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EDITORIAL

A New Bandung

At the height of the Cold War in April of 1955, delegates from newly independent African and Asian countries gathered in Bandung, Indonesia to affirm their desire for independence and their refusal to align with the world powers. The conference was attended by representatives from 29 countries: 6 from Africa and 23 from Asia. The demands over which the delegates united were at the time radical in the break they sought from a world order that had been premised on the denial of the rights, dignity and autonomous development of colonized peoples. They no doubt recognized the threat that such a break, if realized, posed for European powers whose development and wealth depended on the control of overseas territories. The delegates affirmed in this regard their opposition to colonialism and were unequivocal in their call for the independence of countries which were still under colonial rule. They demanded the decolonization and emancipation of the peoples of Africa and Asia, non-interference into the internal affairs of independent states, and for peaceful coexistence and economic development. Independence for most countries of Africa and Asia followed quickly in the few years after the conference. The consequent creation of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) dismantled Cold War geopolitics in the 60s and 70s. Central capitalist powers responded in kind to the threat of delinking that Bandung had signalled.

While marking the emergence of Third World countries on the international stage, Bandung did not surmount the legacies of unequal integration into the globalized system of capitalism, which have meant that crisis after crisis has gutted the radical promise which the conference held out in the mid-20th century. The crisis borne of the Covid-19 pandemic has renewed for the Third World, questions regarding the nature of its political and economic integration into global circuits of monopoly capitalism. The current crisis has also reinstated old questions: those regarding the viability of states lacking sovereignty over their exports, currency and produce; external debt dependence; and over the enduring legacies of colonization that have left us with a permanent crisis of identitarian politics that undercut democracy at its core.

This double issue of the Research Bulletin opens up the space for a renewed debate on Bandung´s legacy and its contributions for today and forward. We have chosen to reprint the "Final Communiqué of the Asian-African conference" signed by 29 countries on 24 April 1955 in Bandung (Indonesia), both for readers that are unfamiliar with this debate

and also as a preamble to the main piece of the issue, where Paris Yeros examines through a searing critique, the dimensions of the contemporary crisis and points us towards the urgency of a new Bandung. This is followed by a piece by Vikram Singh which examines the mass movement of farmers in India, a development which both signals the magnitude of the crisis at hand and highlights the nature of responses that a systemic shift must necessarily entail – solidarity and organizing on a mass scale as we reaffirm our commitment to a different order. Santosh Verma brings to the fore challenges posed by deflationary policies, global agricultural trade and the COVID-19 pandemic in Asia on food security. Such experiences are not unique to Asia but also prevail in Africa as has been shown in our previous research bulletins. The final piece by Thiago Lima focuses on Brazil's neoliberal path and its promotion of export oriented large-agribusiness at the expense of family farming. This, together with the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered land use patterns and greatly undermined food crop production leading to higher cases of malnutrition. The various crises presented in this bulletin call for a renewed search for alternatives in the spirit of Bandung.

As always, we welcome enquiries and responses, which may be submitted to the editors at:

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PART – I

- FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE ASIAN-AFRICAN CONFERENCE OF BANDUNG (24 APRIL 1955)
- A NEW BANDUNG IN THE CURRENT CRISIS (Paris Yeros)

FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE ASIAN-AFRICAN CONFERENCE OF BANDUNG (24 APRIL 1955)

The Asian-African Conference, convened upon the invitation of the Prime Ministers of Burma, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), India, Indonesia and Pakistan, met in Bandung from the 18th to the 24th April, 1955. In addition to the sponsoring countries the following 24 countries participated in the Conference:

Afghanistan, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gold Coast, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Nepal, People's Republic of China, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, State of Viet-Nam, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, Yemen

The Asian-African Conference considered problems of common interest and concern to countries of Asia and Africa and discussed ways and means by which their people could achieve fuller economic, cultural and political co-operation.

A. Economic co-operation.

1. The Asian-African Conference recognised the urgency of promoting economic development in the Asian- African region. There was general desire for economic co-operation among the participating countries on the basis of mutual interest and respect for national sovereignty. The proposals with regard to economic co-operation within the participating countries do not preclude either the desirability or the need for co-operation with countries outside the region, including the investment of foreign capital. It was further recognised that the assistance being received by certain participating countries from outside the region, through international or under bilateral arrangements, had made a valuable contribution to the implementation of their development programmes.

2. The participating countries agreed to provide technical assistance to one another, to the maximum extent practicable, in the form of: experts, trainees, pilot projects and equipment for demonstration purposes; exchange of know-how and establishment of national, and where possible, regional training and research institutes for imparting technical knowledge and skills in co-operation with the existing international agencies.

3. The Asian-African Conference recommended: the early establishment of the Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development; the allocation by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development of a greater part of its resources to Asian-African countries; the

early establishment of the International Finance Corporation which should include in its activities the undertaking of equity investment; and encouragement to the promotion of joint ventures among Asian-African countries in so far as this will promote their common interest.

4. The Asian-African Conference recognised the vital need for stabilizing commodity trade in the region. The principle of enlarging the scope of multilateral trade and payments was accepted. However, it was recognised that some countries would have to take recourse to bilateral trade arrangements in view of their prevailing economic conditions.

5. The Asian-African Conference recommended that collective action be taken by participating countries for stabilizing the international prices of and demand for primary commodities through bilateral and multilateral arrangements and that as far as practicable and desirable they should adopt a unified approach on the subject in the United Nations Permanent Advisory Commission on International Commodity Trade and other international forums.

6. The Asian-African Conference further recommended that: Asian-African countries should diversify their export trade by processing their raw material, wherever economically feasible, before export; intra-regional trade fairs should be promoted and encouragement given to the exchange of trade delegations and groups of businessmen; exchange of information and of samples should be encouraged with a view to promoting intra- regional trade; and normal facilities should be provided for transit trade of land-locked countries.

7. The Asian-African Conference attached considerable importance to Shipping and expressed concern that shipping lines reviewed from time to time their freight rates, often to the detriment of participating countries. It recommended a study of this problem, and collective action thereafter, to induce the shipping lines to adopt a more reasonable attitude. It was suggested that a study of railway freight of transit trade may be made.

8. The Asian-African Conference agreed that encouragement should be given to the establishment of national and regional banks and insurance companies.

9. The Asian-African Conference felt that exchange of information on matters relating to oil, such as remittance of profits and taxation, might eventually lead to the formulation of common policies.

10. The Asian-African Conference emphasized the particular significance of the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, for the Asian-African countries. The Conference welcomed the initiative of

the Powers principally concerned in offering to make available information regarding the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes; urged the speedy establishment of the International Atomic Energy Agency which should provide for adequate representation of the Asian-African countries on the executive authority of the Agency; and recommended to the Asian and African Governments to take full advantage of the training and other facilities in the peaceful uses of atomic energy offered by the countries sponsoring such programmes.

11. The Asian-African Conference agreed to the appointment of Liaison Officers in participating countries, to be nominated by their respective national Governments, for the exchange of information and ideas on matters of mutual interest. It recommended that fuller use should be made of the existing international organisations, and participating countries who were not members of such international organisations, but were eligible, should secure membership.

12. The Asian-African Conference recommended that there should be prior consultation of participating countries in international forums with a view, as far as possible, to furthering their mutual economic interest. It is, however, not intended to form a regional bloc.

B. Cultural co-operation.

1. The Asian-African Conference was convinced that among the most powerful means of promoting understanding among nations is the development of cultural co-operation. Asia and Africa have been the cradle of great religions and civilisations which have enriched other cultures and civilisations while themselves being enriched in the process. Thus the cultures of Asia and Africa are based on spiritual and universal foundations. Unfortunately contacts among Asian and African countries were interrupted during the past centuries. The peoples of Asia and Africa are now animated by a keen and sincere desire to renew their old cultural contacts and develop new ones in the context of the modern world. All participating Governments at the Conference reiterated their determination to work for closer cultural co-operation.

2. The Asian-African Conference took note of the fact that the existence of colonialism in many parts of Asia and Africa, in whatever form it may be, not only prevents cultural co-operation but also suppresses the national cultures of the people. Some colonial powers have denied to their dependent peoples' basic rights in the sphere of education and culture which hampers the development of their personality and also prevents cultural intercourse with other Asian and African peoples. This is particularly true in the case of Tunisia,

Algeria and Morocco, where the basic right of the people to study their own language and culture has been suppressed. Similar discrimination has been practised against African and coloured people in some parts of the Continent of Africa. The Conference felt that these policies amount to a denial of the fundamental rights of man, impede cultural advancement in this region and also hamper cultural co-operation on the wider international plane. The Conference condemned such a denial of fundamental rights in the sphere of education and culture in some parts of Asia and Africa by this and other forms of cultural suppression. In particular, the Conference condemned racialism as a means of cultural suppression.

3. It was not from any sense of exclusiveness or rivalry with other groups of nations and other civilisations and cultures that the Conference viewed the development of cultural co-operation among Asian and African countries. True to the age-old tradition of tolerance and universality, the Conference believed that Asian and African cultural co-operation should be developed in the larger context of world co-operation. Side by side with the development of Asian-African cultural co-operation the countries of Asia and Africa desire to develop cultural contacts with others. This would enrich their own culture and would also help in the promotion of world peace and understanding.

4. There are many countries in Asia and Africa which have not yet been able to develop their educational, scientific and technical institutions. The Conference recommended that countries in Asia and Africa which are more fortunately placed in this respect should give facilities for the admission of students and trainees from such countries to their institutions. Such facilities should also be made available to the Asian and African people in Africa to whom opportunities for acquiring higher education are at present denied.

5. The Asian-African Conference felt that the promotion of cultural co-operation among countries of Asia and Africa should be directed towards: (I) the acquisition of knowledge of each other's country; (II) mutual cultural exchange, and (III) exchange of information.

6. The Asian-African Conference was of the opinion that at this stage the best results in cultural co-operation would be achieved by pursuing bilateral arrangements to implement its recommendations and by each country taking action on its own, wherever possible and feasible.

C. Human rights and self-determination.

1. The Asian-African Conference declared its full support of the fundamental principles of Human Rights as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and took note

of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations. The Conference declared its full support of the principle of self-determination of peoples and nations as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and took note of the United Nations resolutions on the rights of peoples and nations to self-determination, which is a pre-requisite of the full enjoyment of all fundamental Human Rights.

2. The Asian-African Conference deplored the policies and practices of racial segregation and discrimination which form the basis of government and human relations in large regions of Africa and in other parts of the world. Such conduct is not only a gross violation of human rights, but also a denial of the dignity of man. The Conference extended its warm sympathy and support for the courageous stand taken by the victims of racial discrimination, especially by the peoples of African and Indian and Pakistani origin in South Africa; applauded all those who sustain their cause; re-affirmed the determination of Asian-African peoples to eradicate every trace of racialism that might exist in their own countries; and pledged to use its full moral influence to guard against the danger of falling victims to the same evil in their struggle to eradicate it.

D. Problems of dependent peoples.

1. The Asian-African Conference discussed the problems of dependent peoples and colonialism and the evils arising from the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation. The Conference is agreed: (a) in declaring that colonialism in all its manifestations is an evil which should speedily be brought to an end; (b) in affirming that the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights, is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and co-operation; (c) in declaring its support of the cause of freedom and independence for all such peoples, and (d) in calling upon the powers concerned to grant freedom and independence to such peoples.

2. In view of the unsettled situation in North Africa and of the persisting denial to the peoples of North Africa of their right to self-determination, the Asian-African Conference declared its support of the rights of the people of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia to self-determination and independence and urged the French Government to bring about a peaceful settlement of the issue without delay.

E. Other problems.

1. In view of the existing tension in the Middle East, caused by the situation in Palestine and of the danger of that tension to world peace, the Asian-African Conference declared its support of the rights of the Arab people of Palestine and called for the implementation of the United Nations Resolutions on Palestine and the achievement of the peaceful settlement of the Palestine question.

2. The Asian-African Conference, in the context of its expressed attitude on the abolition of colonialism, supported the position of Indonesia in the case of West Irian based on the relevant agreements between Indonesia and the Netherlands. The Asian-African Conference urged the Netherlands Government to reopen negotiations as soon as possible, to implement their obligations under the above-mentioned agreements and expressed the earnest hope that the United Nations would assist the parties concerned in finding a peaceful solution to the dispute.

3. The Asian-African Conference supported the position of Yemen in the case of Aden and the Southern parts of Yemen known as the Protectorates and urged the parties concerned to arrive at a peaceful settlement of the dispute.

F. Promotion of world peace and co-operation.

1. The Asian-African Conference, taking note of the fact that several States have still not been admitted to the United Nations, considered that for effective co-operation for world peace membership in the United Nations should be universal, called on the Security Council to support the admission of all those States which are qualified for membership in terms of the Charter. In the opinion of the Asian-African Conference, the following among participating countries, viz.: Cambodia, Ceylon, Japan, Jordan, Libya, Nepal, a unified Vietnam were so qualified.

The Conference considered that the representation of the countries of the Asian-African region on the Security Council, in relation to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, was inadequate. It expressed the view that as regards the distribution of the non-permanent seats, the Asian-African countries which, under the arrangement arrived at in London in 1946, are precluded from being elected, should be enabled to serve on the Security Council, so that they might make a more effective contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security.

2. The Asian-African Conference having considered the dangerous situation of international tension existing and the risks confronting the whole human race from the

outbreak of global war in which the destructive power of all types of armaments, including nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons, would be employed, invited the attention of all nations to the terrible consequences that would follow if such a war were to break out. The Conference considered that disarmament and the prohibition of the production, experimentation and use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons of war are imperative to save mankind and civilisation from the fear and prospect of wholesale destruction. It considered that the nations of Asia and Africa assembled here have a duty towards humanity and civilisation to proclaim their support for disarmament and for the prohibition of these weapons and to appeal to nations principally concerned and to world opinion, to bring about such disarmament and prohibition. The Conference considered that effective international control should be established and maintained to implement such disarmament and prohibition and that speedy and determined efforts should be made to this end. Pending the total prohibition of the manufacture of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons, this Conference appealed to all the powers concerned to reach agreement to suspend experiments with such weapons. The Conference declared that universal disarmament is an absolute necessity for the preservation of peace and requested the United Nations to continue its efforts and appealed to all concerned speedily to bring about the regulation, limitation, control and reduction of all armed forces and armaments, including the prohibition of the production, experimentation and use of all weapons of mass destruction, and to establish effective international control to this end.

G. Declaration on the promotion of world peace and co-operation.

The Asian-African Conference gave anxious thought to the question of world peace and co-operation. It viewed with deep concern the present state of international tension with its danger of an atomic world war. The problem of peace is correlative with the problem of international security. In this connection, all States should co-operate, especially through the United Nations, in bringing about the reduction of armaments and the elimination of nuclear weapons under effective international control. In this way, international peace can be promoted and nuclear energy may be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. This would help answer the needs particularly of Asia and Africa, for what they urgently require are social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. Freedom and peace are interdependent. The right of self-determination must be enjoyed by all peoples, and freedom and independence must be granted, with the least possible delay, to those who are still dependent peoples. Indeed, all nations should have the right

freely to choose their own political and economic systems and their own way of life, in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Free from mistrust and fear, and with confidence and goodwill towards each other, nations should practise tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours and develop friendly co-operation on the basis of the following principles:

1. Respect for fundamental human rights and for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

2. Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.

3. Recognition of the equality of all races and of the equality of all nations large and small.

4. Abstention from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country.

5. Respect for the right of each nation to defend itself singly or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.

6. (a) Abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defence to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers. (b) Abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries.

7. Refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country.

8. Settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means, such as negotiation, conciliation, arbitration or judicial settlement as well as other peaceful means of the parties' own choice, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.

9. Promotion of mutual interests and co-operation.

10. Respect for justice and international obligations.

The Asian and African Conference declares its conviction that friendly co-operation in accordance with these principles would effectively contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security, while co-operation in the economic, social and cultural fields would help bring about the common prosperity and well-being of all.

The Asian-African Conference recommended that the Five Sponsoring Countries consider the convening of the next meeting of the Conference, in consultation with the participating countries.

Bandung, 24 April, 1955

A NEW BANDUNG IN THE CURRENT CRISIS

Paris Yeros[1]

The current crisis is a permanent crisis of monopoly capitalism (Yeros & Jha, 2020). Its precise character must continue to be interrogated as it evolves so that focused attention may be brought to the politics and solidarity that are required. This is an ever more urgent task as that the Covid-19 pandemic has compressed and accelerated the course of contradictions in the world economy. Analogies with other systemic crises may be drawn, but none is quite the same. Ours is the crisis of monopoly capitalism in its late neo-colonial phase.

Some further ideas will be shared regarding the ongoing tendencies of polarization in North and South and the insurrectional politics that have resulted. In the last two decades, we have already witnessed at least two revolutionary situations; we should expect that the terrain of struggle will now be fast changing in this direction. Certain misconceptions about the trajectory of capitalism as a social system also need to be confronted at this stage, so as to dispel illusions about its future. The call for a New Bandung also needs to be taken more seriously, as it is time that a coherent anti-imperialist movement takes shape to illuminate the way forward and fulfil the potential of the present.

Polarization and insurrection

One of the key traits of late neo-colonialism is the intense and sustained political polarization across the peripheries: from the 1990s onwards, the historical realities of global integration and national disintegration were reinforced, as one country after another succumbed to neoliberal restructuring and new rounds of social and political conflict. As has been observed (Moyo & Yeros, 2011), in some cases nationalist radicalisation ensued, in confrontation with the monopolies; in others, temporary stability was recomposed under the wing of the monopolies; in still others, competition over natural resources resulted in state fracture or foreign occupation. Imperialist strategy never missed a step in this restructuring: it deployed a mixture of economic statecraft, punitive sanctions, political destabilisation, and its military arsenal. But the chickens have now come home to roost in the imperialist centres, most spectacularly so in the United States, as the pacts led by monopoly capital

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are in disarray and overtaken by intense polarisation there as well. Just in the last six months, in the nerve centre of the world economy, in the midst of pandemic catastrophe, we have witnessed a massive uprising against racism and police brutality, and then a fascist putsch on the Capitol. Polarisation is here to stay in the metropolitan centres as well.

The dramatic form that this has taken reflects a second trait of late neo-colonialism: insurrectional politics. Massive popular uprisings in open defiance of authority have been spreading in similar direction, across the South and from South to North. Perhaps the most dramatic has been the Arab Spring for the manner in which it gripped a whole region, only to become embroiled in insurgencies, external interventions, invasions, and civil wars. In Tunisia, where the uprising was first ignited, constitutional reform and transition eventually occurred, but a different outcome awaited the rest. In Egypt the armed forces regained control from the Muslim Brotherhood in July 2013, while foreign intervention, civil war, and state fracture ensued in Libya, Yemen, and Syria, in addition to Iraq.

Experiences in other regions, however, have been noteworthy for their historically progressive results and relative autonomy that was wrested from imperialism, namely in the Andean region of South America, following uprisings in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador, and in Southern Africa after *apartheid* and Zimbabwe's remobilisation. Notable have also been the armed insurrections with a liberation perspective: in Southern Mexico, the Zapatista uprising in January 1994, which carved out an autonomous space up to the present; and the People's War in Nepal, from February 1996 to November 2006. And as we speak, India is undergoing a massive process of mobilisation by farmers' movements and other social forces which have joined in support to sustain a countrywide struggle for nearly two months now, for which there is no parallel in the post-independence period.

The term 'insurrection' is not used here *a priori* in a pejorative sense, as is often the case in public discourse; it is used precisely in the definition given above: a massive popular uprising in open defiance of authority, which may be armed or unarmed. In theory it is distinguishable from a conspiracy or a *coup d'etat* or a putsch or a regime-change operation, which by definition lack a significant popular base and find recourse mainly in violence. Yet, two caveats are in order. We are dealing with a complex phenomenon whereby what goes as an insurrection can morph into a military coup, as it did in Egypt in 2013, or an 'institutional' coup with the backing of the parliament and judiciary, plus the military, as was the case in Brazil after the uprisings of June 2013,

leading to the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in August 2016.

Such a trajectory has partly to do with the chaotic manner in which insurrectional politics evolve, often lacking in political organization and ideological coherence. It has also to do with reliance on social media for mobilisation, which render such uprisings susceptible to government shutdown or capture and manipulation by intelligence agencies, other obscure corporate entities, and not least the corporate media monopolies which at the end are still standing to control the narrative. However, what goes as a 'coup' also has a complicating factor: the growing ability of fascist forces and neocolonial elements to mobilise a significant popular base, drawing upon various ideological and organisational sources including those of religious fundamentalism (Christian, Islamic, Hindu). Despite these conceptual difficulties, the terms here will be maintained for the heuristic value they bring, mindful that, ultimately, the character of the phenomenon must be judged on a case-by-case basis by its actual social character, political organisation, ideological orientation, and relationship to imperialism.

Amorphous though they appear or become, insurrectional politics do not spring from an organisational vacuum. They spring from organisational work and stages of conscientisation and cultural change (or otherwise degradation) obtained over longer periods of time. The experience of Latin America, where the Zapatistas took up arms in the 1990s, has been undergoing such cultural change with the emergence of indigenous, black, women's, and rural and urban working people's movements: when economic and social crisis struck, a new basis already existed for a sustained challenge to the settler-colonial establishment and the neoliberal dispensation. This also applies to the United States among community activism and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, whose conscientisation work has capillarised in society. And it is the case in Southern Africa after decades of armed struggle and negotiated transitions to independence, where popular demands for land were marginalised and eventually reorganised in Zimbabwe with a radical nationalist perspective.

The relationship with the state apparatus adds a further element of complexity, which is decisive. Control over the state apparatus is naturally the object of *coups d'etat* and regime-change operations, while insurrectionary movements also take aim at the state, or at least certain state institutions (such as the police). In the case of imperialist regime-change operations, support or direction is found in branches of the state apparatus, most naturally the security forces: in the last twenty years in Latin America and the Caribbean alone we have witnessed five such successful coups, in

Haiti, Honduras, Paraguay, Brazil, and Bolivia, and several other attempted coups with crucial support from inside the state apparatus. On the other hand, mass popular uprisings are most commonly on the receiving end of the wrath of the repressive branches of the state. This was the case again in Latin America and the Caribbean in the serial insurrections of 2019, whose epicentres were Haiti, Chile, Ecuador, and Colombia.

However, there are also the exceptions of *revolutionary situations*, in Lenin's sense of the term: when hostile classes have been weakened, intermediate elements disgraced, the vanguard class emboldened, *and the armed forces disorganised or defeated* (Lenin, 1917a, 1920). It is perhaps needless to say that insurrections hardly ever amount to revolutionary situations; and that revolutionary situations rarely result in revolutions. But we have indeed had analogous revolutionary situations in the 2000s, namely in Venezuela and Zimbabwe, where polarisation dynamics approximated the first three conditions above, and where a patriotic army, instead of being disorganised and defeated, actually closed ranks with the vanguard forces. In Venezuela, this was the case after the defeated coup attempt of April 2002, when control over the military was consolidated and the Bolivarian revolution taken to a new level. In Zimbabwe, the liberation forces had already replaced the Rhodesian settler army forces after the transition to independence, such that, when the mass land occupations broke out in February 2000, the army and the whole of the state apparatus was radicalised in support of the occupations (Moyo & Yeros, 2007).

In this regard, the military factor and the radical outcomes of these two experiences – albeit each with its own particularities, and both short of revolution – go far to explain the response of imperialism and the viciousness of its twenty-year-long counter-revolutionary regime-change operations that have ensued against Venezuela's PSUV and Zimbabwe's ZANU-PF: economic sanctions have been imposed and escalated to the point of destroying national currencies with the purpose of intensifying internal contradictions and exploiting them to maximum effect. The means used include support to the opposition, attempts to militarise it, and propagation of vile social and corporate media campaigns in the name of 'pro-democracy' and 'anti-corruption' so as to cause despondency and ignite a new 'people's spring' beholden to imperialism.

If one generalisation can be made it is that insurrections are springing from the world's bourgeoning labour reserves. These, moreover, are segmented and hierarchically ordered between North and South, as has been argued by Patnaik and Patnaik (2017) and Jha *et al.* (2017). There are, in effect, two labour reserves, which are articulated in the

world economy, but which are not to be conflated in their economics, or their politics. In the South, insurrections spring from semi-proletarianised social formations, whose political fluidity is mostly uncaptured by conventional trade unionism or peasant organisation (Moyo & Yeros, 2005). As peripheral social formations plunge deeper into social crisis in rural and urban areas alike, insurrectional pressures intensify. A delayed global demographic transition has dovetailed with this tendency, having produced a youth bulge in the population pyramids of the countries and regions of the South. Indeed, the new generations coming on board are staring at a future of none other than extreme vulnerability and misery. This, in turn, explains the opportunistic politics that we have seen again and again which politicise the category of 'youth' and easily obtain the backing of imperialism when needed.

In the North, where the world's fulltime salaried workers remain concentrated, the transition to service economies, the decline in real wages and secure work, and erosion of social rights have put the brakes on security and upward mobility and stripped the new generations of a future better than that of their parents. It is likely that the most consequential of popular movements will spring from the most insecure and oppressed social layers, those pushed, pulled or stuck in the metropolitan labour reserves, especially from the black movements that hold the promise of mobilising a broader section of the working class with an antiracist and anti-patriarchal perspective. Such political energy showed its might in the protests against the killing of George Floyd, which also evoked international support and even presented unique anti-imperialist potential. Others such as the occupation of public squares in Spain and Greece a decade ago (Papatheodorou *et al.*, 2012), or the more recent yellow jackets in France, despite their perseverance, have not produced sufficient ideological coherence, or marked a substantial change of direction in national politics. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, a final and courageous attempt to transform the Labour Party has now come crashing down.

It remains the case that a radical break from late neo-colonialism can only be led from the South, and this requires coherent anti-imperialist ideology and historically conscious alliances in the North. This point requires further elaboration, but before that some additional conceptual comments are in order to dispel illusions regarding the 'future' of capitalism as a social system.

End of cycle, stage or system?

There has been hope in different quarters for the relaunching of a new global cycle of accumulation as a way out of the current crisis, by means of a 'fourth industrial

revolution' or the 'One Belt, One Road' (OBOR) initiative, or most likely a combination of the two. But this misnamed industrial revolution, being a major labour shedding exercise by design, will only sweep millions of jobs off the face of the planet without any commensurate replacement. For its part, the OBOR initiative, albeit capable of sustaining new infrastructural and other direct investments into the foreseeable future, will necessarily feed off of the same worldwide structures of dependency on primary materials that have been the basis of colonialism and neo-colonialism. The hopes, therefore, of a new cycle of accumulation and prosperity for the world are misplaced. Polarisation and insurrectional outbreaks will persist and intensify, and no new cycle will be had.

Let's look at this idea of a cycle a bit closer. The notion of world order as consisting in a sequence of historical cycles has, in fact, been predominant for several decades in the North Atlantic. This notion is the pseudo-scientific basis of fascistic theories regarding the rise and fall of great powers; at a certain juncture in the 1970s, this discourse also co-opted the free-marketeers. At that same juncture, however, it also found remarkable resonance in progressive circles, among world-system theorists. In relation to the reactionary camp, we are referring mainly to the Hobbesian inspired theories of world domination, the so-called 'realists', in all their reactionary differences, plus the neoliberal institutionalists concerned with maintaining the sway of the monopolies via multilateral institutions. Both currents have emanated from the US establishment and have invariably been seized with the fate of US 'hegemony' since the 1970s.

In the other camp we find renowned intellectuals with a critical edge whose lifetime contribution to the social sciences has been to bring focus to the shifting centre-periphery relations in the international division of labour. Nonetheless, finding a seat at the table of the US mainstream has also required shedding the theory of imperialism in favour of the repertoire of 'hegemonic' cycles. World-systems theorists have posited that the 500-year world system has conformed to essentially similar capitalist accumulation cycles, characterised by periods of economic expansion, crisis, general war, and cycle revival, where one great power alone rises to the top of each cycle to exercise 'hegemony'. From Immanuel Wallerstein to Giovanni Arrighi, we have an extensive body of thought in this field, with nuanced internal debates and differences, but animated by an eclectic mix of Braudelian, Marxian, neo-Smithian, and neo-Gramscian notions of 'capitalism'. One of Arrighi's last great books was entitled *Adam Smith in Beijing*. In it he held out the hope that China would become the centre of a new cycle of accumulation without pursuing military domination of the

world, but inaugurate a 'new Bandung' that could 'mobilise and use the global market as an instrument of equalisation of South-North power relations' (Arrighi, 2007, p. 384).

There have also been sustained attempts in this camp to come to grips with the 'end of cycles' in the current crisis, either by pointing to the limits of the political scale among the leading great powers required for the management of the world economy, or the limits imposed by ecological and labour costs – see, for example, Minqi Li's *The Rise of China and the Demise of the Capitalist World Economy* (2008). We are dealing with powerful statements, indeed. But any exogenous conceptual additions to what is essentially an ahistorical, circular theory of history will remain deficient. Theory is either our weapon, or it will be used against us. Fetishised notions of history will not serve the historical consciousness needed for a radical break in this late phase of neo-colonialism. We cannot but recognise the cumulative stock of productive capacities that century after century propelled the West to world domination, or that the same productive capacities are now under the control of the most advanced and obsolete form of monopoly capitalism, the 'generalised monopolies' in Samir Amin's (2019) terms. Nor can we fit into hegemonic cycles the various evolving forms of accumulation known to capitalism, including primitive accumulation of the past and the present, over which there has never been any 'hegemonic consent'; or, indeed, the singular rise of the Third World after five centuries of colonial domination.

These are formulations that have marginalised the crucial Leninist notion of historical stages and diminished the *qualitative* transformations of capitalism. We must maintain our focus on such qualitative transformations so that the insurmountable contradictions peculiar to the present can come into sharp relief, those between the extreme centralisation of productive forces, the degraded systemic relations of production and reproduction, and the planetary metabolic rift. If our question refers to the ways and means of exit from monopoly capitalism, we cannot nurture illusions about a capitalism beyond monopoly capitalism, or place our hopes on a moribund system to resolve the whole range of existential issues faced today.

Capitalism is a social and economic system with a beginning, a middle, and an end. As Amin tirelessly argued, capitalism as a system is now obsolete, incapable of resolving the challenges faced by humanity in the twenty-first century. It is necessary now to make the transition to a system of central planning with new hybrid forms of property, including collective and state property, to suppress private control over the commons and strategic industries, and put in motion a sustainable development paradigm. Such a

transition does not preclude private property, in smallholder farming, popular residence, and small enterprise, all of which will continue into the future and are subject to guidance towards cooperativism. But central planning and new forms of socialist property must resolutely take the upper hand to serve popular consumption needs and modern social reproduction requirements at a just and sustainable world level.

Towards a New Bandung

Capitalism may have survived several qualitative transformations from one stage to the next, but for the largest part of its life as a social system it never contemplated the possibility of a non-colonial world economy. The most important transformation in the current stage of monopoly capitalism has been the rise of the peoples of the South after half a millennium of European domination. The fact that the principle of national sovereignty has now spread throughout the system, despite its still feeble application, is an existential threat to capitalism as a social system. Decolonisation has been the systemic 'game changer', which struck against the extraordinary profits of the monopolies and obliged them to retreat in the post-World War II period. It is not a coincidence that the post-war crisis of monopoly capitalism began in the mid-1960s, when anti-colonial movements advanced against colonial rule. The fact that monopoly capitalism struck back after the 1970s in a highly financialised form should not lead to conclude that it has found a way out of the systemic crisis.

If, for the West, decolonisation was an imperialist maneuver to co-opt anti-colonial movements, for the South it was an historic breakthrough to bring about a new system of mutual respect among peoples, nations and civilisations, new economic relations, and the spread of social progress. This was expressed most poignantly in the political earthquake that was the Afro-Asian meeting at Bandung in 1955. Despite the absence of economic relations among these new nations, they were able to call for cooperation with 'politics in command' and a general posture of 'positive non-alignment'. The challenge today, in the spirit of Bandung, in this late phase of neo-colonialism, continues to be the mapping out of a way forward to strengthen popular sovereignty and the autonomy of national and regions. This means that politics must still be in command, and non-alignment with imperialism must remain a cardinal principle. But unlike Bandung, the New Bandung must now obtain clarity on the imperative of world socialist transition, forge more organic and enduring alliances on a tri-continental level, and articulate a new world development paradigm.

Much has changed since Bandung. Some countries have undergone industrialisation under the wing of Western monopolies and finance. Most others have

not made much of an industrial transition, remaining dependent on agriculture and primary commodities. But whichever the case, the national development project driven by capitalism's own logic and mirrored in the idealised urban-centred modernity of the West set off a massive rural exodus everywhere. This is a reality that has weakened the capacity of countries to provide for the welfare of their people, to reap the fruits of independence, create stable and coherent nations, and affirm their autonomy in the world system. The Chinese revolution, in fact, was the only one to delink form this logic, by pursuing in its first thirty years an industrialisation path that retained nearly eighty percent of the population in the countryside.

The historical evidence is sufficient. There should be no question now of resurrecting the bourgeois hopes that predominated at Bandung. Today, over half of the world's workforce is trapped in vulnerable and precarious work, located largely in the South and living in degraded rural areas and urban slums. The majority of the vulnerable workforce lives in the countryside, and a large proportion still maintains close rural-urban links. The overall world population trends, according the UN estimates, have already tipped the scales between town and country, but this does not imply urban absorption or permanency for the semi-proletarianised workforce. What is more, women compose over two-thirds of the world's vulnerable and insecure population, making it clear that capitalist advance against the countryside relies on, and intensifies, gender stratification for its profitable growth. It has done so by stratifying paid employment, displacing the costs of social reproduction onto households and especially women, and spreading households over diverse gendered economic activities (Tsikata, 2016; Ossome, 2016, Prasad, 2016). There is no chance that monopoly capitalism will absorb or stabilise this population, or alter the course of its contradictions in the interest of working people. Clarity on the imperative of world socialist transition and sustainable rural-urban equilibrium cannot go missing at this late stage.

Not all regions of the South participated at Bandung. Latin America and the Caribbean were officially absent. Most of the Caribbean was under colonial rule; and Latin America, whose colonial elite had gained juridical independence from the Iberian metropoles over a century earlier, remained in a settler-colonial situation well into the twentieth century. These are societies born of genocide and slavery; to this day, proper recognition of this past has not obtained. The transition from Iberian settler-colonialism to neocolonialism proceeded in fits and starts in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution, obtaining only one clean break in

the Cuban Revolution. Brazil was once again the latecomer (it was also the last to abolish slavery in 1888), making the transition to neocolonialism as late as the 1980s – coinciding effectively with the end of *apartheid* across the Atlantic in South Africa (Yeros *et al.*, 2019). Under such conditions, the intense racism that organises class and gender relations has persisted in Latin America, which has also prevented a more substantive identification with the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia.

At the level of official foreign policy, the participation of Latin America in South-South initiatives dates back to UNCTAD and its focus on trade and development issues. But UNCTAD lacked organic political roots and ideological depth, and was sidelined by the GATT and further undermined by the crisis of the 1970s. Throughout this period, Cuba was indeed the great exception in the promotion of solidarity. It hosted the Tri-continental Conference in 1966, itself a second political earthquake, whose great feat was to forge tri-continental convergence and also put *socialist* politics in command. The ramifications were far reaching in the solidarity that was created especially with respect to the national liberation struggles in Africa and Vietnam. But its momentum reached its limits after decolonisation in Africa and the neoliberal turn of events generally. Moreover, no new economic model was to emerge or take root, beyond the Chinese. Overall, with the exception of Cuba, as well as the Caribbean countries which nurtured a Pan-Africanist culture, solidarity with Africa and Asia has been difficult to attain.

There has been one more recent round of South-South initiatives in the 2000s in Latin America. This has much to do with the fact that over the last thirty years indigenous and black movements have advanced to challenge settler culture and perspective, achieving official recognition and constitutional reforms with regards to a range of social policies, the demarcation of indigenous, quilombola and other traditional lands, and the criminalisation of racism. In the 2000s, the UN Conference on Racism of 2003, held in Durban, South Africa, was a milestone in mobilising social movements and putting the spotlight on state policies. In subsequent years, two states in particular, Venezuela and Brazil, pursued South-South initiatives in substantially different directions, albeit without diplomatic estrangement; they included ALBA, IBSA, and BRICS. Crucially, such initiatives were launched at a time when China grew rapidly in an outward direction to become the leading force of a new convergence with an economic emphasis. Relations among the regions and continents expanded rapidly, while a select few among the 'emerging' countries joined to form the BRICS.

The great dilemma has been precisely how to construct this new South-South relationship on the basis of new investments and trade, coming in large part from China, and on new surpluses deriving from primary exports. This experience did not displace historical relations of dependence with the North, particularly on Western-based finance capital, but commercial flows were very substantially diverted and new opportunities did emerge. When Arrighi held out hope for a new Bandung with 'economics in command', this was precisely the optimistic scenario. The new relationship with China provided Latin America with a breathing space in terms of export growth and accumulation of reserves. However, it also fed on existing contradictions by strengthening the traditional export sectors and their reactionary lobbies in national politics, including the agribusiness and mining monopolies.

Brazil's trajectory is telling. The country's economic expansion of the 2000s was linked both to China and the parasitic needs of the Western-based financial circuit, all of which had the effect of deepening the process of de-industrialisation that had begun earlier. It also continued to transform the employment structure of the country, creating jobs of the more vulnerable and informal type in services, even if the minimum wage was raised, and perpetuated the rural exodus. One of the effects has been the weakening of traditional forms of worker organisation in this transition, and also of landless workers and peasants' movements that found themselves in 'reflux'. Much of this political terrain was encroached upon by the social organisation of evangelical fundamentalism. The militarisation of state and society also advanced, to turn the urban peripheries into killing fields, notching up over 50,000 violent deaths annually, especially of black youth, and an eight-fold expansion of the prison population system just in a decade. Overall, this economic trajectory strengthened the most conservative forces in society linked to corporate agriculture, minerals, real estate, high finance, the arms industry, and evangelical churches. When the 2008 crisis struck in Wall Street, it was clear that Brasil was going to be in serious trouble. And when commodity prices plummeted a few years later, Brazil bottomed out. The massive wave of demonstrations in 2013 expressed the simmering disenchantment and produced a perfect opportunity for an institutional coup by the regrouped reactionary forces (Schincariol & Yeros, 2019).

This type of scenario has similarities across counties in the region which rode the wave of China-oriented commodity exports, but differences are also important. The exception in economic terms has been Bolivia, but this did not spare the country of a fascist coup. On the other hand, the

experience of Venezuela in economic terms has been even more dramatic than that of Brazil, but no coup attempt has succeeded (Schincariol, 2020). The point is that an 'economic' New Bandung that follows the logic of monopoly capital and places its hopes on 'cycle revival' will still wreak havoc on the peoples of the South. South-South convergence must recover politics in command so that economic relations can be steered in a progressive and sustainable direction. It must also produce a different development paradigm focused on sustainable rural-urban equilibrium.

The art of insurrection, the weapon of theory

In September 1917, Lenin admonished his comrades in the Central Committee with the following: 'at the present moment it is impossible to remain loyal to Marxism, to remain loyal to the revolution *unless insurrection is treated as an art*' (Lenin, 1917b, *emphasis in original*). By this he urgently pressed for an armed insurrection and takeover of power in Petrograd and Moscow, where the Bolsheviks had already prevailed politically. The revolutionary situation was ripe.

The foregoing discussion has identified an overall permanent state of polarisation together with permanent insurrectional politics and counter-revolutionary coups and regime-change operations. The art of insurrection today requires not only that organisational work continues but also that the terrain of tri-continental unity is prepared for the revolutionary situations that will arise. For it is the success of these revolutionary situations that will tip the balance in whole regions and establish new conditions for anti-imperialist struggle and delinking for sustainable development. There is much more to be said here, but suffice it to point out that the two revolutionary situations mentioned above, Venezuela and Zimbabwe, elicited all kinds of muddled thinking, conditional solidarity, silence, or outright condemnation, in the North but also in the South. Especially Zimbabwe's radicalisation and fast-track land reform brought out the worst of the so-called progressive world, which suddenly could no longer see the importance of land reform or national liberation. The terrain of tri-continental unity must be prepared to rise to the occasion.

It has also been noted here that a New Bandung must bring back politics in command, obtain clarity on the imperative of socialist transition, and also illuminate the way forward in development planning. The content of socialist transition is not given in advance and must be based on a proper assessment of world realities. A New Bandung will require an overall paradigmatic shift in both politics and planning. If the twentieth century set as its ideal an urban-

centred industrialisation path at all costs, the twenty-first century must seek a rural-centred industrialisation path to establish a new egalitarian and sustainable rural-urban equilibrium (Moyo, Jha & Yeros, 2013), where every country and region must seek its own equilibrium on the basis of its own realities.

This brings us to the basic issue of reconciling politics and planning to the realities of given social formations. It is worth recalling the words of Amilcar Cabral (1966) on the occasion of the Tri-continental Conference, when he posed the problem of 'ideological deficiency' in the national liberation movements and called for strengthening the '*foundations and objectives of national liberation in relation to the social structure*' (*emphasis in original*). He continued thus: '[t]o those who see in it a theoretical character, we would recall that every practice produces a theory, and that if it is true that a revolution can fail even though it be based on perfectly conceived theories, nobody has yet made a successful revolution without a revolutionary theory'. We may take two points of guidance from this. First, national liberation struggles are an intrinsic part of world revolution and must be engaged accordingly, in the interest of overcoming ideological deficiencies and internal contradictions. The struggle against imperialism remains the foundational aspect of struggle in this late phase of neo-colonialism, and this cannot be undermined as we look ahead. Second, the precise nature of peripheral social formations and their particularities must be interrogated with theory that is consistent with the struggles for national and regional liberation. This means recognising particular patterns of accumulation and social organisation, while also identifying the precise nature of the vanguard class and the contradictions to which it is subject.

It is heartening to know that an epistemic shift of this sort has been ongoing in our very own Agrarian South Network and that this challenge has been taken most seriously. May this be a contribution to a New Bandung in the current crisis.

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PART – II

- FARMERS' STRUGGLE: A CHALLENGE TO POLICIES OF NEOLIBERALISM AND POLITICS OF HINDUTVA IN INDIA (Vikram Singh)
- FOOD SECURITY ISSUES IN THE SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES (Santosh Verma)
- HUNGER AND MISERY: COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN BRAZIL (Thiago Lima)

FARMERS' STRUGGLE: A CHALLENGE TO POLICIES OF NEOLIBERALISM AND POLITICS OF HINDUTVA IN INDIA

Vikram Singh[1]

India is witnessing a historical struggle by the farmers against the three farm laws and the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2020.[i] Thousands of farmers are sitting on the five major national highways which connect Delhi to the rest of India. The national highways have become the site for farmers' protest after the Government of India forcefully stopped them in their attempt to reach national capital.[ii] Despite the cold wave of December, farmers are firmly sitting on the borders of Delhi. The sole motive of farmers' arrival in Delhi was to convey the elected Government their plight and potential lethal impacts of the three farm laws and Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2020 on their lives. Farmers have come to return the unwanted and unrequested law which the Government has imposed upon them. The new farm laws and proposed electricity bill have exposed the real face of Central Government which is pushing the lives of millions of farmers and the common public at the mercy of cruel rules of the market. While a large number of farmers are protesting at the borders of Delhi, much more than that are joining them by organising protest activities in their states as they cannot travel to Delhi due to Covid-19 pandemic and restricted transport facilities.

Death knell for farming community:

Under the broad framework of neoliberalism, it is evident from the recent development that the agricultural sector is under attack and is being reshaped to benefit the big corporates. The new farm laws will put farmers at the mercy of agri-businesses, large retailers and exporters. These Acts in themselves are a direct attack against the federal structure of the country as per the Constitution of India, as the new laws infringe on the rights of the state governments, provided that agriculture is a state subject.

The Government and the majority of mainstream Indian media claim that the farms' laws will provide 'freedom' of the farmers to 'sell their produce to anybody at any price.' However, contrary to the claims, the new farm laws ascertain 'freedom to the corporates to purchase any produce from any farmer at any price.' Such a system would be inherently biased against the interests of farmers who will not get remunerative prices.[iii] Further, the law nowhere mentions

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that the price should not be lower than the Minimum Support Price (MSP).[iv] In the contract farming the so-called sponsors will have sole monopoly on the produce of the farmers.[v] The terms and conditions of the agreement would favour the sponsor owing to the present policies and the pathetic condition of the farming community. Most of the farmers in India are marginal farmers who would be rendered helpless. The Civil Court has been restricted to entertain any suit related to matters of this act; this is a mechanism which will always favour the sponsor rather than the farmer.[vi] Finally, these Acts will enslave the farmers eternally to produce as per the demand and requirement of agribusinesses, which mainly would be the crops best suited for export to maximise the profits. Further, the amendments to the Essential Commodities Act (ECA) will remove commodities like cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion and potatoes from the list of essential commodities. This will not only lead to a threat to food security but in the context of the above laws, also allow traders and agribusinesses to buy unlimited quantity directly from farmers and hoard even in times of emergencies.[vii]

Far Reaching Implications

These three farm laws will not only affect farmers but will have far-reaching implications on the lives and livelihood of agricultural workers and common people to a large extent. In contract farming, the first and foremost priority of the private company/corporate is maximising their profit, and it is best done by reducing the workers' cost. With the corporatisation of agriculture, there would be more mechanisation, which will reduce working days for agricultural workers. Tenant farmers will also be directly affected. The MSP recommended by the Swaminathan Commission (C2+50) measures comprehensive cost of production which includes all kinds of labour inputs including the cost of hired agricultural workers at the rate of minimum wages. Therefore, the struggle of farmers for MSP is not separate from the struggle for getting minimum wages. With these laws, the procurement of the food grains by Government is going to be influenced in the future, which is a threat to national food security and it directly affects the Public Distribution System, a vital aspect of ensuring food for all.[viii]

In the contract farming, more emphasis is on the cash crops or crops more suitable for export than food grains, due to larger scope for profit, which further renders uncertain the country's food security. The amendments to the Essentially Commodity Act give freedom for hoarding and also restricts the government to check the price rise of essential commodities in normal conditions.[ix] The profit-led inflation, which

can be created by artificial scarcity through largescale hoarding, will force large sections of the masses to starve. With the corporatisation of agriculture, the question of land will take new dimensions. The vast scale entry of the big corporates to agriculture will open a new dimension and this will be detrimental for the hopes of millions of landless agricultural workers who are still waiting for their share of land.[x]

How Movement Evolved

The seeds of the present unity of farmers organisation and mass struggle were sown in the year 2014, when Central Government promulgated The Land Acquisition Ordinance on 31st December. Considering the importance of this dangerous move the All India Kisan Sabha took initiative to consult with other Left and Democratic peasant, agriculture worker and social organisations and has succeeded in developing wider unity and building resistance against the NDA Government.[xi] A united platform in the name of ***Bhoomi Adhikaar Andolan*** (Movement for Land Rights) was formed in the process in which more than 300 organisations are members. This was an important achievement and through these efforts a wide unity of the peasant movement at all India level were developed. Under the ***Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan*** banner two Marches to Parliament on 24th February, 2015 and 5th May, 2015 respectively were jointly organised which was attended by thousands of farmers, agriculture workers and tribal people which gained national attention.

Based on this experience a broader platform was formed in 2017 after the **Mandsaur** firing in Madhya Pradesh where five farmers were killed.[xii] AIKS is an important part of this platform which is joined by more than 250 organisations of farmers on common agenda with demand to implement the Swaminathan Commission recommendations, seeking MSP prices at C2+50%.[xiii] A series of struggles were organised in last two years. AIKCC has drafted the farmers Freedom from Indebtedness Bill, which was introduced in the parliament with support of 21 opposition parties. A Kisan Mukti March was organised in Delhi attended by thousands of farmers and agricultural workers to demand the special session of parliament to discuss the agrarian distress in India. The most significant struggles, which really set the agenda and brought issue of farmers in mainstream were farmers movement of Sikar[xiv] and Long March of farmers from Nasik to Mumbai in the year 2017 and 2018 respectively;[xv] both led by AIKS in Sikar. These were the struggles which had similar characters to the present struggle, i.e. mass base, peaceful nature and huge public support. Finally, after the introduction of three farm ordinances in June, protest started

all over India, and on October 27, 2020 a joint meeting was convened which was attended by All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee and farmers organisations of Punjab. The call of November 26th and 27th 2020 for Delhi Chalo was given which was joined by other organisations and a much broader National platform the '**Samyukt Kisan Morcha'** was formed to lead this historical struggle.[xvi]

Upsurge against the distress:

The present upsurge is not only result of farmers anger against farm laws, but is a cumulative effect of the consistent agrarian distress prevailing in India which has forced lakhs of farmers to commit suicide and dispossessed million from their land. Agriculture is not a profitable affair in India as farmers are finding it difficult to get their cost of production, leave aside the profit. It should be acknowledged that in the times of economic slowdown during the pandemic and lockdown, it is the agrarian sector which has saved Indian economy to some extent.[xvii] In this situation a strong support from the Government is required to revive the agrarian economy in India. The Swaminathan Commission has given a list of recommendation which could have helped India agriculture come out of distress. But the present laws have everything other than what Indian agriculture needs. Therefore, the farmers who were already under distress have sensed more insecurity and uncertainty in future, and so were forced to take to the roads. These farm laws are the immediate reason which ignited the prevailing anger.

Changed narrative:

Normally, the ruling party BJP used to divide people along caste and religious lines, creating false narratives through well-established corporate media houses and the network of social media. During the last six years the ruling party has succeeded in setting the agenda in India with the help of these fake narratives. Issues like love jihad, nationalism and anti-nationalism, war mongering, Gau Raksha, attacks on education institutions, etc. are the issues propagated by the ruling party. Famers and working class were missing from discussion. This skill to divert the issues is one of the main artilleries of the present regime, but it is the first time that farmers are setting the agenda and Central Government is forced to respond. Such is the impact of mobilisation that even corporate owned media houses are forced to cover the protests and initiate discussion of the real issues. There were efforts to divert the discourse by manufactured stories. However, consistent struggle not only forces the farmers issues to be discussed, but also extended to the policy of agriculture and social welfare state. Central Ministers and Prime Minister are forced to respond. This is the first victory of the

movement which enables the people's agenda to be discussed.

Unprecedented Struggle:

The present struggle is one of the largest mass movement after the independence in which crores of farmers are actively participating to defend their rights and livelihood. Despite all uncertainties, farmers in struggle are firm, a result of their conviction for the cause. The pictures of agitating farmers raising slogans in full spirit and loud voice, aggressively breaking barricades, passionately overcoming all hurdles are attracting and inspiring people all over India, but much more inspiration should be drawn from their patience and strong will power. The youth are participating in large numbers and with full responsibility. This is against the general narrative that youth is not concerned about the land and not interested in agriculture. The youth are fully concerned about their land, agriculture and struggles to defend it. Protesters are filled with anger against the government policies, but have never resorted to violence despite repeated provocations by the police. Lastly the struggle is continuously growing in numbers, more people are joining the struggle daily. Recently thousands of farmers from Maharashtra have joined the struggle in Delhi after traveling more than 1300 kilometres. There is immense support for the struggle. Hundreds of the villages nearby Delhi are supplying vegetables, milk, fuelwood, warm clothes to the agitators. Besides that, all mass and class organisations of students, youth, women, employees, artisans, traders, middle class employees, intellectuals, scientists etc. extended their support to Indian farmers.

Undemocratic attitude of Government

In a democracy people have a right to raise their issues and demands to the democratically elected Government and Government has a duty to listen to their citizens. For seven months farmers have been raising their voice. Even when three ordinances were promulgated people raised their voices against their consequences and copies of these ordinances were burnt at thousands of places. The farmers were left with only option to come to Delhi which was met with most violent and brutal measures by the Police.

But the Government is using the most totalitarian and fascist approach to deal with the farmers. BJP is known for its undemocratic and anti-Constitutional approach. With implementation of the three farm laws, Government has gone against the federal character of India. Government is intolerant to any kind of criticism or suggestion. There are censorships on social and formal media. Even individual freedom of citizens is under a scanner. Numerous civil right activists, academicians and politicians are in jail under false charges. Similar

approach was adopted by the Central Government to deal with the protestors against farm laws. Government of State of Haryana had openly declared that it won't allow any protestor to cross its territory, which is against the law. Heavy police were deployed and brutal methods were used to stop protestors.

Workers Peasant Unity:

The ongoing historical struggle against the three farm laws and electricity bill has become the mass movement. Apart from the other sections of the society, the working class is playing a very important role in this struggle. Earlier also there were joint struggles when workers and peasants were coming together on common issues, but after November 26 and 27 has initiated another chapter in this history. On 26 November workers of the country were on strike, while farmers were observing rural strike throughout India and the farmers in Northern India were marching to Delhi. On 27 November, workers also marched with them. Agricultural workers in the rural India are part of this struggle from the very beginning as the impact of the laws is similar for them also. This is the first layer of worker-peasant unity.

Workers are not considering it as support of farmers but their own struggle against the policies of the government. All the mobilizations in last twenty days have seen this unity growing with every passing days. This unity is becoming much stronger when both sections are united against the pro-corporate policies of Central Government. Workers have understood that this struggle of farmers is not only for farmers but for ensuring food security of India and saving the rural economy. When farmers are fighting against farm laws which will push them to the mercy of brutal market laws of uncertainty, workers are also fighting against the codification of labour laws which puts workers in the same situation.

This unity is not only in papers but also can be seen on the ground. Various workers' groups are siting with farmers on the protest sites. Trade union activists from Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan are continuously standing firmly with farmers. All Central Trade Unions and Federations extended their support to the struggle and the working classes in every stage of struggle participated in this struggle in different parts of country. A broad picture of a worker-peasant unity is emerging which may strengthen the democratic struggle in future.

Class Struggle against Corporates

This movement against the three farm laws has entered to the next level where farmers and their organisations have identified their real opponents as being the big corporates. It is for the first time that

farmers' struggle is giving call to boycott products of the corporate. The guiding force for this understanding are the blatant pro-corporate policies of the BJP-led Central Government. The whole campaign is organised against Government and their close ally corporates, primarily Adani and Ambani group. Both have big plans to pursue in accordance to the implementation of these three laws. For example, Adani Group secured permission from Haryana Government for change of land use for setting up of warehouse for agro-produce on May 7, 2020. Government allotted a total of 90015.623 square meters of land in Panipat district before these laws were enacted during the lockdown on May 7. This is just one example to tell the story. Therefore, the slogan '*Sarkar ki kya mazboori-Adani, Amabai and Jamakhori*' evolved during struggle and the call for action against these corporates, including boycotting their products like JIO SIM was given.

This is a time when India is facing all-time high unemployment and hunger, and international agencies are warning about future hunger deaths due to starvation. There is a need to further strengthen our agricultural sector with the government spending more resources and developing a wider governance structure for cultivational needs, a more elaborate procurement system ensuring MSP, and a less wasteful post-harvest system. This would have increased income of farmers and strengthened our food security.

[i] https://bit.ly/3r35A5t
[ii] https://bit.ly/3cicRu5
[iii] https://bit.ly/39q7Wpm
[iv] Minimum Support Price is conceptually a remunerative price decided by the Government for select agricultural crops.
[v] https://bit.ly/2NAHVuQ
[vi] https://bit.ly/3iSC7Zn
[vii] https://bit.ly/2MsunB8
[viii] https://bit.ly/3a7XbqU
[ix] https://bit.ly/3iVVAbB
[x] https://bit.ly/3t60p6I
[xi] https://bit.ly/2YoJK00
[xii] https://bit.ly/3cjObkU
[xiii] Minimum Support price (MSP) recommended by MS Swaminathan commissions which is measured as C2 +50% means Comprehensive measure of cultivation costs that includes the imputed cost of capital and the rent on the land (called 'C2') to give farmers 50% returns.
[xiv] https://bit.ly/3ckpIwa
[xv] https://bit.ly/3iUN4JO
[xvi] https://bit.ly/2MemM9B
[xvii] https://bit.ly/3iR0QNG

FOOD SECURITY ISSUES IN THE SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES

Santosh Verma[1]

The quantity of foodgrains that the world produces is sufficient to feed the entire human population. But, millions of people go hungry every day and do not access the minimum calories required. Women, children, people of the marginalised communities, and people ravaged with wars and conflicts are most vulnerable to food security worldwide. The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) estimates show that in 2014, around 22.4 per cent of the world population was moderately and severely food insecure which increased to 25.9 per cent in 2019. Across the continents and regions except for North America and Europe, the food insecure population has increased between 2014 and 2019. Around half of Africa's total population is either moderately or severely food insecure. Southern Asia witnessed a rise in food insecure population from 570.6 million (31.6 per cent) in 2014 to 691.9 million (36.1 per cent) in 2019 (FAO, 2020). This note intends to examine the extent and reasons for food insecurity in the South Asian countries; Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Table 1: Number of Severely and Moderately Food Insecure People in Different Regions of the World

Regions	Number of Moderately and Severely Food Insecure People (Millions)	
	2014	2019
World	1633.5 (22.4)	2001.1 (25.9)
Africa	534.1 (46.3)	674.5 (51.6)
Asia	850.9 (19.4)	1027.4 (22.3)
Southern Asia	570.6 (31.6)	691.9 (36.1)
Latin America	141.5 (22.9)	205.3 (31.7)
Northern America and Europe	102.6 (9.4)	88.1 (7.9)

Source: (FAO, 2020); Note: Values in parenthesis are per cent of the total population of the respective region.

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Hunger Indices of South Asian Countries

The severity of food insecurity among the south Asian countries is also reflected in their Global Hunger Indices. As a marker of food insecurity, Global Hunger Index, an initiative of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Concern Worldwide and Welthungerlife, is a good indicator. This index uses three components; undernourishment, child underweight and child mortality; it takes into account share of the undernourished population, the share of children under the age of five who have low weight against their height, the share of children under the age of five who are stunted and mortality rate of children under the age of five. These hunger indices scores show that in the years 2011 and 2015, all the South Asian countries were in the severe hunger levels, whereas in 2020, Nepal and Sri Lanka showed some improvement, but still were in the category of moderate levels of hunger. All other South Asian countries remained in severe hunger levels in 2020 (refer Table 2). The creeping lower in the GHI shows more under-nutrition, child waste, child stunting and higher mortality rates of children due to acute under-nutrition. All these occur due to deficiency in getting certain threshold of food and nutrients.

Table 2: Hunger Indices in South Asian Countries

South Asian Countries	Hunger Scores		
	2011	2015	2020
Afghanistan	na	35.4	33.8
Bangladesh	27.6	27.3	20.4
India	23.7	29	27.2
Nepal	19.9	22.2	19.5
Pakistan	20.7	33.9	24.6
Sri Lanka	14	25.5	16.3

Source: Annual Reports of the Global Hunger Index.

Note 1: In 2011, 81 countries; in 2015, 104 countries and in 2020, 107 countries were taken to calculate hunger indices.
Note 2: Data for Bhutan and Maldives were not available.
Note 3: Scores from 10.0-19.9 show moderate levels of hunger; Scores from 20.0-34.9 show serious levels of hunger.

Food Availability in South Asian Countries

Food availability is the supply side instrument to understand the material conditions of food security. Table 2 deciphers an average of per capita annual availability of food grains (cereals and pulses) among the South Asian countries. Afghanistan, a war-ravaged and conflict-ridden country, has witnessed the sharpest decline in per capita availability of food grains. In 1973, per capita availability of food

grains was 273.5 kg, and it declined to 167.6 kg in 1993 (a decline of around 105 kg/capita/year), but the availability of food grains had improved since then and was 182.3 kg/capita/year in 2013. Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka have an overall increasing trend in per capita availability of food grains over the period. India and Pakistan, the two largest countries, in the region, have witnessed a decline in per capita food availability. In 1993, per capita availability of food grains in India was 172.1 kg which declined to 162.9 kg in 2013. Likewise, in Pakistan, the per capita availability was 158.2 kg in 1993, and it declined to 148.5 kg in 2013. Overall, in the South Asian countries, the average per capita availability of food grains has declined from 173.8 kg in 1983 to 166.9 kg in 2013. It is a well-known fact that there is a wide difference in average per capita availability of food and people's real access to food. This may be understood in Indian scenario that 70 to 80 per cent of the rural and urban population were not fulfilling the mandatory 2400 calories per capita per day norm in 2011-12 (Ram, 2017).

Table 3: Food Availability in South Asian Countries (Kg/Capita/Year)

Countries	**1973**	**1983**	**1993**	**2003**	**2013**
Afghanistan	273.5	228.8	167.6	166.8	182.3
Bangladesh	172.6	181.1	174.3	202.2	196.7
Bhutan	na	na	na	na	na
India	164.6	173.6	172.1	160.3	162.9
Maldives	117.3	163.5	113.4	124.8	133.9
Nepal	164.9	173.2	183.8	193.4	205.9
Pakistan	179.7	153.7	158.2	144.9	148.5
Sri Lanka	147.9	144.8	142.4	153.2	161.6
South Asia	168.3	173.8	172.9	165.12	166.9

Source: FAOSTAT; Author calculation.

People's real access to food depends upon various structural linkages available or arranged in a country – the exchange entitlement they have, their legitimate and legal control on productive resources and their ability to take part in the process of production. If certain sections of the population do not have control over these structural linkages, they might remain food insecure. The access to food is also often denied due to various marginalities – caste, gender, minority status and regional disparity, etc. To provide access to food to people, the governments use various macroeconomic tools available with them - important among these are provisioning of cheaper food grains through the public distribution system (PDS), the arrangement of food coupons, provisioning of minimum basic income and employment guarantee, etc.

In South Asian countries, as mentioned above, a large population is under moderate to severe food insecurity conditions. The reasons for this could be a

large proportion of the population in these countries live in rural areas and is dependent on agriculture for livelihood; there is again a larger workforce is involved in rural and urban informal works. These two segments add up to around 90 per cent of the workforce in the South Asian countries. Income in the form of wages and salaries of this section hardly covers the day to day expenses on food, health services, education and other necessities. The rise in prices takes away any advancement made in their nominal income, leaving them in a vicious circle of poverty and food insecurity. The high levels of resource inequality (e.g. land, asset and income) put these people to remain in the clutches of poverty and hence food insecure. To bring people out of food insecurity, there is a long history of distributing food below the market prices dating back from the period of World War II in South Asian countries. These countries procure food grains to distribute it to their population. But with the adoption of neoliberal reforms, the universal Public Distribution System (PDS) was abandoned to bring targeted PDS. India moved from universal PDS to targeted PDS in the 1990s, Sri Lanka moved from universal food ration scheme to first, food stamp scheme and then to a targeted cash transfer scheme, Bangladesh's Public Food Distribution System (PFDS) enforced floor and ceiling prices of food items, but only to a targeted group of population. Pakistan had no specific national food programme except few food security provisions at provincial levels and few targeted income support programmes that too were poorly implemented, fragmented and had no coordination (Ahmad and Farooq, 2010). Nepal, with the adoption of the new Constitution in 2018, enacted the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Act in 2018 which enshrined the people of Nepal to have right to food and food security, though Nepal is still one of the food insecure countries in the region. Afghanistan is almost dependent upon world food aid programme to provide food security to its people and still remain in the category of highly food insecure country.

Dependence on Food Import

To suffice the food needs, South Asian countries resort to importing food grains from other countries. Table 4 reflects that the net export of food grains of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka was negative over the period ranging from 1969 to 2019. India, which was highly dependent upon food imports in the 1960s, is the only country in the region whose net export of food grains is positive since the 1990s. It is also the case with India that its exports of food grains have increased on the one hand, but on the other, there had been a decline in per capita food availability since the 1990s. It reflects thus, India exports food grains on the cost of peoples' food security which coincides with

the hypothesis that *more trade leads to more hunger* (Patnaik, 2008).

Table 4: Net Export of Food Grains of South Asian Countries (000 tonnes)

	1969	1979	1989	1999	2009	2019
Afghanistan	-87.9	-160.0	-281.3	-281.0	-2170.5	-3068.3
Bangladesh	-1179.9	-962.7	-2266.8	-5069.9	-3871.2	-7456.4
Bhutan	-23.6	-3.0	-12.7	-51.3	-71.4	-63.5
India	-4069.9	476.7	-899.4	226.1	1240.2	7220.1
Maldives	-5.2	-19.1	-24.6	-35.2	-49.8	-62.5
Nepal	261.0	39.5	-12.5	-2.6	-127.7	-1343.1
Pakistan	411.9	-1219.0	-1514.3	-1640.3	-571.4	4660.8
Sri Lanka	-947.7	-1020.0	-1169.7	-1344.4	-1218.2	-1697.6
Southern Asia	-5635.9	-4582.5	-14142.9	-16600.4	-17916.24	-13935.4

Source: FAOSTAT; Author calculation.

Deflationary policies and the Food Security

The post-economic reform period has witnessed slowing output growth in agriculture, income deflation for the majority of the cultivators, agricultural labourers, informal workers, increasing asset inequality (especially, land inequality) vis-à-vis a decline in food grains availability all over the developing countries. South Asia is no exception to this all. Deflationary economic policies can be defined as restrictions on government's planned and unplanned expenditures that lead to rollback of the State from a role of producer, entrepreneur, employer to remain only a facilitator and regulator – in other words; governments cut its spending that results into decline in aggregate demand.

The extent of deflationary policies in South Asian countries can be understood in their gross capital formation (GCF[1]) or gross domestic investment in proportion to their total GDP. As a whole of South Asia, GCF was 36.8 per cent of total South Asia's GDP in 2010 which declined to 28.6 per cent in 2019. Except for Bangladesh and Nepal where GCF has increased, all other countries, the GCF either declined (Bhutan, India, and Sri Lanka) or was stable (for Afghanistan and Pakistan). These investments, if increase, lead to increase in production, employment and income which certainly can have a positive effect on food availability and consumption, but in South Asia, the condition is reversed which ends in declining food grains availability and consumption.

Table 5: Gross Capital Formation (% of GDP) in South Asian Countries

	Gross Capital Formation (% of GDP)	
	2010	2019
Afghanistan	18	18
Bangladesh	26	32
Bhutan	63	47
India	40	30
Maldives	na	na
Nepal	38	57
Pakistan	16	16
Sri Lanka	30	27
South Asia	36.8	28.6

Source: World Development Indicators 2019, Table 4.8

COVID-19 and the Food Insecurity in South Asia

COVID-19 has ravaged the whole world in not just millions fell sick and thousands died, but it severely affected the working population in terms of losing employment and working hours, erosion of income and increasing food insecurity. The severity of the situation, though, has not fallen equally to all, but it has exposed existing vulnerabilities and entrenched economic inequalities further. People with limited economic protection and especially the informal workers were affected the most. Among the South Asian countries, India is the worst hit from the COVID-19, and its effect on the economy is the most damaging. The Industrial production declined around 60 per cent in India in the first half of 2020 (ILO, 2020a). A sudden and unprecedented lockdown announced by the Government of India (GoI) led to closure of economic activities from the last week of March 2020 to May 2020 forcing millions of industrial and urban informal workers to return back from their workplaces to their ancestral places. This caused one of the biggest work displacements in the recent history of India, mounting the unemployment rate to around 23 per cent in April 2020 (Vyas, 2020). According to another estimate, in Southern Asia, in the first quarter of 2020, around 21 million working hours (3.4 per cent) were lost whereas, in the second quarter of 2020, around 110 million hours (17.9 per cent) of the total working hours were lost (ILO, 2020b). The losses of working hours have translated into substantial losses in the income of the labourers. Estimates suggest that the income of the labourers globally declined around 10.7 per cent, and in South Asia, the same declined by 17.6 per cent in

the first three quarters of 2020 (ILO, 2020c). These losses of employment and working hours and the erosion of income have affected the access to food, not just South Asia, but all over the world.

Concluding Remark

South Asia is one of the global regions where serious levels of food insecurity persist. Food insecurity has a vicious interjection with poverty and hunger. Eradication poverty and hunger were one of the eight objectives of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), but neither of these could be eradicated and adding to the misery even further, the per capita foodgrains availability in South Asian region has declined in the neoliberal era. The deflationary policies adopted by the countries in South Asia brought the gross capital formation down subsequently decline in the formation of fixed assets and hence declined in employment and income. Governments also shifted from universal provisioning of food items to targeted public distribution programmes leading to the wrongful exclusion of a certain food needy population from getting cheaper food. In the last one year, the COVID-19 has brought havoc on the employment, income and food access to informal labourers, poor households and women not just in South Asia, but all around the world. The dangers emanated due to COVID-19 have threatened to lose the gains made in the last several decades against poverty, food insecurity, hunger and under-nutrition.

[1] Gross capital formation is also known as gross domestic investment. It consists of expenditure on additions to the economy's fixed assets and net changes in the level of inventories. Fixed assets include land improvements (fences, ditches, drains, and so on); plant, machinery, and equipment purchases; and the construction of roads, railways, and the like, including schools, offices, hospitals, private residential dwellings, and commercial and industrial buildings. Inventories are stocks of goods held by firms to meet temporary or unexpected fluctuations in production or sales. (World Development Indicators, 2019, World Bank)

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HUNGER AND MISERY: COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN BRAZIL

Thiago Lima[1]

Anyone looking at Brazil today is astonished by the contrast of a recent past, when the country was internationally recognized as a leader in the fight against Hunger. Today, in the midst of the pandemic, the country is miserably lacking in resources, policies and people in the federal government to face the chimerical challenge imposed by COVID-19; and one of its main consequences is the growing number of hungry people. According to World Bank estimates, around 14.7 million Brazilians, which is 7% of the national population, were expected to go hungry by the end of 2020.

A structure for combating hunger

Since its colonial origin, Brazil has been a major exporter of agricultural commodities. Due to the implementation of agro-industrial complexes that started in the 1960s, the country reached the 1990s as an agripower of international trade and became one of the largest exporters of grains, soybeans, fruits and animal protein in the world. This whole process, however, lived side by side with chronic hunger and famines. For example, the state of Ceará, in northeastern Brazil, created concentration camps in 1915 and 1937 to prevent the victims of drought and famine in the countryside of the state from reaching the capital, Fortaleza. In 2009, José Padilha stated n a documentary "Garapa", that chronic hunger continued to slaughter families both in the countryside and in the capital of Ceará in the 21st century.

Padilha also discussed, among other things, that the policies to fight hunger – such as Bolsa Família – were deficient. Certainly, Bolsa Família (conditional cash transfer program to families in need) had not ended Hunger in Brazil and its reach needed to be increased and complemented with other policies to fulfill this function. However, as a public policy of conditional cash transfer, preferably for mothers, Bolsa Família was one of the instruments that undoubtedly contributed to Brazil's exit from the FAO Hunger Map in 2014.

In 2003, President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva's (Workers' Party – PT in Portuguese) government established that the fight against Hunger would be a priority. Under the Bolsa Família program

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and the Zero Hunger flagship, the Lula government encouraged the emergence of several public policies and social technologies to deal with the problem not in a timely manner, as one topic among others, but to face the issue in its difficult complexity. In the first year of his presidential mandate, the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA) was reactivated to assist the Presidency in formulating and implementing policies in this area. CONSEA was composed of 40 members of civil society and 20 members of the government, in order to amplify the voice of social movements, civil leaders and academic experts on the subject. In 2006, the Organic Law on Food and Nutritional Security (LOSAN) was approved by Congress and gave rise to the National System of Food and Nutritional Security (SISAN), whose mission was to ensure the Human Right to Adequate Food. In 2010, the Right to Food was included in Article 6 of the Federal Constitution.

In addition to this institutional structure, the government created or strengthened some policies and social technologies, such as the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) and the National School Feeding Program (PNAE), respectively. Such programs connect, with government coordination and financing, the production of family farmers with the demand for food by schools and other public facilities such as hospitals. Globally, rural populations are always the most vulnerable to hunger and Brazil is not unique.

The success of Brazilian policies to fight hunger attracted the attention of international organizations, such as the World Food Program (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and of developed and developing countries. They sought to acquire knowledge about Brazilian social technologies and policies in order to adapt them into their realities. Brazil, on the other hand, took the opportunity to spread its model and gain international prominence through International Cooperation for Development and Humanitarian Cooperation. For the first time in history, the country had become a net supplier of international cooperation, overcoming the condition of a net recipient of foreign assistance. Back then, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was commanded by the experienced Celso Amorim, who had a prominent position in international negotiations with the Zero Hunger flag.

Brazil gained prestige with the diplomatic action to Combat Hunger and also at the same time grew as an Agri-power in international trade. The prominence in both fields was

fundamental for the election of José Graziano da Silva and Roberto Azevêdo, now under the government of Dilma Rousseff (PT), for the general directorates of FAO and the World Trade Organization (WTO), respectively. It is important to emphasize that the WTO is recognized as an organization that aims at deepening trade liberalization and, therefore, defends less State intervention in the economy. For this reason, many interpretations have been made about Brazil's position on agri-food issues: would there be inconsistency in simultaneously defending family farming and large agribusiness? Is it a kind of schizophrenia resulting from the need for balance between the various political forces in the Coalition Presidentialism system?[i] Without entering into this debate,[ii] the fact is that, in the midst of contradiction, there seemed to be a way to overcome hunger. That is, public policies and social technologies, associated with strong economic performance, effectively contributed to the Food and Nutritional Security of the population.

Dismantling the structure

The parliamentary coup that ousted Dilma Rousseff (PT) and subsequently empowered her vice president, Michel Temer (MDB), was the first step to the dismantling of the structure. Symbolically, on his first day in office as interim president, Temer dragged down the status of the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) to government secretary. In July, he formalized the exclusion of the MDA from the Chamber of Foreign Trade, CAMEX, which is a strategic institutional space in the process of formulating international trade policy. The MDA had previously given peasants some voice, therefore, posing a direct threat to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply-home to large-scale agribusiness. Still in field of International Relations, Temer extinguished the General Coordination of Actions to Combat Hunger of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2016.[iii]

Upon assuming the presidency in 2019, Jair Bolsonaro determined the extinction of CONSEA in January of the same year. The move faced resistance from organized civil society and legislators, although eventually prevailing by September of the same year. The extinction of CONSEA was a culmination of a campaign discourse broadly in favor of large agribusiness and landowners which was also extremely critical of policies that favoured small family farming, the "Landless Movement" and environmental preservation. Bolsonaro's controversial and largely inexperienced

Foreign Minister, Ernesto Araújo, tweeted that the Foreign Ministry would no longer be the home of the MST. In short, these actions were aimed at dismantling the structures to fight Hunger and to also stifle the international dissemination of ideas, policies and instruments that had been considered successful by the international community.

Meanwhile, at the domestic level, the country's poor economic performance between 2015 and 2018 contributed to the increase of the Brazilian population living below the extreme poverty line from 4.5 to 6.5%. At the same time, labour and social rights were made flexible, placing formal employees more vulnerable and throwing an increasing share of the population into the informal economy. Advancing an argument that the country was undergoing a fiscal crisis while defending the supremacy of the market over social policies, Temer and Bolsonaro reduced the budget for social programs aimed at fighting hunger, such as Bolsa Família, the Food Acquisition Program and the Cisterns Program, which aims to create home structures for storage rainwater in drought regions.

Thus, the Hunger crisis that was already present in Brazil is aggravated by the pandemic of COVID-19, not only due to the economic downturn intensified by the quarantines and illnesses, but also because the federal state is purposefully unstructured to face systemic food and nutrition insecurity.

To give one more example, both Temer and Bolsonaro weakened the Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger (MDS), and the agenda to fight Hunger ended up being attributed to a government secretary that fell into ostracism. The dismantling of the institutional structure has symbolic and practical implications in terms of public policies and social technologies. The Zero Hunger flag was pulled down and the flagpole was kept upright, making it clear what is not a priority in this government.

Recipe for Hunger

The last official survey on hunger in Brazil was published in September 2019 and depicts the country's situation during 2017-2018. The survey also captures the effects of the economic crisis and the dismantling of food and nutrition security policies in a pre-pandemic period. Hence, with the deterioration of the economic and social conditions during COVID-19, the data could be pointing to a worse situation now.

With a population of about 210 million people, the country according to the survey had 86.9 million people who

experienced severe food deprivation in 2017-2018. This translates to a total of 36.7% of households who experienced severe food insecurity, representing an increase when compared to previous years: 34.9% in 2004; 30.2% in 2009; 22.6% in 2013.

In this scenario of economic and institutional degradation, gender inequality becomes even more striking. In 2013, the level of food security among males was 79.1% and 74.6% for females. In 2017-2018 it varied to 66.8% among males and 58.5% for females. Among households that had food security, 61.4% of these had males as main providers compared to 38.6% headed by women. For households that experienced food insecurity, 51.9% are headed by women and 48.1% by men. This highlights the negative gendered outcomes of the Bolsonaro-led government's policies which tend to push females into food insecurity when compared to males.

The research also shows that the more a family is exposed to food insecurity, the greater the portion of the budget spent on basic food, such as rice and beans, the most typical food of Brazilians. Unfortunately, in the middle of a pandemic, Brazil is experiencing the highest food inflation since the creation of the Real in 1994, a currency that was fundamental to the control of the super-inflation that plagued the country. In November 2020, it was recorded that the food inflation accumulated of the last 12 months was 16.4%. The 12 months inflation for rice and beans was 63% and 46% in the state of São Paulo. The inflation for beef had accumulated and risen to 45% while for milk it went up to 57% during the same period.

Meanwhile, Brazil sets records in the export of agricultural commodities. Although more than 70% of Brazilians' food comes from family farming, large-scale agribusiness exports affect domestic prices.[iv] The sudden increase in exports reverberates in the sudden increase in prices on the domestic front. In addition, an important structural trend must be observed: although rice and bean production has remained reasonably stable in the last 20 years due to productivity gains, the planted area has decreased by about 40% and 27% respectively. The areas gave way to soybeans and maize, mainly produced for international markets. Resultantly, rice and beans small producers, who produced typical species in their regions have increasingly found it difficult to survive in the market.

At the same time, successive governments since 2016 have been struggling to dismantle CONAB, a state-owned

National Supply Company that has historically been responsible for food stocks management and minimum pricing policy. The goal, following one of the most immoral neoliberal precepts, has been to further exposure the domestic food market to fluctuations on the international market. The effects on the so-called 'rice crisis' are clear.

During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, one of the Bolsonaro government's initial policies in alleviating the effects of the crisis has been the distribution of an 'emergency aid' amounting to 600 reais (US$55) per family, beginning in April. From September to January the aid was reduced to 300 reais (US$22). It should be noted that the Bolsonaro-led government was initially not willing to extent this social protection to its population but only had to succumb later on following intense pressure from society and legislators. Rough estimates show that around 70 million people received the assistance at least once and that it was instrumental in maintaining social isolation in times of economic paralysis, especially in an increasingly informal labor market. However, following his necropolitics for the peoples of the countryside and the waters and in favor of agribusiness, Bolsonaro excluded rural workers from emergency aid and drastically reduced the value of the Food Acquisition Program, which guaranteed the purchase of the production of family farmers.

Final remarks

Unfortunately, the right to food in Brazil is still deeply associated with purchasing power. Therefore, it is essential for the people to have money to feed themselves. The state must avail resources to guarantee the nation's food security, not only by food distribution, but also through a set of public policies that connect the cycles of production, marketing, consumption and protection to the environment. Brazil, in the midst of its contradictions, which have deep roots in colonialism and slavery, had taken timid but important steps on the path of overcoming hunger. These steps were quickly undone by two governments that openly adhered to the large-scale agribusiness agenda, whose interests are far from agroecology, healthy eating and justice in land distribution. Consistently, the Bolsonaro government follows neoliberal precepts and deepens a neoextractivism without pains. In fact, we need to be critical and not forget that even so-called progressive Latin American governments have also adhered to neoextractivism, just as we cannot ignore the social advances they have produced amid the very difficult contradictions

imposed by centuries of imperialism and underdevelopment.[v]

The historical trajectory helps to understand why it has been so easy to dismantle advances in food and nutrition security and the support for the peoples of the rural and waters, even in the context of humanitarian fragility imposed by the pandemic. As Josué de Castro (1908-1973) wrote in the classic Geography of Hunger (1946): Hunger is the biological expression of sociological evils. This statement clearly reflects the scenario that began to take shape with the parliamentary coup of 2016 and that has intensified as characterized by human misery under the government of Jair Bolsonaro. It is urgent for the people to recognize this challenge and seek to build alternatives to capitalism based on solidarity and sovereignty.

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