

Globalisation and the New World Order: the dynamics of conflict over Eurasia

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The tragedy of 11 September 2001 should not blind us to the immense significance of what has been called by the US administration *Operation Enduring Freedom*. This, it should be remembered, has been defined as a “campaign” to uproot “terrorism” that will possibly last for decades. The war on Afghanistan was only the first phase of this campaign, which, in addition to US military involvement in the Philippines, Georgia, Yemen and now Indonesia, will in all probability be continued with a full-fledged war on Iraq in the very near future. The Afghanistan war, however, has already given us an indication of the objectives of US imperialism underlying Operation Enduring Freedom. By far the most important among these is imperialist domination over Eurasia, itself the key to the imposition of a new order on the entire continent of Asia. The long-term nature of the US engagement in Central Asia is graphically shown by the setting up of US bases in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan. This is the *first time in modern history* that Western capitalism has secured a military foothold in Central Asia and the first time imperialist troops have established a consented presence on the former territory of the October Revolution. It is one of the central ideas to be defended in this paper that, for roughly the next two decades, Eurasia, the vast region extending from the Balkans, through Russia, Turkey and Iran to the Caucasus and Central Asia, will in all probability experience a storm beside which the events that unfolded in the Balkans in the 1990’s will pale to insignificance.

The prerequisite for an understanding of what is at stake in Eurasia, however, is a correct understanding of the New World Order (henceforth NWO) announced with great fanfare in 1990, on the eve of the first Gulf War, by Bush senior. This concept has too often been dismissed on the left on the pretext that it is hardly anything more than New World Disorder. This appellation may be useful for propagandistic purposes, but is hardly sufficient in coming to grips with the real content of the concept, which overlaps with the overall political and military strategy of the US in the present stage of world development. To state that what is presented as a “new order” is in fact a new kind of disorder hides from the view of the potential opponents of this imperialistic order the fact that the disorder in question is not due to a failure on the part of the proponents of the strategy in question, but resides in the very nature of the NWO. The NWO is conceived by US imperialism as the ultimate destination of a process of upheaval in the existing world order, so that the disorder that is time and again denounced is in fact the path that the world has to travel in order to reach that ultimate destination. It is, in other words, *order through disorder* by its very nature. Thus the NWO is, in fact, a dialectical unity in the true sense of the term: the old order has to be negated violently so that the new order may be established as a synthesis of order and disorder. Pure denunciation also makes it more difficult to analyse the methods and modalities through which the new order aspired to is being built. To state that US imperialism is seeking world hegemony will not do. We have to come to grips with the *mechanisms and modalities* through which it is doing so.

In its turn, the NWO cannot be understood in isolation but only as the political superstructure of the economic strategy of “globalisation”. Hence the structure of the present paper. The first section will deal with the reality and the myth of “globalisation” and seek to understand the major driving forces behind this new wave in the contradictory history of the internationalisation of capital. The next section will build on this to identify the specific

characteristics of the strategy of the NWO as imperialist politics. This will then allow us to situate the developments in Eurasia in the overall context of imperialist strategy at this dawn of the twenty-first century. The concluding section will try to bring out the contradictions inherent in the world imperialist system under the combined strategies of globalism and the NWO, provide a prognosis for the foreseeable future and draw lessons for the struggles against imperialist capitalism.

I. “Globalisation”: the unfettered circulation of capital

The use of the term “globalisation” to characterise the advances in the integration of the world economy immediately confronts theory with the task of defining what is new in capitalism and what structural characteristics of the older capitalism still hold sway. For “globalisation” is but one element in that series of theoretical concepts such as post-Fordism, post-modernism, the information society etc. which form the basis of the overall claim that the nature of society and the economy have undergone such complete transformation that any previous conceptual framework utilised in the past to understand the world has now become wholly inadequate for the task. The end of everything from history through work to capitalism has been loudly and proudly proclaimed. There is no doubt that certain traits of capitalism as a world system have indeed changed. But the indispensable task of any theoretical effort to understand the present world is to separate the reality of *change within continuity* from the myth of *total transformation*. We will then start out with a critique of the myths of “globalisation” theory.

1. “Globalisation” as technological fatality

The advances in the internationalisation of capital and the integration of the world economy in the recent period have been codified within the framework of the bourgeois liberal “globalisation” theory, whose assumptions and conclusions were later adopted unquestioningly by many on the left (most notably by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their much acclaimed *Empire*). “Globalisation” theory has become so influential that it is now common sense, so to speak, for the thinkers of and spokespeople for the establishment, its major ideas being circulated in the popular media in the form of unquestionable dogma. The core of this theory can be summed up in four major propositions: (1) “Globalisation” is the direct product of the recent wave of technological progress, i.e. of the new information and communication technologies. (2) “Globalisation” is an inevitable and irreversible process. (3) The new integration of the world economy has rendered the nation-state as a historical category obsolete or, at least, has paved the ground for this. (4) It has opened up a new stage in the historical development of capitalism distinct from the imperialist stage. None of these propositions can withstand the test of a confrontation with the facts of present-day world capitalism.

It is certainly true that the widespread application of new information processing and communications technologies and new materials to the spheres of production and circulation have opened up new horizons for the mobility of capital. But this in no way warrants the jump to the conclusion that it is this development in productive forces *exclusively* and in direct fashion that has set in motion the whole new wave of the economic integration of the world. Behind this integration lies a host of factors which are of a socio-economic and political nature. Some of these factors will be taken up later on. Suffice it to say, at this stage, that were it not for the successful attempt of the international bourgeoisie to establish neoliberalism as the hegemonic strategy of economic policy and to progressively provide for

the unfettered circulation of money, commodities and productive capital since the era of Thatcher and Reagan starting in the late 70's and early 80's, no amount of technological change would have brought about the present level of economic exchange in the international arena. Thus the thesis that "globalisation" flows directly from technological change, without the mediation of sociopolitical factors, reveals itself as a crass kind of *technological determinism*. How ironic to see bourgeois liberal theory committing the very sin for which it has accused Marxism *ad nauseum* in the past!

The thesis of inevitability and irreversibility in fact flows directly, if somewhat implicitly, from this technological determinism and therefore stands or collapses with it. It is enough to ask why the IMF goes to such pains to impose liberal policies consonant with the "realities of globalisation" on each country it has dealings with or why the WTO has to have recourse to round after round of negotiations in order to liberalise world trade to see the absurdity of the claim of inevitability and irreversibility. At a more general level, the irreversibility argument evacuates human agency from the unfolding of history, treating the latter as a process "without a subject" bound by iron laws. The masses have refuted such a view of history, voting with their feet against "globalisation" from Seattle to Genoa, from the streets of Paris in 1995 to the Parque Centenario in Buenos Aires at present.

The third claim with respect to the growing obsolescence of the so-called nation-state is a much more complex question. It is based, among others arguments, most importantly, first, on the irrelevance of national borders in the face of global forces and flows of economic exchange, and, secondly, on the supposed "multinational" or even "transnational" character of capital itself. The idea that, with the tremendous increase in international flows of money, commodities and productive capital, national borders have lost their meaning and that the world economy has become a *uniform and homogenous* entity is both theoretically fallacious and inconsistent with facts (and, in fact, with the economic recipes that flow from "globalisation" theory itself!). Certain traits that derive from the very essence of statehood such as a national currency, the existence of a public finance system, a specific labour relations regime and an overall economic structure distinguish the economic territory of each nation state from the others. (Note that these are factors that distinguish between states, as opposed to other factors that are the consequences of uneven development and distinguish economic regions from each other, including within the borders of a single state.) The first three of these factors contribute specific effects that go into determining three key economic variables (i.e. the rate of exchange, the rate of interest and the wage rate) which typically (along with other specificities) set out a differential path for each national economy within the overall context of the current forces of the world economy. The latter is thus by no means a uniform and homogenous whole.

Quite the contrary: the capitalist world economy presents itself as an integrated whole with tendentially ever-increasing cross-border flows, separated, however, into national domains with specific characteristics of their own. It is not a "smooth" space (Hardt and Negri), but a closely-knit patchwork of national economies. That this is so is confirmed by the irreducible fact that diversities between the different national economies is one of the fundamental determinants of the investment decisions of the so-called "multinational" companies. Who says investment says the accumulation of capital; hence the laws that determine the *spatial* development of the accumulation of capital, itself the central process of the capitalist mode of production, are indissociably linked with the continuing existence of the so-called nation-state. So much is admitted by the advocates of "globalisation" theory itself when they advise governments to harmonise their economic policies with the requirements of the "global

economy” in order to be able to attract foreign capital, which is but a roundabout way of admitting the specificity of national economies and the difference national economic policy can make!

This brings us to the second major proposition behind the claim regarding the obsolescence of the category nation-state. According to this second argument, capital no longer has “national allegiances”: so-called “multinational companies” (MNC’s) or “transnational companies” (TNC’s) have no interest in any single country, since capital seeks nothing but profit and these companies do this at the world level. The terms “multinational” and, *a fortiori*, “transnational” are clearly misnomers for this type of company. There are very few among these whose capital is jointly controlled by capitalists of different nations (some prominent examples being ABB or Royal Dutch-Shell, even the case of Daimler-Chrysler being deceptive notwithstanding the name, for this company is clearly controlled by the German partner.) The overwhelming majority are companies effectively controlled by capitalists of single nations, or, in the case of Europe, where cross-border centralisation is occurring at an increasing pace, of the new European proto-state. In principle, each nation-state in question protects and supports the companies that originate in it as against foreign companies, according to a well-defined strategy that is based on a “survival of the fittest” pattern, so that some companies are sacrificed at the altar of the general interests of national capital. A wealth of empirical material can be adduced to show that this is the case. In place of the misnomers “multinational companies” or “transnational companies” then, one can propose a more adequate terminology, “companies with international activity”, with the fitting abbreviation of CIA’s!

All this goes to show that at the present stage of the development of the capitalist world economy, so-called nation-states still have considerable weight within the world economy and define distinct sub-units within this integrated whole. But irrespective of the validity of all these arguments, nation-states are of paramount importance for capitalism for another entirely different reason: each nation-state is still the *locus of class power*. Whatever the degree of influence international organisations (say the IMF or the World Bank) have on the policies followed by different states, this influence still has to be relayed into the domestic policies of each country by the state in question. The ruling classes of each nation has to consolidate its rule at the national level. Conversely, the conquest of power by the working class and the oppressed masses still has to make its debut on the national arena. It is true that such conquest, wherever and whenever that may be, will meet with sanctions and aggression by the imperialist powers (by the other imperialist powers if the country in question happens to be one that is at present an imperialist country itself) , but that does not negate the fact that this intervention will have to fight *a new state* that has at its disposal the means of an army to defend itself. In any case, outside intervention against the conquest of power by the working masses has been a constant of the history of capitalism from the Paris Commune through the October Revolution to Cuba and Nicaragua and cannot be considered *differentia specifica* of the present period.

The final claim that the imperialist stage has been transcended thanks to “globalisation” is perhaps the most insulting of all to the collective intelligence of the masses when considered in the light of the crystal clear fact that inequality between nations have, if anything, greatly increased within the last several decades thanks to the functioning of the system of “globalisation”. Neither does this claim hold water at the theoretical level. All the characteristics of imperialism depicted by the classical Marxist theory of imperialism, developed by Hilferding, Bukharin and Lenin, are *truer today* than when formulated at the

beginning of last century. Gigantic units of capital (called *monopolies* at that early stage), organised as large groups bringing together the power of financial and industrial capital and diversifying into all spheres of the valorisation of capital (named *finance capital* by the pioneers the theory of imperialism) thrive more than ever on the *export of capital*, which has not only become the characteristic feature of world capitalism, but even gone on to subsume the export of commodities under its logic (witness intra-firm exchange of goods and services as a constantly rising proportion of international trade). Giant banks and companies compete to carve out profitable shares in the four corners of the world and imperialist states are in a constant but temporarily muted struggle for control over bigger portions of the planet. For various reasons, it can even be claimed that the Leninist theory of imperialism is now more relevant than it was when first propounded. To cite a single example: at the beginning of the twentieth century, competition between the capitals of the imperialist countries took, in principle, the roundabout form of investments in the subordinate countries, whether colonies, semi-colonies or independent nations. Today, on the contrary, the overwhelming part of both foreign direct investment and portfolio investment flows between the imperialist countries themselves, with the corollary that the struggle is now played out not only in the regions outside the imperialist heartlands (although that also rages on as never before), but in the respective homes of the capitals in question.

At the stage we have reached, we feel entitled to state clearly that the specific theses of bourgeois liberal “globalisation” theory are mere fancies and that the imperialist nature of capitalism has hardly changed at all. It is now time to turn to the new reality, of which “globalisation” theory is but a symptom and a refracted image.

2. Globalism as capitalist assault

Despite the continuity in the inner nature of the world system of imperialism, it is hardly deniable that, since the late 1970s and early 1980s, there is much that is new in the concrete forms of functioning of the world capitalist system that deserves attentive study. The dismantling of barriers in the way of cross-border flows of money, commodities and productive capital, accompanied by extensive privatisation of state enterprises, and even of infrastructural establishments, the abrupt or gradual erosion, according to the case, of social services, through cuts, commodification or outright privatisation, the penetration of the private sector into governmental functions, especially at the municipal level (conceptualised under the high-sounding label “governance”), the flexibilisation of the labour market and the rapid spread of lean production techniques, have all added to create an entirely new setup with tremendous consequences for the balance of forces between the classes at the international and national levels. In order to come to grips with this new situation and explain the dynamics behind the panoply of new instruments deployed by the international bourgeoisie, we have to take into consideration three developments of a world-historical nature that have each stamped the recent period with its indelible mark.

Foremost among these is the rise of what I propose to call, for lack of a better alternative, *mega capital* as the dominant form of capital within the last half century. In contradistinction to earlier forms, this form of capital, embodied in what is popularly known as “multinational companies”, distinguishes itself by the fact that it plans for and organises its process of valorisation over the entire globe, buying raw materials and other inputs, carrying out production and selling its commodities wherever it is most profitable to do so within a single all encompassing strategic plan. The obverse of this is that the interdependent activities of mega capital are spatially separated and diversified into a great number of regions and single

countries. Thus a fragmented world economy, with innumerable barriers in the way of flows of money, commodities and productive capital is, by its very nature, inimical to the interests of this form of capital and contradicts and constricts its free development. Hence the intense pressure exercised by mega capital, as the most internationalised form of capital, to break up and dismantle what appears to it as rigid barriers that stand in the way of its unfettered circulation and profitable valorisation. Mega capital, in collusion with financial capital in search of the highest return on monetary investment, is thus the major moving force behind the rapid adoption of neoliberalism (“free market” policies), and “globalisation” as a specific variant of neoliberalism, as the dominant strategy of the international bourgeoisie over the last two decades of the twentieth century. In the last instance, neoliberalism can best be summed up as the attempt by mega capital to create a world in its own image.

However important it is to lay bare the social force behind “globalisation” and neoliberalism, a vulgar (i.e. non-Marxist) understanding of the category “capital” may still lead to a kind of conception where the adoption of the new strategy of “globalisation” can be seen, in pure functionalist tradition, as the adaptation of the superstructure of economic policy to the shift of the fundamental structures of world capitalism. This kind of conception would not only hide from the view the myriad contradictions, hesitations and frictions within the process of adaptation in question, converting it instead into an imaginary smooth process, but much more importantly perhaps, would conceal the *class nature* of the new strategy, the very essential fact that the adoption of the neoliberal *cum* “globalisation” strategy is in effect a class assault by the international bourgeoisie against the international proletariat and the working masses at large. For “capital” is not simply a sum of money in search for self-expansion; its self-expansion is at bottom tributary to the extraction of surplus labour from the direct producers, primarily but not exclusively the proletariat. It is not a *thing* but a *social relation*. And whenever it is a question of making capital more profitable, the reverse of the medallion is to change the balance of forces between capital and the working class in favor of the former. Hence, to the extent that neoliberalism and policies in the service of “globalisation” cater to the needs of the worldwide maximisation of profits for mega capital, they are, *ceteris paribus*, an assault on the power of the working class, and concomitantly of other classes and layers of direct producers, to protect themselves from further encroachment by capital.

And here it would be in order to bring into the analysis the second factor that has gone into the making of neoliberalism and the strategy of “globalisation”. With the onset of the depressive phase of the long wave of capitalist development in the mid-70’s, relations between the classes changed dramatically. Faced with the fall in the average rate of profit, itself the decisive cause of the depressive wave, capital gradually moved to attack the positions that had been gained, to an unequal degree it is true, by the working class and the large labouring masses of all countries in order to raise the rate of surplus-value and hence of profit and thereby lay the ground for renewed stable capital accumulation. In all major crises, the space for compromise between the contending classes narrows down and the antagonistic nature of the relations between the classes is revealed for all to see. Hence the ruthless drive of capital to remove forms of protection for the working classes that had, for different reasons we cannot go into here, accumulated over the decades. From partial tolerable concessions, at times acting as partial guarantees for its class rule, these had now, with the turn in the situation, become so many barriers to be overcome.

Workers employed by the public sector formed the backbone of the trade union movement in every country without exception; hence the public productive sector had to be destroyed through privatisation. (There were, of course, other reasons why the bourgeoisie pushed for

privatisation.) Public services (the so-called “welfare state”) created solidarity among the great masses of people and inhibited competition and so had to be dismantled through a combination of budgetary cuts, commodification of services and privatisation. The same went for certain municipal services, which were abandoned to the pressure of the market through “private-public cooperation” and so-called “governance”. Hard-won legal rights in industrial relations were attacked through forms of “atypical” and “contingent” work and the new reality of “flexible work” translated into labour laws wherever capital managed to get the upper hand in the legislative process. The overall objective was to dismantle the trade union movement, legal protection for labour, social protection for the great masses, the state productive sector and anything else that acted to partially counter the forces of the market so that competition would be driven up, worker would be pitted against worker and the working class would become atomised and defenseless.

It is in the context of this wide array of measures to create competition between individual workers and groups of workers that the true meaning of “globalisation” can be understood in its full import. “Globalisation” is *the strategy that aims to pit each national section of the international working class against each other*. “Globalisation” is the drive initiated by the international bourgeoisie to create *a race to the bottom* by reestablishing the full force of competition between countries and their working classes and masses. It is, then, true that “globalisation” is an attack on the nation-state, but only *through a certain angle*. “Globalisation” tries to dismantle every facet of the existing nation-states that, over a certain period, came to act as a bumper mechanism to tame the wild forces of market competition, thereby creating a crack that could be used as a defense mechanism for the working class and the masses at large. But “globalisation” exercises, and can only exercise, this impact on the nation-states with the active consent and participation of the ruling classes of each state in question, even in those countries dominated by imperialism. For this kind of change acts not only in favour of the bourgeoisie of the imperialist countries; it also changes the domestic balance of forces within the dominated country in favour of the ruling classes at the expense of the working masses. Imperialist super-exploitation is concomitantly reinforced.

Where “globalisation” theory goes astray is to present this erosion in certain facets of the nation-state as an undifferentiated general process of obsolescence for the nation-state as a whole. The picture that emerges obfuscates the fact that all so-called nation-states actively pursue policies that favour the capitalist class, both international and domestic. “Globalisation” theory also triumphantly declares as consummated a process that is progressing in a very contradictory manner, with immense frictions, sometimes moving forward in great leaps and bounds, but at other times proceeding in a very hesitant manner, even at times halted by forces of various kinds. It is here that one can discover the real ideological function of the theory and ideology of “globalisation”: by declaring general and completed a process that is only partial and only at its initial stages, “globalisation” theory acts to disarm the great masses of working people and dissuade them from entering into struggle against what is in fact of matter a capitalist assault on their positions.

This, though, is not the only factor that works to weaken the mass struggle against “globalisation” and neoliberalism in general. Here the third of the world-historical factors we are discussing has played an equally pernicious role. The collapse of the bureaucratic workers’ states in central and eastern Europe in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the ensuing rampant process of the restoration of capitalism over this whole area, along with the creeping capitalist restoration in the People’s Republic of China, have taken their toll on the workers’ movement and the struggle of the masses in various ways. On the

one hand, these events have reinforced the capitalist assault on everything that belongs to the public domain; on the other hand, they have destroyed, or at least tremendously weakened, the hopes and aspirations of the great masses of people for a different and better future. We will have ample opportunity to return to the significance of the collapse of the bureaucratic workers' states in the next section on the NWO.

We can now draw a partial balance sheet on the basis of our discussion of the myth and the reality of "globalisation". The bourgeois liberal theory of "globalisation" posits the onset of a new stage in the development of the world economy beyond imperialism that is indissociably linked to the demise of the nation-state. To that extent, "globalisation" theory is in fact dealing with myths. It is for this reason that, all throughout this paper, the term "globalisation" is being written in inverted commas. The critics of the bourgeoisie and its policies should not, in my opinion, treat "globalisation" as a legitimate theoretical concept that depicts an objective process. The time-tested Marxist concept of the *internationalisation of capital* is a much better choice to describe what is happening in this area.

On the other hand, it is certainly true that, with the purpose of creating an untamed competition between the national sections of the international proletariat and other labouring masses, the international bourgeoisie is trying to dismantle those facets of the existing nation-states that, under the conditions of a prior period, acted as buffer mechanisms of protection for the working masses. This is part and parcel of the neoliberal strategy and, to that extent, is a reality. In order to distinguish the myth from the reality, the latter may conveniently be called globalism. "*Globalisation*", then, is a false theoretical concept that acts as one of the dominant elements within present-day bourgeois ideology. The strategy of *globalism*, on the other hand, is a living material force to be fought in practice.

II. The New World Order: the unfettered circulation of imperialist armies

It is of the utmost importance for opponents of imperialism to understand the strategic orientation that is encapsulated in the concept New World Order (NWO). As was said earlier, whatever the propaganda merits of the appellation, widespread among the left, New World Disorder, it does not really provide much insight into the tasks of the coming storms, save point, and that one-sidedly, to the destructive side of this new strategic orientation. Sufficient evidence has gathered now over the decade of the 1990s and the early years of the new century to form as the basis of attempts to present a more comprehensive analysis of the political and military strategy represented by the NWO. The following does not, of course, pretend to be an exhaustive systematic analysis, but merely tries to provide certain decisive elements that go into the making of the NWO.

1. The political superstructure of globalism

We have seen that for mega capital, the hegemonic component of capital at the dawn of the twenty-first century, the space of valorisation extends through the whole surface of the planet, covering all regions and countries where it does not confront insuperable barriers to its movement. Both the consolidation and the further extension of this geographic expanse require a political superstructure adequate for the task of ruling the world on behalf of the interests of mega capital. The NWO is designed, first and foremost, to create such a superstructure for globalism. It is based upon a panoply of international organisations that carry out certain tasks of a world government in primitive fashion. These organisations are

controlled behind the scenes by the imperialist coalition, above all the North Atlantic coalition, often euphemistically dubbed the “international community”.

Among these international organisations, three categories stand out for the real power they wield, alongside those with consultative and research functions, such as, for example, the ILO and the WHO. Among those organisations, there is first the troika of economic and financial organisations, i.e. the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO. These seemingly neutral and technical organisations are in fact political through and through. To take the IMF as the outstanding representative of so-called market rationality, the recent examples of loans to Pakistan and Turkey in 2001 and to Brasil in 2002 for blatantly political purposes, while Argentina was left on its own to crumble under the weight of its economic woes, show amply that these institutions are under the tight control of the imperialist powers, the US above all. This should dispel any illusions as to the dispersion of sovereignty among a hierarchy of institutions in the NWO, such as those harboured in Hardt and Negri’s *Empire*.

While the economic troika fulfil in a partial and one-sided manner the tasks of an economic administration, the UN serves as a political body where grievances are heard, a quasi-parliament at the international level, so to speak. Here again, it must be noted immediately that the General Assembly has from the beginning been a “talking shop”, while any real power in international affairs is vested with the Security Council, in which the five permanent members that wield the power to veto any decision are clearly “more equal than the others”. The UN, just like many of the other international institutions in question, predates the NWO, and really acted as a forum for political (and ideological) struggle between the two sides of the Cold War, with the group of 77 exerting additional pressure, in its earlier epoch. However, with the end of the Cold War, it has now become an instrument used at will by the US and its allies whenever convenient. It also acts, along with the World Bank, as a forum where, especially during the interminable series of international conferences on hunger, the environment, housing etc., the grievances of NGO’s and INGO’s are vented out, producing volumes of solemn resolutions subsequently left to the criticism of mice.

By far the most important international organisation of the NWO is, of course, NATO. This military arm of Western imperialism, built against the Soviet Union, became the subject of a lot of heated debate in the aftermath of the collapse of the latter. The debate ended in 1999, when NATO waged its first war ever in Kosovo and when the Washington summit that gathered on the heels of the war defined a new concept for the organisation. NATO has been renewed to act as the joint military command of the imperialist coalition and, unless and until imperialist rivalries sharpen to the point when EU countries make a definitive break with the hegemony of US imperialism, it will serve as such whenever it is convenient for the US. The recourse to Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, the article that stipulates that any attack on one of the allies will be considered an attack on all, has confirmed the fact that NATO has been transformed so as to be functional in the construction of the NWO.

It should be emphasized again and again that all these three categories of international organisations are far from being neutral institutions rising, even in a relative sense, above the melée of interactions within the existing international system of nation-states. They are all instruments used by the imperialist coalition, and above all the US, whenever circumstances are conducive to present them as more neutral and technical institutions striving to establish international stability and law. We stress “when circumstances are conducive”. Witness the very different paths chosen by the US in its three major wars of the NWO era: the Gulf war of 1991 was sanctioned by the UN; the Kosovo war was decided and waged as a NATO war; the

Afghanistan war, despite the clear declaration of NATO members concerning Article 5, was based on a shifting alliance formed by the US. It seems that as a result of the reticence of many of its allies, the US might even have to go it alone in the coming war on Iraq. Illusions about these institutions being loci of power even relatively autonomous from the “international community”, i.e. first and foremost of the US and the EU countries, are extremely pernicious for the opponents of imperialism and will lead to dead-end strategies of working exclusively in and through these institutions and accepting them as legitimate institutions for a different setup of the future.

2. Repartition of the world

The NWO is thus the political superstructure of the new system globalism is trying to establish. However, this new political superstructure is being constructed within a definite historical context. And that context is determined to its very core by a world-historical development: the demise of the bureaucratic workers’ states. Hence, the NWO is also an attempt to realign international relations of power so as to fill in the vacuum created by the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The collapse of the bureaucratic workers’ states in Europe has opened up a totally new situation in modern history. When Lenin wrote his *Imperialism*, he noted that “the territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed”. (Lenin, 83) And so it was, if one includes within the concept “division” not only colonies in the strict sense of the term, but also semi-colonies and spheres of influence. A development that started with the October Revolution of 1917 and continued after World War II changed this situation in the sense that certain territories where capitalism was abolished withdrew in a relative sense from the world economy and tried to construct their economic development in an insulated manner. It is true that from the 1960s on, there was an increasing tendency for these bureaucratic workers’ states to set up closer ties with the capitalist world economy. However, the real change in the situation came about after the collapse of the wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The process of capitalist restoration that these events set off brought on the agenda forcefully a new and gigantic question: the full reintegration of these territories into the circuits of world capital. A parallel process was going on concerning China, where political continuity was coupled with a creeping restoration of capitalism and an increasing integration with world capitalism. So in a very real sense, this development takes us back, under radically new conditions, to the last quarter of the nineteenth century, before “the territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers [was] completed”. Given the chaotic process of the restoration of capitalism in the former republics of the Soviet Union, one can justifiably talk about the “Wild East”, using the historical analogy, *mutatis mutandis*, of the expansion, in the nineteenth century, of US capitalism into the “Wild West”. Imperialism is thus confronted with the task of assimilating a vast expanse of territory, practically extending from Berlin to the China Sea.

But this is not all. The collapse of the Soviet Union has also created a political vacuum in many areas of the world where different governments had set up alliances with the Soviet Union in order to counterbalance the pressure of imperialism. The Middle East is the foremost example, but the Indian subcontinent and several regions in Africa also fall into this category. It is thus no coincidence that Bush senior chose a war in the Middle East as the gambit of the new strategic orientation labelled the NWO.

Both the assimilation of the bureaucratic workers' states and the filling in of the vacuum left behind by the collapse of the Soviet Union pose two distinct questions. On the one hand, there is the task of establishing a stable setup in these regions, which will work to consolidate and make irreversible capitalist restoration in the former case and provide for conditions that will guarantee the valorisation of capital without major upheavals in the latter. This task is obviously in the interest of the imperialist world system in general, without distinction as to the particular interests of the various imperialist powers. It can thus be carried out jointly. On the other hand, there is also the question of who gets how much and who gets to control the new overall setup. Will it be American capital that will receive the lion's share in the vast markets of Russia and China or German or Japanese? Will it be American and British oil companies that will profit from the oil wells of Iraq and the untapped energy resources of the Caspian Basin or French and Italian? As opposed to the dynamics of unity the first task creates, this second question, by its very nature, sets in motion a tendency for competition and rivalry. It is this contradictory process that will stamp with its mark events in many a region of the world during the construction of the NWO, whose final shape will only become clear as a result of the interaction of these two tendencies.

Finally, the collapse of the Soviet Union has lifted the pressure of this mighty common foe on the imperialist coalition and thereby opened the lid of rivalries between the different imperialist powers. The onset of the depressive phase of the long wave of development has also contributed to the intensification of competition between the capitals of the triad, i.e. the US, Western Europe and Japan. The ever-increasing unification of European imperialist interests within the European Union has added clout to European imperialist capital, which can now stand up against US capitalist interests in many a part of the world. Before it slipped in the early 1990's into what seems to be a perpetual crisis, Japan was of course the rising imperialist power. It is still too early to count it out of the race. But the recent competition is really between the US and the EU. The euro has been conceived as a rival world currency challenging the supremacy of the dollar. The European Security and Defense Initiative is an attempt on the part of European imperialism to break free from its military subservience to US imperialism. There are immense obstacles that confront the EU in its quest to achieve equal status with the US, be it economically, politically or militarily. The effort is nonetheless there and the rivalry is visible in different parts of the world such as Latin America (for most of its history a hunting ground for the US, but where now Spain, followed by other Europeans, has gained a serious foothold), Africa (traditionally a European sphere where the US is now increasing its clout) or even the Middle East.

3. Inroads into national sovereignty: the Annan doctrine

The NWO has proved to be a New War Order. Leaving aside "minor" military interventions by the US and its allies, the approaching war on Iraq will be the fourth major war since the proclamation of the NWO, that is within the space of a mere eleven or twelve years. This has been called the "new interventionism". It is important to stress that there is a developing tendency to justify this new interventionism in legal and moral terms.

As we have seen, globalism asserts the demise of the nation state. This ideological statement is given a semblance of truth by the imperialist drive to unify the whole world into a single domain without any barriers for the circulation of capital. So it was obvious from the very dawn of the rise of globalist ideology that this outlook would result in the denigration of the concept of "national sovereignty" as a principle that, at least nominally, regulates the arena of international politics. The discussion around an international law of intervention was indeed

the rising trend throughout the nineties and reached its apogee during the Kosovo War, with shrill voices haughtily proclaiming *ad nauseum* that humanitarian intervention is a principle superior to national sovereignty. (Not one among these voices explained why humanitarian compassion did not move the so-called "international community" to intervene in even greater human tragedies such as those that unfolded in Rwanda, the Kurdish regions of Turkey or other hot spots that arose around the world within the space of the same decade!) But no one yet dared suggest that the whole structure of UN activities be changed accordingly, remembering that the very backbone of the UN Charter is this vilified notion of national sovereignty. Even after the Kosovo war, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, former Polish premier and UN representative in Bosnia between 1992-96, for instance, excluded a revision of the UN Charter even as he explicitly defended the promotion of a law of intervention in order to "protect minorities".

This task was finally shouldered by Kofi Annan. The UN secretary general, during his opening speech to the General Assembly at the beginning of the fall 1999 session, propounded a doctrine that resounded as an open invitation to imperialist interventionism of the kind witnessed during the Gulf war and the Kosovo war. This is why the "Annan doctrine" is so "revolutionary" in its outlook and fell like a bomb when it was first uttered. The gist of the doctrine is simple: globalisation and international cooperation have made the defense of national sovereignty in its earlier version obsolete and have strengthened the "sovereignty of the individual". It follows that in cases where a state violates human rights, the "international community" has the "right to intervene", militarily if need be, in the internal affairs of that state. Moreover, Annan opines that "the United Nations Charter does not forbid the recognition of the existence of cross-border rights", by which of course he means the right to intervene. Clinton, in his address to the General Assembly, approved of Annan's approach, but understandably warned that the principle could probably not be applied universally! It is not difficult to discover the secret of Clinton's reserves: why would US imperialism incite the UN to "intervene" in the affairs of his loyal allies? No wonder then that countries such as China or Cuba, indeed the whole world outside the domain of imperialist countries, should regard the Annan doctrine as legitimizing a rehashed version of the "gunboat policy" of British imperialism in the nineteenth century!

The debate has since subsided, as the strong reaction to this gambit prevented the advocates of the new interventionism from proceeding in a rapid manner. However, whether a new legal doctrine making inroads into national sovereignty is developed or not, the practice has since continued. What distinguishes the Gulf war from later ones is that the former was waged in the name of saving a formally independent country (Kuwait) from the invasion of another (Iraq). The Kosovo war declared its objective as the restitution of the rights of Kosovar Albanians and not (as was really the case) as, for instance, punishing or ousting the Milosevic administration. Since 11 September we have moved even further: "retribution" and changing governments in power now serve in unabashed fashion as the rationale. This was the case in Afghanistan and will be the case for the coming war on Saddam Hussein.

4. The national question as an instrument of the NWO

In the most hypocritical fashion, even as they denigrate national sovereignty, the proponents of the NWO also exploit the grievances of nations and ethnic groups oppressed by their foes. The experience of the last decade shows that this has become a privileged weapon of imperialism.

In the first two major episodes of the construction of the NWO, i.e. the Gulf and Kosovo wars, the legitimate aspirations of nations oppressed by the state which was the target of imperialism were manipulated cynically by the latter, with the complicity of the existing leaderships of the oppressed nations in question. In the case of the Gulf war, it was the Kurds whose suffering was the basis for US imperialism to chop off a whole section of Iraq's territory from the jurisdiction of that country (the region above the notorious 36th parallel). The Kosovo war is too recent for anyone to forget that the bombing of Yugoslavia along with Kosovo itself was justified on the basis of the oppression to which the Milosevic administration subjected the Kosovar Albanians.

There is, however, nothing new or original here. It has been a time-tested tactic for imperialism to exploit the grievances of nations and nationalities oppressed by its foes. The British were masters at it. A very appropriate example is the "liberation" of the Arab world from Ottoman yoke during and in the aftermath of the First World War. This resulted in the formation of a series of British and French colonies and puppet regimes in the Middle East. Wilson's advocacy of the right of nations to self-determination did not apparently apply to the Arabs or for any of the other "native" peoples! The plight of the Arab Middle East continued between the two wars and came undone only with the overall turn of the tide against colonialism. The case of Palestine, of course, is the tragic exception. This nation, after having "liberated" itself from Ottoman rule in the aftermath of World War I, had then to go through a period of British colonial rule between the two wars, but, as opposed to other nations of the Arab Middle East, fell prey to the creation of a settler colonial state, Zionist Israel, after World War II. So almost a century after imperialism promised the Palestinian people its freedom, this people without a home is still living under the colonial yoke of a foreign state. If we are to learn lessons from history, then, the wise conclusion to draw is that imperialism is no reliable friend of the liberation of oppressed nations and nationalities.

This should in no way blind us to the plight of nations and peoples that are oppressed by the existing nation-states in the third world. The emancipation of such peoples, however, will not come through the hypocritical policies of imperialism, which cynically manipulates legitimate grievances to its own end and frequently betrays the cause that it has supported so strongly once circumstances change and the rights of the oppressed people in question become a burden for its new status quo.

5. International colonies

Finally, the new interventionism of the NWO strategy clearly reveals a developing trend: that of the formation of what could be labelled "international" or "multilateral" colonies. In the age of classical colonialism, the central purpose of the colonial powers was to secure for themselves the economic benefits to be acquired from the colonised territory (there were of course also cases of colonisation for purely political and military reasons). So the principle behind classical colonialism was monopolistic. This kind of colonialism is certainly not appropriate for the age of globalism. The new trend is to establish colonies or semi-colonies of the "international community".

The clearest cases are those of Bosnia and Kosovo. The administration that was formed in Bosnia on the basis of the much-acclaimed Dayton Accords can be called by no other name than a "colony". At the summit of the "state" established by the Dayton Accords is a High Commissioner, who wields powers similar to colonial administrators, including the annulment of elections and the removal from their posts of high-level civil servants. The police force is

recruited from abroad and functions under the jurisdiction of the High Commissioner. Bosnia is militarily under the occupation of NATO-led forces. Economic life, too, is under the iron fist of imperialism. In line with the Dayton Accords, the governor of the central bank was appointed by the IMF, that latter day agent of disguised colonialism. To add insult to injury, the central bank was deprived of the routine powers of a normal central bank: according to the Dayton Accords, the bank could not, for a transitional period, extend credit through the creation of money, but was authorised solely to act like a currency board.

That this kind of multilateral colonialism was the rising trend of the day was demonstrated even more convincingly by what happened in Kosovo in the aftermath of the war. In fact, even at the beginning of the war, Kosovo's future was characterized as a UN "protectorate", a status just short of full colonisation but one that nonetheless has nothing to do with an independent state. In the light of this, the hypocrisy of Resolution 1244 of the UN on Kosovo, where the latter is characterized as an "international protectorate" but the supposed sovereignty of Yugoslavia over the entirety of its former territory is recognised, is all the more glaring. Kosovo is today, just like Bosnia its predecessor, ruled by a High Representative appointed by the instances of the European Union, subjected to military occupation under NATO command, with a police force recruited internationally (the Kosovo Corps staffed by former KLA militia being the exception). Bernard Kouchner, the first High Representative, made the Deutsch Mark the "national" currency and, most appalling of all, represented Kosovo in international meetings, such as the one on the Balkan Stability Pact.

The case of Afghanistan after the war partially confirms this trend. Months after the war was over, General Tommy Franks, commander of the US forces in the region, declared openly that US troops were there to stay for many years to come. Future wars will show to what extent this trend will develop further. The earliest test will, of course, be the political setup after the war on Iraq.

III. The dynamics of conflict over Eurasia

Every historical epoch delineates new geographical areas of a special internal coherence, real or imagined, vis-a-vis the world system. The geographical concept Middle East, to cite the most obvious example, is a recent creation of Western imperialism, designed to supercede the earlier notions of the "Orient" and the later "Near East", defined by the importance of the region in question in world oil production and by the importance of the Israeli-Arab conflict. (Strangely enough, the concept Middle East has lately, in daily political discourse, been reduced exclusively to the latter, with such bizarre turns of the phrase as "the question of the Middle East should be solved before any attempt is made to sort things out in Iraq", as if the latter country itself were not an integral part of the Middle East.) The clearest recent example is the new terminology applied to the Balkans, "Southeastern Europe", in order to divest that region of its historical specificity and assimilate it into the emerging European behemoth.

The term Eurasia has a long history behind it, but was usually used to denote the essential unity of the two continents Europe and Asia, spread as they were in contiguous manner across a gigantic land mass that stretches from the Atlantic on the West to the Pacific on the East. The new meaning that is nowadays attached to the term is directly related to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This historical event has, for the first time since the early to mid-nineteenth century, brought to the world stage a series of independent nation-states in areas that were only until a decade ago part of the Russian, and later the Soviet, state. The majority of these states share, moreover, certain economic, political, ethnic and religious characteristics. In a

narrow sense, then, Eurasia is now defined as the Caucasus and Central Asia. However, for reasons we will shortly go into, Eurasia is more usefully defined as the whole area that extends from the Balkans through Russia, Iran and Turkey all the way to Central Asia or, to paraphrase a former president of Turkey, Demirel, as the area that extends “from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China”.

The attentive reader will immediately have noted that all the great upheavals and major wars of the epoch of the NWO (the Gulf war, the ethnic wars of Yugoslavia and the Kosovo war, the Afghanistan war, the second Intifada etc.) have taken place either within the borders of Eurasia thus defined or in its immediate periphery. The reason for this should be clear: it was established above that the NWO is in fact an attempt by imperialism, primarily the US, at a realignment of the relations of power in the face of the vacuum created by the collapse of the second super-power, the Soviet Union. Eurasia is the epitome of such regions where this kind of power vacuum has appeared after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

1. The importance of Eurasia

However, simply to state that there is a power vacuum is not sufficient to understand why there has been so much turmoil in the region and why after 11 September it has become the epicentre of the upheaval in world politics. There are several factors which give Eurasia the special importance it has attracted from imperialism.

The first of these characteristics is related to the new geography of energy resources (petroleum and natural gas) established by the emergence on the world market of the Caspian basin region after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Some of the new independent Turkic republics of the Caucasus and Central Asia (primarily Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan) wield abundant energy resources, in addition to the gold and other mineral reserves of the entire region. Given the fact that Azerbaijan neighbours Iran, a major oil producer of the Middle East to the north, we are witnessing the formation of a new unified energy-producing region that extends all the way from the Persian Gulf in the south to Kazakhstan in the north.

The exact amount of oil and gas reserves of the Caspian basin seem to be open to debate as figures fluctuate quite widely according to different estimates. However, most reliable sources concur on the importance of these reserves. The International Energy Agency cites proven reserves of between 15-40 billion barrels, with an additional 70-150 billion barrels of possible reserves. These figures are not incompatible with the estimate given by the US Energy Administration Agency of total reserves between 179-195 billion barrels and the figure of 200 billion barrels of total reserves calculated in a report prepared by former US national security adviser Rosemarie Forsythe. On the other hand, overall natural gas reserves of the Caspian basin countries are estimated by the US Energy Administration Agency as between 565-665 trillion cubic feet. Petroleum is abundant in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, while Turkmenistan, which also has some oil, ranks first in natural gas, trailed by Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, in that order.

Such high and untapped reserves naturally whet the appetite of the big oil corporations and incite imperialist powers and regional states to intervene both on behalf of their respective corporations and for strategic reasons. With respect to drilling and production the dice have already been cast. The Tengiz oil fields, the richest known so far, of Kazakhstan are being exploited by the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) dominated by Chevron, with smaller

shares going to Mobil, Kazakhoil and Lukoil-Arco (Lukoil being a major Russian oil corporation). Azeri oil, on the other hand, has been entrusted to another consortium, the Azerbaijan International Oil Corporation (AIOC), in which, alongside a host of minor shareholders, BP-Amoco is the dominant actor.

However important this economic factor may be, though, the region's importance for the international power game cannot be reduced to it. The region presents an immense importance from the geopolitical and geostrategic points of view for future struggles over the whole of the Asian land mass in general. It is an open secret that, in Asia, US imperialism views Russia and China as potential threats. There are two distinct aspects to this perception. On the one hand, these are both countries thrown into socio-economic turmoil by the process of capitalist restoration. It is an urgent priority for the US and for imperialism to assure, in the face of the immense hardships suffered by the working people of these countries, that this process and the accompanying one of the integration of these countries into the capitalist world economy are carried through to their logical conclusion. It should not be doubted that should there be a move toward an interruption of these processes, whether through a mass uprising or a machination from the top, imperialism will throw its whole weight behind the restorationist camp and even, in the extreme case, intervene militarily. China poses an even greater threat from this point of view, since capitalist restoration there is taking place not under the political guidance of an *openly* restorationist regime, but coexists uncomfortably with the political superstructure of the bureaucratic workers' state. This creates a potentially explosive situation. The contradiction has to be solved, but how it will be solved is not clear at all.

The second aspect has to do with the sheer weight exercised by these two states on the affairs of the region, for historical, economic, political and military reasons. In other words, even if the process of capitalist restoration is carried through to its logical conclusion in both of these countries, they, and again especially China, with its 1.2 billion strong population, its vibrant economy and its growing military power, will be considered by the US, and imperialism in general, as formidable rivals to be kept under control.

This, then, is the second reason why Central Asia and the Caucasus hold great importance for the future of struggles over Asia. The countries of Central Asia provide an excellent geographic location for military operations against either country. This is why the military bases that the US built during the Afghanistan war in Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan and Afghanistan itself are of such immense importance. But given the fact that both Russia and China are nuclear powers and notwithstanding the development of the National Missile Defense (NMD) programme, a direct war of aggression on either country can only be considered as a measure of last resort. It is precisely here that the peculiar characteristics of the Eurasian region come into play.

In the vast geographic space that extends from the Balkans to the frontiers of China (and beyond, if one includes this country's controversial province of Xinjiang, *alias* Eastern Turkistan), history has for centuries unfolded as successive cycles of confrontation between two major ethnic families (the Slavs and the Turkic), along with the numerically smaller but significant Persians, and two religions (the Orthodox variant of Christianity and Islam). The Caucasus, both within the Russian Federation and in Transcaucasia in the south, is an ethnic cauldron, where hundreds of small nationalities exist side by side and intermingle, ready to erupt any moment into mutual carnage. As for the Turkic republics of Central Asia (and Tadjikistan), they have lived grudgingly under Russian rule since mid-nineteenth century.

Finally, a host of Turkic republics of different sizes exist inside the Russian Federation itself, even in zones remote from the Caucasus.

Given this overall picture, it would be wise to remember the characteristic features of the NWO strategy depicted earlier. The exploitation of national grievances for manipulative purposes, the utter disdain for national sovereignty (the “Annan doctrine”), the new tendency to set up international colonies—all the typical instruments of this strategy will be able to find ample material to draw upon in this region full of explosive ethnic and religious tensions. It is into this vast geographic space of smoldering ethnic tensions that US imperialism and its allies have made their entry through the Afghanistan war. It is no wonder then that, in his influential book, *The Grand Chessboard*, Zbigniew Brzezinski, one of the foremost representatives of the US foreign policy establishment, has recourse to so many ominous characterizations to describe the present situation in the area: this "volcanic region" that Brzezinski aptly dubs "the Eurasian Balkans", is, in his opinion, "likely to be a major battlefield", and the US and the so-called international community "may be faced here with a challenge that will dwarf the recent crisis in the former Yugoslavia".

This comparison is not fortuitous. Yugoslavia served, among other things, as the testing ground for the policies to be followed in Eurasia. We should then turn to this example in order to draw lessons for the future.

2. Yugoslavia as harbinger

There is a simple fact that most commentators, their attention fixed on the inter ethnic convulsions, forget to mention when discussing the decade-long convulsions and wars that shook former Yugoslavia. That country was, whatever its many specificities, a link in the chain of a series of states where capitalism had been abolished until the restoration process was set in motion by the momentous events of the late 80's and early 90's. The catastrophe that descended on Yugoslavia also happened to coincide with the proclamation of the NWO in 1990, at the threshold of the Gulf War. The coincidence is not spurious and it is imperative that both facts be taken into consideration if one wants to reach a sound analysis of the breakup of former Yugoslavia, of which the Kosovo War is a specific phase.

Yugoslavia's ordeal can only be understood within this overall context. It was a chain in the link of the Central and Eastern European countries as a whole, but due to its deep-rooted historical specificity had not collapsed in the same manner and with the same speed as the others. Moreover, it was the single most important regional power in the Balkans vis-a-vis NATO members Greece and Turkey and a country that had successfully defied Nazi occupation during the Second World War. And, for reasons of ethnic and religious affinity, it was at least a potential ally of Russia, the ever feared potential rival of the imperialist West. This is why, led by Germany, Austria and the Vatican, the West immediately gave diplomatic recognition to the secessionist states of Slovenia and Croatia in 1991 and why the United States encouraged the Bosnian Muslims to adopt an intransigent position in 1992, political acts that fanned the flames of ethnic war in Yugoslavia between 1991-1995. The ensuing dissolution, in matter of fact the dismemberment, of Yugoslavia and the penetration of NATO along with the European Union into the vacuum thereby created has resulted, above all, in a consolidation of the newly acquired power of imperialism in that region.

But even a rump Yugoslavia was a threat to the durability of an arrangement guaranteeing capitalist stability in the Balkans. Within the multi-pronged strategy of imperialism aiming to

assure the durability of capitalist stability in the Balkans and beyond, the dismemberment of Yugoslavia was an important element. Kosovo was thus a new phase in the creation of mini-states where once rose Tito's powerful Yugoslavia. Everything from sudden US support in 1998 to the KLA, an organization once classified as "terrorist" by the very same State Department, to the ultimatum of Rambouillet, which any child could predict would have been rejected by the Milosevic administration, shows that the road that led to the Kosovo war was meticulously and systematically paved by American policy.

The foregoing is not to deny that there existed forces within former Yugoslavia that worked towards the breakup of the country. There certainly were and imperialism could surely not have provoked the carnage that took place without these being present in the first place. However, that story itself has been told so one-sidedly that to untangle all the distortions would take us far from the aim of this paper. Space does not permit us to take this question up, but suffice it to say that a host of factors ranging from IMF-imposed economic austerity through uneven development of the republics in a country which had been organized along a more decentralized manner than the classical Soviet type state to the rabid nationalism propagated by the ruling bureaucracies (certainly Milosevic was not unique in this respect) played its part in the unfolding tragedy. From the standpoint of an analysis of the strategy of imperialism, though, what is decisive is that these were put to use with the aim of dismembering Yugoslavia.

If the foregoing analysis is right, one should then stop to pose the following question: if former Yugoslavia, important as it was on the scale of the Balkans, was considered to be a menace for capitalist stability, how would Russia and China, giants not only on the Asian but on a world scale fare as a threat?

The next question immediately suggests itself: what would be the difference between a war on Russia or China and World War III?

IV. Conclusion: globalism and the NWO as inherently crisis-prone processes

The argument presented in this paper seems sufficient to reach a very simple conclusion: for the working masses of the world, globalism and the NWO, *by their very nature*, promise nothing but increased poverty and the threat of war on a great scale. The important point here lies in the phrase "by their very nature". For "globalisation" is too often criticised, both within the international trade-union movement and the anti-globalisation movement, with respect to its *consequences*, but these consequences are hardly ever related to the strategy of globalism *per se*. As for the rising threat of war, become too clear to be ignored after 11 September, too many critics of US policy have talked about mistakes or intransigence on the part of an administration or other, while refusing to see through the logic of the NWO strategy itself.

Behind these attitudes lie a conception that perceives "globalisation" as inevitable and irreversible. This is precisely the idea that this paper wishes to demolish. On the one hand, "globalisation" should not be conflated with the progressive integration of the world in the economic, political and cultural spheres. "Globalisation" is only one modality through which such integration can be brought about. It is a form of international integration that is predicated on the voraciousness of capital for profit, on the unfettered play of market forces, on the dictates of the imperialist powers, hence overall on the law of the strongest. "Globalisation" is not any kind of integration; it is *neoliberal integration*. Hence to ask for an

“alternative globalisation” is to remain on the terrain defined by the strategy of mega capital and the imperialist states. “Globalisation with a human face” is a contradiction in terms.

Not only is “globalisation” (and the NWO as its political superstructure) not inevitable, but it is ridden with such contradictions that it is likely to collapse in the not too distant future. Here we can only point to these, leaving an elaboration to other occasions. There are at least three sets of such contradictions. There is, first, the series of contradictions of the world economy specific to the age of “globalisation”. Capital roams the world freely as if it were a “smooth” space of valorisation, but national spaces have their specificities, which, too often ignored, become so many bases of crisis, which then spills through a “contagion effect” into other economies, threatening the whole world economy. Against the background of the depressive phase of the long wave that the capitalist world economy is going through and the sea of debt and overcredit in which all economic units are floating, this dialectic of the national and the international creates a constant threat of financial collapse and a depression of the classical type. That this is so is amply shown by the evolution of the successive crises of Mexico (1994-95), of Asia (1997-98), Russia (1998), Brazil (1998-99), Argentina and Turkey (2001-2002) and the generalised recession of 2001-2002. Were the virtuality of such a generalised financial collapse to come about, it is beyond doubt that the world economy would again be fragmented into mutually hostile blocs, which would mean the total demise of the strategy of “globalisation”.

Secondly, the many different factors pointed out above that lead to a rise in the rivalry between different imperialist powers may engender a dynamic of cut throat competition and even outright hostility between the contending parties. It is obviously too early to imagine an open break of the EU or of Japan from the US. Compared to the hegemon, both are military dwarves. But the tension, especially between the US and the rising giant that is the EU, constantly surfaces in economic, political, cultural and even the military spheres. Given the experience of the twentieth century, it would be folly to rule out conflict between the various imperialist powers once circumstances become opportune. A generalised depression, if it comes about, will, of course, hasten the process immensely. But even short of this kind of open conflict between the major powers, the argument presented in this paper has tried to show that war and militarism are part and parcel of the NWO. This is what makes Eurasia (and China) the probable epicentre of world politics in the next two decades, despite other types of simmering tensions in other parts of the world such as Latin America, Southeast Asia and Western Europe.

Finally, capital’s assault on all the hard-won rights and gains of the working masses in the imperialist countries, in those where the restoration of capitalism is being played out and in the third world is bound to create a backlash against both impoverishment and the miseries of war. We should perhaps even say “was”, since all the indications are gathering that a sustained movement against the consequences of “globalisation” and the NWO has already started, in uneven fashion it is true, in many parts of the world. These take two distinct forms. On the one hand, there are those struggles that are confined to single countries, among which the French strikes of 1995, workers’ struggles in South Korea, the mass struggles in Ecuador, the general strikes in Greece, Italy and Spain, and above all the revolutionary days of December 2001 in Argentina stand out. That “contagion” is not confined to the crisis tendencies of capital but also to class struggle has amply been shown by the mass movements of Latin America (Bolivia, Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay etc.) in the course of 2002. There is, next, the series of international actions that started with Seattle in 1999. The demonstrations during EU summits (Nice, Gothenburg, Laeken, Barcelona, Seville etc.) partake of both types

of movement in that they bring together the working masses and the youth of different nations but nonetheless are limited in scope in their demands, focused as these are on EU policies. Despite the state of the socialist movement in the wake of the collapse of the bureaucratic workers' states, which creates so many obstacles in the way of a victory for the masses, it would be unwise to rule out a breakthrough in the future by the working class and the masses. This would again change the conjuncture entirely and signify the beginning of the end for "globalisation" and the NWO.

It is certainly true that none of this may happen, that the international bourgeoisie may be able to weather the deep-seated contradictions that flow from the structure of the capitalist world economy, inter-imperialist rivalries and class struggles and that globalism and the NWO strategy have the upper hand for the foreseeable future. To grant that possibility, though, is worlds apart from saying that it is inevitable. Of course the movement should start out by partial demands and fight for reforms in the system. What is suicidal, though, is not to start there, but to stop there. It is time for us to overcome the trauma of the defeat of the first wave of the socialist experience, draw the lessons of that experience and start thinking about and planning for a world that is really and truly "another world". For such a world is indeed possible and, what is more, necessary.