

"Multilateralism", a key instrument of Chinese imperialism's foreign policy

1. THE CHINESE CONVERSION TO MULTILATERALISM

Since 1986, the Chinese revisionists have used "multilateral diplomacy" as an integral part of their foreign policy.

The theme of multilateralism made its official entrance into Chinese political discourse with the report on the work of the government presented by Zhao Ziyang on the occasion of the launching of the VII five-year plan (1986-90).

During the 1980s, capitalist "reforms" and the opening to the market were the driving forces behind China's move toward multilateral institutions and its growing diplomatic activism.

In the 1990s, the Chinese "conversion" to multilateralism developed with a progressive participation in international organizations and forums, especially of an economic nature. In fact, the new Chinese strategy required a more extensive and diversified participation in various multilateral forums, to avoid isolation and international condemnation. In this way China, increasingly linked to the international capitalist market, was drawn into the spider web of imperialism, as an integral part of it.

This strategy developed especially after the events in Tiananmen Square (1989), also to promote an image of "responsible power" and to begin to redesign a global order more favorable to the rising Chinese superpower.

Hence the re-evaluation of multilateralism, traditionally seen as a vehicle of external pressure and interference, and the start of a process of gradual development of this policy.

In the following years, the growing economic power of the Chinese dragon enabled Beijing to pursue greater diplomatic and foreign policy activism.

Since the 15th Congress of the CCP (1997), in the name of pragmatism the revisionist leaders of the CCP have formally adopted "multilateralism" as a guiding principle and operational tool in their international affairs, relations and initiatives.

New theses on multilateralism were further elaborated during the 16th Congress of the CCP (2002) in order to expand activism in international affairs and to make China accepted as the challenger of US global power.

At the same time, multilateralism has become an essential requirement to ensure long-term economic development, political stability and social peace, both within China and on its borders.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE MULTILATERALISM

In recent decades, the development of the struggle for world hegemony between U.S. imperialism, which is in economic and cultural decline, and the rapidly rising Chinese one (economically it could reach and surpass the USA in a few years; militarily it is continuously strengthening), has reshaped the pragmatic use of multilateralism by the revisionist leadership in Beijing.

Consequently, Chinese multilateralism has constantly evolved, with its own characteristics, under the pressure of its monopolies and dominant groups that want to transform economic force into political-military force to win more favorable positions in the struggle for the re-division of the world.

Chinese multilateral politics thus passed from a conception focused above all in the crucial Asian region (the APEC, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the creation of the free trade area with the ASEAN countries, the Boao Forum, the Six Nations dialogue on North Korea, the creation of the Asian Investment Bank to support huge projects such as the "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI), the cooperation between BRICS, the numerous bilateral agreements that are very advantageous

given China's economic power, are examples of this approach), to expressions with a broader base, characterized by China's entry into global forums and institutions, traditional haunts of imperialist leaders (e.g. WTO, G-20 as a member state, G-8 as an observer). Even within the U.N., China has developed its participation in "peace missions" in dozens of countries (Afghanistan, Haiti, Kosovo, Lebanon, Liberia, Sudan, etc.).

Multilateralism has thus become a central element of Chinese ambitions to continue rapid development and in a few decades to build a new international order in which China is no longer in a "strait-jacket" but holds a decisive and predominant position.

The development of Trump's isolationism and the crisis of U.S. multilateralism have offered new strategic opportunities to imperialist China to establish itself as an advocate of "inclusive" economic globalization, of international order and of multilateral architecture, in opposition to protectionism.

Indeed, China has developed rivalry with the US using the same international organizations hitherto run by the Yankees, but at the same time it has worked to change the balance of power within them, undermining norms and agreements that favor the superpower currently led by Biden.

The concept and practice of Chinese multilateralism have developed amidst the clash of interests and values between the U.S.-led Western powers and the rising medium and large powers (BRICS and other capitalist states), which want to escape U.S. domination and gain a status appropriate to their growing economic, political and military weight in the international hierarchy.

The multilateralism pursued by China therefore seeks to push through in the tensions that are shaking the current system of international relations; its rhetoric hides the struggle for hegemony between imperialist powers, and behind its diplomatic mask there is the old strategy of alliances and blocs.

3. THE CURRENT PHASE OF CHINESE MULTILATERALISM

With Xi Jinping's rise to power in 2013, China has shifted to a major foreign initiative, of which the BRI is the most obvious manifestation. The current phase of Chinese multilateralism, more active and assertive than in the past, was expressed by Xi Jinping during the World Economic Forum in January 2021, who criticizing hegemonism and unilateralism emphasized a consensual system of global governance, based on universal consultation and rules. A utopian imperialist world, in which differences "are not a pretext for antagonism and confrontation, but rather an incentive for cooperation".

Chinese propaganda is based on the revisionist rhetoric that the old U.S.-led postwar international order has become increasingly unsustainable, while the trend is towards a multipolar world and globalization. Hence the push for the "development of a community with a shared future for humanity" (Xi Jinping, report to the 19th Congress of the CCP) to be achieved by reforming the liberal-democratic institutions to create an environment more favorable to the interests and ambitions of Chinese imperialism.

Despite the official narrative, the "true multilateralism" with Chinese characteristics is both strategic and opportunist, part of a counter-hegemonic design.

The U.S. and China are constantly struggling to extend their influence internationally, the tension in the South China Sea and on Taiwan is growing, albeit for now the two superpowers don't want go to a direct war (China needs time to strengthen itself; it has an interest in armed conflicts taking place in other regions of the world in this period). This struggle also develops within multilateral agencies in which China is resolutely defending its decisive interests.

The Chinese multilateralism that has emerged in the last twenty years must be understood in combination with the discourse on "multipolarism". Both are part of the strategy to extend Chinese influence and dominance, especially among "developing" countries, creating an image of China as a benign world power on the rise.

Through multilateralism China is gradually gaining power at the regional and global level, pursuing the penetration of its capital through bilateral agreements with dependent countries of Africa, Asia and South America (in which Beijing gets the “dragon's share”) while striving to form a world political structure that corresponds to its strategic aims.

Despite the deceptive propaganda on fair, transparent, democratic diplomatic relations, on "mutual benefit", “win-win cooperation”, etc., in fact an exclusive and competitive "bipolar" model is emerging, based on regional or international institutions hinged on two great imperialist powers, U.S. and China, which are challenging each other: the first to maintain hegemony, the second to win it. It is an inter-imperialist struggle for supremacy within the dying imperialist system.

4. CLASS VISION OF MULTILATERALISM

From a revolutionary class point of view, what is the "multilateralism" supported by the Chinese revisionists and their followers?

At the root of multilateralism (and multipolarism), there is Kaustky's reactionary theory of ultra-imperialism, which deceives the masses with the hope of the possibility of permanent peace in the capitalist system (i.e. the peaceful division of spheres of influence and colonies), which hides the profound contradictions inherent in imperialism, in the name of the bourgeois perfection of imperialism, of full integration with it.

Chinese multilateralism is the further development of the "Five Principles" of peaceful coexistence promoted by Zhou Enlai since 1954, which have completely replaced the principles of proletarian internationalism, including the coexistence of exploited and exploiters, oppressed and oppressors, the abandonment of revolutionary struggles, the relations with fascist and reactionary regimes (over the years, Pinochet's Chile, Franco's Spain, the reactionary factions in Angola, Taliban's Afghanistan, etc.), the encouragement of the free world market, etc.

Furthermore, Chinese multilateralism continues and deepens the anti-Marxist and reactionary theory of the "three worlds", which was aimed at mitigating the contradictions between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, at eliminating the leading role of the proletariat in the revolution, at suffocating the class struggle and the national liberation struggles of the peoples against the imperialist yoke to achieve the goals of cooperating with the US in the fight against the revisionist USSR and putting China at the head of the "third world" states, painting it as their main defender.

Multilateralism is based on typically bourgeois concepts and practices that reflect the political and legal philosophy of the project of a liberal international order. Therefore, it is completely alien and in contrast to the Marxist-Leninist conception of the world and of society.

The foundations of modern U.S.-led multilateralism were laid at Bretton Woods in 1944, with the creation of major international organizations, including the United Nations (UN), the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), institutions that have strengthened the exploitation and oppression of dependent, semi-colonial and colonial peoples and countries.

From the moment Mao's China steered its course towards the United States of America, defining the Soviet Union as its main enemy, it also began to enter or openly support many mechanisms of the imperialist political game.

At the basis of multilateralism there is class conciliation, the attempt to mitigate the class struggle, to deceive the working class and the oppressed peoples with captivating formulas. Behind the demagogy of the "search for suitable solutions" in a phase of international change, multilateralism preaches collaboration and social peace between exploiting and exploited classes, between oppressed and oppressor countries, between oppressed and oppressing nations.

The Marxist-Leninist conception of social differentiation is based on the theory of classes and the class struggle, up to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Multilateralism, on the other hand, is based on the relationship between states, or apparatuses of the dictatorship of the ruling classes, whose existence shows that class antagonisms are irreconcilable.

By supporting multilateralism the Chinese revisionists deny the objective character of the existence of class contradictions (starting with those existing in China); they try to reconcile antagonistic classes; they credit the idea that imperialism and capitalism are factors of progress and peace in the world.

For the Peking revisionists – who for decades have replaced the essence of the revolutionary theory of classes and class struggle with bourgeois concepts and practices – it is not the popular masses, the classes, who are the subjects of the process and historical action; the class struggle is no longer the driving force for the development of the antagonistic society.

Their position is not accidental: they must try by all means to convince the proletariat and the peoples that class contradictions and those between imperialist and capitalist powers are compatible within the framework of the bourgeois system, that the solution of the existing dramatic problems must be found in greater understanding, mutual and better cooperation between the ruling classes, in the coalition with the imperialist bourgeoisie.

Multilateralism does not question the capitalist social relations of production, now predominant in China, but defends them. It therefore reflects the interests of the exploiting classes which are inevitably in contrast with the demands of social progress; it is a liberal methodology which has the evident purpose of convincing the proletariat to resign itself to its condition as an oppressed class, to become a docile instrument of bourgeois politics.

At the same time, multilateralism is the most flagrant denial of the principle and practice of proletarian internationalism, which is replaced with Chinese nationalism and solidarity with the oppressors of the peoples. In particular, the function of multilateralism is to promote and support the process of integration of the dependent countries into the institutions and mechanisms dominated by the imperialist countries.

Behind these typical concepts of Chinese foreign policy and actions there is the financial oligarchy of the Asian giant which is frantically seeking to invest capital abroad, striving to conquer markets and spheres of influence, seeking to establish its hegemony everywhere. This is a policy that cannot go ahead without the intensification of the exploitation of the Chinese working class and laboring masses.

5. THE MASK OF IMPERIALIST AMBITIONS AND WAR PREPARATIONS

For decades China has abandoned its phraseology of a "revolutionary power" and adopted a position as a power defending the capitalist-imperialist system. Its international policy, as well as its domestic one, is a means of consolidating the power of the exploiting classes.

If Khrushchevite revisionism declared the end of the struggle against imperialism and for "world integration", Chinese multilateralism is the mask of the unbridled ambition of the Chinese imperialists who want to replace the United States in the political and economic domination of the world.

This dangerously deceives peoples about the goals of Chinese imperialism and tries to attract the ruling cliques of dependent countries under this banner.

Under the ideological as well as practical aspect, multilateralism is in flagrant contrast with the interests of the proletariat and with the scientific principles that express the objective tendencies of historical evolution. It tends to maintain imperialism, not to overthrow it in order to suppress any exploitation of one human being by another, any oppression of the peoples.

The views and positions of the Chinese revisionists are counter-revolutionary and align with those of the bourgeoisie of the Western imperialist and capitalist states, with which they collaborate and compete.

But despite the efforts of the revisionists, multilateralism does not eliminate class contradictions, nor those between imperialist powers, much less those between imperialism and the oppressed peoples.

Today's capitalist-imperialist world is objectively more and more fragmented, divided, in conflict. The fact that some countries are emerging and others declining, given the inequality of economic and politic development (and not because of the struggle for self-determination and sovereignty, as the revisionists claim) does not mean that the world is safer.

On the contrary, this very inequality of development makes rearmament, conflicts and imperialist wars inevitable for new divisions of the world and spheres of influence, markets, sources of raw materials, transport routes, etc. The discourses on multilateralism are only a screen behind which the great powers hide the preparations for new wars, deceiving the peoples.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

The conception and practice of multilateralism have nothing in common with communism, but are aimed at diverting the proletariat and the peoples from the struggle for the revolution and socialism.

The ideological and political battle against all those who promote and defend the concepts of multilateralism, "multipolarism", bourgeois "rules of international law", interclassism in the field of international relations, is an important aspect of the struggle against revisionism and opportunism in all its variants that continues to cause serious damage to the International Communist Movement.

The lack of understanding of multilateralism and its ideological and political function highlights the lack of understanding of imperialism and its activities in the international arena.

There are forces and currents that limit their analysis and understanding of imperialism only (or mainly) to its aggressive, militaristic or openly hegemonic foreign policy, such as that of the US.

There are others who argue that China and Russia play an anti-imperialist role because they clash with the United States of America, and therefore consider these powers as allies of the peoples and points of support for the development of dependent countries.

These serious errors in understanding imperialism – the highest and final phase of capitalism – which usually accompany the support of the theses on the multipolar world and the politics of multilateralism, inevitably lead to underestimating the capacity and danger of imperialist powers such as China and Russia; in other cases they lead to concealing or justifying the causes of the inter-imperialist war, to justify rearmament and to put themselves at the service of the imperialist powers opposing the USA with social-chauvinist arguments to divide the proletariat and pit them against each other.

The parties and organizations that define themselves as communists, but which consider a new "peaceful coexistence" desirable and possible in the context of sharpening of the contradictions between imperialist powers; who dream of a "non-aggressive" imperialism, or one whose aggressiveness can be channeled through multilateralism; who preach the theory of the "balance" between imperialist powers and the related "security architectures" in the so-called "multipolar world"; who rely on one imperialist power to fight another, betray the cause of the proletarian revolution and transform themselves into forces subordinate to the bourgeoisie.

The historical experience of the communist movement shows that there cannot be an "intermediate" line or ground between those who support Marxism-Leninism and those who support opportunist and revisionist theories, strategies and practices; between those who fight for the revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat and those who support multilateralism, social peace and false bourgeois democracy.

Any centrist attempt to hold diametrically opposed positions and tendencies, to establish an "intermediate" line on questions of principle, is not only useless, but also leads to ideological

degeneration and reactionary results in the political field. Towards the social-imperialists and social-chauvinists, no other attitude is possible than an implacable struggle.

The new international order for which the communists are fighting is founded on the revolutionary alliance between the working class and the oppressed peoples and has as its goal socialism and communism, the classless society.

The unity we fight for is a true, Leninist unity. It is completely illusory, dangerous and misleading to think of reconstituting a powerful International workers' and communist movement, a new Communist International, without a complete and definitive ideological and organizational separation from modern revisionism and opportunism which aim to divert the proletariat from the revolutionary struggle.

One cannot fight imperialism, cannot fulfill the revolutionary tasks of proletarian socialism, and cannot build the revolutionary unity of the workers' and communist movement, without freeing oneself from imperialist and chauvinist pressure and influences, without recognizing and denouncing the revisionist and opportunist failure, without breaking openly and clearly with these currents and their national and international organizations.

This dutiful separation, favored by the sharpening of the main contradictions of our epoch, is historically inevitable and necessary to develop the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat.

Today more than ever it is necessary to maintain complete theoretical, political and organizational independence, firmly adhering to the principles of communism in order to forge the most solid international union of the revolutionary proletarians of all countries.

The defense and development of Marxism-Leninism, the unmasking and relentless struggle against all forms of revisionism and opportunism within the communist and workers' movement, the living practice of proletarian internationalism, are fundamental aspects of the struggle to advance cooperation and conjunction of the revolutionary parties of the proletariat.

The ICMLPO, which is based on a clear Marxist-Leninist platform and has always fought for the international unity of the communists, plays an essential role in creating a strong center of attraction for the revolutionary proletarian forces

This is why it invites the parties and organizations of all the countries that fight for socialism and communism to join with it for the constitution of a powerful International Communist Movement, which will project itself into the reconstruction of the Communist International.

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