

# Harriet Agerholm: Map Shows Where President Barack Obama Dropped his 20,000 Bombs

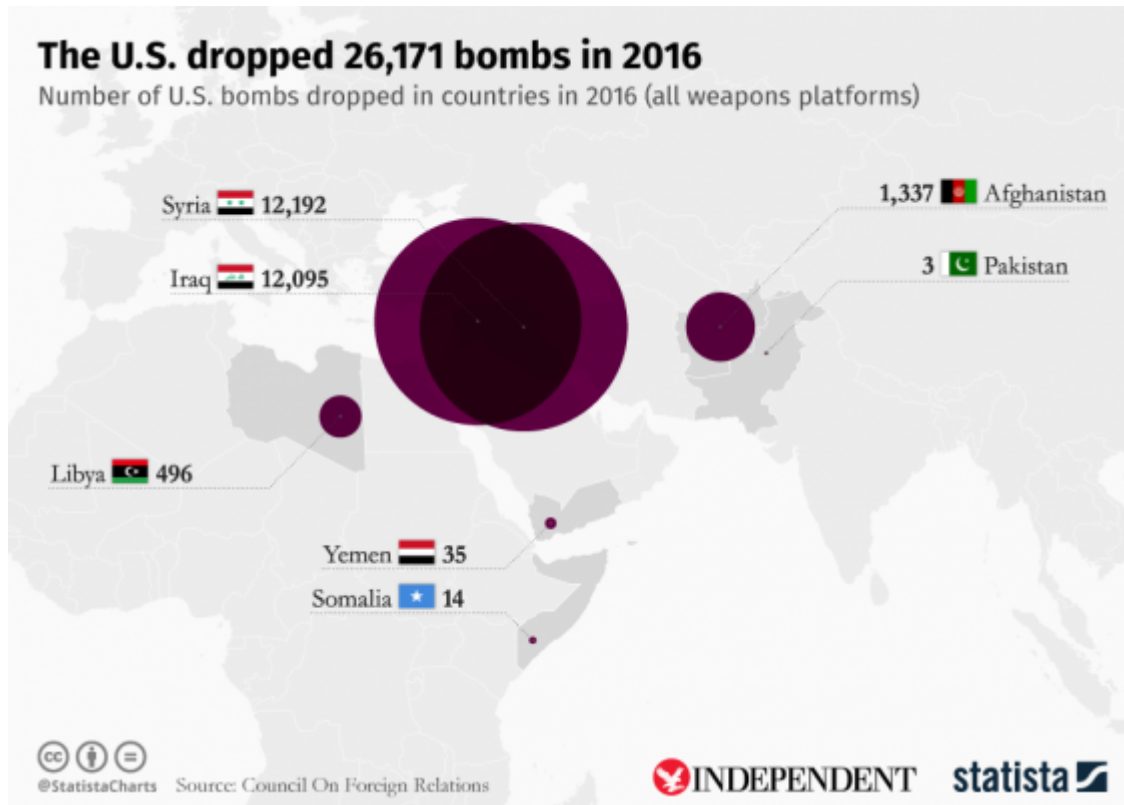
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Incoming US President [Donald Trump](#) has said he will wage war on Isis, vowing to “bomb the s\*\*\* out of ‘em”. And as the world gears up for a seemingly more violent four years, it is worth reflecting on President Obama’s tenure.

According to newly released figures, President Obama had already upped the number of bombs on foreign countries. US forces dropped over 3,000 more bombs in 2016 than 2015, taking the grand total of strikes for the year to at least 26,171.

This map by [Statista](#) shows you where they were:



Vast majority of strikes carried out in Iraq and Syria. The figures are likely to be an underestimate, since the only reliable data only comes from a handful of countries, and multiple bombs can be classed as a single “strike” under the Pentagon’s definition. But of the confirmed bombings, the vast majority (24,2878) took place in Iraq and Syria, according to **analysis** of official data by Micah Zenko, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

His research concluded that the US dropped 79 per cent of all 30,743 coalition bombs in 2016.

While President Obama reduced the number of US soldiers fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq, air-strikes proliferated under his leadership.

He expanded the use of unmanned air-strikes outside the confines of war-zones in Afghanistan and Iraq to countries including Pakistan and Yemen.

In the wake of Mr Trump’s win, **the value of arms companies soared**. He has **promised extravagant military parades** through America’s cities and, like many Republicans, vowed to build up the US military.

# Havin Guneser: On Kurdish Struggle at EZLN Hydra Seminar



“Without understanding how masculinity was socially formed, one cannot analyze the institution of state and therefore will not be accurately be able to define the war and power culture related to statehood... This is what paved the way for femicide and the exploitation and colonization of peoples...”

Listen to the full talk by Havin Guneser [here](#).

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## Dilar Dirik: Building Democracy

# without the State

This article was originally published in [ROAR Magazine](#).



“When people first came to our house a few years ago to ask if our family would like to participate in the communes, I threw stones at them to keep them away,” laughs Bushra, a young woman from Tirbespiye, Rojava. The mother of two belongs to an ultra-conservative religious sect. Before, she had never been allowed to leave her home and used to cover her entire body except her eyes.

“Now I actively shape my own community,” she says with a proud and radiant smile. “People come to me to seek help in solving social issues. But at the time, if you had asked me, I wouldn’t even have known what ‘council’ meant or what people do in assemblies.”

Today, around the world, people resort to alternative forms of autonomous organization to give their existence meaning again, to reflect human creativity’s desire to express itself as freedom. These collectives, communes, cooperatives and grassroots movements can be characterized as the people’s self-defense mechanisms against the encroachment of capitalism, patriarchy and the state.

At the same time, many indigenous peoples, cultures and communities that faced exclusion and marginalization have protected their communalist ways of living until this day. It is striking that communities that protected their existence against the evolving world order around them are often described in negative terms, as “lacking” something—notably, a state. The positivist and determinist tendencies that dominate today’s historiography render such communities unusual, uncivilized, backward. Statehood is assumed to be an inevitable consequence of civilization and modernity; a natural step in history’s linear progress.

There are undoubtedly some genealogical and ontological differences between, for lack of a better word, “modern” revolutionary communes, and natural, organic communities. The former are developing primarily among radical circles in capitalist societies as uprisings against the dominant system, while the latter pose a threat to the hegemonic powers by nature of their very survival. But still, we cannot say that these organic communes are non-political, as opposed to the metropolitan communes with their intentional, goal-oriented politics.

Centuries, perhaps millennia of resistance against the capitalist world order are in fact very radical acts of defiance. For such communities, relatively untouched by global currents due to their characteristic features, natural geography or active resistance, communal politics is simply a natural part of the world. That is why many people in Rojava, for instance, where a radical social transformation is currently underway, refer to their revolution “a return to our nature” or “the regaining of our social ethics.”

Throughout history, the Kurds suffered all sorts of denial, oppression, destruction, genocide and assimilation. They were excluded from the statist order on two fronts: not only were they denied their own state, they were simultaneously excluded from the mechanisms of the state structures around them. Yet the experience of statelessness also helped protect many societal ethics and values, as well as a sense of community—especially in the rural and mountainous villages far from the cities.

To this day, Alevi-Kurdish villages in particular are characterized by processes of common solution-finding and reconciliation rituals for social disputes based on ethics and forgiveness to the benefit of the community. But while this form of life is quite prevalent in Kurdistan, there is also a conscious new effort to establish a political system centered around communal values—the system of Democratic Confederalism, built through democratic autonomy with the commune at its heart.

## **DEMOCRATIC CONFEDERALISM IN ROJAVA**

The Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), like many national liberation movements, initially thought that the creation of an independent state would be the solution to violence and oppression. However, with the changing world after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the movement began to develop a fundamental self-criticism as well as a criticism of the dominant socialist politics of the time, which was still very much focused on seizing state power. Towards the end of the 1990s the PKK, under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan, began to articulate an alternative to the nation state and state socialism.

Upon studying the history of Kurdistan and the Middle East, as well as the nature of power, the current economic system and ecological issues, Öcalan came to the conclusion that the

reason for humanity's "freedom problem" was not statelessness but the emergence of the state. In an attempt to subvert the domination of the system that institutionalized itself across the globe over the span of 5,000 years as a synthesis of patriarchy, capitalism and the nation state, this alternative paradigm is based on the very opposite—women's liberation, ecology and grassroots democracy.

Democratic Confederalism is a social, political, and economic model of self-administration of different peoples, pioneered by women and the youth. It attempts to practically express the people's will by viewing democracy as a method rather than an aim alone. It is democracy without the state.

While it proposes new normative structures to establish a conscious political system, Democratic Confederalism also draws upon millennia-old forms of social organization that are still in existence across communities in Kurdistan and beyond. This model may seem far-fetched to our contemporary imagination, but it actually resonates well with the strong desire for emancipation among the different peoples in the region. Although the system has been implemented in Bakur (North Kurdistan) for years, within the limits of Turkish state repression, it was in Rojava (West Kurdistan) that a historic opportunity emerged to put Democratic Confederalism into practice.

The system places "democratic autonomy" at its heart: people organize themselves directly in the form of communes and create councils. In Rojava, this process is facilitated by Tev-Dem, the Movement for a Democratic Society. The commune is made up of a consciously self-organized neighborhood and constitutes the most essential and radical aspect of the democratic practice. It has committees working on different issues like peace and justice, economy, safety, education, women, youth and social services.

The communes send elected delegates to the councils. Village councils send delegates to the towns, town councils send delegates to the cities, and so on. Each of the communes is autonomous, but they are linked to one another through a confederal structure for the purposes of coordination and the safeguarding of common principles. Only when issues cannot be resolved at the base, or when issues transcend the concerns of the lower-level councils, are they delegated to the next level. The "higher" instances are accountable to the "lower" levels and report on their actions and decisions.

While the communes are the areas for problem solving and organizing everyday life, the councils create action plans and policies for cohesion and coordination. At the start of the revolution and in the newly liberated areas, assemblies had to erect people's councils first and only later began to develop the more decentralized grassroots organizational structures in the form of communes.



The communes work towards a “moral-political” society made up of conscious individuals who understand how to resolve social issues and who take care of everyday self-governance as a common responsibility, rather than submitting to bureaucratic elites. All of this relies on the voluntary and free participation of the people, as opposed to coercion and the rule of law.

It is of course difficult to raise society’s consciousness in a short span of time, especially where war conditions, embargoes, internalized mentalities and ancient despotic structures have been deeply institutionalized and can lead to power abuses and apolitical mindsets. An alternative education system, organized through academies, aims to promote a healthy social mentality, while self-organization practically reproduces a conscious society by mobilizing it in all spheres of life.

The women and youth organize autonomously and embody the social dynamics that are naturally inclined towards more democracy and less hierarchy. They position themselves “to the left” of the democratic autonomy model and formulate new forms of knowledge production and reproduction.

Today, the Kurdish freedom movement splits power equally between one woman and one man, from Qandil to Qamishlo to Paris. The idea behind the co-chair principle is both symbolic and practical—it decentralizes power and promotes consensus finding while symbolizing the harmony between women and men. Only women have the right to elect the female co-chair while the male co-chair is elected by everyone. Women organize their own, stronger, more ideologically conscious structures towards a women’s confederation, starting with autonomous women’s communes.

## **THE PRINCIPLE OF THE DEMOCRATIC NATION**

Another important principle articulated by Öcalan is the “democratic nation”. Unlike the nation state’s monist doctrine, which justifies itself through a chauvinistic myth, this concept envisions a society based on a common social contract and fundamental ethical principles such as gender equality. Thus, all individuals and groups, ethnic, religious, linguistic, gender, intellectual identities and tendencies can express themselves freely and add diversity to this expansive, ethics-based nation in order to secure its democratization. The more diverse the nation, the stronger its democracy. The different groups and sections are also in charge of democratizing themselves from within.

In Rojava, Kurds, Arabs, Syriac Christians, Armenians, Turkmen and Chechens try to create a new life together. The same logic underlies the project of the People’s Democratic Party, or HDP, across the border in Turkey. The HDP united all communities of Mesopotamia and Anatolia under the umbrella of “free togetherness” in the democratic nation.

Among its MPs it counts Kurds, Turks, Armenians, Arabs, Assyrians, Muslims, Alevis, Christians and Yazidis—a greater diversity than any other party in the Turkish Parliament. Contrasted with the monopolism of the nation-state ideology, the concept of the democratic nation serves as an ideological self-defense mechanism of diverse peoples.

Although many different communities actively participate in the Rojava revolution, long-standing resentments prevail. Entire tribal confederations of Arabs unilaterally expressed their support for the administration, but in some parts, Arabs remain suspicious. Secret service documents reveal that already in the early 1960s, Syria's Baath party made highly sophisticated plans to pitch different communities against one another, especially in Cizire. On top of the pre-existing tensions, external forces additionally fuel and instrumentalize conflict between different communities to further their own agendas. The establishment of unity between the different ethnic and religious groups of Syria, and in the Middle East more generally, would make it more difficult to divide and rule the region. One Arab member of the Rojava administration explained why this democratic model counts on so little support from the established as well as newly formed political groups in the region and beyond:

The democratic autonomy system in our three cantons shakes and upsets the whole world because the capitalist system does not want freedom and democracy for the Middle East, despite all its pretensions. That is why everyone attacks Rojava. The different forms of state exemplified by the Syrian Arab Republic under Assad and the Islamic State are two sides of the same coin as they deny and destroy the diversity mosaic of our region. But more and more Arabs from the rest of Syria come to Rojava to learn about democratic autonomy because they see a perspective for freedom here.

## **AN ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL VISION**

The effective system of self-organization, combined to some extent with the embargo, which necessitated self-reliance and thereby fueled creativity, spared Rojava from economic



corruption through internal capitalist mindsets or external exploitation. Yet in order to defend revolutionary values beyond the war, a calibrated economic vision is needed for a socially just, ecological, feminist economy that can sustain an impoverished, traumatized and brutalized population.

How to engage wealthy people, who do not care for cooperatives, and avoid being charged with authoritarianism? How to arrange emancipatory and liberationist principles in the urgency of war and a survival economy? How to decentralize the economy while securing justice and revolutionary cohesion? For the people in Rojava, the answer lies in education.

“What does ecology mean to you?” a woman at the Ishtar women’s academy in Rimelan asks her peers in a room decorated with photos of women like Sakine Cansiz and Rosa Luxemburg. An older woman with traditional tattoos on her hands and face responds: “To me, being a mother means to be ecological. To live in harmony with the community and nature. Mothers know best how to maintain and organize this harmony.” Perhaps it is the ecological question that most clearly illustrates Rojava’s dilemma of having great principles and intentions and the willingness to sacrifice, while often lacking the conditions to implement these ideals. For obvious reasons, survival often has priority over environmentalism.

For the moment, at least, it is possible to speak of a transitional dual system in which the democratic self-administration of Rojava lays out revolutionary and ecological principles, carefully maneuvering them in war and real politics, while the grassroots movement organizes the population from below. At the cantonal level, especially with regards to foreign policy-related issues, centralist or at least non-revolutionary practices are to some extent inevitable, especially because Rojava is politically and economically between a rock and a hard place. It is the democratic autonomy system arising from the base that people generally refer to when they speak of the “Rojava revolution”.

The decentralizing dynamics of the grassroots organization, most notably in the communes, even serve as an internal opposition to the cantons and facilitate the democratization of the latter, which, due to their complicated political geography—further limited by non-revolutionary parties and groups within—can tend towards a concentration of power (though the cantons, as they currently are, are still far more decentralized and democratic than ordinary states).

Far more important than the exact mechanisms through which the popular will is expressed, is the meaning and impact of democratic autonomy on the people themselves. If I were to describe “radical democracy”, I would think especially of the working class people, the sometimes illiterate women in neighborhoods who decided to organize themselves in communes and who now make politics come to life. Children’s laughter and games, cackling

chicken, scooting plastic chairs compose the melody for the stage in which decisions on electricity hours and neighborhood disputes are made. One should also note that the structures function better in rural areas and small neighborhoods than in big and complex cities, where more effort is needed to engage people. Here, power belongs to people who never had anything and who now write their own history.

“Do you want to see our vegetables?” Qadifa, an older Yazidi woman asks me in a center of Yekîtiya Star, the women’s movement. She appears to have little interest in explaining the new system, but she is keen to show its fruits instead. We continue our conversation on the transformations of everyday life in Rojava while eating the delicious tomatoes of a women’s cooperative in the backyard.

Self-determination in Rojava is being lived in the here and now, in everyday practice. Thousands of women like Qadifa, women previously completely marginalized, invisible and voiceless, now assume leadership positions and shape society. Today, in the mornings, they can for the first time harvest their own tomatoes from the land that was colonized by the state for decades, while acting as judges in people’s courts in the afternoon.

Many families dedicate themselves fully to the revolution now; especially those who lost loved ones. Many family homes slowly start to function like the people’s houses (“*mala gel*”) that coordinate the population’s needs: people walk into each other’s houses with their children to criticize or discuss or suggest ideas on how to improve their new lives. Dinner table topics have changed. Social issues literally become social, by becoming everyone’s responsibility. Every member of the community becomes a leader.

The slow transition of social decision-making from assigned buildings to the areas of everyday life is a fruit of the efforts to build a new moral-political society. For people from advanced capitalist countries this direct way of being in charge of one’s life can seem scary sometimes, especially when important things like justice, education and security are now in the hands of people like oneself, rather than being surrendered to anonymous state apparatuses.

## **THE COMMUNE’S LEGACY OF RESISTANCE**

One night I am sitting near Tell Mozan, once home to Urkesh, the 6,000-year-old ancient capital of the Hurrians. Nearby is the border between Syria and Turkey, less than a century old. While drinking tea with Meryem, a female commander of Kobane, we watch the lights of the town of Mardin in North Kurdistan, on the other side of the border.

“We fight on behalf of the community, the oppressed, of all women, for the unwritten pages of history,” she says. Meryem is one of the many women who met Abdullah Öcalan in her

youth, when he arrived in Rojava back in the 1980s. Like thousands of women, in a quest for justice beyond her own life, one day she decided to become a freedom fighter in this region that is at the same time home to thousands of honor killings and thousands of goddesses, worshiped in all shapes and sizes.

What attracted anti-systemic movements around the world to the historic resistance in Kobane were perhaps the many ways in which the town's defense mirrored a millennia-old current of human struggle; the ways in which it carried universal traits that resonated with collective imaginaries of a different world. Many comparisons were made with the Paris Commune, the Battle of Stalingrad, the Spanish Civil War, and other almost mythical instances of popular resistance.

In the *ziggurats* of Sumer, massive temple complexes in ancient Mesopotamia, many hierarchical mechanisms began to be institutionalized for the first time: patriarchy, the state, slavery, the standing army and private property—the beginning of the formalized class society. This era brought about a far-reaching social rupture characterized by the loss of women's social status and the rise of the dominant male, especially the male priest, who seized the monopoly on knowledge. But this is also where *amargi*, the first word for the concept of freedom, literally “the return to mother”, emerged around 2,300 B.C.

Öcalan proposes the idea of two civilizations: he claims that towards the end of the Neolithic Age with the rise of hierarchical structures in ancient Sumer a civilization developed based on hierarchy, violence, subjugation and monopolism—the “mainstream” or “dominant civilization”. By contrast, what he calls “democratic civilization” represents the historic struggles of the marginalized, the oppressed, the poor and the excluded, especially women. Democratic Confederalism is therefore a political product and manifestation of this age-old democratic civilization.

The democratic autonomy model it has given rise to, in turn, is not only a promising perspective for a peaceful and just solution to the traumatic conflicts of the region; in many ways, the emergence of the Rojava revolution illustrates how democratic autonomy may actually be the only way to survive. In this sense, the revolutionary commune is a historical heritage, a source of collective memory for the forces of democracy around the globe, and a conscious mechanism of self-defense against the state system. It carries a millennia-old legacy and manifests itself in novel ways today.

What unites historic moments of human resistance and the desire for another world, from the first freedom fighters of history to the Paris commune to the uprising of the Zapatistas on to the freedom squares in Rojava, is the unbreakable power to dare to imagine. It is the courage to believe that oppression is not fate. It is the expression of humanity's ancient desire to set itself free.

*Bijê komunên me! Vive la commune!*

Dilar Dirik is a Kurdish activist and a PhD candidate in the Sociology Department of the University of Cambridge. Her work examines the role of the women's struggle in articulating and building freedom in Kurdistan. She regularly writes on the Kurdish freedom movement for several international media.

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# Kali Akuno: Until We Win: Black Labor and Liberation in the Disposable Era

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Since the rebellion in Ferguson, Missouri in August 2014, Black people throughout the United States have been grappling with a number of critical questions such as why are Black people being hunted and killed every 28 hours or more by various operatives of the law? Why don't Black people seem to matter to this society? And what can and must we do to end these attacks and liberate ourselves? There are concrete answers to these questions. Answers that are firmly grounded in the capitalist dynamics that structure the brutal European settler-colonial project we live in and how Afrikan people have historically been positioned within it.

The Value of Black Life

There was a time in the United States Empire, when Afrikan people, aka, Black people, were deemed to be extremely valuable to the “American project”, when our lives as it is said, “mattered”. This “time” was the era of chattel slavery, when the labor provided by Afrikan people was indispensable to the settler-colonial enterprise, accounting for nearly half of the commodified value produced within its holdings and exchanged in “domestic” and international markets. Our ancestors were held and regarded as prize horses or bulls, something to be treated with a degree of “care” (i.e. enough to ensure that they were able to work and reproduce their labor, and produce value for their enslavers) because of their centrality to the processes of material production.

What mattered was Black labor power and how it could be harnessed and controlled, not Afrikan humanity. Afrikan humanity did not matter - it had to be denied in order create and sustain the social rationale and systemic dynamics that allowed for the commodification of human beings. These “dynamics” included armed militias and slave patrols, iron-clad non-exception social clauses like the “one-drop” rule, the slave codes, vagrancy laws, and a complex mix of laws and social customs all aimed at oppressing, controlling and scientifically exploiting Black life and labor to the maximum degree. This systemic need served the variants of white supremacy, colonial subjugation, and imperialism that capitalism built to govern social relations in the United States. All of the fundamental systems created to control Afrikan life and labor between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries are still in operation today, despite a few surface moderations, and serve the same basic functions.

The correlation between capital accumulation (earning a profit) and the value of Black life to the overall system has remained consistent throughout the history of the US settler-colonial project, despite of shifts in production regimes (from agricultural, to industrial, to service and finance oriented) and how Black labor was deployed. The more value (profits) Black labor produces, the more Black lives are valued. The less value (profits) Black people produce, the less Black lives are valued. When Black lives are valued they are secured enough to allow for their reproduction (at the very least), when they are not they can be and have been readily discarded and disposed of. This is the basic equation and the basic social dynamic regarding the value of Black life to US society.

### The Age of Disposability

We are living and struggling through a transformative era of the global capitalist system. Over the past 40 years, the expansionary dynamics of the system have produced a truly coordinated system of resource acquisition and controls, easily exploitable and cheap labor, production, marketing and consumption on a global scale. The increasingly automated and computerized dynamics of this expansion has resulted in millions, if not billions, of people being displaced through two broad processes: one, from “traditional” methods of life sustaining production (mainly farming), and the other from their “traditional” or ancestral

homelands and regions (with people being forced to move to large cities and “foreign” territories in order to survive). As the International Labor Organization (ILO) recently reported in its World Employment and Social Outlook 2015 paper, this displacement renders millions to structurally regulated surplus or expendable statuses.

Capitalist logic does not allow for surplus populations to be sustained for long. They either have to be reabsorbed into the value producing mechanisms of the system, or disposed of. Events over the past 20 (or more) years, such as the forced separation of Yugoslavia, the genocide in Burundi and Rwanda, the never ending civil and international wars in Zaire/Congo and central Afrikan region, the mass displacement of farmers in Mexico clearly indicate that the system does not possess the current capacity to absorb the surplus populations and maintain its equilibrium.

The dominant actors in the global economy - multinational corporations, the trans-nationalist capitalist class, and state managers - are in crisis mode trying to figure out how to best manage this massive surplus in a politically justifiable (but expedient) manner.

This incapacity to manage crisis caused by capitalism itself is witnessed by numerous examples of haphazard intervention at managing the rapidly expanding number of displaced peoples such as:

- \* The ongoing global food crisis (which started in the mid-2000's) where millions are unable to afford basic food stuffs because of rising prices and climate induced production shortages;
- \* The corporate driven displacement of hundreds of millions of farmers and workers in the global south (particularly in Africa and parts of Southeast Asia);
- \* Military responses (including the building of fortified walls and blockades) to the massive migrant crisis confronting the governments of the United States, Western Europe, Australia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, etc.;

- \*The corporate driven attempt to confront climate change almost exclusively by market (commodity) mechanisms;
- \*The scramble for domination of resources and labor, and the escalating number of imperialist facilitated armed conflicts and attempts at regime change in Africa, Asia (including Central Asia) and Eastern Europe.

More starkly, direct disposal experiments are also deepening and expanding:

- \* Against Afrikans in Colombia,
- \* Haitians in the Dominican Republic,
- \* Sub-Saharan Afrikans in Libya,
- \* Indigenous peoples in the Andean region,
- \* The Palestinians in Gaza, Adivasis in India,
- \* The Rohingya's in Myanmar and Bangladesh,
- \* And the list goes on.

Accompanying all of this is the ever expanding level of xenophobia and violence targeted at migrants on a world scale, pitting the unevenly pacified and rewarded victims of imperialism against one other as has been witnessed in places like South Africa over the last decade, where attacks on migrant workers and communities has become a mainstay of political activity.

The capitalist system is demonstrating, day by day, that it no longer possesses the managerial capacity to absorb newly dislocated and displaced populations into the international working class (proletariat), and it is becoming harder and harder for the



international ruling class to sustain the provision of material benefits that have traditionally been awarded to the most loyal subjects of capitalism's global empire, namely the "native" working classes in Western Europe and settlers in projects like the United States, Canada, and Australia.

When the capitalist system can't expand and absorb it must preserve itself by shifting towards "correction and contraction" - excluding and if necessary disposing of all the surpluses that cannot be absorbed or consumed at a profit). We are now clearly in an era of correction and contraction that will have genocidal consequences for the surplus populations of the world if left unaddressed.

This dynamic brings us back to the US and the crisis of jobs, mass incarceration and the escalating number of extrajudicial police killings confronting Black people.

### The Black Surplus Challenge/Problem

African, or Black, people in the United States are one of these surplus populations. Black people are no longer a central force in the productive process of the United States, in large part because those manufacturing industries that have not completely offshored their production no longer need large quantities of relatively cheap labor due to automation advances. At the same time agricultural industries have been largely mechanized or require even cheaper sources of super-exploited labor from migrant workers in order to ensure profits.

Various campaigns to reduce the cost of Black labor in the US have fundamentally failed, due to the militant resistance of Black labor and the ability of Black working class communities to "make ends meet" by engaging in and receiving survival level resources from the underground economy, which has grown exponentially in the Black community since the 1970's. (The underground economy has exploded worldwide since the 1970's due to the growth of unregulated "grey market" service economies and the explosion of the illicit drug trade. Its expansion has created considerable "market distortions" throughout the world, as it has created new value chains, circuits of accumulation, and financing streams that helped "cook the books" of banking institutions worldwide and helped finance capital become the dominant faction of capital in the 1980's and 90's).

The social dimensions of white supremacy regarding consumer "comfort", "trust" and "security" seriously constrain the opportunities of Black workers in service industries and retail work, as significant numbers of non-Black consumers are uncomfortable receiving direct services from Black people (save for things like custodial and security services). These are the root causes of what many are calling the "Black jobs crisis". The lack of jobs for Black people translates into a lack of need for Black people, which equates into the

wholesale devaluation of Black life. And anything without value in the capitalist system is disposable.

The declining “value” of Black life is not a new problem – Black people have constituted an escalating problem in search of a solution for the US ruling class since the 1960’s. Although the US labor market started to have trouble absorbing Afrikan workers in the 1950’s, the surplus problem didn’t reach crisis proportions until the late 1960’s, when the Black Liberation Movement started to critically impact industrial production with demands for more jobs, training and open access to skilled and supervisory work (which were “occupied” by white seniority-protected workers), higher wages, direct representation (through instruments like the League of Revolutionary Black Workers), constant strikes, work stoppages, other forms of industrial action, militant resistance to state and non-state forces of repression and hundreds of urban rebellions.

This resistance occurred at the same time that the international regime of integrated production, trade management, and financial integration, and currency convergence instituted by the United States after WWII, commonly called the Bretton Woods regime, fully matured and ushered in the present phase of globalization. This regime obliterated most exclusivist (or protectionist) production regimes and allowed international capital to scour the world for cheaper sources of labor and raw materials without fear of inter-imperialist rivalry and interference (as predominated during earlier periods). Thus, Black labor was hitting its stride just as capital was finding secure ways to eliminate its dependence upon it (and Western unionized labor more generally) by starting to reap the rewards of its post-WWII mega-global investments (largely centered in Western Europe, Australia, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan).

One reward of these mega-global investments for US capital was that it reduced the scale and need for domestic industrial production, which limited the ability of Black labor to disrupt the system with work stoppages, strikes, and other forms of industrial action. As US capital rapidly reduced the scale of its domestic production in the 1970’s and 80’s, it intentionally elevated competition between white workers and Afrikan and other non-settler sources of labor for the crumbs it was still doling out. The settler-world view, position, and systems of entitlement possessed by the vast majority of white workers compelled them to support the overall initiatives of capital and to block the infusion of Afrikan, Xicano, Puerto Rican and other non-white labor when there were opportunities to do so during this period.

This development provided the social base for the “silent majority,” “law and order,” “tuff on crime,” “war on drugs,” “war on gangs and thugs” campaigns that dominated the national political landscape from the late 1960’s through the early 2000’s, that lead to mass incarceration, racist drug laws, and militarized policing that have terrorized Afrikan (and Indigenous, Xicano, Puerto Rican, etc.) communities since the 1970’s.

To deal with the crisis of Black labor redundancy and mass resistance the ruling class responded by creating a multipronged strategy of limited incorporation, counterinsurgency, and mass containment. The stratagem of limited incorporation sought to and has partially succeeded in dividing the Black community by class, as corporations and the state have been able to take in and utilize the skills of sectors of the Black petit bourgeoisie and working class for their own benefit. The stratagem of counterinsurgency crushed, divided and severely weakened Black organizations. And the stratagem of containment resulted in millions of Black people effectively being re-enslaved and warehoused in prisons throughout the US empire.

This three-pronged strategy exhausted itself by the mid-2000 as core dynamics of it (particularly the costs associated with mass incarceration and warehousing) became increasingly unprofitable and therefore unsustainable. Experiments with alternative forms of incarceration (like digitally monitored home detainment) and the spatial isolation and externalization of the Afrikan surplus population to the suburbs and exurbs currently abound, but no new comprehensive strategy has yet been devised by the ruling class to solve the problem of what to do and what politically can be done to address the Black surplus population problem. All that is clear from events like the catastrophe following Hurricane Katrina and the hundreds of Afrikans being daily, monthly, and yearly extrajudicially killed by various law enforcement agencies is that Black life is becoming increasingly more disposable. And it is becoming more disposable because in the context of the American capitalist socio-economic system, Black life is a commodity rapidly depreciating in value, but still must be corralled and controlled.

### A Potential Path of Resistance

Although Afrikan people are essentially “talking instruments” to the overlords of the capitalist system, Black people have always possessed our own agency. Since the dawn of the Afrikan slave trade and the development of the mercantile plantations and chattel slavery, Black people resisted their enslavement and the systemic logic and dynamics of the capitalist system itself.

The fundamental question confronting Afrikan people since their enslavement and colonization in territories held by the US government is to what extent can Black people be the agents and instruments of their own liberation and history? It is clear that merely being the object or appendage of someone else’s project and history only leads to a disposable future. Black people have to forge their own future and chart a clear self-determining course of action in order to be more than just a mere footnote in world history.

Self-determination and social liberation, how do we get there? How will we take care of our own material needs (food, water, shelter, clothing, health care, defense, jobs, etc.)? How will we address the social contradictions that shape and define us, both internally and externally generated? How should we and will we express our political independence?

There are no easy or cookie cutter answers. However, there are some general principles and dynamics that I believe are perfectly clear. Given how we have been structurally positioned as a disposable, surplus population by the US empire we need to build a mass movement that focuses as much on organizing and building *autonomous, self-organized and executed social projects* as it focuses on campaigns and initiatives that apply *transformative pressure on the government and the forces of economic exploitation and domination*. This is imperative, especially when we clearly understand the imperatives of the system we are fighting against.

The capitalism system has always required certain levels of worker “reserves” (the army of the unemployed) in order to control labor costs and maintain social control. But, the system must now do two things simultaneously to maintain profits: drastically reduce the cost of all labor and ruthlessly discard millions of jobs and laborers. “You are on your own,” is the only social rationale the system has the capacity to process and its overlords insist that “there is no alternative” to the program of pain that they have to implement and administer. To the system therefore, Black people can either accept their fate as a disposable population, or go to hell. We have to therefore create our own options and do everything we can to eliminate the systemic threat that confronts us.

Autonomous projects are initiatives not supported or organized by the government (state) or some variant of monopoly capital (finance or corporate industrial or mercantile capital). These are initiatives that directly seek to create a democratic “economy of need” around organizing sustainable institutions that satisfy people’s basic needs around principles of social solidarity and participatory or direct democracy that intentionally put the needs of people before the needs of profit. These initiatives are built and sustained by people organizing themselves and collectivizing their resources through dues paying membership structures, income sharing, resource sharing, time banking, etc., to amass the initial resources needed to start and sustain our initiatives. These types of projects range from organizing community farms (focused on developing the capacity to feed thousands of people) to forming people’s self-defense networks to organizing non-market housing projects to building cooperatives to fulfill our material needs. To ensure that these are not mere Black capitalist enterprises, these initiatives must be built democratically from the ground up and must be owned, operated, and controlled by their workers and consumers. These are essentially “serve the people” or “survival programs” that help the people to sustain and attain a degree of autonomy and self-rule. Our challenge is marshaling enough resources and organizing these projects on a large enough scale to eventually meet the

material needs of nearly 40 million people. And overcoming the various pressures that will be brought to bear on these institutions by the forces of capital to either criminalize and crush them during their development (via restrictions on access to finance, market access, legal security, etc.) or co-opt them and reincorporate them fully into the capitalist market if they survive and thrive.

Our pressure exerting initiatives must be focused on creating enough democratic and social space for us to organize ourselves in a self-determined manner. We should be under no illusion that the system can be reformed, it cannot. Capitalism and its bourgeois national-states, the US government being the most dominant amongst them, have demonstrated a tremendous ability to adapt to and absorb disruptive social forces and their demands - when it has ample surpluses. The capitalist system has essentially run out of surpluses, and therefore does not possess the flexibility that it once did.

Because real profits have declined since the late 1960's, capitalism has resorted to operating largely on a parasitic basis, commonly referred to as neo-liberalism, which calls for the dismantling of the social welfare state, privatizing the social resources of the state, eliminating institutions of social solidarity (like trade unions), eliminating safety standards and protections, promoting the monopoly of trade by corporations, and running financial markets like casinos.

Our objectives therefore, must be structural and necessitate nothing less than complete social transformation. To press for our goals we must seek to exert maximum pressure by organizing mass campaigns that are strategic and tactically flexible, including mass action (protest) methods, direct action methods, boycotts, non-compliance methods, occupations, and various types of people's or popular assemblies. The challenges here are not becoming sidelined and subordinated to someone else's agenda - in particular that of the Democratic party (which has been the grave of social movements for generations) - and not getting distracted by symbolic reforms or losing sight of the strategic in the pursuit of the expedient.

What the combination of these efforts will amount to is the creation of Black Autonomous Zones. These Autonomous Zones must serve as centers for collective survival, collective defense, collective self-sufficiency and social solidarity. However, we have to be clear that while building Black Autonomous Zones is necessary, they are not sufficient in and of themselves. In addition to advancing our own autonomous development and political independence, we have to build a revolutionary international movement. We are not going to transform the world on our own. As noted throughout this short work, Black people in the US are not the only people confronting massive displacement, dislocation, disposability, and genocide, various people's and sectors of the working class throughout the US and the world are confronting these existential challenges and seeking concrete solutions and real

allies as much as we do.

Our Autonomous Zones must link with, build with, and politically unite with oppressed, exploited and marginalized peoples, social sectors and social movements throughout the US and the world. The Autonomous Zones must link with Indigenous communities, Xicano's and other communities stemming from the Caribbean, and Central and South America. We must also build alliances with poor and working class whites. It is essential that we help to serve as an alternative (or at least a counterweight) to the reactionary and outright fascist socialization and influences the white working class is constantly bombarded with.

Our Autonomous Zones should seek to serve as new fronts of class struggle that unite forces that are presently separated by white supremacy, xenophobia and other instruments of hierarchy, oppression and hatred. The knowledge drawn from countless generations of Black oppression must become known and shared by all exploited and oppressed people. We have to unite on the basis of a global anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-colonial program that centers the liberation of Indigenous, colonized, and oppressed peoples and the total social and material emancipation of all those who labor and create the value that drives human civilization. We must do so by creating a regenerative economic system that harmonizes human production and consumption with the limits of the Earth's biosphere and the needs of all our extended relatives - the non-human species who occupy 99.9 percent of our ecosystem. This is no small task, but our survival as a people and as a species depends upon it.

The tremendous imbalance of forces in favor of capital and the instruments of imperialism largely dictates that the strategy needed to implement this program calls for the transformation of the oppressive social relationships that define our life from the "bottom up" through radical social movements. These social movements must challenge capital and the commodification of life and society at every turn, while at the same time building up its own social and material reserves for the inevitable frontal assaults that will be launched against our social movements and the people themselves by the forces of reaction. Ultimately, the forces of liberation are going to have to prepare themselves and all the progressive forces in society for a prolonged battle to destroy the repressive arms of the state as the final enforcer of bourgeois social control in the world capitalist system. As recent events Greece painfully illustrate, our international movement will have to simultaneously win, transform, and dismantle the capitalist state at the same time in order to secure the democratic space necessary for a revolutionary movement to accomplish the most minimal of its objectives.

Return to the Source

The intersecting, oppressive systems of capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, and white

supremacy have consistently tried to reduce African people to objects, tools, chattel, and cheap labor. Despite the systemic impositions and constraints these systems have tried to impose, Afrikan people never lost sight of their humanity, never lost sight of their own value, and never conceded defeat.

In the age of mounting human surplus and the devaluation and disposal of life, Afrikan people are going to have to call on the strengths of our ancestors and the lessons learned in over 500 years of struggle against the systems of oppression and exploitation that beset them. Building a self-determining future based on self-respect, self-reliance, social solidarity, cooperative development and internationalism is a way forward that offers us the chance to survive and thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.

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## **Pablo González Casanova: Crisis: Tendencias y alternativas**

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ESCENA COTIDIANA EN EL ZÓCALO CAPITALINO. FOTO MARÍA MELÉNDREZ PARADA.

El sistema de dominación y acumulación en que vivimos -conocido como capitalismo- tiene como atractor principal: la acumulación de poder y riquezas. En su comportamiento actual, para lograr sus fines el sistema emplea todos los modos de producción que lo precedieron. Combina el trabajo asalariado con el esclavismo, y uno y otro con el trabajo del siervo y con las nuevas formas de tributación y despojo, que hoy se ocultan en deudas impagables y créditos usureros, que los acreedores cobran con bienes y territorios por las buenas o por la fuerza.

A los países endeudados, cuando les llega la hora de pagar y no tienen con qué, los hacen acumular deuda sobre deuda y pagar más y más intereses hasta que por fin los embargan y los obligan a desnacionalizar y privatizar propiedades nacionales y estatales... es decir, los despojan. Esa es la nueva acumulación primitiva o por desposesión en una de sus muchas variantes. Todo ocurre en un conocido proceso por el que los gobiernos deudores someten sus decisiones, su dignidad y sus políticas a las corporaciones y complejos acreedores, que son quienes realmente mandan.

Los políticos colaboracionistas creen que ser un buen político es obedecer a esos que mandan, es enriquecerse con los que mandan, y es llegar a ser como los que mandan. Piensan que así es la vida, y hasta dicen y se dicen, que la historia también es así, y que quienes no entienden los cambios actuales se están aferrando a un pasado que ya no existe, y se ocultan los avances con sus necios prejuicios.

Piensen también que en este mundo, aunque no lo digamos, todos somos sinvergüenzas, pero que ellos -los políticos distinguidos, y que mandan queramos o no- son más inteligentes y eficaces que quienes los critican. Ganas tuvieran sus opositores de ser como ellos. Así piensan.

Todo lo anterior parecería anecdótico si no sirviera para darnos cuenta que la crisis que vivimos es una crisis económica, moral, intelectual, política y social. Es una crisis que abarca todas las actividades de la vida humana, incluso las del conocimiento de lo que pasa y de lo que va a venir en el mundo y el país, en que sus trabajadores de tierra, mar y aire, sus campesinos, agricultores y mineros, sus comunidades indígenas y no indígenas, sus sectores medios y sus juventudes, tendrán más posibilidades de defenderse, y de ganar, si a una organización de organizaciones sectoriales, regionales, fabriles, comunales, barriales, añaden la organización desde abajo y con los de abajo de su voluntad colectiva y personal; la organización de su conocimiento y del saber, la organización de su conciencia para mejor lograr lo que los trabajadores y los pueblos quieren, y para impulsar -lo que es fundamental- el fortalecimiento y organización de nuestra moral de lucha, de nuestra moral de cooperación, de compañerismo, y, también, de concertación de voluntades tanto para resistir, como para luchar, y construir las relaciones y estructuras de otro mundo posible y necesario en que, con la democracia -como poder del pueblo- este organice la vida y el trabajo para alcanzar esa emancipación, esa libertad y ese respeto a las diferencias de raza, edad, sexo, religión, filosofía, para las que la humanidad dispone hoy de conocimientos y técnicas que consoliden la emancipación humana.

Si los sueños del pasado se quedaron en sueños -y los sueños, sueños son-, hoy, con las técnicas de organización de que disponemos y una fuerte moral colectiva, se pueden realizar, si no cejamos en nuestra decisión de lucha y nos organizamos en redes, en coordinadoras, en colectividades, en comités de fábrica, de barrio, de calle y en otros enlaces presenciales y a distancia, que constituyan un nuevo tipo de partido capaz de construir las bases de otro mundo posible.

Hoy podemos hacer que nuestra lucha solidaria de pueblos y trabajadores viva ese paso de lo ideal que se vuelve real. Sí se puede, aunque estemos en plena tormenta, o por eso mismo.

La crisis en que vivimos es una crisis que rompe muchas de las tendencias que se daban, en particular las que buscan su solución dentro del actual sistema de dominación y acumulación capitalista, con sus mentirosos actos caritativos, generosos, humanitarios, y hoy, hasta dizque para salvar la tierra que ellos mismos están destruyendo con su entrañable codicia.

Las grandes crisis de este sistema de dominación y acumulación movido por el afán de

poder, de riquezas y utilidades no sólo obedecen a que baja la tasa de utilidades de las compañías, o a que hay problemas de sobreproducción o de subconsumo. No sólo se deben a especulaciones de unos cuantos banqueros que quiebran a miles de deudores, como la crisis que se desencadenaron en 2008 y que sirvió de detonador de la que el mundo todavía no sale.

Las crisis se producen también deliberadamente por las corporaciones financieras para maximizar su poder, sus riquezas y utilidades, para debilitar a los trabajadores y hacerlos que pierdan sus derechos y bajen la fuerza de sus demandas y, que hasta para comer se sometan a toda suerte de tiempos, ritmos, riesgos, salarios de hambre, enfermedades seguras, y daños incurables.

Las crisis inducidas sirven a la vez para que las grandes corporaciones hagan negocios a costa de medianas y pequeñas empresas, y hasta de países a lo que sacan fuera de los mercados nacionales e internacionales, o a los que entre deudas, presiones y colusiones someten, suplantando o integran a sus propias compañías privadas -como es el caso del petróleo mexicano-, o de inmensas regiones del territorio nacional que pasan y pasarán a ser “enclaves coloniales”.

Las crisis inducidas se enfocan también contra los servicios públicos que los grandes capitales quieren privatizar a toda prisa, o en incesantes acometidas, como ocurre con las universidades, los hospitales, las pensiones... y con la educación toda, que buscan desmoronar para transformarla en negocios de unos cuantos.

En los servicios públicos codiciados incluyen hasta las pensiones y jubilaciones y el conjunto de la seguridad social. Todas esas actividades en vez de ser una carga fiscal aumentan sus haberes y poderes. Así como patronos de la educación forman estudiantes mental y materialmente eficaces y eficientes para los servicios que requieren, y como patronos de los hospitales estimulan tratamientos y medicamentos que duran tanto como lo que permiten los recursos y seguros de los clientes...

Empeñados en tan fieros empeños, los grandes patronos ni por asomo piensan en las personas a las que despojan y ponen en la calle, sanos o enfermos, y que de la noche a la mañana se quedan sin recursos para sus gastos elementales de salud, educación, pensiones, producción, comunicación, servicios, alimentación y hasta de agua para beber.

Es más a quienes se vuelven vendedores de la calle, cuidadores de automóviles, boleros, plomeros, relojeros les quitan sus trabajos con persecuciones de la policía o con productos que ya no tienen compostura, o que “compactos” salen de las grandes fábricas y cuando una pieza no sirve se van a la basura.

La variada ofensiva afecta a grandes y pequeños países, campos y ciudades, montes y lagos; ríos y mares; suelos y subsuelos lo cual significa una creciente disminución de los empleos y de las fuentes de trabajo, medidas a las que acompañan con macropolíticas de represión y corrupción que no sólo incluyen la violación de los derechos nacionales sobre el territorio, la población, la soberanía, sino los derechos humanos que ellos mismos dicen defender y que de por sí ya están muy limitados.

Entre sus agresiones destaca el incesante ataque a los derechos agrarios de las comunidades, y el despojo por narcos y mafiosos de los recursos y las tierras de ejidatarios, comuneros y pequeños propietarios. La ofensiva no sólo incluye los derechos sociales y los de agricultores y campesinos sino los derechos sindicales, y los derechos ciudadanos. Es más a la devaluación de la moneda, a la inflación creciente que prepotentemente juraron controlar, añaden la congelación de salarios en moneda y especie, o en servicios y mercados antes subsidiados y hoy desaparecidos o por desaparecer, a favor de las megaempresas que todo lo producen y todo lo venden, hasta las semillas de que la vida no nace, y los remedios que desatan pandemias.

Mientras eso y más ocurre -y al mismo tiempo- los hacedores de tanto daño se pasean y pavonean haciendo como que son grandes señores, respetables funcionarios, responsables y seguros empresarios, eficientes y eficaces hombres de Estado. A su pública apariencia añaden un doble teatro que también pone en crisis la realidad. Desapareciéndola... ¡La realidad no aparece!

De un lado si el éxito de la dominación en crisis se debe a la cooptación y colusión de cuadros y clientelas subordinadas y subrogadas que circulan a través de todo el sistema gubernamental abierto y encubierto, de otro se debe al arte maravilloso de la televisión, de la propaganda a la sociedad de consumo, combinada con mezclas, alianzas y amalgamas de una macropolítica de corrupción y represión que funciona desde los grandes mandos de la globalización neoliberal y “desde la sombra” hasta los gobiernos y grupos criminales abiertos y encubiertos que juegan sus respectivos papeles entre autonomías y sujeciones, entre soberanías y servidumbres, amalgamadas o coludidas.

Con razón muchos autores no sólo hablan de una crisis del capitalismo sino de una crisis de la civilización. Algo de eso es lo que está pasando aquí y en el mundo que domina el complejo empresarial-militar-político y mediático de Estados Unidos y de la Unión Europea, con sus redes de aliados, socios y subordinados de una globalización que se distingue de la política imperialista anterior, por lo menos en dos terrenos: Uno consiste en que más que dominar a los Estados-nación desde un centro rector, las sedes imperiales están organizando una burguesía global, cuyos enlaces consolidados reciben el apoyo necesario para enriquecerse y acumular, siempre que del ingreso nacional total, las corporaciones se queden con la mayor parte. A esas medidas que organizan la lucha de clases global, quienes

de veras mandan añaden otras por las que regularmente dominan a sus socios periféricos. Consisten estas en darles “luz verde” en la corrupción y la represión, una corrupción y represión de las que se benefician en grande las metrópolis y que la banca mundial oculta, cuando en realidad son ellas y ella quienes hacen del narcotráfico y el terrorismo uno de los principales negocios del “enlace globalizador” de las corporaciones financieras, armamentistas, mineras, agroindustriales, constructoras, y de los variados servicios que les dan para la construcción de infraestructuras y meganegocios en las ciudades y territorios de la periferia, al tiempo que los gobiernos nativos adquieren cuantiosas deudas interiores-exteriores, que no destinan al desarrollo del país, sino a la importación de materiales y productos que los prestamistas producen y de que se deshacen en ventas negociadas para el descomunal enriquecimiento y la buena marcha de las corporaciones y sus deudores.

La creciente deuda externa no se emplea así para adquirir bienes de producción que les hagan competencia en medio de la crisis sino para la adquisición de bienes de consumo que las corporaciones no tienen a quien vender.

A tan nuevas y renovadas medidas se añade otra más que es importante señalar y es la que concierne a la organización global de la lucha de clases, que corresponde a la impresionante novedad de los llamados “golpes de Estado blandos” aplicados sobre todo contra los llamados “gobiernos progresistas” o “de izquierda”.

En la lucha global de clases se usan, con beneficios sin cuento, los vínculos entre el crimen organizado y el gobierno local, asesorado e informado este por el gobierno global y apoyados abiertamente por las burguesías nacionales. En la lucha se combinan las guerras “internas”, reales, con las virtuales, con o sin uso de los militares, y mediante la combinación de la inflación con el desabasto, de la publicidad y la propaganda con los agentes provocadores...

La novedad prevaleciente se basa en el uso de las contradicciones de clase de pueblos y trabajadores que tiran a los gobiernos progresistas con el apoyo del poder legislativo y el judicial y a veces con el del segundón en el poder ejecutivo, todo en medio de un ejército que defiende el orden legal existente. La globalización es otro imperialismo, muy otro, en occidente y también en oriente; en el neoliberalismo de aquí y en el estatismo no menos sofisticado de allá.

En cuanto a los gobiernos que luchan eficaz y eficientemente en las redes de los socios comprometidos y leales, la globalización neoliberal apoya su fidelidad siempre que le den más y más de lo que les piden o que no incurran en desobediencias. En ambos casos se les amenaza con denunciarlos y, si es necesario, cuando ya no le sirven, las propias corporaciones y complejos apoyan las denuncias de latrocinios y crímenes, y les aplican los calificativos de “gobiernos fallidos” o de “gobiernos canallas”. Así es el arte de gobernar

“eficientemente”, así se ejerce una llamada “democracia” que ha sido privatizada por las grandes corporaciones y utilizada por clase política para ocupar puestos jugosos de elección popular y disponer de las ventajas y concesiones de que se sirven sus jefes políticos y clientelas.

En México el sistema político, con sus sindicatos y organizaciones del antiguo sector popular, obrero y agrario actúa en un mundo fantasmagórico en que las mutuas acusaciones de corrupción o violencia criminal, individual y colectiva, generalmente son inconsecuentes, y “allí quedan” -en meras denuncias-; mientras los partidos políticos, a más de sus luchas internas y de sus alianzas desideologizadas entre los que se dicen de derecha o de izquierda, más que presentar y defender un programa alternativo socialdemócrata, o reformista, o que retome como programa la Constitución que ya se deshizo, se dedican a acusaciones personales de latrocinios, crímenes, y flaquezas, con un agravante más: Que cuando presentan un programa para la solución de los problemas nacionales y sociales, su candidatos, una vez elegidos casi siempre se olvidan de las promesas, y muestran, con variados tonos, su pobre y elocuente deterioro moral.

En medio de tan grave situación se dan dos circunstancias a nivel mundial que hacen cada vez más necesaria la organización de los pueblos y los trabajadores: La amenaza a la vida en la tierra si el capitalismo subsiste, y el horror sistémico que vive la humanidad con la actual organización del trabajo y de la vida.

Para la solución de todos esos problemas y para el establecimiento de una democracia desde abajo y con los de abajo, el papel de los trabajadores va a ser crucial y a su presencia como actores fundamentales de la emancipación quiero dedicar unas palabras finales, a reserva de referirme en otra ocasión al reciente Congreso Nacional Indígena y del EZLN con su extraordinario acuerdo de consultar a sus comunidades sobre la posibilidad de librar la lucha electoral con todos los mexicanos que se sumen al proceso emancipador, y que para ello funden el poder del pueblo mexicano. Los trabajadores cumplirán en este y en todos los proyectos emancipadores un papel fundamental para su organización y éxito.

De hecho, todos los problemas referidos incluyen la presencia activa de los trabajadores en su sentido más amplio, que es el correcto y, al mismo tiempo hay otros problemas que directamente les conciernen y de que me gustaría hablar, así como, de los retos que se les presentan para una organización y una lucha que pueda hacer el pueblo trabajador, uno de los actores que con sus vanguardias construya la democracia, es decir, la soberanía del pueblo sobre la de monarcas, oligarquías, burocracias y corporaciones.

La crisis está afectando en el mundo y en nuestro país a los trabajadores como a la inmensa mayoría de los seres humanos y amenaza con afectarlos como a todos los seres vivos y al planeta Tierra. Esto es científicamente exacto. Pero por lo que se refiere a los trabajadores,

algunos datos y cifras pueden ser muy ilustrativos, y son esenciales para darnos cuenta de la urgente tarea de organizarnos y de las mejores formas de hacerlo.

Empleo un estilo telegráfico para dar cuenta de algunos. Según la Organización Internacional del Trabajo 25 millones de personas son víctimas de trabajo forzado. Según la *Walk Free Foundation* el número de esclavos en México es de 376 mil 800 personas. Los peligros de desempleo por la robotización y el uso de nuevas tecnologías y de “sistemas inteligentes” varían en las distintas regiones y en una misma región. El riesgo de la automatización del trabajo en los países de la OCDE alcanza 9%. Parece estar subestimado...

Una investigación de la Universidad de Oxford calcula que los trabajos en alto riesgo de perderse alcanzan al 47% en Estados Unidos. En todos estos casos se habla de trabajos que pueden ser automatizados en una década o dos. La mayoría corresponde a transportes, labores de producción y también de trabajo administrativo y de oficina. Otra amenaza más se refiere a los desplazados por la violencia, que según el Consejo Noruego para refugiados en México llegan por lo menos a 281 mil 400 internos con unos que son masivos -es decir de 10 o más familias-, y en que destacaron 15 estados.

De 2007 a 2011 se estima que pasaron a Estados Unidos 115 mil personas de las 254 mil que querían entrar sólo desde Ciudad Juárez.

Como la ayuda a los campesinos ha sido totalmente abandonada de acuerdo con la política neoliberal globalizadora, 11 millones 300 mil mexicanos se encuentran en la extrema miseria, cifra proporcionada por Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social, el Coneval. Entre trabajadores, periodistas, estudiantes, líderes comunales y muchos otros, como víctimas se registran más de 100 mil homicidios intencionales de 2006 a 2012, según el Informe Especial de la ONU sobre ejecuciones extrajudiciales, sumarias o arbitrarias.

Según cifras estimadas de organizaciones de la sociedad civil el promedio anual de migrantes indocumentados que ingresa a México puede llegar a 400 mil. Y hay migrantes que llegan de Asia, África, el Caribe y Sudamérica, que tratan de pasar a Estados Unidos como indocumentados por ciudades del este y el oeste. La emigración actual es inmensa; la del futuro tiende a ser mayor.

No puede uno ignorar que todos estos datos son muy “incómodos” para los ricos y los poderosos y para quienes los encubren y ensalzan, o simplemente, no quieren oír nada del mundo desagradable. Pero son muy importantes para quienes creemos que otro mundo es posible y luchamos poco o mucho para que hasta lo que parece imposible sea posible como decía aquél letrado del 68. Y querríamos terminar este recuento refiriéndonos a los jóvenes



que son quienes van a vivir en el futuro inmediato como trabajadores manuales e intelectuales. Sobre todos en ellos pesa el peligro de la privatización de escuelas y universidades.

Al conflicto magisterial que la llamada reforma educativa alentó se añaden crecientes daños y amenazas a las escuelas y universidades públicas. En ambos niveles, niñez y juventud viven problemas que parecen identificarse con una política expresa -y no sólo indirecta- de desarrollo del subdesarrollo. No debemos nada más enfrentar esa política sino acrecentar las fuerzas de pueblos y trabajadores y de las organizaciones que con ellos y para ellos luchan por otra organización del trabajo y de la vida.

Ser trabajador es ser obrero, campesino, empleado, profesor, ingeniero, médico, abogado, y profesionista en el uso de las manos y la inteligencia. Si en los trabajadores productivos se encontró por la teoría crítica al protagonista de la emancipación, la historia fue mostrando varios hechos significativos que es necesario llevar a la conciencia y a la acción. Uno de ellos es que a los trabajadores de la producción industrial se tienen que añadir hoy los de la agricultura, los de las comunidades, los desplazados, los sin papeles y también los de la distribución, los transportes y servicios, así como los trabajadores que viniendo de las clases subalternas y de los sectores medios viven en carne propia y en su conciencia, la irracionalidad de un sistema dominado por quienes están enfermos de poder, utilidades y riquezas, a tal grado que se ocultan el estado universal de barbarie y de inmoralidad que el sistema dominante impone, amenazando hoy la existencia de la propia vida de sus beneficiarios y la de sus descendientes, hechos todos que no son producto de mentes deprimidas a las que acusan de catastrofistas, sino de quienes, junto con los pueblos y los trabajadores organizados en su moral de lucha y de cooperación, lidiaremos y venceremos.

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## Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi: The Coming Global Civil War: Is There Any Way Out?

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## Necro-Economy

Are we heading into the Third World War? Yes and no: war has been with us for the past fifteen years, it promises to be with us for a long time, and it threatens to destroy the last remnants of modern civilization. The exacerbation of xenophobia across the West and the rise of nationalism in countries like France are causes and effects of a looming war whose sources lie in the past two hundred years of colonial impoverishment and humiliation of the majority of the world population, not to mention neoliberal competition and the privatization of everything—including war itself.

Pacifism is becoming irrelevant as the conditions of war become irreversible. How can we oppose war when killers shoot at a peaceful crowd at a concert? War is becoming normal: the stock exchange no longer reacts to massacres, as its main concern is the looming stagnation of the world economy. After every armed attack, whether by Islamists or white supremacists, by random murderers or by well-trained fundamentalist killers, Americans run to buy more weapons. So weapons are not only increasing in the arsenals of nations, but also in the kitchens and bedrooms of everyday families.

A Republican assemblywoman from Nevada named Michele Fiore recently posted a Christmas family portrait on Facebook. At first glance, it's like any other holiday card, with three generations of a family in red shirts and jeans in front of a Christmas tree. Upon closer inspection, you see that Mrs. Fiore, her adult daughters, their husbands, and even one of her grandchildren are all holding firearms.

The privatization of war is an obvious feature of neoliberal deregulation, and the same paradigm has generated Halliburton and the Sinaloa Cartel, Blackwater and Daesh. The business of violence is one of the main branches of the global economy and financial abstraction does not discriminate criminal money from any other kind.

The process of externalization and privatization is now provoking a worldwide civil war that

is feeding itself. According to Nicholas Kristof, “in the last four years more people have died in the United States from guns (including suicides and accidents) than Americans died in the wars in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq combined.”<sup>1</sup>



Michele Fiore, a Republican assemblywoman from Nevada, poses with her family for her Christmas card, 2015.

## Global Fragmentary Civil War

Are we heading toward a global war? Not exactly: no declarations of war are being issued, but innumerable combat zones are proliferating. No unified fronts are in sight, but fragmented micro-conflicts and uncanny alliances with no general strategic vision abound. “World war” is not the term for this. I would call it fragmentary global civil war.

And the fragments are not converging, because war is everywhere.

Now, as US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter claims, “destructive power of greater and greater magnitude falls into the hands of smaller and smaller groups of human beings.”<sup>2</sup>

When war is privatized, no geopolitical order in the world can be imagined, no arrangement among the conflicting religious tribes can be pursued. No beginning and no end—an endless war, as Bin Laden promised. From the Paradise in which he certainly dwells, Mr. bin Laden must be looking upon the rise of the Caliphate of Death with a smile: so far, he can easily claim that the Army of Allah is winning the war.

Some American Republicans claim that the killings are related to mental illness. In a way, they are right. But they misunderstand the causes and the extent of what they label mental illness. Mental illness is not the rare malady of an isolated dropout, but the widespread consequence of panic, depression, precariousness, and humiliation: these are the sources of

the contemporary global fragmentary war, and they are spreading everywhere, rooted in the legacy of colonialism and in the frenzy of daily competition.

Neoliberal deregulation has opened the way to a regime of worldwide necro-economy: the all-encompassing law of competition has canceled out moral prescriptions and legal regulations. Since its earliest phases, Thatcher's neoliberal philosophy prescribed war among individuals. Hobbes, Darwin, and Hayek have all been summoned to conceptualize the end of social civilization, the end of peace.

Forget about the religious or ideological labels of the agents of massive violence, and look at their true nature. Take the Sinaloa Cartel and Daesh and compare them to Blackwater and Exxon Mobil. They have much more in common than you may think. Their common goal is to extract the maximum amount of money from their investments in the most exciting products of the contemporary economy: terror, horror, and death. Necro-capitalism is the emerging economic order of the world.

The narco business is a pillar of the Mexican economy, and in fact the head of the Sinaloa Cartel, Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, was listed by *Fortune* magazine as one of the most prominent businessmen of 2012. Why not? After all, he is just a neoliberal entrepreneur who deals in deregulated kidnappings, drug trafficking, and murder.



Between 2009 and 2011, *Forbes* ranked "El Chapo," head of the Sinaloa drug cartel, the second most powerful man in Mexico, and respectively the 41st, 60th, and 55th most powerful man in the world.

Like neoliberal corporations investing money in the ultimate business, the Iraqi-Syrian caliphate and the Mexican narco army pay salaries to their soldiers, who are necro-

proletarians. The narco business recruits unemployed young men from Monterrey, Sinaloa, and Veracruz. The caliphate recruits young men from the suburbs of London, Cairo, Tunis, and Paris, then trains them to kidnap and slaughter people at random. Daesh salaries have been estimated to be as much as one thousand US dollars a month. The group acquires this money from ransom, oil, and taxes imposed on millions of Sunni people. They deliver a postmodern medievalism, but one that is not at all backwards. On the contrary, it is an anticipation of the future.

In a video released by Dubiq, the advertising agency of the Islamic State, the rhetoric is the same as any other type of advertising: buy this product and you'll be happy.<sup>3</sup> Multiple camera angles, slick graphics, slow motion, and even artificial wind give the whole thing a more dramatic mood: join the cause and you'll find friends, warmth, and well-being. Jihad is the best therapy for depression.

A message for feeble-minded people, for suffering people craving warmth, virile friendship, belonging. Not so different from the ads that we see every day in our city streets, only more sincere when it comes to the subject of suicide. Suicide is crucial in this video: 6,500 current or former US military soldiers commit suicide each year, according to Dubiq. While Americans die alone in anger and despair, God's soldiers die eager to meet some seventy virgins waiting in Paradise to fuck the warriors.

## **A Blueprint for Europe and the World**

Do you remember Yugoslavia? For some time, it was a rather healthy federation of twenty-five million people. Different ethnic and religious communities coexisted, factories were managed by workers, everybody had a privately owned house, and nobody suffered from hunger. Then came the International Monetary Fund, the Polish pope pushing Croats into religious war against the Orthodox Serbs, and Germany delivering weapons to the fascist Ustaša.

In 1990, the United States cut off all forms of credit to Yugoslavia unless separate elections were held in each state of the federation within six months. As a consequence, Yugoslavia—no longer able to conduct foreign trade—was condemned to commercial bankruptcy, which reinforced the divisive tendencies of its states. The US then funded the individual states to dissolve the federation, also supporting parties and movements that promoted this process. Meanwhile, Germany shipped arms to Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina.

In March of 1991, fascist organizations in Croatia called for the overthrow of the Socialist government and the expulsion of all Serbs from Croatia. On March 5, 1991, they attacked

the federal army base at Gospić, and civil war began.

The extreme right-wing Croatian party Democratic Union, which used the flag, emblems, and slogans of the pro-Nazi Ustaša party, seized power. Citizenship, property rights, employment, retirement benefits, and passports were granted only to Croats and to no other ethnic group. Thus, 300,000 Serbs armed themselves and entered the fray with unspeakable brutality.

The destruction of Yugoslavia can be seen as a return of Hitler's ghost to the world scene. Ethnic-religious wars caused around 170,000 casualties, as ethnic cleansing was practiced in every area of the federation. After seven years of violence, a new state order emerged based on a paradigm of ethnic-religious identification, a principle thought to have been extinct after the end of the Second World War and the defeat of Nazism.

Twenty years after the Nazi-neoliberal wars of Yugoslavia, in all those small nation-states (except perhaps Slovenia) unemployment is rampant, people are impoverished, schools are privatized, and public infrastructure is in disrepair. Today, the Yugoslavia of the Nineties may well be a blueprint for the European future: German Ordoliberalism has impoverished social life, depleted public services all over the continent, and inflicted humiliation on Syriza which has jeopardized the core of European solidarity.

The failure to deal with the new wave of migrants from the East has exposed the political fragility of the European Union, and now fuels a new outburst of fear, racism, shame, and bad conscience.

From the Balkans to Greece, from Libya to Morocco, are the ten million people amassing at these borders going to be the perpetrators of the next terrorist wave? Or will they be the victims of the next Holocaust?





Forensics experts work on exhuming and identifying Srebrenica victims, Bosnia and Herzegovina, July, 2005. Photo: Marco Di Lauro/Getty Images

## The Only Way Out

After the attacks in the center of Paris on Friday, November 13, a nervous French President declared: “The security pact takes precedence over the stability pact. France is at war.”

Bin Laden’s dream has been fulfilled. A small group of fanatics has provoked fragmentary global civil war. Can it be stopped?

In the present condition of perpetual economic stagnation, emerging markets are crumbling, the European Union is paralyzed, the promised economic recovery is elusive, and it is hard to foresee an awakening from this nightmare. The only imaginable way out of this hell is to end financial capitalism, but this does not seem to be at hand.

Nevertheless, this is the only prospect we can pursue in such an obscurantist time: to create solidarity among the bodies of cognitive workers worldwide, and to build a techno-poetic platform for the collaboration of cognitive workers for the liberation of knowledge from both religious and economic dogma.

A fragmented front of nationalist parties is gaining the upper hand: they oppose the euro currency and globalization, and they call for the restoration of national sovereignty. This front has assembled in the governing coalition of Hungary (which includes Nazis and authoritarian nationalists), in the Italian right-wing of Matteo Salvini, in the Polish government, in the anti-European British party UKIP, and in the rightist majority of the Bavarian CSU. This anti-euro front of European forces is converging with Russian



nationalism under the authoritarian leadership of Putin and the banner of national populism and unrelenting Islamophobia.

After the humiliation of Syriza, the future of Europe is held captive by the opposition between financial violence and national violence. In order to grasp the dynamic that drives the global civil war, we first have to see the relation between the icy wind of financial abstraction and the reaction of the aggressive body of society separated from its brain.

The icy wind of financial abstraction is instilling in the European soul a sense of desolation that Michel Houellebecq has described in his books. *La soumission* (*Submission*) is a novel about the sadness that emerges from the vanishing of collective desire. Submission to the Supreme Entity (be it God or the market) is the source of the present gloom, and the source of the present war.

Globalization has brought about the obliteration of modern universalism: capital flows freely everywhere and the labor market is globally unified, but this has not led to the free circulation of women and men, nor to the affirmation of universal reason in the world. Rather, the opposite is happening: as the intellectual energies of society are captured by the network of financial abstraction, as cognitive labor is subjugated to the abstract law of valorization, and as human communication is transformed into abstract interaction among disembodied digital agents, the social body is detached from the general intellect. The subsumption of the general intellect into the corporate kingdom of abstraction is depriving the living community of intelligence, understanding, and emotion.

And the brainless body reacts—on one side, a huge wave of mental suffering, and on the other side, the much-advertised cure for depression: fanaticism, fascism, and war. And at the end, suicide.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Kristof, “On Guns, We’re Not Even Trying,” *New York Times*, December 5, 2015

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<sup>2</sup> Discussion with Secretary Carter at the John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum, Harvard Institute of Politics, Cambridge, Massachusetts, defense.gov, December 1, 2015 →

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