

World perspectives

Part 1:

An epoch of crisis and immense instability

1. Capitalism of our epoch is characterized by extreme instability and uncertainty on all levels. It may be correct to say that there is no parallel period in the post WWII (second world war) history of capitalism, in the all-engulfing character of the multiple crises that it is facing. The global economy is heading into another recession, the third since the 2007-9 “Great Recession”. It slowed down dramatically in 2022 and will probably get worse in 2023. Inflation is rising to unforeseen levels, the worst in 40 years (sometimes more than 40, e.g., in the case of Germany). With economies dramatically slowed down by the energy crisis and the supply bottlenecks, governments in all “developed” industrial countries, are raising interest rates, at the fastest pace in decades, to put inflation under control. This is pushing their economies, which are already stagnant, deeper into economic contraction. We have the phenomenon of stagflation, again never seen since the 1970s. Global debt is at unprecedented levels, both private and public. The economists and analysts of the ruling class have no clear way about how to tackle the challenges they are faced with, no economic “theory” that they can hope or present as able to provide solutions to the economic problems they are faced with. The recent “Modern Monetary Theory”, developed in the US, has been ditched as a result of objective developments.
2. Last but not least international capitalism is faced with huge geopolitical antagonisms, which have reached a new qualitative stage, manifested particularly by the war in Ukraine. In the background of this war there is the central conflict regarding the world balance of forces, as China is challenging the US as the dominant power on the planet. This contradiction will underline all developments in the epoch that we are living, and will last for decades, worsening conditions on all levels on the planet, unless the forces that fight for a socialist alternative to capitalist barbarism are able to take the lead in social and political processes.
3. For the first time in many decades the danger of mass annihilation due to a nuclear war is being widely discussed. At the same time the capitalist system is pushing the environmental crisis beyond the point of no return, threatening life and civilization on the planet.
4. All of these factors affect the lives of the working class and the poor in a dramatic way. Pauperization is becoming a feature not only of the poor countries but also of the “developed” industrial ones, while malnutrition affects around 850 million people, while 350 million face acute nutritional crisis, i.e., are in danger of dying of hunger.

5. The perception promoted by representatives of the system and by sections of the Left, that society can only go forward, that as time progresses, the economy, civilization and culture, will also progress, is proved once again to be wrong. Civilization can collapse, life not only of humans but also of innumerable species can be massively destroyed. This is not a result of “human irresponsibility” and irrational behavior, as capitalist commentators never tire repeating, it is a direct result of capitalist logic, of capitalism’s insatiable thirst for profit and fierce competition to maximize it and dominate.
6. This general picture is posing extremely important tasks for the organisations of the working class. But the picture they present is one of tragic “deficiencies”. The trade unions and the parties of the Left are in crisis: they have failed to provide an alternative to the attacks of the system, never mind to the system itself. Old parties of the Left (“Social-democratic”, “Socialist”, “Labour” or “Communist”) have either sold-out and completely capitulated to the ruling class or broke up in pieces, or both. At the same time, the “New Left” parties that developed in the past 3 decades, have also failed to provide a way forward to the suffering and struggling masses. The anticapitalist Left is also faced with crisis, particularly so in Europe.
7. The task of building mass socialist parties of a revolutionary character, determined to fight for the overthrow of the capitalist system and for workers democracy is the only possible way forward and more necessary than ever. At the same time, socialist revolutionaries have a duty to struggle for the building of fighting mass organisations of the working class, something that we have described in the past using the expression “dual task”.

Georgieva

8. Even the representatives of capital understand that they are faced with a multiplicity of crises, which they are not really able to handle. The Financial Times has begun using a new term, “polycrisis”, to describe the new situation that they are faced with. Perhaps the most suited person to describe the impasse that capitalism finds itself in, is Kristalina Georgieva, the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). At her introductory speech at the last annual meeting of the IMF (10 to 16 October, 2022) she said, among other things:

“We are experiencing a fundamental shift in the global economy: From a world of relative predictability ... to a world with more fragility, greater uncertainty, higher economic volatility, geopolitical confrontations, and more frequent and devastating natural disasters...”

“That’s why we at the IMF are calling for early and joint action to regroup and rethink... And more willingness to act now and act together...”

“Last October, [2021] we projected a strong recovery from the depths of the Covid crisis. Global growth reached 6.1 percent in 2021... But this is not what happened... All of the world’s largest economies are slowing down... This in turn affects emerging and developing countries...”

“We have downgraded our growth projections already three times...”

“We estimate that countries accounting for about one-third of the world economy will experience at least two consecutive quarters of contraction this or next year. And, even when

growth is positive, it will feel like a recession because of shrinking real incomes and rising prices...

“Overall, we expect a global output loss of about \$4 trillion between now and 2026. This is the size of the German economy—a massive setback for the world economy.

“And it is more likely to get worse than to get better...”

9. Apart from the pessimistic perspectives outlined by Georgieva it is worth noting what she proposes as a remedy: *“...we at the IMF are calling for early and joint action to regroup and rethink... more willingness to act now and act together...”*. This is precisely what is impossible.
10. One of the key reasons for the present multiple crisis is precisely the fact that it is no longer possible for the big powers to act together, and this is manifested both by the war in Ukraine and by the trade war between the US and China (launched by the former). Back in 2008-9, when the “Great Recession” broke out, all the major powers of the planet were able to come together, decide common policies and act together. They provided the global economy with huge liquidity (increased state expenditure, massive drops in interest rates and central bank interventions to help alleviate the problem of rising budget deficits and public debts). The role of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and particularly of China was crucial in this context. BRICS and especially China continued to grow at fast rates, when the US and the EU were plunging into the worst recession since 1929, and were thus able to “drag” the rest of the global economy out of the recession, or to alleviate its impact. Any such coming together today is simply out of the question.

Rubini

11. It is nearly impossible to find any serious expert or institution of the ruling class without a gloomy picture of the coming period – the general approach is that the crisis has not reached its worst point yet. A [recent interview by Nouriel Rubini](#)[¹] one of the most prominent economists internationally, to Der Spiegel (October 28, 2022) is quite indicative. In short what Rubini said was that:

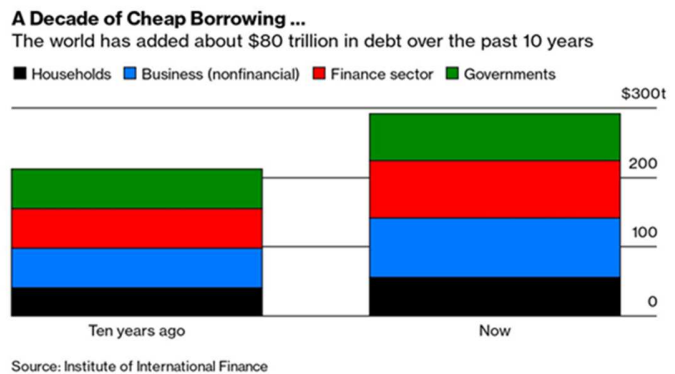
“The Eurozone is already in recession... It will be long and ugly... The United Kingdom is even worse... In the 1970s we also had an energy crisis, high inflation and stagnant growth...today it’s worse... back then we didn’t have as much public and private debt as we do today... if central banks [further] raise interest rates to fight inflation, it will lead to bankruptcy many ‘zombie’ companies...”

To Der Spiegel’s question if there is any central bank that gets it right, Rubini’s answer was:

“They are damned anyway... Either they fight inflation with high interest rates and cause a hard landing for the real economy and the financial markets. Or they wimp out and blink, don’t raise rates and inflation keeps rising... this will raise interest on all debts, private and public... We have so much debt right now that something like this could lead to a total economic, financial and monetary collapse...”

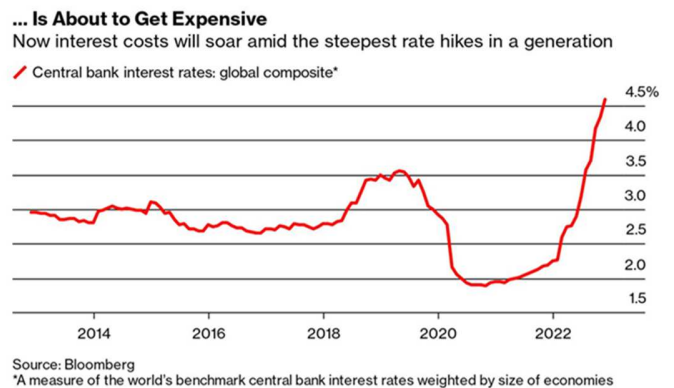
Debt crisis

12. In the course of the past decade, global debt has risen to unprecedented levels. It now stands at \$US 290 trillion, up 80 trillion from 10 years ago ([Bloomberg, Nov 30, 2022](#)). It is about 3 times the size of global GDP.



13. As long as interest rates were close to 0%, which was the case until the end of 2021, a section of capitalist Keynesian economists thought that any amount of debt could be manageable, on the basis of “recycling” it, i.e., borrowing at zero rates to pay the previous debt and so on and so forth. This was the “modern monetary theory” mentioned above. It didn’t last long, as the rise of inflation forced a rise in the interest rates from below 2% (globally) at the end of 2021 to more than 4.5% one year later, [projected to rise to 5.2%](#) by January next year. Interest rates will continue to rise at least in the first part of 2023.

14. The very high public and private debt, combined with rising interest rates, means that millions of small businesses and households will collapse, while states will default leading to currency crashes and to the intervention of the IMF to “bail out” countries, imposing at the same time severe austerity policies, i.e., making the working class and the poor pay for the crisis of the system



15. The world economy, [according to the British newspaper The Guardian](#)^[ii]

“...faces the possibility of one of the worst debt crises in decades, threatening deep recessions, political instability, and years of lost growth. At the same time, the increase in extreme weather events –stronger hurricanes, recurring droughts– makes life even harder for states that already dedicate a large portion of their revenues to servicing foreign debt...”

Stagflation

16. There isn’t much to add to the way the strategists of capital are describing the blind alley in which the system finds itself. The central, immediate problem that capitalism faces is inflation, which coupled with growth rates next to or below zero caused what has become known since the 1970s as “stagflation” (i.e., combining stagnation in the economy with rising prices which up until the 70s economists considered as an impossibility).

Country	Inflation (year on year)	Date
		4

17. Inflation has re-emerged, giving a bad surprise to bourgeois economists and analysts. In the industrially “developed” global North, it is around 10% (annually). In the global South, of course, the picture is much worse (Source: <https://elements.visualcapitalist.com>). Of course, the real rate of inflation is always much higher than the official one, particularly as regards the basket of goods consumed by working-class families – this is often as much as double the official rate.

Zimbabwe	269%	Oct 2022
Lebanon	162%	Sept 2022
Venezuela	156%	Oct 2022
Syria	139%	Aug 2022
Sudan	103%	Oct 2022
Argentina	88%	Oct 2022
Turkey	85.5%	Oct 2022
Sri Lanka	66%	Oct 2022
Iran	52.2%	Aug 2022

18. The rise of inflation is the result of a combination of factors. Initially the ground for it was provided by the massive injections of liquidity by the ruling classes in their effort to cushion the effects of the 2007-8-9 recession. Governments spent trillions to save the banks and big corporations from collapse, creating massive budget deficits and public debts, at the same time as lowering interest rates to provide cheap credit to governments, corporations and consumers. This was undermining the stability of the system for the period ahead. The next turning point came with the pandemic of Covid-19, which forced governments to again resort to massive injections of liquidity to avoid economic collapse. These injections, particularly at a time when production was at a standstill, was creating a discrepancy between demand and supply which was to manifest itself at a later stage. This took place when the lockdowns were over and demand showed a sudden leap which could not be immediately satisfied by the supply chains, thus pushing prices up. This was coupled and intensified by an “energy crisis” in the course of 2021 which was the result of the anarchic way by which the capitalist system tried to move to Renewable Sources of Energy (wind and solar). Without any plan, as is characteristic of capitalism, they increased taxes on fossil fuels and gave huge incentives to investment in Renewables, expecting the market to work... but it didn’t, it created bottlenecks. Then they “blamed” the weather, i.e., the “too cold” winter of 2020 and the “too hot” summer of 2021 for the high prices of energy. All governments and economists expected inflation, which by the end of 2021 was in the region of 5-6%, to fall in the course of the next 1-2 years down to 2% which is the desirable level of inflation for the capitalists. This expectation collapsed with the war in Ukraine of February 2022 and inflation surged.

19. The capitalist system has only one way to tame inflation, and this is to contract the economy. The broader and more general picture is that in order for the capitalist system to be able to enter another period of growth and of capitalist profits, it has to destroy a section of the existing forces of production, i.e., close down businesses and increase unemployment, irrespective of the concrete detailed characteristics of different recessions. The mechanisms by which it will try to achieve this is by *reversing the policies of the previous period*: i.e., cut down on government spending and government borrowing and increase interest rates making borrowing more expensive both for consumption and for investment.

20. In other words, faced with the present crisis, the capitalists are forced to follow the exact opposite policies of what they would have liked to do under different circumstances when faced with a recession. In every recession the capitalists increase spending (through borrowing, pushing budget deficits and sovereign debt up) and lower interest rates, making money cheap, to encourage investment and consumption. These policies are the blue print in the case of any recession, what differs is the amounts and the balance between monetary and fiscal policies. This time, they have to cut spending and increase rates, thus pushing the economy further into contraction instead of cushioning it.
21. At the same time the ruling classes will fight hard to resist the demands of workers and other suppressed and poor layers to increase their income to make up the losses due to inflation, leading to increased pauperization not only for the unemployed but also for those in work. In the global South this will mean devastation and hunger. Thus, the system is making the poor pay for the crisis of the system. In this way also power and wealth will be concentrated in fewer corporations, the bigger ones, destroying massively small and medium size ones.

22. The process of falling real wages is already clear in the official statistics. According to the [annual global report of the ILO](#)^[iii] (the International Labour Organisation of the United Nations) released November 30, 2022, global wages fell by 0.9% in the first half of 2022, for the first time in the 21st century. This means that over the whole of 2022 the drop will be in the region of -2%. The drop in North America was -3.2 % and in the European Union -2.4%



23. However, getting inflation back to 2% for the developed industrial nations (for the global South no such targets have any sense of realism) is not going to be easy. There is a number of factors that complicate the ruling classes' efforts, such as: The war in Ukraine is still continuing and will do so for the foreseeable future; sanctions against Russia will continue for as long as the war goes on and beyond; they want to cut government spending but actually they are forced to continue subsidizing corporations and households (in the rich countries of course) due to the incredible energy prices which threaten millions of homes with a severe winter without proper heating; they are increasing arms expenditure as a result of the "threat" posed by Russia after the war in Ukraine – there is a new, mad arms on a global scale; the rise of the dollar to its highest level in the last 20 years, partly due to the rise of interest rates in the US, is generating inflation for the rest of the planet as the dollar remains the key currency for international transactions – thus in October 2022 inflation [fell to 7.7% for the US](#)^[iv] but it continued to rise to record levels of [10.7% in the Eurozone](#)^[v]. Then there is class struggle: workers have no choice but to fight for higher wages at times of high inflation. Last

but not least, the trade war between the US and its allies on the one hand and China and its allies on the other will, as a general rule, push prices up on a global scale.

24. At the same time inequality is rising. The covid pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis has greatly increased the wealth inequality between the richest 0.1% of the world's population and the rest. According to the Bloomberg Billionaires index, 131 billionaires more than doubled their net worth during the pandemic. At the same time an additional 97 million people were pushed into extreme poverty. Although taxation of the rich might seem to be a way to ameliorate the current situation, the structural characteristics of capitalism inevitably put greater resources in the hands of the rich at the expense of the rest. No governments are prepared to take on the markets and corporations and increase taxes. A study by Oxfam showed that 141 out of 163 countries froze tax rates for the rich during covid and 11 reduced them.

Class struggle

25. There is a more than evident rise in class struggle in the course of 2022. In the global South, at the time of writing, the revolt of the Iranian women and youth together with sections of the working class is continuing (in its eighth week at the time of writing) after the death of Masha Amini in September 2022. It is the most important, in terms of numbers, determination and duration, rise up against the reactionary Islamic regime of Khamenei and the mullahs since the revolution of 1979 which overthrew the dictatorship of the Shah but was hijacked by the Islamists.
26. In July the Sri Lankan masses stormed the presidential palace and president Rajapaksa had to flee to save his skin. The revolt of the Sri Lankan masses had started in March 2022 and led, among other instances, to the resignation of the whole cabinet in April 2022.
27. A whole list of countries are candidates for social explosions in the current conjuncture. This is openly admitted by the strategists of the system. The IMF and the UN are warning about hunger revolts in as many as 70 countries. Already the IMF is imposing austerity programs (in this way preparing itself the hunger revolts that it warns against) on a number of countries, like Argentina, Egypt, Lebanon, Pakistan, etc.
28. In November and into December we had the massive protests in China against the pandemic lockdowns. These protests were not comparable to the previous great rise of the Chinese youth, in Tiananmen Square in 1989, but they have been the biggest since then, spreading to 22 cities and forcing the regime of Xi Jinping to retreat. This comes at a time when in China we see the unique phenomenon of the "lying flat movement" in the youth (which has acquired mass proportions): meaning we cannot fight the regime, but we refuse to serve it, therefore "we lie flat", i.e., we are passive. The two are inevitably interconnected.
29. Just as significantly, but not reported on or commented on in the Western media, was the widespread refusal of the Chinese masses to follow the Chinese State's Covid protocols. These refusals immediately followed the first of the protests. The refusals were so widespread that within a two-week period, the Chinese State had to admit that they could no longer enforce them and that the data they were gaining from the protocols could not help them control the spread of

Covid. This is a significant moment for consciousness in China. The Chinese masses can see that they can act together to bring change to an oppressive set of bureaucratic measures imposed from above. The realisation that the CCP is not all powerful and always correct in its policies is therefore increasing. What effect this will have on future political, industrial and civil struggles remains to be seen. The failure of the Covid App is also a great blow the Chinese State's attempts at policing society. The App gave the Chinese State unparalleled access to masses of data about the movement of and behavior of the Chinese people and acted as a potent force for social control. The fact that it has now failed to be effective is a great burden taken off the Chinese people and a blow the prestige of the State.

30. These few examples are a reflection of the explosive conditions that prevail on the whole planet, which were intensified by the recession of 2007-8-9 (which represented a turning point for global developments). In 2019 these processes took shape on a massive scale, particularly in the ex-colonial countries, with revolts, often of a revolutionary character, in about 35 countries. These were coupled with the impressive youth movement against climate change, starting from 16-year-old Greta Thunberg in Sweden, and with massive feminist struggles across the planet. These movements were interrupted by the pandemic of 2020. Of course, they wouldn't be able to continue developing in an uninterrupted upward spiral anyway, particularly as no revolutionary leadership existed, but the pandemic did act as a break despite the economic collapse it caused.
31. On a continental basis, the most developed conditions from a class point of view are in Latin America. 2022 has not seen major class upheavals on the level 2019 but all of the radicalization of society has been reflected on the political level with what has been described as a "pink tide", with center-left governments taking power nearly over the whole of the continent. Political instability over the continent is huge. It is not an exaggeration to say that L. America is at "boiling point", combining deep economic crisis, high deficits and sovereign debts and high inflation.
32. The Left in Argentina consider the probability of having another "Argentinazo", on the lines of the winter 2001-2 mass revolt in Argentina, as very high. In Brazil Lula won over Bolsonaro in the October 2022 presidential elections, but the fight was very tight. Bolsonarismo as a phenomenon remains a grave danger to the Brazilian masses, particularly given the massive economic problems and the fact that, as a result, Lula won't be able to deliver. In the first half of December the Right wing in Peru and Argentina dealt some blows against its left opponents.
33. On December 6, left Peruvian president Pedro Castillo attempted to dissolve Congress, introduce a curfew, rule by decrees and call for new elections. As a result, the Constitutional Court and the Congress decided to remove him from president. He was arrested and awaits trial. Castillo, a rural teacher and trade unionist, from indigenous background, was elected in June 2021 to the presidency and was soon followed by the victories of the center left parties in Chile (Gabriel Boric) Honduras (Xiomara Castro) Colombia (Gustavo Petro) and Brazil (Luis Ignacio Lula) – to complete the turn to the left on the continent, described as "pink tide". In passing we should mention that this pink tide was much less radical than the tide of left governments that swept the continent in the 2000's, with Chavez in Venezuela as the key figure. Castillo had created a lot of hope and expectations to the Peruvian masses but could not handle the systematic sabotage of the ruling

class which controls the institutions of the country. After two failed impeachments he was facing a third one. Being a reformist, and therefore unable to understand the need for the mobilization of the Peruvian masses around a revolutionary programme (the Achille's heel of all reformists) he attempted a "solution" from above, to dissolve the parliament and rule by decrees. This gave the ruling class with a unique opportunity to get rid of him and get things back under their tight control. Castillo's arrest has caused a mass revolt particularly by indigenous people, which now in progress.

34. In Argentina, on December 9th Christina Fernández Kirchner was sentenced by the High Court to 6 years imprisonment in a verdict which if upheld will also ban her from holding office for the rest of her life, accused of corruption and defrauding the state. She was Argentina's president between 2007 and 2015 –following her husband Nestor Kirchner who was president from 2003 to 2007– and since 2019 she has been vice president. In the period that the Kirchners were heading the government, Argentina enjoyed growth rates of around 8% per year in the early 2000s, and boasted the highest national minimum wage in Latin America. Kirchnerism was able to implement a series of policies that favored the country's poor, such as providing pensions for housewives, creating a universal child benefit, opening new public universities, etc. Christina (Nestor Kirchner died in 2010) is considered more radical than the current president Alberto Fernández, despite the fact that they both belong to the same ruling party, the Frente do Todos (Front for Everyone).
35. These developments are a reflection of the deep crisis of Latin American capitalism, of the inability of reformism to offer any way forward and of the fact that the L. American elites cannot tolerate governments that are led by reformists, even mild ones, using the traditional institutions under their control, the judiciary, the army and police, religion, etc, to destabilize and overturn them.
36. Africa is undoubtedly the continent the people of which have faced the worst suffering over the past decades, but also during the recent crises. Africa's inflation is the worst compared to any other continent. As rising food prices affect poor the most, millions are thrown under the poverty line. The debt of African countries, although overall quite low as a percentage of the GDP compared to industrialized countries, has been continuously rising in recent years and threatens a number of countries with the spectrum of default. The international charity organisation "Debt Justice" estimates that for lower-income countries, debt servicing payments have increased by 120% in the last decade. These amounts of money are sucked up from local budgets in order to be sent to Western banks. The dire state of infrastructure is revealed when looking at energy consumption on the continent. According to the Economist, *"Average consumption per person in sub-Saharan Africa, excluding South Africa, is a mere 185 kilowatt-hours (kWh) a year, compared with about 6,500kWh in Europe and 12,700kWh in America. An American fridge uses more electricity than a typical African person."* Africa also faces huge catastrophes caused by the climate crisis. According to the World Meteorological Organization's report, *"The State of the Climate reveals that high water stress is estimated to affect about 250 million people on the continent and displace up to 700 million individuals by 2030"*. The recent devastating floods in Nigeria, which destroyed more than 200,000 homes, the four consecutive years of drought in the Horn of Africa, which have pushed 37 million people to face starvation, and the heavy rains and floods in Sudan, which have affected 780,000 people, are a clear indication of this.

37. At the same time, important geopolitical developments are taking place on the continent. China has become the biggest lender and trading partner for a number of countries in the region, outpacing the US and Western grip. In the countries of the Sahel, the French military (former colonizing force) are being kicked out from one country after another, because of their failure to win their proclaimed war against Islamic insurgent forces (al-Qaeda, ISIS, Boko Haram, ect). In these conditions Russian imperialism gains influence through the private military contractor Wagner Group, which is employed to fill the vacuum.
38. This is also part of the political turmoil in several African countries. The recent rise in polls of Peter Obi in Nigeria, a side-lined politician running with a tiny party, shows the volatility of the situation. In this context, important industrial struggles such as the ASUU strike in education in Nigeria, or wider social movements, such as the End SARS movement against police brutality in Nigeria and the anti-xenophobia rallies in South Africa, are on the agenda. There are also national struggles taking place, such as the struggle for self-determination in Southern Cameroon or the struggle of the Indigenous People of Biafra. The basic obstacle for political developments and movements in Africa, as well as internationally, is the political limitations of the workers' organisations.
39. In Europe we have many strikes which signify a changing situation in quite a number of countries. The latest two, as this document is being prepared, have being the massive general strikes in Belgium and Greece. During the whole past year, participation in the mobilisations and strikes in Belgium has been impressive and of very high rates (up to 87% in some cases) despite the trade unions being reluctant and even acting as a break at times. There are expectations that this will continue in the next months, especially because salary and allowances adjustments have not been to the same level as inflation. In the case of the Greece, the general strike of November 9 was the biggest trade union mobilisation since 2013-14, at the time of monumental struggles of the Greek working class against the Memoranda and the Troika. France was another country where important strikes took place. In some cases, the fuel supply lines were obstructed for several days causing chaos in the streets and the market. The distillery workers managed to win important salary rises (though lower than their demands). One of the arguments they put forward was demanding to receive their share from the spectacular profits accumulated by the energy companies. In Germany, we also had important strikes, in Spain mass mobilisations in defense of public health, etc.
40. The country that comes out more starkly, however, at present, is Britain which used to be lagging behind continental Europe for decades. At this stage, Britain is at the forefront, with many sectoral strikes in conditions of social upheaval and political chaos. Strikes have or are in a process of taking place in the transport sector (RMT and TSSA), health, education, civil servants, local authority and many others. Liverpool dockers won pay deals above inflation following strike action. The same with barristers. Such successes further encourage strike actions. In addition, the emergence of "*Enough is Enough*" linked to efforts to create a "no pay" movement, and campaigns in defense of the NHS and against climate change, are very important, reflecting the mood in society. However, they are linked to the Labour Party and this will inevitably act as a break, given the fact that the left in the Labour Party, around Jeremy Corbyn, is weak and cowardly. This situation has been reflected on the political level, causing immense instability: Boris Johnson fell before the end of his term after

a revolt in the Tory parliamentary group, to be replaced by Liz Truss who only lasted 44 days, before she was replaced by Rishi Sunak. The Sunak government's refusal to discuss pay with workers illustrates well the pro-austerity response to the global crisis and capitalism's drive to defeat the organised working class.

41. There's a continual gradual development of class struggles in the United States, particularly centered around efforts to create unions in new industries, like Amazon, Starbucks, Kellogg's, Apple, etc., and around demands for higher wages, inspired by the success of the "15 now" movement in a number of states. The US has been in many ways in the course of the past decade the most developed in terms of rising class struggles and consciousness in comparison to the rest of the rich industrial countries. It's been well established in the past years that the majority of young people in the US opt for "socialism" as opposed to capitalism. There is no clear picture of what socialism is, of course, it is rather a kind of proto-socialist perception, but it is still important. The crisis is reflected on the political level, with the *Republicans* moving in a far-right direction and the *Democratic party* facing pressure from the Left and through the emergence of DSA (whose membership is in the region of 100,000). There is open talk in the "progressive" media about "civil war" in the USA, particularly after Trump's abortive coup attempt in January 22 against Biden's inauguration. This is a hyperbole at this stage, but is still an indication of the level of anxiety in sections the ruling class.
42. The issue of the lack of a consistent socialist or even radical leadership is a complicating factor in the US as well. The great feminist mobilisations and the Black Lives Matter movement, which inspired and mobilized people over the whole planet, have retreated but, what is worse, are now under the complete political influence of petit bourgeois *Identity Politics*. Also, while the rise of DSA and its recent electoral successes initially gave rise to a lot of expectations both in the US and internationally, it did not take long to show its limitations: on November 30, members of DSA voted in favor of banning a strike called by the railroad workers' Unions – something which sections of the DSA have described as a ["disgraceful betrayal"](#)^[v]
43. The impact of the economic contraction into which the world economy is heading –triggered by the energy crisis and the war in Ukraine– on class struggle, is different from the impact of the economic recession triggered by the pandemic. Contrary to the latter, the new recession is bound to lead to an intensification of class struggles. Essentially because the rise of inflation is undermining real incomes on a continuous basis and the ruling class will not cover the losses – this leaves no other choice to the working class and the poor but to fight back. Also, because the losses in income due to inflation are seen by the masses as a result of government policies and conscious decisions, whereas the Covid-19 pandemic was seen as an outside factor directly threatening the lives of millions, increasing fear rather than anger. In addition, at the time of the pandemic lockdowns, governments in the richer western countries were spending huge amounts to subsidize companies but also to cover wages and benefits. There were of course notable examples of social upheavals in the course of 2021, but they were exceptions rather than the general tendency. Today, we see class struggle reemerging and the perspective is that this will intensify in the coming period.

44. Having said this, the limits with which all of these new movements and social upheavals are faced with should be clear – and this is because of the lack of leadership to really take them forward. But the main point here is that these processes can be expected to continue and develop in the next period. We cannot predict the dimensions they will take. But what is clear is that they will offer opportunities to revolutionary ideas and can also enable the building of broader fighting organisations of the workers and the youth.
45. There is a significant layer in society which is searching for radical ideas, particularly in the youth. Environment, feminism, anti-sexism, anti-fascism, remain powerful factors mobilizing the younger layers. But the class to which revolutionary socialists should primarily orient and aim to conquer is the working class – this task can never be lost from sight. It is also correct to say that today, building around the new movements (youth, environment, anti-sexism, antifascism, etc) is a more complicated process than in previous periods, e.g., it is more complicated than in the 2000s and in the first part of the 2010s – there is greater confusion today and a stronger anti-party feeling than then. All of these have to be seen in the context of the Post-Stalinist era, i.e., the period after the collapse of Stalinism at the turn of the 1990s.

Crisis of leadership

46. One of the most important examples in recent history of where the lack of leadership can lead to, is the revolutions of 2011 in North Africa, called the “Arab Spring”, in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria. In all four countries we had mighty revolutions which overturned vicious dictatorial regimes, in power for decades. The lessons of the “Arab Spring” come out very clearly: revolution is not only possible, it is inevitable, but if there is no revolutionary leadership to take it to its conclusion, i.e., the overthrow of the power of capitalism and imperialism and the building of a socialist society based on workers’ democracy, it not only can, but will turn into its opposite, counter revolution in the form of devastating civil wars, social chaos and disintegration and new dictatorial regimes.
47. Similar general lessons can be drawn from the experiences of many mighty revolts in the past few years. Apart from Iran and Sri Lanka of the current period, the list of upheavals in the past few years is endless: Sudan, Algeria, Hong Kong, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Ecuador, Chile, Haiti, Bolivia, Indonesia, to name only a few. In some cases, we had movements with clear revolutionary characteristics, while some of them were able to score important victories, forcing the ruling class to take back all the measures they had voted through, like for example in the cases of Chile and Ecuador.
48. Without revolutionary leadership however even the mightiest of movements are bound to lose; at best they can only achieve temporary gains. The heroic movement for democracy in Hong Kong has suffered a tragic defeat. In Lebanon, the revolutionary upheaval of 2019 failed to provide a way out and the country plunged into chaos, with the currency depreciating more than 90%.
49. The most recent example (there’s no point in citing a long list of examples) of how things can turn “into their opposite” is Chile. In 2019 the revolt of the Chilean masses forced the right-wing government of Pinera to take back the neoliberal measures it had attempted to impose. In 2020 the mass movement forced the government to organise a referendum on replacing the reactionary

Chilean Constitution of 1980, drafted by the then military dictator Pinochet. In December 2021 Pinera fell and a center-left government led by Gabriel Boric was elected. In 2022 the government of Gabriel Boric organised the referendum on the Constitution that the Chilean masses had been fighting for. In September 22 the referendum took place and 61% voted against the new anti-Pinochet Constitution! It was a stunning defeat, but there is an explanation for it: the Chilean masses were so angry with the policies applied by the “progressive” in words, anti-working class in practice, government of Boric that they voted against the new Constitution as a way to express their anger. It was an anti-government vote, not a pro-Pinochet one.

50. There is a deep crisis of leadership of working-class organisations and of the Left on an international level. The Trade Unions as well as the traditional social-democratic working-class parties (named “Socialist”, “Social-Democratic” or Labour”) have completely capitulated to the ruling class making a massive shift to the right, losing the (even mild) reformist character that they had in previous historical epochs. The Communist Parties which had mass influence in large parts of the planet have essentially disappeared – after the collapse of Stalinism they faced splits, collapse, and what remained of them followed the path of the social-democratic parties. In the ex-Stalinist countries, the remnants of the old communist parties are faced with degeneration, capitulating to capitalism and a turn to nationalist policies.
51. In the vacuum that was created after the collapse of Stalinism a whole number of new left parties came to the fore. Some of the best known are Communist Refoundation in Italy, Die Linke in Germany, P-SOL in Brazil, SYRIZA in Greece, Podemos in Spain, Left Block in Portugal, etc. All of these started on a left radical programme but moved to the right. Other new reformist parties in the recent period, which have not been put to the test yet, are France Insoumise in France and PTB-PVDA in Belgium. Other attempts were also made in the previous period but ended in failure and have disappeared or are marginalized, like the SSP in Scotland, Respect in Britain and NPA in France, in the 1990s and early 2000s. Europe, once again, was the main birthplace of this “New Left” as we termed it. Apart from new parties, new reformist “phenomena” emerged as currents in parties like the Labour Party in Britain and the Democratic Party in the US, around Corbyn in the former case and Sanders in the latter. FIT-U, an alliance of Trotskyist organisations in Argentina, with a mass appeal of around 6%, is of a different character and will be discussed separately, together with other forces of the anticapitalist left.
52. As mentioned already, in their vast majority these new reformist parties were tested and failed. At least two of these “failures” played a key role and represented turning points in the history of the “New Left” of the past 3 decades. The first one was that of Communist Refoundation in Italy, which in the 1990s and early part of the 2000s inspired *and mobilized* millions across Europe and internationally. In the mid-2000s it entered a government led by the center-left “Democratic Party of the Left” after which is collapsed, split and essentially disappeared. The second was SYRIZA, which after its election in 2015 made a complete about turn, capitulating to the demands of the Troika (IMF, ECB, EU) within hours after the historic referendum of July 5, 2015, which by a huge majority of 61,5% instructed the SYRIZA government to reject the Troika’s terms. The cases of Sanders and Corbyn are also important (though not to the same degree because they were never

elected in government) because of the international weight of both the US and Britain: both of them failed to split from their parties and proceed to the creation of new Left parties, when it was necessary; instead, they capitulated to the pressure of the bureaucratic apparatus of the Democratic Party and the Labour Party (i.e., of the ruling class) respectively.

53. All the parties of the “New Left” were reformist in character, of various shades. Their failure to provide an alternative had a demoralizing impact on an international level, to different of course degrees in different countries/regions. At the same time, it created a big vacuum which could have been utilized by the anticapitalist and especially the Trotskyist Left. But here unfortunately we had another major failure.
54. The majority of the anticapitalist and Trotskyist Left are very sectarian, splitting over secondary differences and unable to work between them – the last example being the fracturing of the CWI into 4 different international groupings. Sectarianism is not a characteristic of the *United Secretariat of the Fourth International* (USFI) which is the biggest organisation internationally, but the latter has moved, historically, to an opportunist direction – the last example being its [blunt “pro-Ukraine” position](#)^[vii] on the war in Ukraine.
55. The vacuum in the Left today is in many ways one of the worst in its history – as a result there is demoralization in big layers, a widespread “anti-party mood”, anarchist currents receive attention and support and new reactionary phenomena emerge to cover the ground: Islamic Fundamentalism in the previous historical conjuncture in Islamic countries and a turn to far-right parties, more pronounced in Europe the US and south America in the more recent period. Having said this, there are also positive elements in the picture: processes are taking place, some organisations or currents are arriving, or trying to, at balanced conclusions. L. America seems to be the epicenter of developments in the anticapitalist and Trotskyist Left at least for the present time.

Post-Stalinism

56. The processes taking place within the working-class organisations have to be seen within the context of the conditions that were created internationally after the collapse of Stalinism at the turn of the 1990s. Despite the totalitarian character of the Soviet Block which made it unattractive to the workers of the West, its collapse and the capitalist restoration that followed represented a historical defeat for the international working class. It allowed the capitalist class to go on an all-out ideological and political offensive, and lead to the complete capitulation and adaptation to bourgeois policies (what we described in the past as “bourgeoisification”) by all the traditional working-class parties, abandoning reformism even in its more right-wing shades. The ideas of nationalisation and of planning, traditionally strong amongst the masses, suffered a very serious blow, because “they were shown not to work”, according to the propaganda of the ruling class but also because this is what the working-class masses saw on the surface.
57. The Trotskyist Left, despite being the only current in the working class which fought against Stalinism, suffered heavy blows and went through multiple splits. This was because the impact of defeat is the decisive factor even when perspectives and ideas are proven to be correct.

58. No Trotskyist organisation was able to predict the way things were to develop, but Trotskyism as a current, in theory (i.e., based on Trotsky's analysis) had the perspective that the Stalinist countries would either move in the direction of a political revolution to establish a healthy worker's state or back to capitalist restoration. Sections of the Trotskyist Left were very slow to accept that capitalist restoration was a fact in the Soviet Block. Actually, some still claim that it is not complete – e.g. remnants of the ex-Healyite current. Some others, wrongly claim that the impact is no longer present, because the new generations have never known or experienced Stalinism.
59. The effects of the collapse of Stalinism are still present, though, of course, not to the same degree as in the 1990s. There still is no visible alternative or challenge to the capitalist system, even of a deformed character, given that not only the Soviet Union has collapsed but also China is on the capitalist road. The present clash between the West and China is an inter-imperialist one. The traditional organisations of the working class have become an organic part of the capitalist apparatuses. Reformism has nothing to offer on an international scale. These elements are also present in the capitulation of the "New Left". For the popular masses there is no "vision" of an alternative society. Socialist consciousness is lagging far behind what we had on an international level throughout the 20th century, particularly after the October 1917 revolution and until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. No mass left party, of any shade (i.e., excluding the Anticapitalist Left which with the exception of Brazil, Argentina and Ireland, is very weak) is raising the socialist perspective. These elements are "symptoms" of the epoch after the collapse of Stalinism and experience shows that recovering the lost ground and rebuilding mass socialist consciousness takes time.

Consciousness

60. In an article at the beginning of November the NYT described how the emotional /psychological well-being of people around the globe is collapsing ([NYT article](#) translated in Greek press^[viii]). This was based on studies by the US polling company "Gallup" which, among other things, asks every year 150,000 people in 40 countries questions about their personal lives and well-being. According to this, stress, anger, worry, anxiety and similar feelings had reached record levels. Other studies have shown that depression is also skyrocketing: anti-depressant medicines increased by about 250% in the 20 years between 2000 and 2020 in 18 European countries (the top five ones being Iceland, Portugal, UK, Sweden and Spain).
61. According to Gallup, two billion people are so unhappy where they live that they would not recommend their community to anybody! In 2014, 22,6% of the world population was facing "nutritional insecurity". By 2020, only 6 years later, this rose to 30,4%. It should be noted that these conclusions by Gallup *relate to the period before the pandemic and before the war in Ukraine*. In other words, the picture today is much bleaker than the one described.
62. There is massive anger and ferment where ever we look. But this is not in itself sufficient to take movements forward, even more so to take them to victory. It can cause mass upheavals or even revolutions, but without leadership these can be defeated or will at some stage retreat. It can cause continual social unrest and political instability, or even chaos, but this does not mean things will move in a "progressive", i.e., positive from the point of view of the interests of the working class

and mass of the population, direction – the opposite can be the case. The fact that the capitalist crisis, economically, socially and politically, leads big sections of the population to desperation, depression and demoralization, rather than collective struggle and optimism for political and social change, is not unrelated to the lack of a left/socialist political perspective from the mass organisations of the working class.

63. The deficiencies of the “subjective factor” are leading to an “anti-party mood” as a general international phenomenon, though there are differences from country to country. This has been evident in Latin American countries, Southern Europe, the Middle East, Northern Europe, Hong Kong during the great revolt of 2019, etc. In the quite contradictory and complex environment that Marxists have to struggle today, there is a minority who are moving in a radical direction and are open to revolutionary ideas. This minority is sizeable and could become a decisive force if the anticapitalist Left were able to attract them and inspire them. The anticapitalist Left however, is generally characterized by sectarianism and this puts young people off.
64. The anti-party mood is a serious obstacle in the effort to build the kind of revolutionary parties needed to bring about social revolution. But of course, it is not unsurpassable. Another reflection of this is the emergence of sizeable anarchist currents in the youth. A central characteristic of anarchist ideas is that they supposedly fight against the existence of any kind of leadership. But there has never ever been a victorious revolution based solely on the spontaneity of the movements, however mighty this might be. The anarchists are not able to draw the conclusions from this and as a result propagate what can only lead to defeat, as the only road to victory. Anarchists in a number of countries are held back by a pessimistic outlook and widespread anti-socialist rhetoric in their publications. They are heavily influenced by past defeats rather than looking to future possibilities.
65. In relation to consciousness, unfortunately most of the organisations of the anticapitalist Left do not see the picture in all its complications and contradictions. They tend to repeat ideas and slogans which only see the positive elements, the “revolts” and the “upheavals” but not the other sides of the equation. They tend to be overoptimistic – *and this is seen by many activists* who rightly criticize Trotskyists as “permanently seeing the revolution round the corner” and exaggerating every development in class struggle in order *to artificially boost morale*. A balanced approach in relation to perspectives and consciousness is absolutely key in order for Marxists to be successful in their revolutionary tasks.

Political instability and the far Right

66. The contradictions of the system are inevitably reflected on the political level. Political instability has always been a characteristic of less developed economies. But in the recent period it is becoming a characteristic of the rich industrial countries as well. The “weakness” of the subjective factor leads in many instances to the emergence or strengthening of the far-right parties, many of which have sizeable open fascist groupings in their ranks. This does not mean that there are no opportunities towards the Left and for revolutionary ideas, quite the contrary, but this is not the

main current in society in the present period, as was the case at the time of the 2007-8-9 crisis. The recent developments in the United States and Brazil are characteristic of these processes.

67. Biden won the last presidential elections (November 2020) but Trumpism has shown that it has strong roots in US society and is trying to make a comeback. The midterm elections of 2022 represented a defeat for Trump in the sense that the Republicans failed to achieve the victory they were hoping for. A key reason for this was Trump's and his reactionary followers' positions on abortion – the Democrats were successful in managing to take advantage of this. As a result, the leadership of Trump in the GOP is being questioned, but time will show if there will be a serious challenge. However, the main opposition to Trump from inside GOP comes from the governor of Florida, Ron DeSantis, who shares the same far-right conservative agenda as Trump. In short, one of the two pillars of the US political system has shifted to far-right positions. For the first time in living memory there is now an open talk among even serious representatives of the establishment about the dangers to US democracy after Trump's refusal to accept the election results and his failed "idiotic coup attempt" of January 6, 2021.
68. In Brazil, Lula won the presidential elections of November 2022 but Bolsonaro received a staggering 49.1% of the vote. There were widespread fears that he might refuse to accept the results and attempt something similar to Trump's abortive "coup" of January 6, 2021 to remain in power. The balance of forces did not allow him any such ventures, despite the fact that his followers tried to mobilize to this end. But the phenomenon of Bolsonarismo (in the same way as that of Trumpism) is far from ended: it emerged on the basis of the failed expectations and the demoralization and anger of the Brazilian masses under the three PT governments that ruled between 2003 and 2015. The PT, under Lula, is again taking office in January 2023, but this time on a more right-wing agenda than before, and in conditions of much more severe economic constraints and pressures. Lula will be preparing the ground for reaction, in one form or another, to hit back again.
69. The far Right is on the rise in general, but the region where it is making the most gains is Europe. Recently we had the victory of Meloni's alliance of arch-conservative right-wing parties in Italy and the rise of the far-right "Swedish Democrats" in Sweden to second party. These developments come after the emergence of powerful far Right parties in Spain and Portugal a few years earlier.
70. Vox (meaning "Voice") in Spain, hardly known after its creation in 2013, entered parliament in 2019 making a massive leap to the third political force in the country, receiving 3.6 million votes (and 52 deputies). Polls show that its support is on the rise. Chega (meaning "Enough") in Portugal, was formed in 2019, it won one seat in the Portuguese Parliament in 2019 and increased its seats to 12, with a 7.18% swing in its favour in 2022.
71. The above are the more recent phenomena. Apart from these, Hungary and Poland are ruled by right wing parties characterized by nationalism, racism, sexism and attacks on democratic rights. In addition, the far Right is strong in many other countries, particularly so in the twin pillars of the EU and the Eurozone: France, where Marine Le Pen received 13.3 million votes, over 41% of the total, in France's last presidential elections and Germany where the [AfD is making gains^{\[ix\]}](#) (15% in the polls) in the present conjuncture with the ruling coalition of Social-democrats, Greens and Liberals

(FDP) losing ground. Essentially the far Right is growing everywhere in Europe to a greater or lesser degree and even where it is not present as a major political force its agenda is largely employed by the establishment parties.

72. The rise of the far Right in Europe was sparked off in the 1990s. The capitalist restoration in the Soviet Block sent millions of refugees into Western Europe and this was used by the far Right to grow. It also was followed by the emergence of openly fascist organisations in Eastern Europe. Since then, the far Right has been growing, with ups and downs of course. The recent developments indicate that the rise of the Far Right “cycle” in Europe is not yet over, on the contrary they are the main winners of the rise of popular anger particularly after the capitulation of the “New Left” (SYRIZA, Podemos, Left Block, Corbyn) in the second half of the 2010s.
73. The picture in Latin America is rather different. Arch conservative or far right governments followed the failures of the “left” governments that swept Latin America in the 2000s and after, but this “far-right wave” did not last very long. Of course, it can return in the next period based on the fact that the center-left parties taking power in most LA countries won’t solve any of the fundamental problems caused by capitalist crisis.
74. Key in Latin American developments was the victory of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela in 1998. This set off a process of radicalization throughout the whole continent, with the election of many left (reformist) governments. In 2003 Nestor Kirchner was elected as president of Argentina, and Lula da Silva, heading the “Workers’ Party” as president of Brazil – the two most important in many ways countries of L. America. In the course of the 2000s Latin America looked like the only region on the planet in which the Left was “returning”, and with quite radical characteristics. Developments in Venezuela were of particular importance. Chavez was moving constantly to the left, speaking of revolution and even stating to be a follower of Trotsky’s ideas (while at the same time a corrupted state and military elite were being built); nationalisations were taking place in countries like Venezuela, Bolivia, Argentina, Ecuador, etc; and at the same time American imperialism was proving completely incapable of checking these developments on its doorstep (three attempts to get rid of Chavez by non-parliamentary means failed).
75. The “good intentions” of all these reformist governments and their attempt to give capitalism a human face naturally failed, and this led to the return of right-wing governments of a hard neoliberal character, like Mauricio Macri in Argentina in 2015 (until 2019) or of a far-right character like Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil in 2018 (until January 2023). After the defeat of Bolsonaro by Lula in the second round of the Brazilian presidential elections of October 30, 2022, there is again what is described as a “pink wave” over the whole of Latin America. In other words, the failures of the parties that speak in the name of the Left did not lead to some kind of long-term defeats, or a long “cycle” of reaction. This is a reflection of the militant and revolutionary traditions of Latin America.
76. Having said this we need to stress that the new “pink” governments of Latin America are far to the right and much softer than the left governments that came to power in the 2000s. Thus, the recent electoral victories are not the end of reaction but are only laying the ground for a return of it.

77. The far Right can be blocked only if strong left parties with a radical anticapitalist, essentially revolutionary, character can be built. The rise of the far Right is inevitably causing a reaction towards the left. Given the huge deficiencies of the present-day parties of the Left, the process is very slow and as already explained very contradictory. But there are processes under development – the fact that the parties of the Left offer no attraction to the more radical elements in society allows an important space for the anticapitalist Left. The latter is weak but it is playing a role in quite a number of countries. The epicenter of developments in the anticapitalist Left is for the present time, Latin America, and particularly in Argentina where the FIT-U received 3 million votes in the last elections and Brazil where P-SOL received 4.5 million votes. There are, contradictions in both these formations, so the future will show to what extent they may provide the core for developments on a global scale. *Internationalist Standpoint* will work in a very positive spirit, despite any differences, with all forces aiming at building a mass revolutionary alternative on an international level.

Part 2: The war

78. The war in Ukraine is not an ordinary war. It has been a turning point which is reshaping relations on an international scale and is pushing global antagonisms to new highs. This war is not comparable to other wars in the post WW2 (2nd world war) history as regards the death and catastrophe it is causing. If we go back to the 1960s, the [Vietnam War^{\[x\]}](#) caused up to or more than 3,000,000 deaths (only 58,000 US soldiers). If we look at the [Iraq war of 2003^{\[xi\]}](#) the number of dead is widely accepted to be in the region of 1 million (up to 1,220,580 according to [ORB International^{\[xii\]}](#) and between 392,979 and 942,636 deaths according to [The Lancet^{\[xiii\]}](#)). In the war in Ukraine the number of deaths (not counting the wounded) so far is counted in the tens of thousands for each according to the (naturally exaggerated) claims of the belligerents about the casualties of the other side – which of course is tragic and criminal but not comparable to the hundreds of thousands and millions of previous wars. It remains to be seen though how long the war will last and what the total number of victims will be at that moment.

79. The rage of Western powers thus has nothing to do with humanitarian reasons, justice, democracy, etc, it only has to do with the fact that the victim of Russia's aggression is one of their close and devoted allies. *Internationalist Standpoint* condemns the imperialist invasion by Russia but at the same time the policies applied by the West that were provoking Russia and the hypocrisy of the West which is unparalleled. The West is determined to try to score a victory against Russia at whatever human cost.

80. *Internationalist Standpoint* has produced a long series of articles on the issue of the war, attempting to cover as many angles as possible, theoretical, programmatic and as regards perspectives. We have also included articles from other Trotskyist currents in order to encourage a

comradely discussion between different organisations. It would take too long and too much space to repeat our analysis of perspectives and transitional demands in detail here. We therefore direct comrades and readers to the main articles that we published, which are [collected here](#).^[xiv]

The Trotskyist Left divided

81. The main thing which is necessary to reproduce here is a summary of our position on the war in the context of the debate which is taking place internationally. The Anticapitalist Left is divided in three on the issue of the war. Roughly speaking there is a “pro-Ukraine” camp, a “pro-Russian” camp and a section which refuses to support either side in the war, opposed to both the Russian invasion and the Zelensky-NATO alliance. *Internationalist Standpoint* belongs to the third camp.
82. *Internationalist Standpoint*:
- o Stands against both imperialist camps, those of NATO and Russia,
 - o against both the Russian and the Ukrainian governments.
 - o Defends the rights of the Russian working class and youth,
 - o defends the rights of the Ukrainian workers and youth,
 - o defends the suppressed minorities’ rights and particularly the right of self-determination of the Russophone populations in Eastern Ukraine,
 - o Stands for the evacuation of Ukraine by the Russian army,
 - o for an end to the expansion of NATO to the East,
 - o for the dissolution of both NATO and CSTO (the “Collective Security Treaty Organization” between Russia and its allies in Central Asia)
 - o Fights for a class, internationalist approach by the working class in both Russia and Ukraine, against capitalism in both countries and for a socialist perspective – the only way to have a solution to the conflict which is insoluble on a capitalist basis.
83. There are a number of elements that characterize this war but the dominant one is that it is a conflict between NATO on the one hand and Russia on the other – in other words an inter-imperialist conflict. It is part of the broader conflict of the West with the new rising powers in Asia, particularly China –which is in alliance with Russia– for global domination.
84. As is always the case, the reformist Left (or the center-Left) in the West capitulates their ruling class and thus fully support Ukraine including arming Ukraine to fight Russia. The Anticapitalist Left, however, has a duty not to succumb to the pressures of Imperialism or the ruling class, or even “public opinion”, it has a duty not to take a position in favor of any imperialism.
85. Some of the Trotskyist Left have taken a position in favour of Ukraine, claiming that in its substance it is a war of a weak neo-colonial nation against an imperialist aggressor. This position misses the point about the dominant element as regards the character of the war, which is predominantly an inter-imperialist conflict on Ukrainian soil. Unfortunately, these same organisations have nothing to say about the rights of the suppressed Russian minority in East Ukraine who have been in war with the Ukrainian government since 2014 demanding their right to self-determination.

86. Another section of the anticapitalist Left (particularly from a Stalinist/Maoist tradition) takes a pro-Russian position on the basis that the real butchers of the planet are the Western imperialists – the US and its European allies. That the “West” is by far the greatest imperialist force and threat to people’s rights on the planet is absolutely correct, but this should not lead to an underestimation of the dangers represented by other imperialist forces. There is not one and only one imperialism but different levels of imperialist aggression and of imperialist powers. Russian capitalism is imperialist: by intervening militarily in many parts of the world (particularly central Asia and the Middle East) by investing capital abroad, by exporting financial assets for speculation and with a high relationship of exports to gdp (\$547.74 billion exports relative to \$1.776 trillion gdp, i.e. more than 30% – [2021 figures \[xv\]](#)). The invasion of Russia in Ukraine is a blunt imperialist act and cannot be supported under any conditions.
87. At the same time Zelensky’s regime is a reactionary regime, not just applying neo-liberal policies but attacking democratic and trade union rights, giving refuge to the biggest, fully armed, vicious neo-Nazi organisations in Europe, bluntly suppressing the democratic and cultural rights of the Russian (30% of Ukraine’s population are Russophones) and other minorities (Rumanian, Hungarian etc) and launching a full scale war against the Eastern provinces of Lugansk and Donesk (with a population of about 5 million) refusing their right to self-determination.

A principled position

88. The Marxist Left has to make sure it never ends up supporting one reactionary imperialist camp against another one, on the basis that one imperialism is stronger or weaker than the other. Nor can we accept the hypocrisy of the West which justifies its wars of aggression on the basis of, supposedly, representing democracy and freedom against the authoritarianism of its enemies.
89. The Anticapitalist Left is not in a position to change the course of events but it is very essential that it takes a principled position with the aim to develop consciousness and train cadre to intervene in the mass movement and build its forces. It has a duty to take an independent, class, revolutionary position (as presented above) to show how it would solve the problem of war and nationalism if it was a force sufficiently strong to challenge power.
90. That would be through fighting for the overthrow of Putin’s reactionary regime, for the overthrow of Zelensky’s reactionary regime, for the right of self-determination of the Eastern provinces and for a socialist federation of the three parts and the broader region. The positions and tactics applied by the Bolsheviks in 1917, who took advantage of WW1 to overthrow capitalism and build the first workers’ state in history are very relevant today. As is the slogan of Karl Liebknecht in 1914 *“the main enemy is at home”*.
91. For the revolutionary Left in the West and globally the tasks would be to:
- o fight for the end of the war and against both belligerents,
 - o oppose the invasion of Russia but also campaign against the policies of Western governments
 - o oppose the West’s arming of Ukraine (in order to fight their own war against Russia),
 - o support the Russian and Ukrainian workers and youth on the basis of an independent, class, internationalist position,

- o expose the hypocrisy of the West, its anti-Russian racism, as well as their hypocrisy on the issue of the refugees (providing support only to refugees from Ukraine, while keeping all others out of “fortress Europe”).
- o exposing the fact that Western governments are making the peoples of the planet pay for their war aims, in terms of a winter without sufficient fuel, massive hikes in energy and electricity, inflation and economic recession, galloping pauperization and hunger and, of course, sacrificing once again the environment for the sake of their war plans.

No end of war in sight

92. As regards the war itself and its perspectives, what is clear is that nothing will be solved by it. It is a war that is not possible to see how it can end in the foreseeable future. Neither Russia nor NATO can accept defeat and Ukraine will not sign an agreement that hands over to Russia huge areas of land which are now under occupation.
93. A look at some of the existing national problems on the planet gives an idea of how the “Ukainian Question” could end in an impasse: the Palestinian issue, the North Ireland question, the Cyprus problem and the Greco-Turkish conflict, Nagorno Karabakh, Kosova, are only some of the examples of national problems that are there for decades. Capitalism cannot find solutions to national problems in the vast majority of cases because of the antagonistic nature of different ruling classes; thus, the solution of such national problems can only be seen in conjunction with the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist federation of the countries involved in the conflicts, and the ones in their vicinity. The solution of the explosive problem of the nationalities in the Czarist empire, after the October revolution shows how only the Marxist-Bolshevik approach can solve national contradictions and lay the basis for a fraternal relation between nations and nationalities. This tradition was of course destroyed by Stalinism.
94. It is clear that the Putin’s regime made serious blunders at the beginning of the war, thinking that the invasion would be like taking a stroll and bringing the Zelensky government down in a matter of days. They underestimated the Ukrainian resistance, probably based too many hopes on support from the Russian speaking minority and certainly underestimated the determination of the West to “teach Putin a lesson”, i.e., grab the opportunity to weaken Russia for a whole historical epoch. Russia suffered very heavy losses around Kyiv and had to change tactics, concentrating on the East and South-East, but again they were taken by surprise by the Ukrainian counter offensive of September 2022. As a result, they lost huge areas of land in the north, in the region of Kharkiv and in the South, around Kherson, probably in the region of about 15,000 sq. km, which is more than half the size of Belgium. But Russia still holds huge lands, approximately of the size of Portugal and has gone ahead with calling at least 300,000 conscripts into service.
95. In the previous period the West followed a policy of repeated provocations against Russia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO expanded to the East, into countries of the ex-Soviet Block (14 in total) despite the pledge by the US president Reagan to Gorbachev that NATO would not expand to the East. They then attempted to incorporate Ukraine too into NATO, not understanding (or understanding but wanting to provoke) that by doing so they were crossing red lines. Finally, they

supported the Ukrainian government in its war against the regions of Lugansk and Donetsk after 2014. They armed and trained the Ukrainian army (and the Nazi contingents which were incorporated into the Ukrainian army) as if Russia would not react. This either naivety or a conscious provocation of war with Russia.

96. This was not the only “blunder” on the part of the West. The West thought that they could isolate Russia and bring Putin’s regime to its knees, even cause social upheaval in Russia to overthrow the regime. These plans proved out of touch with reality. Essentially Russia has been isolated from the US and Europe (with internal conflicts) and from the traditionally close allies of the West like Australia, Japan, Canada, S. Korea and Taiwan. But, no country in Latin America has joined the sanctions against Russia and no country in Africa except Morocco. The same is true of countries representing the vast majority of the populations of Asia – China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, to mention only the bigger ones, stood aside. The bonds between China and Russia, developing over the past decades, proved strong enough – it was naïve of the West to hope it could break them.
97. After the September 2022 Ukrainian offensive, the character of the war is changing. Seeing the determination of the West to supply arms and the ability of the Ukrainian army to inflict serious damage on the Russian side, the latter are now switching to an essentially defensive war (this could change in the future depending on events). That is, Russia is not aiming at capturing large areas of new lands but at mainly defending what it has already conquered. The Russian regime has gone ahead with referendums in 4 regions –Lugansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson– which declare their affiliation to the Russian federation. The referendums are a farce, they cannot be taken seriously, but Putin will defend his newly acquired lands by all possible means. He has even threatened the use of nuclear weapons, but this should not really be taken literally – nuclear attacks would cause a retaliation by the West and this could escalate into a new world war, nuclear in character, that we would still argue that is not realistically on the table because it would mean the mutual destruction of all sides involved.
98. It’s impossible to predict how the war will develop in the next period and after the severe Ukrainian winter – but, no “solution” to the conflict can be expected. The only way that the present bloodshed may stop is if the belligerents are stuck in their trenches unable to make any serious advance against each other. If this goes on for a prolonged period of time then both sides will accept the reality of the situation de facto and only wait for opportunities in the future to see if they find openings or weak spots that can allow small advances. The possibility of a “standstill” in the war in the next period is serious given that Russia can be expected to turn the war into a fundamentally defensive one.
99. Before this scenario takes shape, we should expect another big effort by the West to arm the Ukrainian army for another major offensive. If this offensive is successful, which seems to be a remote possibility but cannot be excluded, then the war will continue with full force and rivers of blood. The declared aim of the Zelensky regime is to take back all the lands occupied by Russia, including Crimea. This seems completely unrealistic. But nothing can be said for certain. The perspectives will be clearer only towards to the summer of 2023, after the Ukrainian offensive.

Impact on Environment

100. The war has meant that any serious discussion on environment and climate change is ditched. The COP 27 that took place in Egypt in the second half of November 2022 was another complete failure. It follows the failure of COP26, which was supposed to become a landmark only to develop into a flop. All and every kind of targets set by previous COP conferences, however unsatisfactory, have been ditched. As a result of the energy crisis aggravated by the war –to be more precise mainly by the sanctions of the West against Russia– every effort to limit the use of fossil fuels has been abandoned. CO₂ emissions have increased and have been higher than ever in 2022 and the same is true for methane (about 30 times more dangerous for global warming than CO₂). Under the “leadership” of the West, the whole planet is turning not only back to oil and natural gas but to coal, the worst pollutant, at the same time as rediscovering “nuclear energy”, calling it “green”!
101. Most environmental scientists have come to the conclusion that the fight to limit temperature rise to 1.5° Celsius (i.e., that the average planet temperature will not rise more than 1.5°C compared to the preindustrial era) that was agreed at the Paris meeting of 2015, has been lost. They believe that as things stand, the battle for a maximum temperature rise of 2°C is also lost and we are moving towards a 2.5°C or 2.8°C rise. This of course will be devastating for lives and civilization on the planet. In November, the melting of the Himalayan ice cap led to the most severe floods in Pakistan causing the death of 1700 people and the evacuation of 33 million! Draught, on the other hand is causing nutritional crises affecting tens of millions in Africa. In August 2022, over 66 million were projected to experience famine across Eastern and Southern Africa. The International Committee of the Red Cross, ICRC carries reports an estimated 346 million people in Africa affected by the food crisis in 2022.
102. These conditions will be aggravated in the decades to come and as long as capitalism prevails. If present trends continue up to two billion environmental refugees will be created and mass migration will create hellish conditions from which the rich industrial nations won't be able to escape. Even within N. America itself there would be migration waves – N. Rubini estimates that up to half the population of the USA will have to migrate due to the rise of sea levels and droughts.
103. A solution to the environmental crisis necessitates global coordination – it's a problem that is simply impossible to solve on a national or even continental basis. This global coordination is precisely what is impossible to take place under capitalism. Today more than ever before, because global antagonisms are at their highest since the worst moments of the first Cold War, between the West and Soviet Union. Capitalism will push the climate crisis to its limits and beyond. Only on the basis of socialism and workers' democracy can the climate crisis be gradually checked.

Part 3:

Geopolitics

104. No other war has caused so much havoc in the rich capitalist countries, since the 60s and the '70s. One reason, already mentioned, is that Russia attacked a devoted ally of the West – the US and the EU did not react in a similar way when the Russian army launched wars in the Caucasus, in Georgia, Tajikistan, Chechnya etc, or intervened in Syria and Central Africa. A second factor, linked to the former, is the fact that this war has to been seen in the context of the challenge posed to the global hegemony of the US by China.

Historical decline of Europe and USA

105. The US has been the dominant power on the planet since the end of WWII. After the collapse of the Soviet Union at the turn of the 1990s, its hegemony was considered absolute by the spokespersons of capitalism. The mood of the ruling classes of the West was best reflected in Fukuyama's aphorism "the end of history" which became their slogan for the 1990s. They agreed to China joining WTO (World Trade Organisation) confident that in a matter of 10 to 15 years they would develop some kind of "neo-colonial" domination over it. This analysis was superficial.

106. The capitalist spokespersons do not understand the inherent contradictions of their system and were caught by surprise by the new movements that developed in the 2000s and 2010s (anti-global, Occupy, feminist, etc) and by the 2007-8-9 recession, the worst since 1929.

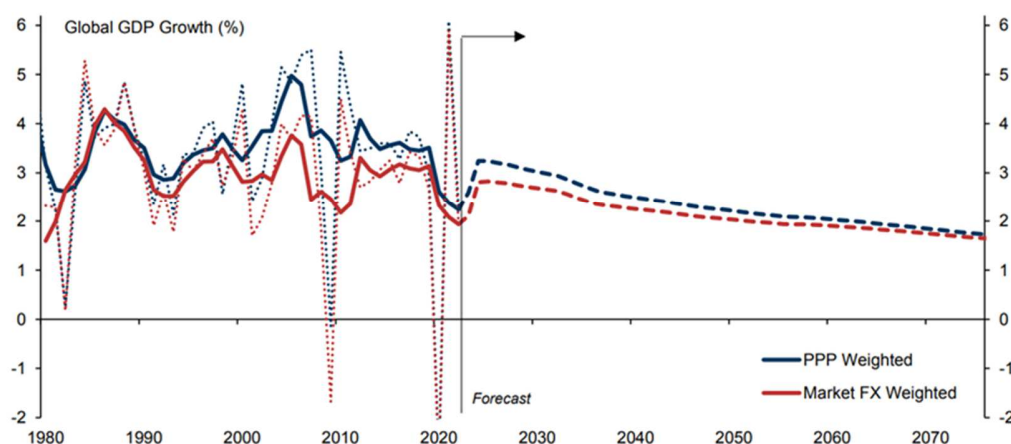
107. China was able to cope better than the West in the 2007-8-9 recession (despite contradictions and bubbles piling up there as well) and it actually played a central role in helping the global economy come out of the recession. In the second half of the 2010s, while the West was still trying to recover from the preceding recession, all projections showed that around 2030 China would overtake the US as the strongest economy on the planet. This sent shock waves to the US ruling class. Donald Trump, elected president of the US in 2017, soon entered the trajectory of a trade war with China which has been continued and escalated by Joe Biden.

108. Until last year (2021) it was more or less established that by 2030 China's gdp would surpass the US GDP *in dollar terms*. In terms of PPP (people's purchasing power) China is already, since 2016, the most powerful economy. In recent months a number of Western think tanks are beginning to question this timeline, claiming that it could take decades for China to overtake the US and that perhaps this may never happen. Thus, the Economist (2022/09/06) for example carries an article casting doubt on this perspective, titled "*Will China's economy ever overtake America's? Some economists think not*". Capitalist commentators also raise the possibility that India could overtake China at some stage and thus block its road to the top. And Bloomberg (November 8, 2022) states that:

“For China, the dollar’s strengthening makes it all the more a question of whether it can exceed the US, as once seemed inevitable in the nearer term. With Covid Zero here to stay for some time, it means no “sorpasso” [surpass] in sight”.

109. According to Morgan Stanley, [India will become the world’s third-largest economy](#)^[xvi] and stock market before the end of the decade; India has already overtaken Britain as the 5th strongest economy on the planet (and measured on a PPP basis it is already the 3rd biggest economy, i.e., ahead of Japan); its GDP is to surpass \$7.5 trillion by 2031, more than double current levels (\$3.2 trillion at the end of 2021) overtaking Japan in nominal dollar terms (at around \$5 trillion) and Germany (around 4); the number of households earning in excess of \$35,000/year is likely to rise fivefold, to over 25 million; and 25% of incremental global car sales over 2021-2030 will be from India, with 30% of PV sales to be EVs.
110. Bloomberg (26.11.2022) shares similarly optimistic perspectives for India:
“[China’s economy](#)^[xvii] zoomed past India back in the early 1990s, when it was following the initial chapters of the high-growth playbook. Now, just as China is running into major headwinds, India has the chance to emerge as a new dynamo. The South Asian giant is [on the cusp](#)^[xviii] of sustained 7% GDP growth over the medium term... Bloomberg Economics is even more optimistic, seeing potential growth ascending to 7.6% by 2026 and peaking around 8.5% in the early 2030s”.
111. We need to be open about such timelines, particularly because the trade war against China will inevitably slow down its growth. But the perspective of India overtaking China seems very remote.
112. Global economic activity is shifting from the West to Asia – Asia now representing more than 50% both of global production and of global trade of manufactured goods. China is the biggest producer on the planet. It has the fastest growing internal market in the world. China is very close to the US in nominal dollar terms – [US gdp is at US\\$23 trillion](#) while China’s is at [US\\$17.73 trillion](#) (2021 figures). India is a long distance behind, at [US\\$ 3.173 trillion](#).
113. Goldman Sachs economists attempted a very long-term estimate of the balance of power on the economic level, up until 2075, encompassing 104 countries (published 06.12.2022). They expect average global growth to drop in the present decade to 3% from 3.6% average before the financial crisis (2008-9). And a continuous drop to around 1.8% per annum by the 2070s, i.e., half of the pre-2008-9 average. By 2075 they predict China to be the strongest economy and India to be the second strongest (Indonesia by the way is predicted to be the 4th strongest economy behind the US). Goldman Sachs expects a *“weakening in the globalization of trade”* by which they mean *“the growth in cross-border movement of goods, capital, people, technologies, data and ideas”*.

Exhibit 1: Global Potential Growth on a Gradually Declining Path
Global GDP growth; solid line - 5Y centred average; dotted line - annual growth



Source: Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research, IMF

114. The process of the shifting balance of power from the West to Asia is a tendency that is inherent in the capitalist system. It is a manifestation of the powerful law of “combined and uneven development” which characterizes capitalism from its inception. Thus, political decisions can speed up or delay the manifestation of these processes, but they cannot make them disappear. The US can delay the speed with which China is challenging it, but it cannot put absolute breaks on it.
115. When Britain was developing as the dominant imperialist force on the planet in the 18th and 19th century, it had “free” trade on its banner. When the US was overtaking Britain and Europe in the course of the 20th century, it also was a great propagator of the advantages of free trade. The fact that now the US is the one that is applying protectionist policies and [China presents itself as a defender of free trade](#)^[xix] is an indication of weakness on the part of the US and of the decline of the West. The West of course claims that this is from a position of strength and in order to defend its national security, democratic rights and the rights of minorities like the Uyghurs in China. Marxists of course defend the rights of the Uyghurs and condemn the atrocities of the Chinese state. But the West always knew about the Uyghurs and never uttered a word, until they began to worry that China would overtake the US – once again, hypocrisy without limits.
116. Thus, we have entered a new period of global competition for domination, which has many similarities to the first Cold War between the West and the Soviet Union, often called 2nd Cold War.

What kind of “cold war”?

117. The fact, which is of central importance in the geopolitical and economic conflicts of today, is that the West is losing ground, entering a process of “historical decline”. This is what Britain and the rest of the European powers that dominated the world in the 19th century and before, faced in the first part of the 20th century. A similar process is now developing in relation to US capitalism.
118. This is a slow process, not one that can be completed in a number of years. It would take many decades unless interrupted by revolutionary developments which put socialism on the agenda.

Such a socialist perspective would necessitate the existence of mass revolutionary Marxist parties. Such parties do not exist today and therefore the perspective of revolutionary change is a long term one. Thus, the new Cold War will drag on for a whole historical period.

119. The epoch of the historical decline of US imperialism creates the conditions of great economic and geopolitical instability. In previous historical periods (from ancient times, thus the usage of the term "[Thucydides' Trap](#)"^[xx]) such conflicts would almost certainly (historically in 3 out of 4 cases) lead to a war between the main antagonists, i.e., in the present epoch, a new world war. This is not taking place today because all the main antagonists are in possession of nuclear arms, meaning that a new world war would destroy all belligerents.
120. Cold War II differs from Cold War I, essentially because it is a conflict between capitalist powers. The first cold war was a conflict between the capitalist world and the nationalised and planned economies of the Soviet Union and its allies. The West is trying to give the new cold war ideological characteristics, presenting it as the conflict between the democratic and free West against the autocratic regimes of China and Russia and their allies. This argument has attraction only in the rich industrial countries of the West. It carries little weight in Asia, Africa and Latin America, where parliamentary democracy (corrupt and exposed as it is) is a recent and fragile development and where there is huge suspicion towards the Western powers as a result of their imperialist/colonial past. Also, the West was always on fine terms with the various dictatorial regimes that plundered the neo-colonial countries on behalf of the local capitalists and their Western collaborators.

Reserves in dollar terms

1		People's Republic of China	3,289,992	November 2022	▲74,576
2		Japan	1,194,568	31 October 2022	▼43,488
3		Switzerland	883,334	31 October 2022	▼8,774
4		Russia	571,300	2 December 2022	▲3,800
5		India	561,162	2 December 2022	▲11,020
6		Taiwan	552,201	November 2022	▲9,409
7		Saudi Arabia	462,861	October 2022	▼8,000
8		Hong Kong	423,200	30 October 2022	▲4,000
9		South Korea	414,006	October 2022	▼2,764
10		Brazil	331,505	November 2022	▲5,959
11		Singapore	291,274	November 2022	▲8,990
12		Germany	277,458	November 2022	▲3,037
13		France	238,277	October 2022	▲948
14		United States	237,797	25 November 2022	▼338

121. China has intervened economically in many countries of the Global South (but also in Europe) in the context of its "belt and road initiative", which was launched in 2013 and is involving 65 countries representing 29% of the global gdp and 63% of the global population, according to a [2016](#)

[HSBC survey](#)^[xxi] (today it's obviously more). China has [already spent around 1 trillion US dollars](#)^[xxii] on its "initiative". It has some powerful advantages over its Western antagonists in relation to its expansionary aims: it has huge reserves estimated at more than around \$3 trillion and it's quick to deliver loans without putting conditions of the kind IMF is and without interfering in internal affairs. If the loans aren't served, the projects can pass under the ownership of Chinese companies for periods of up to 100 years.

Deglobalization and decoupling

122. In the past few years some new words have entered the economic vocabulary – such as “decoupling” and “deglobalization”. These are a reflection of the new situation created by the US-China trade war and the US' effort to push US companies to relocate, i.e., move from China back to the US or to friendly (Asian or other) countries. These processes are important and need to be taken into account in our analysis, but with a sense of proportion.
123. Decoupling cannot take an absolute character. It cannot take place in one huge leap or a massive U-turn, because it would mean the crash of the US and the West's economies. It should not be expected to create a new “iron curtain” as was the case with the Soviet Union in the past. The main reason for this, is that the West needs China both as a workshop/factory for its products and as a market. Therefore, the basic prediction that we can make, at least for the foreseeable future, is that it will be a partial process, a slow process and at the same time an expensive one.
124. This is in line with the thinking of some of the systems important spokespersons. Thus, according to [Lorenzo Flores \(Financial Times\)](#)^[xxiii] vice-chair of Kioxia (Japan), one of the world's leading chipmakers, decoupling global supply chains will be “*very complicated, expensive and time-consuming*” process. “*Decoupling supply chains from China... would not happen in six months or a year*”. The Financial Times explains that Washington's controls have specifically targeted Kioxia's Chinese rival Yangtze Memory Technologies, but Flores noted that the Chinese company had “leapfrogged” in technology after lagging behind. Thus according to FT, while chip memory makers that compete directly with YMTC, such as Kioxia, might benefit from the [US restrictions](#),^[xxiv] “*China is also expected to accelerate the development of domestic capabilities, which could pose a threat to Kioxia in the long term*”.
125. “Deglobalisation” is also a debatable term. It does not describe accurately what most probably will be the feature of the next period, which is a slowing down of globalization (i.e., a fall in its rate of growth) but not a contraction in absolute terms. The [Financial Times describes it correctly](#),^[xxv] in our opinion: “*Globalisation is not dying, it's changing*”. What is most probable is that the process of globalization will be slowed down compared to the previous historical period, but it will not end and it should not be taken for granted that it will contract i.e., go in reverse, for any significant length of time. The only period in history when globalization contracted in absolute terms was between World War I and World War II. We are not in such a period.

126. The UN warns that efforts to “friend-shore” manufacturing could weigh on a global trading system. “*The trade system is a very complex system,*” [according to Rebeca Grynszpan](#),^[xxvi] secretary-general of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (Unctad). “*...If you try to get away from one part of the world, you create a huge disruption to the system. Everything changes*”. Unctad projects that growth in total seaborne trade will be 1.4% in 2023, same as this year’s level, and then it will average just above 2% through to 2027. That’s below the historical average in recent decades of about 3.3% annual growth but it is not negative.
127. The main antagonists are the US on the one hand and China on the other, but both powers have strong alliances around them. Obviously, the EU is backing the US but it is important to note this alliance is not without internal rifts. This is due to the fact that *within* the Western alliance Europe is losing further ground while the US is strengthening its relative position. Of course, the US-EU block, particularly over the war in Ukraine, is quite a solid one, forged over many decades particularly in the post WW2 period but the rifts are notable.
128. On the other hand, China is not isolated in the global economy despite all the efforts of the West. Russia is of course its closest ally but it is not the only one. Two of the most noteworthy alliances build around China and supplemented by Russia are the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and BRICS.
129. [The SCO](#)^[xxvii] is a political, economic and security (i.e., it collaborates militarily) organization. It is the world's largest regional organization in terms of geographic scope and population, covering 40% of the world population and more than 30% of global GDP. It is the successor to the “Shanghai Five”, formed in 1996 between China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. In the years that followed, it expanded further. Its Charter was signed in 2002 and entered into force in September 2003. Its membership has since expanded to nine states, with India and Pakistan joining in 2017. Several countries are engaged as observers or dialogue partners – nearly 20 in total.
130. [BRICS](#) ^[xxviii] is the acronym coined to describe the alliance between five major emerging economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The BRICS have an estimated population of about 3.21 billion (41.5% of the global population) and a combined nominal GDP of US\$26.6 trillion (about 26.2% of global GDP in dollar terms – in PPP their combined GDP rises to US\$51.99 tr., 32.1% of global GDP) and an estimated US\$4.46 trillion in combined foreign reserves (2018 figures).
131. According to Goldman Sachs the BRICS will dominate the world economy by 2050.
132. The BRICS together with the SCO represent a direct challenge to the international institutions which are in the hands of Western imperialism, such as the G7, the IMF and the World Bank. They have already announced competing initiatives to the G7’s, such as the *New Development Bank*, the *Contingent Reserve Arrangement* (a BRICS payment system) and a BRICS basket reserve currency aiming at a direct challenge to the dollar (and the euro), officially announced in 2022. A number of countries are following the BRICS as observers (again the total number is close to 20). Argentina, Iran and Algeria have already applied to join BRICS soon after the BRICS’ last meeting in July 2022. Also, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, several other countries are interested in joining, including Indonesia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

133. It is notable that the West seems to have entirely missed seeing the processes that have been taking shape. They missed the importance of the creation of SCO and BRICS and had the naïve impression that they could break China away from Russia, after the war in Ukraine. They even failed to see the importance of the [China–Russia declaration](#)^[xxix] made only days before the invasion in Ukraine (on Feb 4, 2022) which among other things stated that they:

“...reaffirm that the new inter-State relations between Russia and China are superior to political and military alliances of the Cold War era. Friendship between the two States has no limits, there are no ‘forbidden’ areas of cooperation, strengthening of bilateral strategic cooperation is neither aimed against third countries nor affected by the changing international environment and circumstantial changes in third countries.”

Similarly, the US tried but failed to pressurize Saudi Arabia to take an anti-Russian position after the war in Ukraine. On the contrary, relations between China and S. Arabia [are being strengthened](#)^[xxx]

134. China may overcome the US in the foreseeable future as the stronger economy on the planet, but this does not mean that it will be the dominant power on the planet. This will be a much longer process which will have to do with the levels of productivity and competitiveness, technological superiority, military capacity etc. If we look at the history of how the US overtook Britain, there are some useful analogies: the US overtook Britain towards the end of the 19th century and by the end of WWI it had overtaken the British empire as a whole. But it only became the dominant power on the planet only after WWII. The massive catastrophe of two world wars, of course, accelerated this process. If it is not interrupted by the building of mass revolutionary parties which will raise the perspective of the overthrow of capitalism, the US-China conflict for global supremacy will be one of the main features characterizing the decades to come.

135. The processes described above are of course conditional. Developments must be followed closely and any corrections necessary should be made. There are many factors involved and some of them are entirely unpredictable. One of the most important ones is the internal situation in China.

China – internal contradictions

136. A major upheaval against the regime is inevitable at some stage. The high growth figures of the economy over the past decades are declining and the impact of this on social eruptions remains to be seen. There has been a lot of turmoil in the past decade in China, but it has all been around local issues. The mass demonstrations in November 2022 against the lock downs have been the most important for decades but not comparable to the Tiananmen square movement of 1989. However, at some stage a popular revolt against a brutal dictatorship is unavoidable. The regime will of course react with massive violence – as it did in the case of Tiananmen and worse. What the perspectives of a future mass revolt will boil down to, is if the working class will enter struggle as a class, with strikes and general strikes. Of course, if there is no revolutionary Marxist party present the revolt will not be able to challenge the capitalist system. If successful, it could end up with a change of guard inside the ruling class and the Communist Party bureaucracy, and with a “democratic parliamentary façade”. Such a development will mean a major disruption of the “normal” development of China, particularly if it is coupled with a revolt of national minorities on

national and religious lines. Such developments will not in general solve the problem that China will be posing to US supremacy, but it can complicate matters for the Chinese capitalists and allow the West to gain time and other antagonists of China to gain ground. There should be no doubt that the US will not hesitate to encourage all sorts of revolts of national and religious character inside China, whatever the consequences, in a cold-blooded manner and cynical calculations with the sole aim to prolong its superior position globally, projecting of course the “struggle for democracy”.

Rifts in the Western front

137. Another factor which is of importance, as mentioned above, is relations within the western powers. On [24.11.2022 Politico](#)^[xxx] describes the situation as one of:

an “...increasingly toxic atmosphere” between the US and its European allies and of “fears over a transatlantic trade war”. It reports that “Top European officials are furious with Joe Biden’s administration and now accuse the Americans of making a fortune from the war, while EU countries suffer”. According to a senior anonymous EU official who spoke to Politico “...the country that is most profiting from this war is the U.S.”.

138. This is not difficult to explain: the US liquid natural gas (LNG) that arrives in Europe is sold at 4 times the price it sells in the US – this seriously undermines the competitiveness of European industry; then the Biden administration went ahead with a \$369 billion industrial subsidy scheme to support “green industries”, further undermining EU competitiveness; at the same time the EU officials are frustrated at the fact that the US arms industry is making massive profits because of the war in Ukraine. The seriousness of the rifts between key European powers and the US is manifested not just in the comments of some EU officials but in the official statements and actions of many high standing EU officials, particularly of the two most powerful leaders of the EU, the French president Emanuel Macron and the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

139. In an article titled [“Macron Accuses US of Tricky ‘Double Standard’ Amid Energy Crunch”](#)^[xxxii] published October 21, Bloomberg reports on Macron openly criticizing the US, in a press conference in Brussels, for using double standards; and both the US and Norway of making super-profits out of the geopolitical war at the expense of Europe. And that on top of this, it hands out state subsidies to the auto industry up to 80% of the production costs, for the manufacture of EVs, in the name of the green transition, while in Europe state subsidies are prohibited. Bloomberg referred to earlier comments by Macron in which he stated that

“...the EU must join forces with Asian economies to demand from the US and Norway to show a more friendly approach by selling natural gas at lower prices”. Bloomberg also mentioned a statement by Charles Mishel, the president of the European Council in which he said: “...it is clear we don’t want to be naïve, but we also do not want to enter the logic of a systematic confrontation with China”.

140. What however draw the attention of the bourgeois media more than anything, was the visit that Olaf Scholz made to China on November 4, 2022. This visit created a lot of tensions among the Western allies but also inside the ruling coalition in Germany (SPD, Greens and Free Democrats).

There were many protests from German, European and American media. Der Spiegel wrote that this represented “*a god sent present to the Chinese leadership*”. Politico raised the question: “*Will Europe ever draw the lessons?*”. Scholz was accused of being naïve, and of making a serious mistake, underestimating the geopolitical factors, etc, etc. But the fact that Scholz was accompanied in this visit by some of the most powerful representatives of German multinational capitalism, such as Volkswagen, BASF, BMW, Merck, Deutsche Bank and Bayer fully clarifies the picture: it is not a matter of naivety or lack of understanding, but of economic interests.

141. Just to cite one example, VW is at the top of the list in vehicle sales in the Chinese economy: 4 out of 10 cars sold by VW are sold in China (VW employs 100.000 workers in China). VW will not agree to committing suicide for the sake of the US wanting to maintain its hegemony. The example of BASF, the number one chemical corporation globally, is also telling. BASF’s second market after Germany (18% of annual sales) is China with 14% of its annual sales. BASF is de-investing in Europe and investing in China (a new plastic unit, valued at €19 bn) in order to “*support rising demands for its products in the country*”, at a time when “*the European chemical market is facing very weak growth for the past decade*” according to its CEO Martin Brudermüller. The energy crisis was the last straw, making production more costly in Europe. One week before Scholz’s visit to China, the German government had agreed to the buying of 24.9% of the port of Hamburg by the Chinese giant Cosco. While in China, Scholz made a clear statement: Germany is against decoupling. Essentially, the same statement was made by Charles Michel, mentioned above.
142. It is clear that despite the fact that the alliance between the US and the EU cannot break, the EU is not willing to follow the US all the way, either in relation to the Ukraine war or in relation to the “war” of domination between the US and China.
143. Divisions also exist in the US ruling class. The Trumpite wing of the Republicans blames the war in Ukraine on the blunders of Biden’s administration, although they did not vote against the aid to Ukraine. Bernie Sanders was also vocal in distancing himself from the policies of the US administration although he also did not vote against US aid (military and otherwise) to Ukraine. In the last week of October 30 Democratic members of the House of Representatives published a letter by which they were calling on the Biden administration to go for direct negotiations with Moscow, only to retrieve it one day later due to the avalanche of protests against them. *Foreign Affairs*, (a US journal on US foreign policy) has come out clearly in favour of [searching for a diplomatic solution](#)^[xxxiii] to the war, warning that the US policy is leading to a never-ending war, which in the end endangers the global interests of the US. Some of the clearest criticisms to US policies have come from Henry Kissinger (ex-minister of Foreign Affairs in the US, undoubtedly one of the shrewdest analysts) who initially came out openly in favor of accepting the loss of Ukrainian land in order to come to an understanding with Russia, citing China as the real enemy. His statements met with angry responses, as a result of which he had to “explain” himself and water down his positions.

Conclusions

144. To sum up the main processes at work, the capitalist system is faced with one of the worst crises in its history, particularly in the post WWII period. The policies used to cushion the crisis of 2007-8-9 and then the pandemic and the impact of the war in Ukraine, have led to the huge rise of global debt (public and private) and the reemergence of inflation after more than 4 decades, at the same time as the economies are stagnant or in recession. The world economy is entering into stagnation or recession in 2023 but the strategists of capital cannot apply the policies that would be normal in any recession, i.e., increase in public spending, quantitative easing and lower interest rates. They are forced to do exactly the opposite: quantitative tightening, decrease in public spending, sharp increases in interest rates. By reversing the policies that would have cushioned a recession, they are pushing the global economy into what is described as “a hard landing” i.e., a deeper recession. The system is not just faced with a harder economic situation next year than 2022, it is not just faced with declining growth in the present decade, it is faced with falling average rates of growth on a global scale, as Goldman Sachs predict, for the next historical epoch. The cost, of course, will be laid on the working-class masses and the poor.
145. The system lacks economic policies that can help it out of the impasse. It ended in a blind alley through the application of Neoliberalism, but if they turn to Keynesianism, they will cause even greater chaos. The “Modern Monetary Theory” that was developed in the course of the 2010s, of unlimited borrowing to finance infrastructure and investments, was based on the perception that interest rates would remain indefinitely at 0% – it was ditched silently, before it was ever applied.
146. We are in a vicious new Cold War between capitalist powers for global hegemony, not seen in decades, since the time of Cold War I between the planned economies of the Soviet Block and the West. The background to the new Cold War is the historical decline of the West relative to Asia and, especially, China. A new “mad” arms race is taking place affecting every corner of the planet. Geopolitical clashes and proxy wars can be expected to be more frequent, more determined and bloodier – the war in Ukraine is such an example. The world is faced with an unprecedented climate crisis. The Paris Agreement, adopted by 196 UN nations in December 2015, set the target of keeping temperature rise below 1.5°C. Now environmental scientists say the planet is heading for 2.5°C to 3°C – the last UN international conferences (COP 26 and COP 27) are a farce.
147. Political instability has become inherent in the system. This time it is not just characteristic of the neo-colonial countries, but of Western “democracies” as well. The working class does not have the proper political and trade union representation. The traditional parties of the Left have been “bourgeoisified” while the New Left has been tested and shown to be completely inadequate. In view of this vacuum the forces that are making ground internationally are those of the far and populist right. This is causing a reaction in sections of society particularly the youth, who see the need to fight. Antifascism, feminist struggles and fight to save the climate are major issues, which are pushing many in the direction of left radicalization.
148. The real choice before humanity, as Rosa Luxemburg put it, is “Socialism or Barbarism”. The need to build the political forces which will help the working class raise its consciousness and

understanding to the level of challenging and overthrowing the system, is the most important task faced by Marxists of our epoch.

Part 4

Tasks

149. The multiple crisis faced by humanity is a manifestation of the fact that the working class has not been able to fulfil its historic role of overthrowing capitalism and building a socialist society based on workers' democracy. The central responsibility for this lies with the leadership of the working class. The need to build mass revolutionary parties remains the absolutely necessary precondition for human civilization to avoid the perspective of barbarism that capitalism is leading it to. For *Internationalist Standpoint* this central, strategic task, is the *raison d'être*. *Internationalist Standpoint* is present in 12 countries and discussing with revolutionary organisations in 7 more, with a prospect of either uniting forces or, if that is not possible, to work in close collaboration. There are three levels on which *Internationalist Standpoint* is working in its efforts to achieve this task: a) Building our forces b) Intervening inside or assisting in the building of other left parties or formations c) Drawing lessons from the recent splits of the CWI and ISA, and also from the experience of other Trotskyist groups about the way to build a mass revolutionary International in the future.
150. Up until now *Internationalist Standpoint* has been functioning on a consensus basis, not on the basis of majority and minority votes taking place. The coordinating bodies ("Working Group" and "International Coordination") function on the basis of comrades' availability and their will to make the necessary sacrifices to advance the work. They have not been elected by an international conference/congress as should be the case. This approach was necessary in the initial stage of *Internationalist Standpoint's* development, in order for the comrades to meet each other better and see to what extent they could function in a coherent way, after the two disastrous splits of the CWI and the ISA. The balance sheet of the WG and the Coord is more than positive. The WG has held weekly meetings and the Coord, more or less, monthly ones and have shown a very high degree of coherence. On this basis we decide to move in the direction of setting up a formal organizational structure and beginning to work on the statutes of the new international organisation. If some of the organisations that we are in discussions with decide to join forces with us we are more than willing to discuss a new name for the common initiative.
151. Building our forces is decisive. An international organisation is made up of national sections, and in many of the countries where we are present it fundamentally falls on our shoulders to build the core of a revolutionary organisation at this stage and a mass revolutionary party later. In other countries we can work together with other Trotskyist groups if they too are willing to – this includes our ex-comrades from the CWI and the ISA. The forces we represent today, compared to what we represented when we were in the CWI, are certainly much smaller, and this inevitably has an effect both on the potential and on the morale. However, despite this weakness we see that we have

been able to make significant steps forward in just over one year of existence. We have expanded, with new groups coming from outside our tradition, and been able to make important steps forward even in countries where our forces are very small or new.

152. We are very flexible with tactics and always have a clear orientation to the masses, even though the general level of consciousness at this historical conjuncture is lower than in previous periods. Consciousness of course is not something that falls from the sky. It is determined by objective circumstances and subjective factors – the most crucial of the latter is the role of the leadership of the working class. There are no mass working class parties anywhere on the planet that raise the need to overturn capitalism raising the socialist perspective. There are no mass reformist parties of any kind on a global scale which resemble what existed historically from the end of the 19th century until the collapse of Stalinism. It is correct to call the traditional social democratic parties, “ex-reformist parties”. Today they not only do not raise socialism but not even nationalisations. There are some proto-socialist currents under development in some countries like the US and Britain – these are lagging far behind the vision of socialism which inspired and mobilised millions up until the 1980s, but of course they are very important.
153. Traditionally, in the past, revolutionaries would put demands and tasks on the mass reformist parties. This is much less the case today. The demand that has to be raised today in many countries, is for the need to build new mass political organisations of the working class. Once this is raised, revolutionaries should show that they can respond to this task and assist it, without for one moment, of course, sacrificing their own independent existence politically and organisationally.
154. This was described as the “dual task” by the CWI and it was a correct concept, combining the building of new working-class organisations with the building of the revolutionary party.
155. The way this tactic is applied differs from country to country depending on the objective conditions on the character of the “New Left” under formation, on the size and impact of our forces etc. In some conditions our forces should engage fully in the work of building a new left party, not only on a short term but also on a medium or even long-term basis. The relevant material written by Trotsky in the 1930s, must be revisited by our comrades. Given that most of our sections represent small forces this kind of tactic is very appropriate in present day conditions.
156. In other cases, if we have a strong independent position in society and the movements, our tactics could combine work inside a new left party with independent campaigns in the name of the organisation. The experience of Xekinima in the second part of its relation to SYRIZA, between 2011 and 2015, when about 1/3 of its members worked inside SYRIZA and through SYRIZA, is a useful example. The main point to make here is that there are no blueprints about how to apply the tactic, the specific circumstances have to be carefully taken into account.
157. Another aspect of our tactical approaches is the need to build “broad formations”, of a campaigning and fighting character, around us. Most of us are aware of such initiatives taken by the CWI when we were still part of it, in the 1990s and after: the YRE in the 1990s; International (Socialist) Resistance in the early 2000s; “Green Attack” and “Fighting Education” in Greece in the late 2000s; “Youth Against Nationalism” in Cyprus in the 2000s; Youth Against Sectarianism in North

Ireland; ROSA in Ireland, Belgium and other countries in the 2010s, “Workers and Youths Solidarity Network” (WYSN) recently in Nigeria after our comrades came out of the ISA, etc.

158. The approach to take in relation to such broader formations around us must also be flexible. In some conditions they will only be a campaign launched by our organisations. In other conditions they will have organised structures in which people who do not belong to our parties/organisations will also take part. And in still other conditions, they could be set up together with other organisations with which we have good working relations. Such is the “Antifascist Coordination” set up in Athens in which we play a central role and which was decisive in the struggle against Golden Dawn. Another example is “Kasma Birak/Μας Σκάβουν το Λάκκο/ Don’t Dig it” which brings together some tens of radical environmental organisations in Turkiye, Greece and Cyprus
159. This kind of work has elements of the method of “united front” (UF) but it is not the United Front per se as was understood by the Bolsheviks and the Com. International before its Stalinification. The UF in its classic form was related to the mass parties of the working class, Communist and Social-democratic in the interwar period and after. In the present conditions it relates to the tactics followed by small revolutionary organisations in their attempt to acquire bigger audiences. It is therefore correct to use different terms to describe these tactics, as raised above. Wherever there are sizeable parties of the working class, we call for a united front between them, of course, but our intervening inside a new left party is not a classic united front tactic. When we follow such a tactic, of working inside a left party, we need to be aware of the dangers that are present, both sectarian and opportunist in character.
160. Some basic rules of this work are the following: we are careful and sensitive in the way we criticise the deficiencies of the party in which we work; we have to be among the best activists in building the party; criticism of the leadership must be of a positive character, related to what is the best way forward for the working class and the youth; we make clear that the only way the party can fulfil the role of serving the working class interests consistently is through a socialist programme; we establish the best democratic traditions in the sections of the party which are under our influence by discussing all issues on the branch level and making proposals through the branch to the leading bodies; we explain that the best way to build successfully a new left party in the present epoch is by inviting organisations to join it without abandoning their independent existence politically and organisationally; if this is not accepted by the party statutes or traditions, we establish our right to exist as a tendency around a journal, a website and a social media page; we should have no illusion that even the best of the “radical left” will slide into some kind of reformism sooner or later; this process will go hand in hand with the bureaucratization of the party apparatus; when a bureaucracy comes into being, it will be impossible to take the party away from their grip, unless conditions are exceptional, i.e., under a revolutionary situation; we have to be aware that once differences develop between a reformist and a revolutionary wing, which is inevitable, the reformist wing will go for a split if it feels threatened by the revolutionary current; revolutionaries have to be always aware of the need to be well prepared for this development, having built the best traditions inside the party and the best relations with the rank and file in the preceding period.

161. One of the most important lessons that came out of the experiences of the splits of the CWI and the ISA is that the future mass revolutionary International will not be built by the methods used by the CWI, ISA, IMT (which came out of the CWI in the 1990s) and other international groupings, who think that they and only they have the right ideas and the right methods and only they can build the mass revolutionary party which will change the face of the earth. This messianic approach leads to splits whenever differences come up or whenever the leadership is questioned, it has been tested and failed.
162. The future mass international can only take the character of an amalgamation of different revolutionary forces that come together with their political differences and different traditions which have to be respected. No leadership can demand “infallibility” or the role of the successors to Lenin and Trotsky. A future mass international must be able to air the internal differences in the open, without this causing splits. Splits are justified when there is a breach of principles. The prototype of what we are describing is given by the Bolshevik party itself and the Com. International in its initial stages – differences were discussed openly in the party, the international, the national sections and the working class.
163. *Internationalist Standpoint’s* strategic aim is the building of a mass revolutionary international, but it does not consider itself to be *the* mass international. It aims to contribute in this direction and to join forces with other international groupings who understand this necessity and have escaped from the “illness” of messianism.
164. What is important is that once *Internationalist Standpoint* came out in the open, after the splits in the CWI and the ISA we came into contact with groups and currents in other countries which have come to similar conclusions through their own independent experiences. It is very positive to see that different organisations or currents, across all continents begin to understand that the traditions which they initially came from, i.e., that they possess the “absolute truth” etc., is completely wrong and that if they want to see a mass revolutionary international come into being, they have to learn how to work with people they don’t agree with. With confidence in our ideas, *Internationalist Stanpoint* will continue the fight for all the above.

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