October 16th and October 22nd, 2022. The Chinese bourgeoisie and the state entered this congress under rapidly deteriorating domestic and international conditions. The slowdown of the Chinese economy due to the impact of the third great depression of the world economy that began in 2008 and the COVID-19 pandemic that started at the end of 2019, along with the increasing economic and geopolitical tensions between China and advanced capitalist, i.e., imperialist, powers are putting increasing pressure on the CCP leadership. Xi Jinping, who sees the path to overcoming these problems in a personality cult-based dictatorship, managed to get elected as the General Secretary for the third time. Thus, just like Mao Zedong, he opened the way to stay in power until death. However, as labor and social unrest erupted across the country immediately after the 20th Congress, Xi's victory did not offer a magical key to solving the enormous problems facing the People's Republic of China (PRC). The escalation of tensions between China and imperialism could lead to a nuclear war and plunge humanity into disaster. A prolonged stagnation of the Chinese economy could provide significant opportunities for the struggles