

The nature of this period: *Which way are the winds blowing?*

The swings from world revolution to counter-revolution

- ***Post WW II colonial revolutions***
- ***Neoliberalism of the 1970s & onward***
- ***Collapse of the Soviet Union***
- ***neoliberalism & resistance***
- ***The Arab Spring and its results***
- ***Right wing populism***
- ***The crisis in the working class***



What process is dominant today?

An Oaklandsocialist pamphlet

“We could be living in a year in which authoritarians take or keep power in nations across Europe, Latin America and in the U.S., while Putin continues to make advances in Ukraine and Hamas survives the war in Gaza. In short, the authoritarians still have the momentum on their side.” David Brooks, NY Times, 5/16/2024



Introduction

After a period in which liberation and revolution contended with repression and counter revolution, it seems that the latter may have gotten the upper hand at least for the moment. It is essential to recognize this.

Failing to do so, some on the left sink into a morass of confusion and political and moral degeneration. This includes left support for individual terrorism and for groups which, however much they may have risen due to oppression, are counter revolutionary nevertheless. (A counter revolution means the reversal or the opposite of a revolution, usually with the bloodiest of means, like what Putin, Iran and Assad are carrying out in Syria, or what the Ayatollah did in Iran in 1979. The period of the 1930s, when fascists seized power in Germany, Italy and Spain, was mainly a counter revolutionary period.) Left support for Hamas and their actions on Oct. 7 is but the most recent and visible example. Without understanding what has happened, we risk becoming demoralized and unable to take full advantage of what openings do exist. We risk being unable to fully prepare for what comes next, be it an even worse world situation or a new turn towards world revolution.

That is why it is vital for the world liberation struggles to have a general view of the nature of the period in which we live. That is what this pamphlet attempts to do - clarify the nature of the present world situation and what led up to it.

It is not possible to decisively define the nature of this present period because often we don't

know until a new period has decisively defined itself. The best we can do is look back at the general trends in previous periods, somewhat clarify the main trends today and try to see where they may be headed. By doing so, we hope to open up and contribute to a broader discussion on the issue. Such a discussion in and of itself would be an important step forward for the world liberation/socialist movement.

This article will start by looking at the periods following WWII. In none of these periods was any one trend the only one. The world is far more complex and contradictory than that. But certain elements were dominant. These periods were:

- 1. The post war economic boom in the industrialized capitalist world.**
- 2. The rise of austerity and “neo liberal” policies and 9/11.**
- 3. The collapse of the Soviet Union.**
- 4. The rise of resistance and of liberation movements vs. counter revolution.**
- 5. Some tentative conclusions on the nature of this period and possible developments.**

The Post WW II economic boom

The extended economic boom following WWII was driven by a number of factors. First and foremost was the rebuilding of Western Europe, which had been largely destroyed during the war. US capitalism, which had not been bombed or invaded, emerged as the world's only capitalist superpower and profited enormously from leading the way in rebuilding Western Europe. The US capitalist class also made large concessions to its working class. It did so partly because its enormous profits made the concessions affordable. Also, the memory of the militant strikes of the 1930s still lingered in the capitalists' minds. Finally, at that time US and world capitalism were competing with the Soviet Union for influence in the former colonial world and open class battles at home (or open attacks on black people during the civil rights movement) would have seriously damaged the US in that competition.

One of the main political methods of making concessions was through the economic policy of Keynesianism. This meant pumping dollars into the economy to smooth over the tendencies towards booms and busts. In part, the US capitalist class was able to make the rest of the world pay for this because the dollar was the only global currency. Under the 1944 Bretton Woods agreement, the US guaranteed that the dollar would be freely convertible to gold at \$35/ounce. In 1971, Nixon unilaterally abrogated that agreement and “closed the

gold window". The price of gold was allowed to "float", in other words to be determined by the world market. In 1973, US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger made a secret agreement with the Saudi regime that oil would be sold in dollars only. Since the rest of the world had to accept dollars, this meant they had to effectively pay for US economic policies.

The end of the post war boom

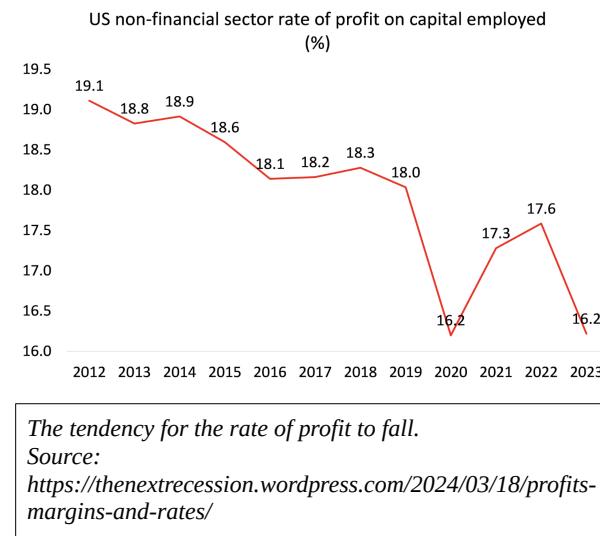
The end of Bretton

Woods was a signal for the end of Keynesianism and a new period in world history. The most clear symptom was rising inflation in the US. From 1973-6, inflation ran at 6.2%, 11.1%, 9.1% respectively. (And people in the US think it's bad today!) Also, the long term tendency for the rate of profit to decline reasserted itself¹. These factors meant the end of concessions to the US working class. The previous period of softer class relations had combined with the ugly role of the Soviet bureaucracy to further confuse the US working class. This strengthened the grip of the conservative and timid union bureaucracy. The US capitalist class also went on an open union busting campaign, starting with the building trades in the early 1970s and then passing to other industries.

Collapse of the Soviet Union

The Soviet bureaucracy played a contradictory role in the world. It supported various anti-colonial struggles while simultaneously doing its utmost to ensure that these struggles did not lead to the overthrow of capitalism itself. The Soviet bureaucracy competed with the US to influence and win into its orbit the newly independent nations of Africa and Asia. That competition was part of the reason why the US capitalists made concessions to the civil rights movement in the 1960s. The scenes of black people being beaten, bitten by police dogs, tear gassed and shot did not play well in the "Global South" after all!

The collapse of the Soviet Union was primarily due to the enormous inefficiency and corruption of the Soviet bureaucracy. Bureaucratic planning of the economy without workers



democratic control and management was a relative fetter when the task was simply to build basic industry. But when the Soviet Union developed into a modern, industrialized and highly complex society, the bureaucracy became an absolute fetter; it could no longer develop society at all. Of course US capitalism added pressure on to the Soviets, but it was the bureaucratic inefficiencies that prevented them from overcoming that pressure.

Neo liberal austerity

In addition to the end of the post war upswing we saw the increased "globalization" of capitalism. Enabled by the rise of computers and the internet, production and distribution of goods and services became globalized to a degree exceeding the wildest dreams of the capitalist class. Through this process, workers in every part of the world were thrust into ever greater competition with each other for who would work for less and who would

impose even fewer taxes and regulations on the capitalists. This is the infamous "race to the bottom". It meant accepting outright wage cuts and/or reducing taxes on the capitalists. These were taxes that funded the widespread social safety net in Western Europe. The choice presented was stark: Either accept these cuts or lose jobs as the capitalists pick up their stakes and move production to lower wage parts of the world.

Take the country that is considered to be the model of social democracy: Sweden. Jan Hägglund, who is a Swedish socialist leader, explained: "The most brutal attack on the welfare state from the Social Democrats in Sweden came during the four years 1994 - 1998. It was an ongoing austerity program for 126 billion Swedish kronor. The figures don't say that much today. But it was generally recognised that this was the most brutal attack on the public sector in the world at the time. It affected everything. Mainly there were cuts in the number of employees in health care, elderly care and schools. But also in the different systems that gave you money when you were sick, unemployed and belonged to the retired part of the workforce...."²

1 <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2024/03/18/profits-margins-and-rates/>

2 Jan Hägglund in an email to oaklandsocialist.

These attacks were carried out primarily by the Swedish Social Democratic Party. The same role was played by similar parties throughout Europe, including the British Labour Party. In the United States, which has never had a mass working class party, the union leadership continued to support the Democrats, who were carrying out similar attacks. As a result, the Social Democratic and Labour Parties in Western Europe lost almost all of their credibility and authority within their respective working classes. This created enormous demoralization,

confusion and disorganization in the working class. In the United States, a similar process occurred with the drift of layers of the working class away from the Democrats and towards the Republicans. This confusion was augmented by the capitalist propaganda of the 1980s, the years of Reagan in the US and Thatcher in Britain. This propaganda campaign even affected those outside the official sectors of the economy. I remember a young man in Oakland responding to my offering him a socialist newspaper by telling me, "I ain't interested in that shit. I sell drugs. I'm an entrepreneur."

Rising resistance and 9/11

However, the anger was building up. That was expressed by the world movement against globalization. That movement started among the youth but workers started to get involved also. The 1999 *Battle in Seattle*³ was an example. In that event protesters - both youth and workers - actually managed to shut down a conference of the World Trade Organization. Union members defied their own leadership, joined with the youth and stood up



1980s & '90s: major battles against wage cuts & capitalist globalization

to police clubs and tear gas. (The union members had been mobilized by the union leadership, primarily the leadership of the United Steel Workers. That leadership never mobilized its membership to join the radical youth again.) 9/11 reversed that developing mood overnight. Patriotism permeated every corner of US society and even in Europe.

Summary of the end of the 20th century

And so, at the opening of the new century (and one year after that opening) we had the collapse of the Soviet Union and the massive setback of the resistance to austerity due to the attack on the World Trade Center.

Stalinism also caused deep and permanent damage. Its powerful influence in the left meant that the struggles against imperialism and against exploitation and repression were distanced from the struggle for socialism. In the former colonial world, it also meant separation from the domestic class struggle. This has led to defeat after defeat. Sometimes those defeats were immediate, as in the 1973 coup in Chile or the 1979 rise to power of the reactionary mullahs in Iran. Other times, the defeat was more indirect and longer term, as in the retreat from socialism of the ANC government in South Africa. That retreat led to the bloody 2012 Marikana Massacre on the one hand and to the domination of a corrupt capitalist clique within the ANC.

While in recent years Stalinism had little direct influence in most of South West Asia/North Africa (SWANA), it has been central to erasing the collective memory of the link between the working class struggle and resistance to national oppression in that part of the world. As we will see, this has had disastrous counter-revolutionary consequences.

2000's: The "American Century"?

At the dawn of the 21st century the world capitalist class, led by the US capitalists, developed an enormous conceit. Liberal capitalism is "the end of history", they crowed⁴. US imperialism concluded that since nobody could stop them militarily, they could invade anywhere even without allies. That was the view of the neo-conservatives, and it led to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Quite aside from the

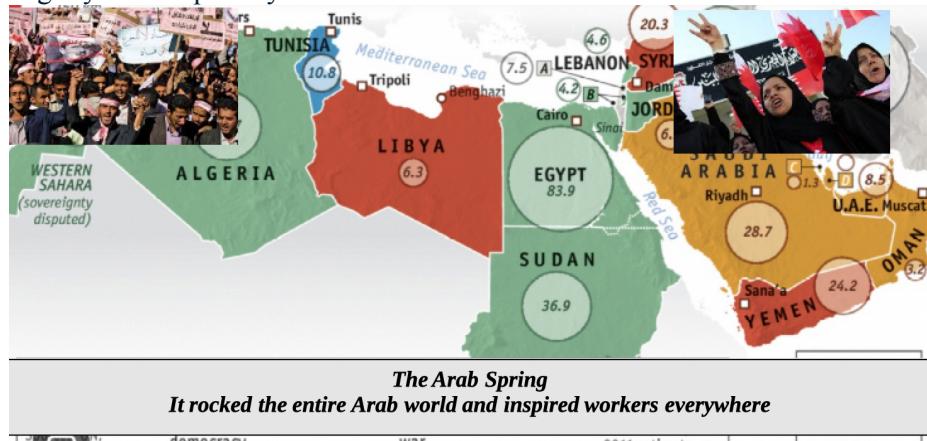
³ See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1999_Seattle_WTO_protests

⁴ <https://theconversation.com/the-end-of-history-francis-fukuyamas-controversial-idea-explained-193225>

suffering of the Iraqi people (when do the people in the Global South matter, after all?), the invasion proved to be a disaster for US imperialism. The capitalist class ditched the neo-conservative strategy and put a far more thoughtful and strategic leader, Barack Obama, into office.

It required ten years to recover from from the patriotic fervor created by the 2001 World Trade Center attack. In the United States, that recovery was expressed by the *Occupy Wall St.* movement which started in 2011. And by 2014, tech billionaire Nick Hanauer was warning that *The pitchforks are coming for us plutocrats*⁵ if a wealth was not distributed slightly more equitably.



An even more important development was the Arab Spring, starting in December of 2010 and continuing for several years after that.

Oaklandsocialist discusses that movement from a Marxist perspective in our pamphlet *What is Revolution?*⁶ The central theme of all the revolutions in the Arab Spring was democracy. However, underlying the revolutions was the neoliberal attacks on the working class and the poor. What happened was that the repressive and corrupt regimes such as that in Tunisia (where the Arab Spring originated) had an understanding with the masses of the people: The regimes would be allowed to be as corrupt and repressive as they liked so long as they maintained a certain degree of economic stability and security. The regimes did this through such measures as price supports for basic necessities like cooking oil, free or nearly free higher education, and limitations on foreign investment into the country. However, just as the globalization of the world economy forced social democracy in Western Europe to adopt austerity, so in the Arab world these dictatorships were forced to

5 <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/06/the-pitchforks-are-coming-for-us-plutocrats-108014/>

6 <https://oaklandsocialist.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/what-is-revolution.pdf>

retreat from government economic intervention into the economy. They adapted neoliberal policies and broke the understanding they had had with the Arab masses.

Dictatorships fell in one country after another. In Egypt, for example, a general strike forced Mubarak to step down. It seemed like one of the worst dictators of all, Assad in Syria, was about to fall, and Obama recognized this in 2011 by urging him to step down⁷ just as Obama had done regarding Mubarak. Obama and other world capitalist leaders feared that the Arab Spring would destabilize the entire region.

Unlike the other dictators, however, Assad chose to fight it out to the bitter end. The Syrian revolution gathered steam, and as always happens in any revolutionary process, committees were built to coordinate and advance the Syrian revolution. These were known as Local Coordinating Committees (LCC's). Also as always happens, these committees tended to overflow their bounds. They tended to take on the task of running the economy. Oaklandsocialist's article *Syria Revolution and Counter*

*Revolution*⁸ quotes reports from Syria on this process. While the LCC's did tend to organize the rank and file of the army, this was not done systematically. Therefore, Assad was able to hang on until Putin came to his rescue, starting around 2014. The counter revolution got under way. This counter revolution was actually supported by the US government, which by that time saw Islamic fundamentalism as the main threat. They feared that if Assad fell, that the fundamentalists would take power. Therefore, while the US gave some very limited assistance to the rebel army, they used that assistance to control that army and force it to attack the fundamentalists and the fundamentalists only. Michael Karadjis has thoroughly documented⁹ this. Although the Syrian revolution lives on, the counter revolution is dominant at this time. Elsewhere, the drive for a more open democracy and less corruption has largely been defeated. For example, Egypt is now controlled by the al Sisi military dictatorship.

The Arab Spring had global consequences. It even affected Israel. In Tel Aviv there was a series of

7 <https://abcnews.go.com/International/obama-calls-syrias-assad-step-freezes-assets/story?id=14330428>

8 <https://oaklandsocialist.com/2020/02/26/syria-revolution-and-counter-revolution/>

9 <https://mkaradjis.com/2019/05/14/regime-preservation-how-us-policy-facilitated-assads-victory/>

protests calling for “social justice” in 2011. However, the failure of the Arab Spring to radically transform Arab societies had the opposite effect throughout the world.

Putin and the counter revolution in Russia

The Russian counter revolution was an extended affair lasting nearly three quarters of a century. It started with the rise of the bureaucracy, as exemplified by Stalin, whom Trotsky called “the grave digger of the revolution”. The counter revolution remained frozen in place for many decades, while society finally fully reverted to capitalism in the early 1990s. The global counter revolution was given a huge boost as Putin consolidated his base in Russia around 2014. Oaklandsocialist’s pamphlet *Putin, Assad and the Syrian disaster*¹⁰ explains what happened. Putin started out simply as the head mafiosi. He saw no need to build a domestic political base around any sort of ideology. However, several developments caused him to change. One was the Maidan movement of 2014. This movement threatened to bring Russia’s most important neighbor into the Western European political and economic world (the EU) while it also exemplified the demand for democratic rights within Ukraine. Also the Arab Spring itself threatened Putin’s rule.

As a result, Putin started to develop a base through support for the reactionary Russian Orthodox Church and the dream of returning to the (supposed) glory days of the Tsarist Russian empire. Putin sought to play a role similar to that of Russian Tsar Alexander I. That tsar played the centralizing role in the “Holy Alliance” that tried to hold back bourgeois democratic advances in Europe over 100 years ago. Putin embarked on a 21st century version of a similar goal. A large part of that move was his military intervention to prop up Assad in Syria starting in 2014. At home, Putin justified this as being an intervention to save Christianity in Syria. Putin also intervened more openly in Ukraine following the Maidan uprising. There, he claimed he was intervening against Nazis, who were supposedly overrunning Ukraine.

Ironically (or hypocritically) it is the Putin regime which is playing the role of the world centralizing and organizing force for reaction, counter revolution, and even outright fascism. Putin, for example, has long had extremely close ties¹¹ to

10 <https://oaklandsocialist.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Putin-Assad-and-the-Syrian-Disaster-II-1.pdf>

11 <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/les-decodeurs/article/2022/04/21/what-are-marine-le-pen-s-ties-to->

the far right nationalist Marine le Pen. Elements of Germany’s semi-fascist Alternative for Germany/Deutschland (AfD) are known to support Putin. It is the same for nationalists and even fascists all around the world, including in the United States.

Putin, Assad and the Syrian Disaster

Understanding the real forces at work in Russia, Syria, the United States and in world capitalism



Child victims of Assad's latest sarin gas attack, this time in Douma

Former KKK “Grand Wizard” David Duke (on left) with Putin’s close advisor, the fascist Aleksander Dugin

No To the new “Holy Alliance”!

- Oppose not only US imperialism, but *all* imperialisms!
- No support for the far right or for any capitalist regimes!
- Oppose racism, sexism, homophobia and chauvinism everywhere, not just in the US!
- Oppose war criminal Assad!
- No links with the racist, chauvinist far right!
- For the US to admit Syrian refugees!
- Build international working class solidarity!

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www.oaklandsocialist.com

Price: \$2.50

What they hold in common is racism/white supremacy, ethno nationalism and “traditionalism”. This is the call for society to return to its supposed ancient roots and traditions. Hindutva - the Hindu nationalism of Narendra Modi - is an example. So is Islamic fundamentalism, which is the ideological basis for the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the United States, this ideology is not only represented by groups like the Proud Boys but by MAGA itself. A central theme of traditionalism is the call for a return to the “traditional” - meaning nuclear - family, which is headed or dominated by the “strong” male. This call is the justification for the attacks against the supposed global LGBTQ conspiracy, which is a central theme of Putin’s. In February of 2024, the Russian Supreme Court upheld the first conviction¹² under a Russian law which states that the LGBTQ movement is a dangerous extremist movement. Among other things, the law outlaws displaying the rainbow flag.

Here is an example of how the reversal of the Arab Spring had global consequences: Putin’s

vladimir-putin-s-russia_5981192_8.html#

12 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/02/15/russia-first-convictions-under-lgbt-extremist-ruling>

shoring up the Assad regime combined with the US invasion of Iraq and led to further rise of reaction. It was the basis for the rise of Islamic fundamentalist forces in Syria, including the Islamic State. This rise increased Islamophobia in Western Europe and the United States. In turn, Islamophobia played a large role in Trump's successful presidential campaign of 2016. His election then further strengthened MAGA-style nationalism and white supremacy in the United States.

The “demise of the nation state”

In 2018, the *Guardian* newspaper published an article by Rana Dasgupta called *The demise of the nation state*.¹³ That article is introduced by the following statement: “After decades of globalisation, our political system has become obsolete – and spasms of resurgent nationalism are a sign of its irreversible decline.” Dasgupta explains the effects of the globalization of capitalism. He writes: “National political authority is in decline, and, since we do not know any other sort, it feels like the end of the world. This is why a strange brand of apocalyptic nationalism is so widely in vogue. But the current appeal of machismo as political style, the wall-building and xenophobia, the mythology and

solidarities: roving tribal militias, ethnic and religious sub-states and super-states. Finally, the old superpowers’ demolition of old ideas of international society – ideas of the “society of nations” that were essential to the way the new world order was envisioned after 1918 – has turned the nation-state system into a lawless gangland; and this is now producing a nihilistic backlash from the ones who have been most terrorised and despoiled....

“Exhaustion, hopelessness, the dwindling effectiveness of old ways: these are the themes of politics all across the world. This is why energetic authoritarian ‘solutions’ are currently so popular: distraction by war (Russia, Turkey); ethno-religious “purification” (India, Hungary, Myanmar); the magnification of presidential powers and the corresponding abandonment of civil rights and the rule of law (China, Rwanda, Venezuela, Thailand, the Philippines and many more).”

Dasgupta sees three main elements of a crisis that will only worsen. These are: “First, the existential breakdown of rich countries during the assault on national political power by global forces. Second, the volatility of the poorest countries and regions, now that the departure of cold war-era strongmen has revealed their true fragility. And third, the illegitimacy of an “international order” that has never aspired to any kind of “society of nations” governed by the rule of law.”

Political consequences

What Dasgupta is describing is the combined consequences of the globalization of capitalism.

One is the attacks on the standard of living of workers in the industrialized capitalist world. The general success of those attacks, which we have discussed above, led to enormous insecurity, confusion and demoralization within the working class. The complicity of the leadership of the working class meant the extreme weakening of the organizations of the class (both political parties and unions) with nothing to take their place. This created a huge vacuum.

Meanwhile, as Dasgupta explains, the crisis in the former colonial world proceeded apace. National borders, which were often drawn up by colonial forces for their own convenience, tended to collapse. Also, whereas capitalism never was able to provide even limited prosperity or stable democracy in the former colonial world, the situation became even worse following the end of the post war boom and the globalization of capitalism. Outright starvation, ethnic cleansing, wars both internal and external, repression, corruption and mass slaughter



race theory, the fantastical promises of national restoration – these are not cures, but symptoms of what is slowly revealing itself to all: nation states everywhere are in an advanced state of political and moral decay from which they cannot individually extricate themselves.

“Why is this happening? In brief, 20th-century political structures are drowning in a 21st-century ocean of deregulated finance, autonomous technology, religious militancy and great-power rivalry. Meanwhile, the suppressed consequences of 20th-century recklessness in the once-colonised world are erupting, cracking nations into fragments and forcing populations into post-national

¹³<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/apr/05/demise-of-the-nation-state-rana-dasgupta>



(1) Itamar Ben Gvir (4) Bezalel Smotrich: Israel's fascist MK's

became the order of the day for capitalism in the former colonial world.

These catastrophes led to mass migrations from the Global South, whether it be from Central

America and Mexico to the United States or from Asia and North Africa mainly to Europe. A united and advancing workers movement would have offered solidarity to these refugees and would have seen their presence as an enormous opportunity to learn and to build international working class solidarity. But for the reasons cited, there was little or no such movement. Instead, insecurity and reaction had taken its place. So, anti-immigrant nationalism from Britain's Brexit to Germany's AfD to France's National Rally, to MAGA in the US took its place.

The world liberation struggles and their results

In the former colonial world, we have seen waves of liberation struggles. Examples include:

- The resistance to Zionist oppression, going all the way back to the Arab general strike of 1934 in Palestine.
- The 1979 revolution against the Shah in Iran and the 2022 attempted revolution against the mullah dictatorship.
- The revolution against apartheid in South Africa.
- The Arab Spring, including the Syrian revolution.

In the industrialized world, these struggles included:

- The anti-globalization/anti WTO movements
- The Occupy Wall St. movements
- The Black Lives Matter movement

In each case, these struggles or revolutions did not achieve their full goals or were outright defeated. As is always the case with either partial or outright defeats, the result has been the rise of reaction, in this case in the form of nationalism, for example anti-immigrant and "traditionalist" nationalism in Europe and the US and religious-based nationalism in SWANA. A similar development has happened in Russia under Putin, as described. It's the same in India with the rise of Hindutva, or Hindu nationalism and traditionalism.

The socialist movement

The rise of reaction and in some cases outright fascism is also related to the collapse of revolutionary socialism. *Oaklandsocialist* has discussed this collapse in detail [many times](#), including this detailed article on [Fascist ideas on the left](#) and more recently in this article [Putin draws the left into the far right web](#),¹⁴ which is also a [video/slide show](#). As is inevitable, the revolutionary socialist left has always partly reflected some of the traditional weaknesses of the US working class movement itself. The influence of Stalinism enormously added to and concentrated these weaknesses. The result has been a socialist movement operating in its own echo chamber isolated from the working class and sucked into "campism". This term means supporting any imperialist "camp" that is in conflict with US imperialism, no matter how repressive and reactionary that camp may be. First and foremost that means Russian imperialism. We explained that tendency in some detail in the article on Putin drawing the left into a far right web. This "socialist" left operates in its own silo.

Israel/Palestine, Hamas & Gaza

The effects of these defeats and political confusions and outright betrayals have been concentrated together like the rays of the Sun through a magnifying glass. That is what we see in the present crisis in Israel/Palestine and SWANA in general.

Largely due to the role of Stalinism, a united working class resistance to Zionism withered and died in the years leading up to and including the founding of the State of Israel (1946-8). This resulted in a resistance to Zionist oppression which fell under the control of reformists like the PLO and then under outright right wing religious nationalists like Hamas.

Socialists need to be clear on what Hamas is: There are major differences, but there are also important similarities between Hamas and the Zionist movement, especially in Zionism's early years. Both arose as a response to murderous national repression, but that doesn't change their right wing character. In the case of Zionism, it depended first upon the Ottoman Empire, then on the British empire, for its existence. It also used terrorism against the Palestinian people. In the case of Hamas, socialism has always [opposed the](#)

14 <https://oaklandsocialist.com/2024/04/16/video-putin-draws-the-left-into-far-right-web/>

method of individual terrorism¹⁵ for good reason. Nor is it an accident that Hamas depends on several of the reactionary states in SWANA.

That includes the repressive and corrupt Iranian regime. And whereas people in Iran were celebrating¹⁶ the recent death by helicopter accident of the criminal head of state there Ebrahim Raisi, Hamas sent a message of condolence¹⁷ to the Iranian regime. In it Hamas expressed “our shared feelings of grief and sorrow” at the mass murderer’s death. *Both Zionism and Hamas replace working class solidarity and socialism with ethnic/religious nationalism.*



**The early Zionism of Theodore Herzl (top) and Hamas (bottom):
They actually have a lot in common.**

Just as unequivocal support for the struggle of the Jewish people against murderous repression leading up to and during WW II should not flow over into any support for Zionism, the same must be said of the struggle of the Palestinian and Iranian people and Hamas or the Islamic Republic of Iran. But yet the left, socialist and otherwise, does exactly that. For example, the widely followed “Democracy

15 <https://oaklandsocialist.com/2024/04/26/why-marxism-opposes-individual-terrorism/>
16 <https://news.sky.com/video/some-celebrations-across-iran-after-president-ebrahim-raisis-death-13140964>
17 <https://www.newsweek.com/iran-hamas-raisi-crash-1902329>

Now” carried extensive reports¹⁸ on the state funeral for Raisi but not a word about the celebrations inside Iran over his death. And Red Star, the supposed Marxist caucus of DSA which has three members on the DSA National Political Committee, actually “commands Hamas”¹⁹ for Oct. 7.

Reactionary and even fascist movements have often developed in response to oppression. Nazism arose in large part in response to the national oppression imposed on Germany by the Allied powers’ Treaty of Versailles following WW I. That didn’t make Nazism any more defensible. The same is true of Zionism, as this article has pointed out. And the same is true for Hamas. Genuine working class forces unequivocally opposed the Treaty of Versailles and opposed anti-Semitism while at the same time they opposed Nazism and Zionism. Why should the case of Palestine and Hamas be any different?

In all these cases, as the disaster becomes more acute, so does the confusion and even outright betrayal on the left become more glaring and more in need of open confrontation.

Perspectives: Israel and its allies

Israel is headed towards outright ethnic cleansing of Gaza. It is also accelerating its settlement building in the West Bank. There, this includes accelerated settlers’ terrorist attacks, some of which are little different from outright pogroms. (The original pogroms were the mass anti-semitic riots mainly in Eastern Europe and Russia. The rioters killed tens of thousands of Jews.) This ethnic cleansing is led by outright fascist forces, the most prominent representatives of which are Israeli Minister of National Security Itamar Ben Gvir and Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich. We must not exaggerate or overuse the term “fascism”, but that is what these two actually represent. They represent an armed racist mob that does not hesitate to use deadly violence. This mob has its largest base among the settlers, especially the youth, but it is not confined to them. One of Israel’s main daily newspapers is *Haaretz*. They represent the thinking of the main wings of Israeli capitalism and they oppose Smotrich and Ben Gvir. This indicates that the mainstream of the Israeli capitalist class does not want the fascists to take power, but what the

18 https://www.democracynow.org/2024/5/21/headlines/funeral_proceedings_begin_in_iran_for_pres_ebrahim_raisi_foreign_minister_hossein_amir_abdollahian
19 <https://redstarcaucus.org/we-do-not-condemn-hamas/?ref=red-star-newsletter>

capitalist class wants is not necessarily the final word. As we saw in Germany in 1933, being a minority is not necessarily the final word. Like in Germany then, the Israeli fascists are armed, organized, determined and know exactly what they want: an Arab free Greater Israel²⁰, from the river to the sea and ultimately even far beyond (*see map*).

An outright fascist Israel which conducted mass and overt ethnic cleansing would tend to elevate the ethno/religious nationalist forces throughout the Arab world.

If fascists are able to seize power and move decisively down that road, this would have global consequences. It would empower similar forces around the world. In the United States, the Republican Party is united in giving unequivocal support to whatever Israel does. In order to support a fascist Israel, the Republican Party would have to move even further to the right and adopt even more overtly Islamophobic and racist rhetoric and policies. Nor would the Democrats be untouched. Biden is right when he said that “if there were not an Israel we would have to invent it. It is the best \$3 million investment we make.”²¹ This expresses the fact that Israel is the only truly reliable ally in SWANA. Therefore, as the representatives of the major wings



*Israel fascists' dream of a "Greater Israel"
It goes "from the river to the sea"... and far beyond!*

of the US capitalist class, the Democrats could not simply denounce and cut ties with a fascist Israel. The Democrats, too, would have to move further to the right although not as far as the Republicans.

In other words, this would mean a step towards the further breakdown in world capitalist order. While this world order does not function in the interest of the working class and the oppressed, descent into chaos and war would be even worse.

20 <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-06-18/article/.premium/lebanon-part-of-the-promised-land-israels-messianic-right-wing-targets-new-territory/00000190-2b9d-d340-a1f8-2b9d18220000>

21 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HZs-v0PR44>

And what we see regarding world order between states we are also seeing within individual states.

Perspectives: Haiti

The situation in Haiti can serve as an example of both the tendency towards fragmentation of society and the lumpenization of the capitalist class. First, we must be clear on the roots of the disaster in Haiti. These roots epitomize the results of centuries of imperialist crimes. Haiti produced enormous wealth for colonial France. That wealth was based on the blood of the enslaved Africans. In fact, it can be argued that the wealth Haiti produced was the basis for much of France's colonial expansion around the world. Then, after the first and only successful slave revolution in history. Then Haiti was forced to pay reparations to the French slave owners for the liberation of and by the slaves! It is estimated that in today's dollars and with accrued interest, France owes Haiti up to \$200 billion or more.²² Then the US imposed an embargo on Haiti. Following that, in 1919 US forces invaded Haiti. The US Marines carried out what was probably the greatest gold heist in history when they walked into the Haitian national bank and stole the 2021 equivalent of \$13.5 billion of gold that was sent to CitiBank in New York.²³ That oppression has never ceased, with Bill and Hillary Clinton pressuring Haiti to keep wages at rock bottom.²⁴

This is the background for the present disastrous situation in Haiti. The national government has all but collapsed. Like a poster child for the rest of the world, the Haitian working class is fragmented and a massive vacuum is being filled by various gangs which make their money off of kidnapping and the drug trade. These gangs are really nothing but a lumpen capitalist class. According to the *NY Times* (05/21/2024), the notorious gangs in Haiti have tended to unite behind one of its most powerful - “5 Segonn” - which allegedly controls the great majority of Haiti's principal city, Port Au Prince. 5 Segonn apparently is connected with the former head of security for former Haitian president Jovenel Moïse. That former head of security is named Dimitri Hérard. Moïse was assassinated in 2021, and Hérard was imprisoned for

22 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/apr/18/haiti-france-reparations>

23 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_occupation_of_Haiti#:~:text=Urged%20by%20the%20National%20City,%E2%80%93%20on%20December%2017%2C%201914.

24 <https://www.currentaffairs.org/news/2016/11/what-the-clintons-did-to-haiti>

his alleged role in that crime. He escaped from prison in a general prison break in February of this year.



5 Segonn: They have drones and other modern military equipment.
Here they are lined up with the most modern assault weapons.

Like all capitalists, 5 Segonn has international ties and allegedly is getting its modern weapons from Colombia and other countries in South America. They are allegedly doing so through their contacts with corrupt elements in those countries' military. Many of the manufacturers of these arms are European although Brazil also has a large and profitable arms industry. The main source of income for these gangs is the international drug trade. Although the main lumpen capitalists engaged in that trade may be based in Latin America, US capitalism also plays its role. Casey Michel in his book *American Kleptocracy* (reviewed by [Oaklandsocialist](#)) documents how the US banking industry is in that trade up to its neck through its role in money laundering.

So we see how Haiti's descent into anarchy and chaos may be an extreme example but it also results from and contributes to the same descent throughout the Americas, even including the United States.

The working class socialist alternative: SWANA

As they say, while there is life there is hope, and while it may be in retreat the world working class movement and genuine, internationalist socialism, is still very much alive. The question is: How, through what channels, could it make a comeback?

Just as the world crises are in many ways centered around SWANA and Ukraine, so a healthy working class and socialist movement may see a revival centered there also. With regard to SWANA, Iran and Syria may have the greatest immediate potential. That's because masses of the population in those two countries have been thoroughly inoculated against Islamic fundamentalism. The Iranian people

have lived under that rule since 1979 and millions of Syrians have fought the fundamentalists for the last ten years or so. In fact, even recently there have been [protests against the fundamentalists](#) in Idlib, Syria.²⁵

Although there are some divisions between the people of Syria and Iran, they have the same enemies including both reactionary Islamic fundamentalism and also Putin, who supports both the Iranian and the Syrian regimes. So links between a renewed movement in those two countries would be natural. It would also be natural for such a movement to tend to spread to elsewhere in the region. Such a movement would be driven to take up the class struggle and from there socialism would tend to arise once again.

To the extent that such a revolution developed, it would have an impact inside Israel. It would not only inspire Israeli Palestinians; it would also affect Israeli Jews. [An article](#) in the Israeli daily newspaper *Haaretz* (May 4, 2024) described the inevitable remorse and guilt that some Israeli soldiers felt over their role in Gaza. The problem is that there is no organized political force that can attract those with such feelings and provide them with a political direction, one which takes into account the interests of the entire working class in Israel/Palestine and in the region as a whole. A renewed regional revolution along the lines described above would tend to provide that center.

The working class socialist alternative: Ukraine

Socialism still has a generally bad name in Ukraine because it still is associated with the national oppression under the old Soviet Union. However, capitalism has not exactly been a bed of roses for Ukrainians. Ukrainian socialist Denys Pilash has [explained](#) that Ukrainian workers are under the attack of Russian missiles and Ukrainian real estate developers. Especially if Russia's invasion is defeated, the focus of Ukrainian workers will tend to turn towards the attack of the real estate developers and the rest of the capitalist class. Like in Syria and Iran, the Ukrainian working class will have no illusions in Putin. And unlike in the US and elsewhere in the world, neither will a renewed socialist movement.

That is why it seems the best hope for a renewed socialist movement that is free of both the covert and the overt influence of Putinism lies in those three countries – Iran, Syria and Ukraine. That doesn't mean that socialists outside those three

25 <https://www.dw.com/en/syrian-protesters-rise-up-against-islamists-in-idlib/a-69166416>

countries, those who have not betrayed the principle of international working class solidarity, have no role to play. Far from it. It does mean that we may have a difficult row to hoe. It also means that the alternative is absolutely disastrous, especially when one takes into account how the far right dismisses the danger of global climate change and will actually take on policies to accelerate this process.

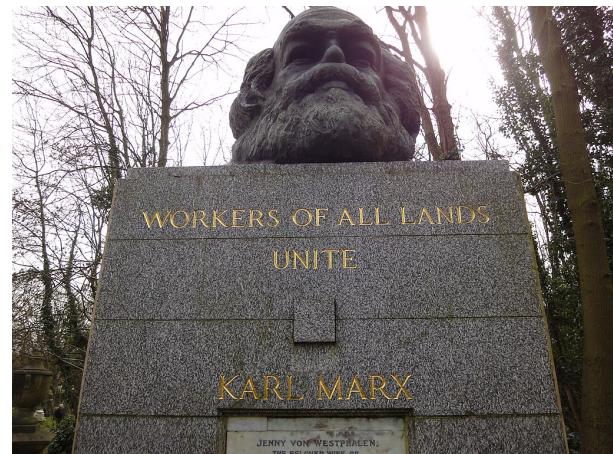
The electoral loss of Bolsonaro in Brazil (2023) and of Le Pen in France (2024) and possibly of Trump later this year are welcome reprieves. But these movements will not go away. The same is true for “Reform UK” in Britain.

We have not even touched on the issue of global climate disruption and environmental collapse. This process is just starting to really bite. As it accelerates, it will force even greater numbers of environmental refugees from the global South. Under present circumstances this will intensify even more the tendencies towards nationalism. The reason we have not really explored this issue here is that it feels almost like it is out of human control and we can only hope that a new working class socialist movement will develop before it is too late.



As this pamphlet is being completed, Israel's daily newspaper *Haaretz* is reporting on this riot at an Israeli military installation. What happened was that several Israeli soldiers sodomized a Palestinian prisoner with a pipe, severely injuring him. These soldiers were arrested and then these Israeli's invaded the military compound in protest of their arrest. No form of sadistic torture was too great for them. They were joined by at least one member of the Knesset and the Israeli police stood aside to permit this riot. In subsequent debates in the Knesset, members defended this sadism.

In 1921, Leon Trotsky [wrote](#) that “History says to the working class, “*You must know that unless you cast down the bourgeoisie, you will perish beneath the ruins of civilization. Try, solve this task!*”²⁶ Today, it is not just “history” but the present situation giving us this warning. What alternative, then, do socialists have but to cast off all the propaganda of different capitalist forces, Putin included, no matter how unpopular that may make us at the moment?



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