

The New Arrangement of Imperialist Powers in the New Global Conditions



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Introduction

As part of its strategy to consolidate its position in the new world order, China introduced the “New Silk Road” project in 2013. This plan is one of the most ambitious imperialist initiatives in modern history. The New Silk Road, with its infrastructure, will allow China to access the ends of the globe and expand China’s imperialist power everywhere.

The US, Japan and major European powers are worried about China gaining power, and divisions and dispersion within the former Western bloc have intensified. Recently, imperialist tensions have also intensified between the US and China on the one hand, and the US and Iran on the other. Former US allies in the thieves’ lair otherwise known as the Security Council did not vote in favour of the US resolution, and the US suffered a humiliating defeat. News of the 25-year strategic agreement between Iran and China has attracted a lot of attention, not only in Iran but all over the world. Even the Western and Chinese media have talked about the axis of China, Russia and Iran.

But an examination of the relations between China, Russia and Iran shows that each of them has pursued its own imperialist interests, and the divergence in their imperialist interests can clearly be seen. However, it seems that all three of these countries tend to converge on the issue of competition with the West, led by the US.

The Islamic bourgeoisie describes the 25-year agreement with China as a “comprehensive China-Iran strategic partnership based on a win-win approach”. In other words, the Islamic bourgeoisie believes that both countries will benefit from the agreement. The Islamic bourgeoisie claims that this agreement will not only boost Iran’s economic growth but also strengthen Iran’s position in the region. The reaction of pro-Western opposition has been accompanied by anti-communist hysteria, declaring that the “Communist Government of China” violates national sovereignty; that this agreement is not in the national interests of Iran, and that it will perpetuate totalitarianism and the violation of human rights and democracy. The pro-Western opposition has written a letter to the Chinese government, condemning the “bondage agreement”, asking for it to be rescinded and calling upon the West to oppose this “disgraceful agreement”.

Such an agreement has not come out of the blue, although the true dimensions of this agreement are not yet clear. This agreement can only be evaluated in the context of the New Silk Road strategy, the new world order and the inefficiency of the “Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action” (JCPA), especially after the US withdrawal from the JCPA. The Islamic bourgeoisie has increasingly turned to Russia, and especially to China, in order to counter the political and economic pressures of the West, led by the US. The Islamic bourgeoisie sees the Chinese alternative as the most viable alternative to save the bankrupt peripheral economy, to counter destructive US sanctions, to circumvent the dollar and to invest.

China is also pursuing its imperialist goals, especially to compete with the US and to access not only the markets of Asia and Africa but also Europe, through the New Silk Road project. This agreement is part of the New Silk Road project, and its purpose is to achieve the strategies of Iran and China, in line with their imperialist goals.

The first step towards an internationalist explanation (and intervention in the class struggle) is to examine the new arrangement of the imperialist powers and the balance of power among social classes in the new world conditions, and to gain a better understanding of the new conditions from an internationalist perspective. It is hoped that this article will be a step towards fuelling debates in this context within the proletarian political milieu.

History of Iran-China relations

Following the Soviet agreement with the US in 1966, whereby nuclear weapons were to be limited to those countries that already had them, the Mao regime condemned the Soviet agreement with the United States as “an important conspiracy to maintain the monopoly of nuclear weapons in the hands of the great powers”. The crisis in the counter-revolutionary camp took on a public and serious form, paving the way for China’s integration into the Western economic bloc.

The history of Iran’s relations with China, after Mao came to power, dates back to the early 1970s, and it has been affected by ping-pong diplomacy. In response to the invitation extended by the Chinese, calling upon the US ping-pong team to visit Beijing, US diplomats duly made travel arrangements for Kissinger (the US president’s national security adviser). Finally, after the necessary conditions were met, then-US President Richard Nixon went to China in February 1972 to meet with Mao and other Chinese officials. The meeting led to normalization of relations with the Western bloc, led by the US, which, in turn, integrated China into the Western economic bloc. At that time, Iran was the main US ally in the region.

Mao’s regime had close relations with the Shah’s regime in Iran. The Shah’s sister travelled to China in May 1971 and met with Mao. The following year, in 1972, the Queen and the Iranian Prime Minister travelled to China. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese greeted the Queen with dancing and stomping.

With the change of political power in Iran and the coming to power of the Islamic bourgeoisie, relations between Iran and China have remained stable despite the ups and downs. China sold about \$2 billion worth of weapons to Iran during the eight-year Iran-Iraq war, while it sold more than \$5 billion worth of weapons to Iraq during the same period. During the Iran-Iraq war, silkworm missiles, which played an important role in the balance of power, were exported to Iraq more than Iran. China exported about 80 missiles to Iran while simultaneously exporting 200 missiles to Iraq [1].

In the 1990s, China severely limited its military cooperation with Iran in order to improve relations with the US. Later, when Iran's nuclear case went from the IAEA Board of Governors to the UN Security Council, China moved in line with Washington's policy. In February 2005, out of 35 members of the Board of Governors, only Cuba, Venezuela and Syria voted in favour of Iran. China and Russia voted against Iran alongside the US, and Iran's case was sent to the Security Council. The US cannot veto recommendations made by the IAEA Board of Governors, but it does have a veto in the Security Council.

Iranian officials had hoped, in the Security Council, China or Russia would veto a resolution against Iran. Meanwhile, China and Russia did not veto a resolution, nor did they abstain; moreover, they voted against Iran in all resolutions. China actually voted for Security Council Resolution 1929 against Iran, while even Turkey and Brazil voted against it, imposing the most destructive sanctions on Iran's defence industry.

Following Trump's inauguration, the withdrawal of the US from the JCPA, and the consequent imposition of harsh sanctions against Iran, China (although opposed to the US withdrawal from the JCPA) supported the US sanctions. China's oil imports from Iran in 2019 decreased to 300,000 barrels per day, which is half the number of imports made in 2018, while China's oil imports from Saudi Arabia and Russia increased. The Chinese company CNPC (which signed the contract for development of the North Azadegan oil field) has practically refused to develop the second phase. Meanwhile, in the last 20 years, Iran's oil exports to China have been crucial, reaching more than \$27 billion a year in 2014.

At one point, China and Iran struck a bargain to circumvent US sanctions on Chinese goods and Iranian oil, and in December 2019, a joint manoeuvre by Iran, Russia and China (called the "Maritime Security Belt") was held in the Oman Sea. Chinese media described the military exercise as a "warning to the United States".

Russia's weakening of Iran's position in Syria

In line with its imperialist interests, Iran has played an active role in supporting the criminal Assad regime. This support has not been limited to military support, but despite the bad economic conditions, Iran has spent about \$40 billion since the beginning of the unrest in Syria during this period. With a green light from the US, Israel has repeatedly carried out large-scale air and missile strikes against Iranian positions in Syria, and the Iranian gangsters are now silent and humiliated. Awareness of Israeli attacks on Iranian positions in Syria or the Syrian positions themselves, and Russia's failure to prevent these, may once have been just speculation but has been a matter of course for years. The S-300 missile system is only for defending Russian military positions and bases in Syria. Russia prefers its imperialist interests, maintaining a kind of balance in its relations with Iran and Israel. Russia's green-lighting of Israeli attacks on Syria, the formation of a joint working group by Israel and Russia, and attempts to circumvent Iran in Syria's reconstruction projects have prevented Iran

from having the upper hand in Syria. In other words, Russia needs to weaken Iran's influence over Syria. Russia has used Iran as leverage.

Russia is aware that the process of rebuilding Syria will be very difficult without investment by Europe and the Gulf countries. Both the Europeans and the Gulf states oppose Iran's presence in Syria and will certainly make any assistance to the Syrian reconstruction process conditional upon Iran's withdrawal from Syria. Russia is also pursuing its strategic goals in the Middle East.

To counter Israeli attacks, Iran has moved some of its bases to eastern Syria to avoid Israeli attacks. Iran is pretending to wait for the US election in November, and then respond to Israel and the US.

Sino-Russian relations

Although the Soviet Union played a key role in reorganizing China's economy and military following Mao's victory, tensions between the two countries later escalated over imperialist interests. Following the Soviet agreement with the US in 1966, limiting nuclear weapons to those countries that possessed them, the Sino-Soviet dispute took a serious turn. The culmination of the seven-month border dispute between China and the Soviet Union without a declaration of war came in 1969.

Although the dispute eased somewhat following the collapse of the Eastern bloc, China and Russia remain rivals. China is trying to advance Russia's sphere of influence and consolidate its position. Russia also perceives China's policies in Central Asia to be in conflict with its imperialist interests. Russia has close relations with India, which is one of China's rivals.

Rising tensions between the United States, on the one hand, and China and Russia, on the other, are driving China and Russia to cooperate more on a united front against the US. For China, Russia is important as a supplier of energy and military equipment. It was in this context that in 2014, a \$400 billion Russian gas export contract with China was signed by the two countries. Since 2016, China has increasingly favoured oil imports from Russia over Saudi Arabia in order to avoid becoming dependent on Middle East oil.

Russia and the US have more than 90% of the world's nuclear weapons. Russia is the world's second-largest military power. In recent years, in addition to upgrading its military equipment and weapons, Russia has introduced new weapons into its military. Russia's military power in Sino-Russian relations with the US can be seen as beneficial to China and Russia but detrimental to Sino-Russian domestic rivalry because it demonstrates Russia's superiority.

China's imperial ambitions for world power

Understanding China's imperialist ambitions is possible only through understanding the concept of imperialism in the age of capital decay, that is, through understanding the development of global capitalism and the world market. If, in the age of capitalist growth, imperialists were looking for new colonies, in the age of capitalist decline (in the age of imperialism), imperialism is about redistributing the world market, and this includes all countries of the world. In such a situation, all countries, whether large gangsters like the US and China or small gangsters like Iran and Turkey, are trying to weaken one another and conquer one another's markets.

The United Kingdom was the first capitalist and industrial country in the world, followed by countries such as Germany, France and the US. It is important to note that foreign investment has played an important role in financing industrialization, especially in the US and Germany. Investment is a key factor in the industrialization of a society. State capitalism is not attractive for foreign investment, and a country's government will have limited opportunities for investment. Lending in state capitalism has serious limitations, and a lack of credit is the most important reason for lack of investment in state capitalism. The fundamental question is how was the necessary funding for China's industrialization process obtained?

Since the early 1970s, China has sought to break free from its isolation and integrate into the Western economic bloc. Following ping-pong diplomacy, Kissinger travelled to China to arrange for Nixon to meet with Mao and other officials. Seven months after Nixon's visit to China, China also established diplomatic relations with Japan and improved relations with the West.

After Mao's death, Deng brought about serious changes in the Chinese state capitalist system, in other words, legalization of private property, which paved the way for the capitalist credit system. Investment and lending have played an important role in China's development, modernization and economic growth.

Cheap labour, government subsidies, low-cost government loans and a stable national exchange rate provided the basis for trade surpluses and high foreign exchange reserves for domestic and foreign exporters. Chinese exporters sold their goods in dollars or other currencies, but wages and most raw materials were paid for in yuan, so foreign currency was converted into yuan by domestic banks. The result of this trend in the long term was an exponential increase in China's foreign exchange reserves, which made it possible for China to finance loans, in turn, ensuring China's historic growth in GDP and investment. China kept its national exchange rate stable by buying dollars in international markets and, as a result, was able to maintain its competitiveness, as well as ensure export-based growth. China has also severely restricted private investment abroad. One of the most important factors in China's economic growth is that China is the world's largest producer and exporter, and exports have played an important role in China's economic growth. About 59% of China's

exports have been to metropolitan capitalism, and China’s year-on-year trade balance is generally positive. The US trade deficit with China widened sharply between 1985 and 2018 [3]. The table below shows how many US dollars are imported into China each year, which can be used for investment:

Year	Balance of trade
1985	-0.006
1990	-10.431
1995	-33,789
2000	-83.833
2005	-202.278
2010	-273.042
2015	-367,328
2018	-418,954

This caused China’s foreign exchange reserves to rise sharply, enabling the country to top the world, with more than \$4 trillion. China will use its dollar reserves to further strengthen its international position. China holds \$1.3 trillion in US Treasury securities.

China has been able to stabilize its national currency, keeping tax rates low and, in particular, providing cheap Chinese labour, which has played an important role in attracting foreign investment, as Western countries have seen China as a major market for profitable investments. Nevertheless, it should be noted that foreign investment in China has never exceeded 10% of total investment, and China’s economic growth is largely due to domestic investment. China’s GDP in 1960 was about \$60 billion, and this reached more than \$13.61 trillion in 2018 [4]. In other words, it has increased 228 times; no other country in the world has experienced such growth in this period. The share of services in its GDP (which was about 9.1% in 1952) increased to 46.3% in 2018.

Declining position of the US, Japan and Germany

The remoteness of the US from World War I caused the US economy to suffer the least, and the US economy was able to gain a better position in the world, compared to the war-torn European countries that, at the time, formed the world’s major economies. It also changed the political balance in the world and led to the US holding the top spot in terms of world power. During World War II, the European economy, as the driving force of the world economy and the main producer of world wealth, collapsed, and the US became the undisputed leader of the world; the dollar then established its global hegemony. Although the US has been in an economic crisis since 1991, the 2008 economic crisis has lost much of its momentum, and the US is projected to decline to second place in 2030. In contrast, China’s economic and military growth is a threat to US hegemony.

In recent years, Japan has slipped from second in the world economy to third, and it will soon lose that position. Japan is one of the poorest countries in the world in terms of natural resources, so it imports all its raw materials; Japan is also likely to face a major labour force challenge in the future. Japan's population is one of the oldest in the world, and according to the United Nations, Japan will have lost 30% of its population by 2050.

Germany was once the world's third-largest economy and the driving force behind Europe. Germany is currently one of the top three economies in the world but is projected to fall further in the coming years, becoming the tenth-largest economy in 2050.

China and the Middle East

With the discovery of the massive Daqing oil field in northeastern China in 1959, China became an oil exporter. But China's economic growth and the consequent increase in its domestic demand have meant that China has been one of the world's largest oil importers since the early 1980s. Since 2000, when China became an economic giant, it has imported 50% of its oil needs from the Middle East. The Middle East has also been one of China's main markets, with Chinese exports to the Middle East increasing 25-fold between 1993 and 2016.

The Middle East has not only been a market for conventional Chinese goods but also a market for arms and military equipment. In the Iran-Iraq war, China sold weapons and ballistic missiles to both sides. In the late 1980s, China began selling ballistic missiles to Saudi Arabia (capable of carrying nuclear warheads) and continued until 2019.

With the decline of US hegemony in the Middle East, China has sought to play a more active role in the region. Iran, Turkey, Egypt and Israel all exert an important role on China's New Silk Road. China has tried, diplomatically, to appease regional rival powers, Saudi Arabia and Iran. China's imperialist policy towards the Middle East highlights two points. The first is that Iran used to be the second-largest oil exporter to China after Saudi Arabia, but Chinese oil imports from Iran have been declining since 2012. Even after the JCPA, when oil exports were not banned by law, Iran fell to being the fourth-largest oil exporter to China and became practically insignificant after the US sanctions.

In 2018, the US withdrew from the JCPA, and the US has not yet imposed back-breaking sanctions against Iran. The second issue associated with China's imperialist policy towards the Middle East concerns the fact that in 2018, China exported \$48 billion worth of goods to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, while Iran's share was only \$14 billion. At the same time, China imported \$62 billion worth of goods from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, while China's imports from Iran amounted to \$21 billion. The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, are allies in the long-term US politico-military strategy in the Middle East.

New Silk Road

In 2013, the Chinese president unveiled the “Belt and Road” project as part of his strategy to consolidate China in the new world order. The plan includes two trade routes: the Silk Road Economic Belt (which connects China to Europe via Central Asia, Russia and the Middle East) and the Sea Silk Road (which connects China by sea to Southeast Asia, West Asia, Africa and Europe). The plan covers more than 60 countries in Asia, Africa and Europe, 40% of the world economy and two-thirds of the world’s population. China is set to invest \$900 billion in the project in terms of economic infrastructure alone [5].

China has set up a new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to provide the funding needed by countries along the route. China’s two main rivals, the US and Japan, are not members of the bank. The US has even expressed concern about the establishment and management of the bank and has advised its allies to refrain from joining the bank [6].

The hegemony of the dollar is essential to the continued global power of the US. China has been trying to use the renminbi in international trade since 2017, and one of its goals is to replace the renminbi with the dollar in international transactions. Although the renminbi’s share in international trade is currently very small, it could challenge the hegemony of the dollar in the long run. The memorandum with Iran also envisages deals with renminbi.

China has invested heavily in developing local infrastructure, roads, railways and power plants etc. in exchange for access to raw materials. China’s policy is not only to invest in other countries (especially African countries) but also to invest in companies and labour etc., using mainly Chinese companies with Chinese labour to carry out projects. As a result, it collects a large part of the investment itself and the rest goes to the country in question.

Providing financial credit to indebted countries, then taking over commercial and port areas, has been part of China’s imperialist policy. For example, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, which could not afford repayments, have been leasing important ports for many years. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, its debt to China is equivalent to 30% of its GDP, while in the case of Djibouti, it is a staggering 95%.

The New Silk Road, with its infrastructure, allows China to access the ends of the earth and expand its imperialist power everywhere. Although China claims that this is a peaceful project, the New Silk Road is of particular military importance. Iran’s geopolitical position is important for China on the New Silk Road. Iran connects the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf, and Central Asia to the Middle East, as well as its important geopolitical position in the Oman Sea, so China wants Iran to participate in this project.

Military power in the service of imperialist ambitions

When the capitalist mode of production became the dominant mode of global production, and the world market was divided, capitalist rivalry for bigger stakes in the already-saturated market has taken on a military form. Therefore, military power plays an important role in imperialism. It is very difficult to compare the military power of countries, but *Global Firepower* magazine ranks the world annually according to 55 factors of military power. Within this ranking, the US, Russia and China have been positioned first to third, respectively [7].

America has not only been the beating heart of the global capitalist system but also the technological and scientific centre for capitalism. The goal of the American bourgeoisie is to continue this situation and to use military superiority to prevent further collapse of its hegemony on the world stage following the fall of economic power.

China has stated that if it becomes a great power one day, it will not seek military supremacy over others and will always live in peaceful coexistence. Of course, everyone knows that this is just propaganda. China's economic growth has meant that it can attend to security and military spheres, and the Chinese government openly bears military costs. China is trying to increase and modernize its military capacity through the use of artificial intelligence, remote-control technologies and new laser weapons etc.

The South China Sea is of strategic importance to China, so it is important for China to have a strong influence over this region. This is why it has become the centre of the US-China conflict. Meanwhile, China's economic activities in various countries that are part of the New Silk Road are covered by the US military, and the US could disrupt China's economic activity by wielding its military superiority if necessary. Despite closing a number of bases in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US has about 800 military bases outside its borders, based in about 140 countries [8]. In 2019, the US military budget was \$731 billion, and China's budget was \$261 billion. The US alone accounts for 38% of the world's total military spending [9].

US withdrawal from the JCPA

Trump withdrew from the JCPA agreement on the grounds that it was structurally flawed. The US says its withdrawal from the JCPA has curbed Iran's influence in the Middle East over the past three years and has helped the US maintain its security and that of its allies in the region.

More than 100 large foreign companies have left Iran following the US withdrawal from the JCPA and the imposition of extensive sanctions on Iran, one after another. The Islamic bourgeoisie hoped that Russian companies, especially Chinese companies, would complete their projects. The withdrawal of the Chinese company CNPC from the South Pars Phase 11

project showed that even Chinese companies will not risk investing in the face of US sanctions. The Islamic bourgeoisie is now experiencing difficulty getting foreign companies to invest in its infrastructure projects. The Minister of Oil of the Islamic Bourgeoisie has stated that:

“No foreign country is willing to sign a contract with us on any issue and will not continue existing contracts.” [10]

Iran-China 25-year cooperation programme

The context of 25 years of comprehensive cooperation between Iran and China dates back to the visit of Xi Jinping (President of the Republic of China) to Iran in February 2015. The official joint statement that was signed spoke of the will of the two sides to expand comprehensive cooperation for 25 years, and in this meeting, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic bourgeoisie stated:

“The government and people of Iran have always sought to expand relations with independent and credible countries such as China, and accordingly, the agreement of the Presidents of Iran and China for a 25-year strategic relationship is quite correct and wise.” [11]

The promises of Western countries following the JCPA made Iran-China cooperation programme remain a matter of words. Following the withdrawal of the US from the JCPA in May 2018 and the subsequent imposition of a policy of maximum pressure on Iran, the necessity for this cooperation was raised by the Iranian bourgeoisie. In March 2019, the Islamic bourgeoisie sent a delegation to China to raise the issue of cooperation.

The draft text for the undertaking providing 25 years of cooperation between Iran and China was recently published. This draft contains an introduction, nine paragraphs and three appendices. The details of the cooperation are not clear and are confidential, but the axes of cooperation include economic, military, security, political and scientific fields in national, regional and international arenas. Recently, the British site Petroleum Economist published details. According to the media, China is set to invest \$280 billion in oil and gas, and \$120 billion in Iran’s infrastructure, industrial, banking and intelligence development. China will also become a regular buyer of Iranian oil. The same media claimed that China will buy part of Iran’s oil, gas and petrochemical products with a 32% discount and will pay for it over a maximum of two years. A hundred Iranian troops will be trained in China, with a hundred Chinese troops being trained in Iran, and a 5,000-strong Chinese security force will be in charge of protecting Chinese projects in Iran.

It has been speculated that China will have a military presence off the southern coast of Iran, and Russia will have access to some of Iran’s military and air bases, in exchange for these

countries pledging to provide air defence, intelligence and military capabilities to the Islamic bourgeoisie (thereby making the Islamic bourgeoisie a strategic ally of China and Russia).

Cooperation agreement and the opposition

The pro-Western Iranian opposition considers the memorandum to be a captivity agreement and a second Turkmenchay (Treaty of Turkmenchay). The pro-Western opposition, dissatisfied with the JCPA, supported escalating tensions and Trump withdrawal from the JCPA as Trump came to power, hoping that an alternative to “regime change” would replace the US policy of maximum pressure. According to the pro-Western opposition, this memorandum reduces the effects of maximum pressure and the chances of regime change and military strikes etc. through US intervention, and consequently also reduces the chances of them gaining power in the shadow of imperialist tensions.

The left-wing opposition, which had hoped for a “revolution” in the wake of the overwhelming pressure of the peripheral capital crisis (exacerbated by US maximum pressure and in the shadow of imperialist tensions), did not see the cooperation agreement as being in the public interest because the horizon of overthrow under the maximum pressure of the US is overshadowed by this cooperation agreement. Hamid Taghvaei, leader of the Worker-Communist Party of Iran, has explicitly stated:

“But as far as this agreement is concerned, its reactionary nature and what is unacceptable and objectionable from the point of view of the interests of the Iranian people is not economics, but its political-military status and meaning. China, along with Russia, is a political ally and supporter of the Islamic Republic... always actively supporting and strengthening the Islamic Republic.” [12]

Intensification of imperialist tensions between the US and China

During the 1980s and 1990s, China’s economic growth did not worry the West or the US, but then China’s economic growth accelerated, and this dazzling Chinese economic growth increased China’s power on the international stage, causing competitors to worry. China, which ranked eighth in the world in terms of GDP in the 1970s, has now risen to second place and is a serious rival to the US.

Although the dollar does not play an absolute role in world trade as before, the dollar still plays a major role in both world trade and as a foreign exchange reserve. China’s share of the currency is very small, but China intends to challenge the role of the dollar in the long run, especially through buying oil from the Middle East, and this is a major blow to dollar hegemony. To this end, the Chinese government launched the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in 2014. Among the 57 founding countries are Germany, France, Italy and Britain. The bank became operational in late 2015. The US opposed the establishment of such a bank and

tried to dissuade its allies in the region from joining it but failed, leaving only Japan loyal to the US in the region. The bank will play a key role in financing the New Silk Road.

It is not just Trump and the Republican Party that express, the threat to China. Democrats are no less wary of China than Republicans, and the entire American bourgeoisie opposes China's progress. For the American bourgeoisie, it is clear that China's progress and China's rise to power are directly related to America's decline.

In 1985, the US trade deficit with China was negative \$0.006 billion, and in 2018, it increased to negative \$418.954 billion [13]. After coming to power, Trump tried to increase US exports to China through negotiations with Chinese leaders, and to reduce the US trade deficit with China. To some extent, he succeeded in doing this as, in 2019, the trade balance deficit narrowed by about \$74 billion. However, the trade war continued.

In January 2020, the US and China signed an agreement aimed at easing the trade war between the two countries. China pledged to increase imports from the United States by \$200 billion, while the US agreed to halve new tariffs on some Chinese goods. They apparently ended the two-year trade war. At a ceremony in Washington, Trump (backed by Republican campaigners) said that the agreement would pave the way for stronger ties between the US and China. Trump went even further, saying, *"This is something that – far beyond even this deal – is going to lead to an even stronger world peace."* [1] But the gangsters are preparing for war when they talk about peace.

If imperialist tensions were once at the level of a trade war, recently, imperialist tensions have been raised to an even higher level. The US has not only closed the Chinese consulate in Houston (on the grounds of it being a spy centre) but has also occupied and spied on China. China closed the US consulate in Chengdu in retaliation. The US sanctioned several Chinese officials for human rights abuses, and China responded by sanctioning several US officials, including two Republican senators.

Mike Pompeo reiterated his accusations of unfair trade relations, the spread of the coronavirus, human rights abuses and attempts to infiltrate American society, and called on US allies to change China's behaviour by putting pressure on China. He declared that China's actions threaten America's prosperity and people, and stressed that the Chinese army is a *"stronger and more eloquent [form of] intimidation"*. He said the free world must change China, and in this regard, he announced: *"Perhaps the time has come for a new group of like-minded nations, a new alliance of democracies, [to] form."* He also stated: *"Dealing with China is the mission of our time."*

The Western bourgeoisie and the Iran-China agreement

The Iran-China strategic agreement has also been the subject of Western media, especially that of the US. The Western media has examined the deal from the perspective of the long-

term interests of the Western bourgeoisie and with concern for China's rise to power. The *Washington Post* wrote that Trump's policy of maximum pressure has not reached its goal, and Iran is not willing to negotiate. The Iranian regime has not fallen and has turned to China to save its economy, and this is a severe blow to US interests.

The *New York Times* also expressed concern about the 25-year China-Iran agreement, saying the deal could expand China's influence in West Asia and strengthen Iran's economic power in the face of US sanctions. The *National Interest* even went so far as to cause the US to be responsible for the creation of a monster. According to this publication, and in connection with the 25-year China-Iran agreement, it published an article entitled "*America Has Created a China-Iran Collaboration Monster*" [15].

Even the US administration has expressed deep concern over the 25-year China-Iran agreement and the consequences of the agreement for the interests of the US as well as US allies in the region. Referring to the 25-year agreement document, the US Secretary of State said:

"China's entry into Iran will destabilize the Middle East. It'll put Israel at risk. It'll put the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Emirates at risk as well."[16]

Of course, Westerners have also raised doubts about whether Chinese private companies will dare to invest in Iran given the threat of US sanctions. The Western press has also questioned the dual ethics of the Islamic bourgeoisie, arguing that while China confines Uighur Muslims to concentration camps, Iran concludes agreements with China instead of fighting communism.

China-Russia-Iran joint military exercise

Sino-Iranian military cooperation dates back to the Iran-Iraq War and it facilitated the sale of arms and ballistic missiles to both sides. China continued to sell missiles and missile manufacturing technologies to Iran after the war and in the 1990s. In return, Iran provided China with reverse engineering of Western and Russian weapons looted during the Iran-Iraq war. There is even speculation that Iran delivered the American drone that was shot down on Iranian soil under Obama.

On 27 December 2019, a four-day joint naval exercise involving Iran, China and Russia commenced in the North Indian Ocean and the waters of the Oman Sea. This region is of global importance in terms of commercial shipping, especially tankers. The Chief of Staff of the Iranian army declared this to be the beginnings of cooperation between these three countries and that this cooperation would continue. In response to the exercise, Republican James Edward Banks, in an interview with Fox News, warned against the alliance between Iran, Russia and China, calling the three countries the axis of evil, saying:

“This exercise was a provocation by the axis of evil; Iran has allied with the Chinese and the Russians. The navy of any of these three countries alone and in no way can match the strength of our navy, but... collectively, their capabilities will go beyond the US Navy, and we are seeing the three countries come together in this provocative exercise in this part of the world, and that is something that should be of concern to us.” [17]

World war horizon

War is not the decision of the ignorant leaders, but the last resort of capitalism for its crisis. The Metropolitan Capital first attempts to transfer the consequences of the crisis to peripheral capitalism or to rivals, and in the next step, it will resort to its last solution, warfare. The First World War was an indication that capitalism had been a decadent social system, and that the era of social revolutions and imperialist wars had started. The danger of imperialist war represents a new era of life under capitalism; in the era of imperialism war is inevitable. In order for World War to take place, the following two conditions must be satisfied:

- the existence of two political, economic and military imperialist blocks
- a working class which has been defeated worldwide.

In the past three decades, even though two coherent political, economic and military imperialist blocks do not exist, tensions have been witnessed between the large gangs. However the working class is not ready to provide the sufficient support necessary for its alternative, i.e. a Communist Revolution against the barbarity of the capitalist system. But it is not defeated. Therefore imperialist wars are tending more toward regional wars, like the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq and dozens of other small regional wars.

Despite the fact that we are witnessing labour protests in some areas, for example, Iran, the world's working class has, more than ever, retreated from its position at the global level, which indicates a retreat from its class identity. In the imperialist camp, although the former Western bloc is more fragmented than before, we see more cooperation between China, Russia and Iran. Are new blocks being formed?

The crisis in the former Western bloc and the further collapse of American hegemony

Following the fall of the Eastern bloc, the US was no longer able to exercise its hegemony as it had during the Cold War. Therefore, in order to maintain its hegemony in the new world order and weaken its rivals, the US launched the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and so on. The fall of US hegemony in the Middle East has accelerated in the last decade, while China is trying to play an active role in the Middle East. One of the most famous American economic magazines, *Forbes*, addressed this issue in its July edition and published an article entitled *“U.S. Continues Retreat From Global Stage As China-Iran Forge 25-Year Deal”* [18].

The former Western bloc is more fragmented than before. Although NATO has expanded since the end of the Cold War (with France and a number of eastern European countries joining it), internal divisions within NATO member states have intensified. The US is trying to downplay its presence in NATO. John Bolton, Trump's former national security adviser, recently stated that if Trump wins the November election, the US will leave NATO [19].

Italy, one of Europe's most important NATO members (where US nuclear weapons are based) has shown interest in the New Silk Road. The US is imposing sanctions on Turkey, which is a member of NATO, and US nuclear weapons are currently being stored there. Tensions between NATO members Turkey and Greece over oil exploration and drilling have escalated to the point where France has sent a warship to the Mediterranean Sea by way of "regional control". Britain is distancing itself from other European countries.

In 2007, the UN Security Council imposed an arms embargo on the Islamic bourgeoisie to punish it. This embargo will end on 18 October 2020 (after 13 years), and Iran will be able to buy weapons and armaments, and officially export weapons to other countries. So, the US submitted a resolution to the UN Security Council, proposing to extend the arms embargo and put pressure on certain countries, including Tunisia and Estonia, to support it. The proposed resolution was finally put to the vote on 14 August, and the result was a humiliating defeat for the US. Three major European countries (Germany, France and Britain) abstained. Britain, meanwhile, has been a follower of the US and its main ally since World War II. The result was so humiliating that the British *Guardian* newspaper wrote:

"The US has suffered a humiliating defeat at the United Nations as its proposal to extend an arms embargo on Iran won support from only the Dominican Republic at the Security Council vote."[20]

China Radio International's report on the results of the Security Council elections was even more humiliating than the British newspaper, and made reference on its website to the "*tough slap in the face that the United States endured in the Security Council*" [21].

After the announcement of the results of the Security Council elections, Mike Pompeo stated that the Security Council had failed in its mission of maintaining global security. It is important to note that the members of the Security Council did not reject the US proposed resolution in defence of the Islamic bourgeoisie but opposed the great gangster in terms of its imperialist interests. Recently, the differences between European countries and the US have intensified. The US has long been pressuring European countries to join the "new Cold War". Following the non-vote on the US Security Council resolution, the US announced that it would use the "snapback" mechanism to reverse sanctions. The European Union and even Britain have stated their opposition to the US's use of the "snapback" mechanism. Josep Borrell, the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, has said of US activation of the "snapback" mechanism:

“The United States is not entitled to force the reinstatement of sanctions on Iran via the so-called ‘snapback’ mechanism linked to an international nuclear deal. Since the US unilaterally withdrew from the agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), it cannot be considered a part of it.”[22]

Despite opposition from the European Union to resumption of sanctions against Iran (and a majority vote against this by Security Council members), Pompeo says sanctions against Iran will resume on 20 September and, in this regard, has said:

“Last week, the U.S. triggered the 30-day process to restore virtually all NU sanctions on Iran after the Security Council failed to uphold its mission to maintain international peace and security. These sanctions will snap back at midnight GMT on September 20.”[23]

Although European countries have previously stated that the 30-day US countdown to reversing sanctions is not legally effective, Pompeo has said he will oppose any resolution to lift the sanctions. This, more than anything else, is indicative of the degree of fragmentation in the former Western bloc. In this regard, Pompeo stated:

“If any member of the UN Security Council introduces a resolution to continue sanctions relief, the U.S. will oppose it. If no resolution is introduced, the sanctions on Iran will still return on September 20. That’s how UNSCR 2231 works.”[24]

The future of China

China, now the world’s second-largest economy, is projected to become the world’s largest economy by 2030, overtaking the US. The table below shows the top three economically dominant countries from 1870 onwards.

Top three countries with economic dominance							
Percentages represent the share of global economic power							
1870		1973		2010		2030 (Forecast)	
Britain	16.4%	America	18.6%	America	13.3%	China	18.0%
Germany	9.3%	Japan	8.0%	China	12.3%	America	10.1%
France	8.3%	Germany	8.0%	Japan	6.9%	India	6.3%

While China’s economic growth was initially sluggish, Western countries (led by the US) supported China’s economic growth. But when China emerged as the world’s second-largest economy, tensions took a serious turn. In the near future, the largest share of world GDP will be produced in Asia, and the centre of gravity of the global economy will move to Asia. China’s rise as an economic power is directly related to the decline of the US, which is at the centre of the global capitalist crisis. China now presents a serious challenge to the US.

China has also increased its propaganda and ideological media activities, both formal and informal. The *Washington Post* quotes a George Washington University faculty member as saying that China spends about \$10 billion a year on foreign-language media abroad in pursuit of its “soft power” goal of portraying China as the defender of international order [25].

Will China follow the same path as Britain and then the US? China will make economic progress in the future, and it can even improve its position in the military sphere and expand its influence in the Silk Road countries, especially in Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Africa, but China does not currently have a block leadership strategy, nor is it ideologically able to play such a role in the current context. Therefore, China will not be able to replace the US, at least in the short term.

China in the role of axis?

During World War II, the three main axis powers, Germany, Italy and Japan, did not fully agree, either ideologically or in terms of goals, and their agreement only extended as far as their imperialist interests in the war against their common enemies, the Allies. Germany formed the backbone of the axis.

Is a new bloc-like axis being formed? Are the three powers, China, Russia and Iran, forming a new bloc in which China will play a leading role, despite pursuing different imperialist interests and having different ideological superstructures? Before examining the issue, let us see how the Chinese press or those close to China have commented on this issue. The Chinese newspaper *The South China Morning Post* recently wrote:

“To the West, a new axis between Beijing, Moscow and Tehran appears to be taking shape.”[26]

The same view was published by the *Asia Times* (based in Hong Kong), which wrote:

“China and Iran, along with Russia, could emerge as the new Axis Powers in the Western narrative.”[27]

The same view has been published by some Western media outlets, including the *Wall Street Journal*. China is currently the world’s second-largest economy and is projected to become the world’s top economy in the near future. China has never hidden its imperialist ambitions. China has a strategic position in Asia and is also a permanent member of the Security Council, with a veto power. However, although China is a nuclear power capable of producing weapons of mass destruction, it is still militarily incapable of challenging its main rival, the US.

Russia's economy is expected to grow in the near future and become the world's eighth-largest economy in 10 years. On the other hand, Russia is the world's second-largest military power, and its nuclear arsenal is comparable to that of the US. It could therefore be a good complement to China.

However, Iran's economy, especially in the shadow of sanctions, has recently fallen to 28th according to World Bank statistics. But Iran's economy is expected to rise to 16th place by 2030. On the other hand, Iran is a regional power. In recent years, despite sanctions, Iran has achieved success in the military field (especially missiles), and its geopolitical position is becoming increasingly important.

Internationalist tasks and horizons

If, in the West, the working class has been poisoned by the ideology of democracy, in China, the working class has been poisoned by Maoist ideology. Although we have witnessed workers' protests in China, it must be emphasized that the Chinese working class lacks long-term historical experience, and a deep break with the communist tradition has taken place due to the dominance of Maoism. The Chinese police state has created a serious obstacle to the evolution of the class struggle, through censorship and repression on the one hand and Maoist ideological superstructure on the other.

The main currents of the communist left, with their rich experience in defending proletarian positions, have both great responsibility in the proletarian political milieu and the potential to interfere with the class struggle. Communists are not determinists, and they believe in the involvement and influence of revolutionaries in the class struggle. Without the intervention and influence of revolutionary tendencies in social protests, only the dormant anger of social protests will be evacuated, and social protests will not be able to rise to a higher level. Will the internationalists (especially the currents that play a leading role in the proletariat) be able to break out of their isolation and intervene on a global scale? Will the communist left be able to meet the tasks and needs that the new era demands?

The historically borne-out necessity of the Internationalist and International Communist Party is as evident as ever, both for the evolution and expansion of the class struggle, and the victory of the Communist Revolution. In recent years, we have witnessed the working classes' increasing withdrawal from their class identity at a global level, so the formation of the International and Internationalist Communist Party is not the task of internationalists today; rather, the daily and vital task of internationalists is to strive tirelessly in this direction and prepare theoretically, politically and organizationally for this important matter. Collaborations, discussions and even theoretical polemics and internationalist conferences are the first steps in this direction.

Capitalism smells of blood, dirt and sludge. If the working class does not follow its historical decree, that is, the overthrowing of capitalism through communist revolution, the destruction of humanity is inevitable. The destruction of humanity must not only be achieved through world war but also through the brutality of capital, the virus pandemic and environmental catastrophes. To put an end to the barbarism and savagery of capitalism, the alternative of the internationalists is more valid than ever:

Communist Revolution or the Destruction of Humanity!

Internationalist Voice

16 September 2020

Notes:

[1]

- <http://revolution.pchi.ir/show.php?page=contents&id=13259>
- Cirincione, “Deadly Arsenals” pages 150-151

[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council_Resolution_1929

[3] <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5700.html>

[4] GDP

[5] *The Guardian*

[6] *The Guardian*

[7] <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.asp>

[8] <https://qrius.com/5-reasons-the-us-has-a-military-presence-around-the-world>

[9] Radio Farda

[10] <https://www.radiofarda.com/a/30737165.html>

[11] The Supreme Leader of the Islamic bourgeoisie

[12] <http://wpiranfa.com/?p=16468>

[13] As source 3

[14] <https://www.bbc.com/persian/business-51130185>

[15] America Has Created a “China-Iran Collaboration” Monster

[16] Voice of America

[17] <https://www.msn.com/en-us/video/w/iran-holds-naval-drills-with-china-and-russia-in-gulf-of-oman/vp-BBYqoqn> Jim Banks (

[18] *The Forbes*

[19] <https://www.redlandcitybulletin.com.au/story/6869761/nato-under-threat-if-trump-returns-bolton/?cs=12994>

[20] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/14/us-iran-un-arms-embargo-nuclear-deal>

[21] <http://persian.cri.cn/921/2020/08/15/164s188769.htm>

[22] <https://www.riskscreen.com/kyc360/news/us-cannot-trigger-snapback-sanctions-on-iran-eu-official/>

[23] <https://twitter.com/SecPompeo/status/1298991873822883848>

[24] <https://twitter.com/SecPompeo/status/1299000560431988736>

[25] *The Washington Post*

[26] <https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3095225/there-no-new-cold-war-west-just-losing-influence-eurasia>

[27] <https://asiatimes.com/2020/07/china-iran-pact-wont-be-trouble-free-for-either-side/>

Basic Positions:

- The First World War was an indication that the capitalism had been a decadent social system. It also proved that there were only two alternatives to this system: communist revolution or the destruction of humanity.
- In our epoch, the working class is the only revolutionary class. Furthermore, only this social class can deliver the communist revolution and end the barbarity of capitalism.
- Once capitalism entered its decadent period, unions all over the world were transformed into organs of the capital system. In turn, the main tasks of unions were to control the working class and mislead them about its class struggle.
- In the epoch of decadent capitalism, participating in the parliamentary circus and elections only strengthens the illusion of democracy. Capitalist democracy and capitalist dictatorship are two sides of the same coin, namely, the barbarity of capitalism.
- All national movements are counterrevolutionary, against the working class and the class struggle. Wars of national liberation are pawns in imperialist conflict.
- The reason for the failure of the October Revolution was the failure of the revolutionary wave, particularly the failure of the German Revolution, which resulted in the isolation of October Revolution and afterwards its degeneration.
- All left parties are reactionary: Stalinists, Maoists, Trotskyists and official anarchists etc. represent the political apparatus of capital.
- The regimes that arose in the USSR, Eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc., while being called “socialist” or “communist”, only offered a particularly brutal and barbaric form of capitalism: state capitalism.
- The revolutionary organization constitutes the avant-garde of the proletariat and is an active factor in the development and generalization of class consciousness. Revolutionary organizations may only take the form of revolutionary minorities, whose task neither is to organize the working class nor take power in its stead, without being a **political leadership**, or a political compass, where revolutionary organizations’ political clarity and influence on the working classes are **the fundamental elements for the implementation of a communist revolution**.

Political belongings:

The current status, positions, views and activities of the proletarian political tendencies are the product of past experiences of the working class and the effectiveness of the lessons that political organizations of the working class have learned during the history of the proletariat. Therefore, Internationalist Voice can trace its own roots and origins back to the Communist League, the First International, the left wing of both the Second International and the Third International, and the fractions that defended proletarian and communist positions against the degenerating Third International, which was represented by Dutch-German fractions, and **particularly Italian Fraction of the Communist Left** and the defence of Communist Left traditions.