



Aukus
The new cold war with
China hots up



Myanmar
No to military rule, restore
democracy and people's
rights



**Peace &
sovereignty**
Global threats, from Kabul
to Caracas

Liberation

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Afghanistan

The struggle for peace,
progress and security

editorial/Liberation

Britain needs to extricate itself from US ambitions, its dangerous policies and mal-designs - which offer only wasteful and deadly escalation. The value of world peace and an averting of war, even nuclear war, cannot be overestimated.

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Women protest against
Taliban, Pershawar
28 April 1998

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The cost of war and the value of peace

Developments in Afghanistan since the country's handover to the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban by the US on August 15 have been widely covered and reported across the media.

Liberation, however, is of the view that the public are not fooled by contrived misrepresentations of the outcomes of failed policies masterminded and executed by the US and UK governments since the atrocities on September 11, 2001. We are convinced that the foreign policy decisions of the imperialist powers twenty years ago made our world unsafe and more unjust.

On the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the horrific terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the Taliban instructed women to cover up from head to toe and banned them from secondary schooling and further education. Meanwhile, President Biden turned a blind eye and chose to praise the Taliban for their "professionalism" in reopening Kabul airport.

Barely two weeks earlier, General Sir Nick Carter, Chief of the Defence Staff, had claimed British troops were "happy to collaborate with the Taliban" and that he believed the Taliban had changed in recent years. The people of Afghanistan angrily refute these baseless claims.

The so-called "war on terror" has become a perpetual war; ruthlessly exploiting legitimate fears; misleading military personnel into death and injury; laying waste to whole nations; and destabilising world politics. Increased exploitation and profiteering amidst the ruins represent the spoils of this war.

It is these very double standards in foreign policy, interstate relations, lies, and the corporate greed of multinationals that feed ultra-violent politics and terrorism - whether Islamist, Christian fundamentalist, or neo-Nazi!

Aggression and conflict have not been the only tools

deployed to protect the interests of US big business and the military industrial complex. Economic blockades and trade sanctions against progressive Cuba, Venezuela, and even the dictatorship in Iran, as well as support for military coups, have also had a role. These have led to hardship, adding to the pandemic misery.

In addition, the British government hangs on to the coat-tails of the US in all of its aggressive manoeuvres, while assisting attempts to generate a new cold war against China. Such provocations pose a threat to the entire world!

The stakes could not be higher, nor the dangers greater! Biden continues to raise the odds on conflict. From Iran and the Middle East, pandering to the oppression of the Palestinians by the Israeli State, to the Indo-Pacific and Eastern Europe, the US is a force for destabilisation and injustice.

Biden claims he is ending 20 years of US war, yet currently maintains 800 overseas military bases in 70 countries. These remain a key affront to international justice and a threat to world peace.

The true cost of the US-NATO occupation of Afghanistan is yet to be revealed, but it is clear that the lives and blood of the Afghan people held little worth to the US.

As Malalai Joya, a women's rights activist and former Afghan parliamentarian, has said: "For years I have called for the withdrawal of the foreign occupation forces. Now it has been proved to all of our people that the US and NATO were dishonest. The blood of the Afghan people is of no value to them."

Britain needs to extricate itself from US ambitions, its dangerous policies and mal-designs - which offer only wasteful and deadly escalation. The value of world peace and an averting of war, even nuclear war, cannot be overestimated.

It is time to build solidarity between the peoples of all lands, and to develop independent and fraternal foreign policies.

Peace and real liberation is possible!

Jamshid Ahmadi

news/Liberation

'These remembrances should not be about assuaging the guilt of those that have benefitted from slavery or about making anyone feel better about the horrors that my ancestors and those of many other enslaved Africans had to endure. It is about the politics. It is about unfinished business.'



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Slave trade abolition is 'unfinished business'

Liberation marked International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition on 23 August with a pledge to 'write a new book about slavery'.

In an article and video published on the day general secretary Roger McKenzie argued that 'it is very easy to see how this day can become institutionalised in the same way that many Black History Month events have. It can easily be all about the music, eating the so-called ethnic food – all things which I heartily enjoy and am happy to participate in – but not about the politics.'

Roger, whose ancestors 'had been stolen from Africa and enslaved on plantations in Jamaica' continued:

'This should not be the end of the story. These remembrances should not be about

assuaging the guilt of those that have benefitted from slavery or about making anyone feel better about the horrors that my ancestors and those of many other enslaved Africans had to endure. It is about the politics. It is about unfinished business.'

Roger said it was important to remind people of the 'horrors of slavery and that the end of that barbaric institution was not won by a few kind hearted if no doubt well meaning White folks'.

'Both the end of slavery and the end of colonialism was achieved by organised rebellion. But is also about the reparations that need to be paid to the descendants of enslaved Africans. This is not an issue that can be hidden behind nice food and dancing.'

See Roger's article and video at liberationorg.co.uk

Liberation launches annual lecture

Liberation is launching an annual lecture in December that aims to raise awareness of anti-colonial struggles and the challenges of combating imperialism today.

The event will be held in the Houses of Parliament and will be billed as the Fenner Brockway annual lecture, named after the founder of Movement for Colonial Freedom, Liberation's predecessor organisation.

The initial theme is Britain and the need for a progressive foreign policy with human rights at its core.

The event will be held on 8 December, timed to coincide with the United Nations Human Rights Day, which falls on 10 December.

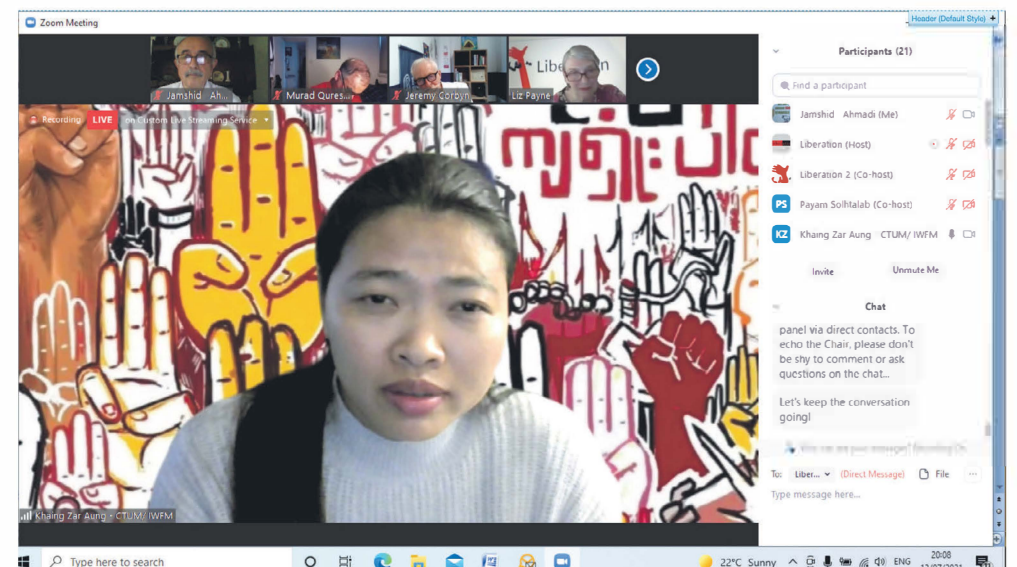
Liberation also plans an annual Maggie Bowden Essay Competition, named after our

former, long-time general secretary and current joint president. The essay seeks to encourage engagement with a whole range of groups including school children, and those from diverse backgrounds and sectors.

These initiatives are the result of the work of Liberation's education committee, comprising Liberation Central Council members, led by Harsev Bains. This is currently meeting monthly. The committee was established to develop and take forward educational work under the supervision of Liberation central council and the Liberation executive.

Liberation will publish further details of the lecture and other initiatives on our website and via social media.

Myanmar meeting mobbed

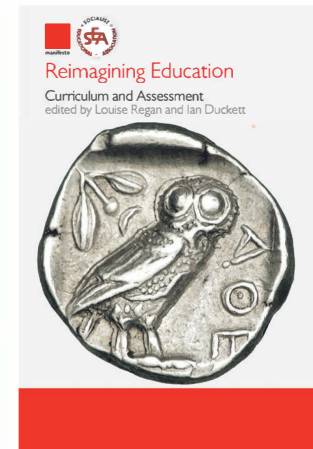
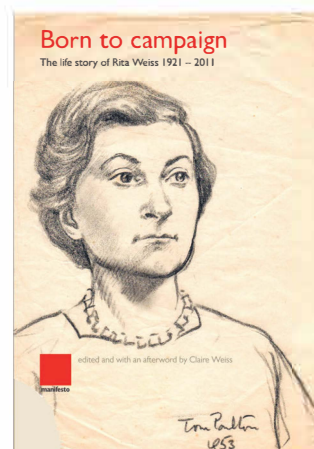


Over 1500 tuned into Liberation's meeting on Myanmar in July to hear union leader Ms. Khaing Zar Aung (pictured), president of the Industrial Workers' Federation of Myanmar (IWFM) and treasurer of the Confederation of Trade Unions Myanmar (CTUM). Arun Kumar, general secretary of the All India Peace and Solidarity Organisation

(AIPSO), Jeremy Corbyn MP and Murad Qureshi also spoke.

You can play back the event 'Restore democracy and peoples' rights in Myanmar!' including its lively Q&A via our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/watch/liberationorg>. The texts of the presentations by Arun Kumar and Murad Qureshi are on page 8.

New from www.manifestopress.org.uk



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Afghanistan/three voices

Liberation held an online seminar in September on the situation in Afghanistan. Here we include extracts from the contributions of the three speakers from the country, a woman activist, a progressive political leader and a former diplomat.

The people's view by Shokrieh Rahami



'The previous Afghan government was mired in corruption, but the young generation of Afghanistan were raised and schooled under that system and the constitutional values it propagated.

The raising of such a generation was one of the greatest achievements. This must not be destroyed.'

Picture redacted for security reasons

The newly installed oppressive regime has set out to systematically remove women from all spheres of social life: removal of female government cabinet members, gender segregation in universities, imposition of foreign Arab culture and dress, the closure of girls' schools, and the passing of a 'privileged' law. We witness the setting of an abnormally low pass-threshold in public exams in order to recruit men to government positions - while women in high-ranking government positions are forced to resign - and all first, second and third tier government positions are monopolised for men.

The new order have resorted to brutal suppression to silence the voices of women across Afghanistan, through locking them up underground; shooting at them; threatening

them with weapons; pepper-spraying and flogging them; arresting rally organisers and issuing calls for the arrest of protesters on march days; torturing and ill-treating them in various ways while in detention, including with electric shocks; transferring them to unknown places of detention (literally disappearing them); pursuing them into their homes having dispersed them from public spaces; monitoring their social media accounts; intimidating and threatening those involved with human rights activism; targeted killings of those human rights activists that persist; cracking down on domestic journalists, particularly those attempting to cover demonstrations and rallies; right through to the ever present threat of torture, imprisonment or being disappeared... But rest assured that what is shown in the media represent just a small part of the crimes

The wider context by Assad Keshmand



'All signs indicate that bloody wars will break out in our region and once again an awful and unclear fate awaits the people of Afghanistan who have suffered more than enough so far.'

The Americans have prepared the conditions for the Taliban to come to power again. The first time when the radical Islamist division called the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP, Taliban Movement in Pakistan) entered the scene through Pakistan in 1994 and in its early steps participated in wars with unprecedented vigour and violence and took the power, it was met with an indifferent reaction from the Americans, and a short while after that, the same United States, the so-called leader of the free world, entered into a deal with it through the massive oil company Unocal.

The United States has never made any effort to force the Taliban to respect human rights, women's rights, national and ethnic equality, and to build a political system based on social justice. America is only concerned with securing its own vital interests.

Accordingly, the United States has chosen the Taliban as the only force capable of carrying out its (i.e., America's) major Central Asian policies. This policy, as far as its initial preparations on the one hand, and the reactions of the other players such as Central Asia, Russia, China, and Iran on the other hand shows, is based on raising tensions and bringing about a kind of "Central Asian Spring" with new

characteristics.

Many analysts in our region believe that the displacement of Daesh (ISIS) forces in Northern Afghanistan in a different position alongside the Taliban is one of the most obvious signs of these policies. It is worth noting that the ISIS forces stationed in Northern Afghanistan are mainly citizens of Chechen, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Caucasians, and Chinese Uyghurs. Alongside these two strong terrorist and extremist groups, other groups have been gathered around from al-Qaida to Hizb ut-Tahrir and other Islamic fundamentalist groups that all have the same common goal of overthrowing the secular regimes in Central Asia. All signs indicate that bloody wars will break out in our region and once again an awful and unclear fate awaits the people of Afghanistan who have suffered more than enough so far.

In this way, Afghanistan once again is becoming a victim of the ambitions of the Pentagon and CIA hawks, and peace, as an unattainable cause, will remain one of the burning aspirations of our people. Afghanistan will continue to remain underdeveloped and yearning for prosperity.

Based on what has happened, it could be said that the overt first step of the US

What should be done? by Dr Abdullah Naibi



'We would like to ask all democrats and progressive voices in the UK Parliament to support the democratic forces of Afghanistan and Afghan women in their vital struggle against the Taliban. A

default fallback to support for those forces linked to the Mujahidin would merely equate to the repeating of a failed and shameful experience'

How should the current Taliban regime be dealt with? It must be remembered that the regime that the Taliban overthrew was corrupt, anti-democratic, and quite a puppet of its US-NATO funders. Its military commanders and leadership were drawn from the Mujahidin, primarily from the Jamiat-i-Islami faction. They rigidly maintained their tribal and regional characteristics and links. In fact, the "Afghan national army" was a collection of anarchist mercenaries facilitated and funded by the United States.

Yet by signing the Doha Agreement with the Taliban last year, the United States in practical effect handed Kabul

over to them. Antony Blinken, the US Secretary of State, disregarded the fact that by signing the accords with the Taliban, international recognition of the Taliban regime would be instigated - despite his insistence that the Taliban would have to accomplish and earn its "legitimacy".

The corrupt previous government drove Afghan society into decadence and enabled the easy takeover by the Taliban. The White House and its allies, in particular the United Kingdom, are accountable for the Taliban victory.

The rapid fall of the government, precipitated by the US-NATO withdrawal, and the desertion by the president and

Afghanistan/three voices

‘What the Taliban represent is not just Islamic fundamentalism, but a mixture of Islamic fundamentalism with a particular brand of conservative tribal culture and highly patriarchal traditions originating in the areas from which the Taliban emerged. This is what makes the Taliban particularly dangerous to women’

and repressions these fundamentalist monopolists carry out against us!

The people of Afghanistan are tired after a 40-year-long war - and, where they are not tired, there is a deep-seated hatred amongst the majority of them towards the Taliban, who are severely interfering in the individual freedoms of the people and making it difficult for them to even breathe. What the Taliban represent is not just Islamic fundamentalism, but a mixture of Islamic fundamentalism with a particular brand of conservative tribal culture and highly patriarchal traditions originating in the areas from which the Taliban emerged. And, this is what makes the Taliban particularly dangerous to women and completely opposed to women's interests.

Therefore, on behalf of the spontaneous independent women's movements in

Afghanistan, I urge our counterparts in Britain and around the world, all human rights and women's rights activists, as well as all active and knowledgeable people in the fight against terrorism and drugs (the main source of income for the Taliban in recent years), to draw upon their power, resources and resolve to push these issues until the Taliban are forced to form an inclusive government in which women are guaranteed a dignified position and full rights.

These include, but are not limited to: the right to equal education to equal employment; equal opportunities in all social and labour sectors; the right to political participation to leadership levels (including the lifting of the ban on women in high government positions); the re-establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs; freedom of choice of profession; freedom of field of study;

prohibition of forced marriage and the jihad of marriage; freedom of expression; as well as other values enshrined in international treaties and conventions to which the government of Afghanistan has signed up thus far, such as - the Convention on the Elimination of Violence against Women; the UN Charter; and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. And, until the government in Afghanistan embraces all of these values and stands with the women of Afghanistan, no legitimacy or recognition should be given to the fundamentalist monopoly system of mono-ethnic, mono-religious, and mono-gender.

The previous Afghan government was mired in corruption, but the young generation of Afghanistan, who make up 65% of the population, were raised and schooled under that system and the constitutional values it

propagated. It was one of the most democratic in the entire region. We grew up and learned to read and judge the world from this perspective - the raising of such a generation was one of the greatest achievements. This must not be destroyed like the achievements in the training and equipping of the Afghan army over the past twenty years were so easily destroyed.

Shokrieh Rahami is a young women's rights activist from north Afghanistan. She was involved in establishing the Co-ordinating Council of Afghan Women Fighters for Peace Negotiations. She is actively involved in campaigns on issues regarding children and women in Afghanistan, and has been involved in organizing recent protests against the Taliban.

polycymakers in order to take good advantage of the Taliban resources, was their attempt to gradually turn the Taliban into a politically and diplomatically approachable force by setting up Doha talks with them. Today, the Americans have eliminated any taboo and problem that could exist in communicating and liaising with the Taliban.

The hassle-free transfer of power to the Taliban, and leaving for them all the military equipment and weaponry estimated at more than 85 billion dollars, is the central point of this political plan. In fact, all practical means have been provided to shift activities of insurgency, disorder and [regime] overthrow to Central Asia. They expect the Taliban, whose leadership has been trained by the Americans, to create final conditions for the second phase of their plans, which is to create chaos and disorder and to gradually instigate civil wars in Central Asia.

The current state of the world indicates that rather than a secular and incoherent government in terms of religion and ethnic composition, only a force such as the Taliban, which is coherent ideologically, politically and religiously, and in terms of ethnic makeup, will be able to implement this US policy in Central Asia, a policy which has been in the making for quite some

time. That is why the Americans chose the Taliban.

However, it should be noted that the people of Northern Afghanistan, neighbours of Central Asian nations, with whom they have historical, ethnical, cultural, and spiritual common interests, are not willing to participate in such plans.

The US pulled its troops out of Afghanistan in order to avoid directly engaging with this difficult and dangerous problem. Yet, it still has all the major levers in its own hands. By transferring power to the Taliban, the Americans won their hearts forever. Additionally, the active and decision-making leadership of the Taliban who were based in Qatar and are in control today, remain firm allies of the US.

There are other important resources available to the United States, principally its influence in the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and other global financial institutions. It seems hard to believe that the Americans will freeze the assets of Afghanistan for a long time and give Taliban a hard time. This is a difficult test and a turning point that will reveal the US policy toward Afghanistan and Central Asia.

What is predictable is that the Taliban will

be willing to back off from certain policies to cast off the current problems. But are they willing to compromise in key issues such as the real presence of representatives of all nationalities and ethnicities of Afghanistan in power, real women's freedom, religious equality, freedom of expression and political freedoms, the method of governance and the type of the political system, and other issues determining the future destiny of the Afghan people?

The Taliban are a force that have proved their disregard for the international laws and standards. They are likely to have red lines that are dangerous and unacceptable to global public opinion. These red lines largely stem from their socially and politically regressive way of thinking based on fundamentalism and self-admiration. Under the present circumstances, the Taliban are trying to consolidate their position so that they can step into the next phase as a united and cohesive regime, but many problems are in their way.

There are many problems facing the Taliban every day; their internal differences are huge and if they do not implement a reasonable policy that will bring peace to the people, they will not be able to govern. The implementation of US plans for Central Asia

will depend on the Taliban's conquest and solving the current problems.

There are other unclear points about US capabilities in Afghanistan. What of the US military bases? In Doha, in February 2020, a deal was reached between the Taliban and the United States to dismantle five of the nine US military bases in Afghanistan. Yet, no detailed information has been provided about the actual number of US military bases in Afghanistan. And what was the fate of the other four bases? And what about the security pact between Afghanistan and the US, signed in 2014 and which is valid through 2024. These two major issues have been left unclear intentionally and so create more common links between the Taliban and America.

Ultimately, the biggest question is, when will the US enter the final stage of its plan to instigate disorder in Central Asia, that many believe is in the works?

Assad Keshtmand served as the Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan to Hungary, Iran, and Ethiopia, in the final years of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan government. He currently resides in London.

other Jihadi leaders, proved that Afghan people did not support the corrupt regime in Kabul and were not bereft at its removal.

Nonetheless, the Afghan people are not pleased with the Taliban's current mode and policies, even if their prevailing meant the end of the war.

The progressive movements, women, and people of Afghanistan expect the international community and the UK government to block and withhold recognition of the Taliban's medieval-like government, as well as exert pressure on Pakistan and other supporters of Taliban for the formation of a political broad-based

government and not one based on tribal arrangement.

The other important issue is regarding the second resistance movement in Panjshir. In reality, this movement is aimed at maintaining the position of Jihadis linked to Jamiat-i-Islami, prominent in the previous set-up, and has nothing to do with the interests and urgent needs of the people of Afghanistan. People are fed-up with Mujahidin's rule during the last 20 years and expressed a hatred of their conduct and many crimes. The democratic and bona fide patriotic forces of Afghanistan must no longer be ignored.

We would like to ask all democrats and

progressive voices in the UK Parliament to support the democratic forces of Afghanistan and Afghan women in their vital struggle against the Taliban. A default fallback to support for those forces linked to the Mujahidin would merely equate to the repeating of a failed and shameful experience.

Activists from progressive movements and those representing women's rights are under Taliban pressure and attack. They urgently need the support of the international community, in particular of the United Kingdom government.

Dr Abdullah Naibi is a medical doctor, writer, and poet and seasoned politician. He was a leading political figure during the era of the progressive government that ruled Afghanistan from the late-1970s until 1992. In exile he was a founding member of a progressive movement that led to the formation of the People's New Party of Afghanistan, dedicated to peace, sovereignty and social progress in Afghanistan.

These are edited versions of the presentations - full versions are available on the Liberation website.

peace and sovereignty/Venezuela

'We want to thank the powerful solidarity movement that has been built in Britain. We are sure that you will continue to stand with us'

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Sanctions: a new format of war and interference



Gabriel Aguirre explains why there must be an

unconditional lifting of all unilateral coercive measures on his country and for the policy of placing maximum pressure on the country to cease

AT THE END of 1823, John Quincy Adams, then Secretary of State, elaborated the Monroe Doctrine, which was read out by President James Monroe in a speech before the US Congress. This document was to form the theoretical basis for the construction of US foreign policy towards the new world. The synthesis of this document was expressed in the phrase "America for the Americans". Emerging American power reserved the right to intervene militarily should Europe make any aggressive move against countries that had recently achieved their independence from colonialism.

But the truth is that behind this proclamation was the principle that has been applied right up to and including today by US imperialism; it regarded the American continent as effectively its living space. In a term often used, it has been referred to as its 'backyard', a territory from which it has extracted important strategic resources, energy, minerals, aquifers and biodiversity. An example of this relationship of domination is that 23 of the 63 minerals the US imports come from the Latin American region.

Important resources are concentrated in Venezuela. It has 293 billion barrels of oil, meaning that the country possesses the biggest oil reserve in the world. Likewise, the country has the largest gold reserves (161 tons) and the eighth largest gas reserves in the world. Together with the presence of other important minerals, this was the main reason why US imperialism exercised political, economic, and social control over the country. For many years, the presence of US corporations on Venezuelan soil extended to almost all areas of the economy.

If we want to put forward an example of how domination has been expressed, we can say that within the Venezuelan military infrastructure there was an office of the United States Department of Defense. From here operations were directed to combat revolutionary insurgent movements both in our country and in other parts of the continent. Even the planes of the Venezuelan air force had to request authorization from the military bases and center of operations of the United States in order to take off.

Naturally, as happens in systems where corporations exercise control and dominate the country's economy, the social situation worsened, producing increasingly difficult conditions of poverty, hunger and misery, while corruption and the looting of resources prevented social needs from being addressed. This produced uprisings and protests by the Venezuelan people. Faced with a situation of total abandonment and lack of attention on the part of the state, the moment at which society demonstrated its frustration was on 4 February 1992, [when Hugo Chavez led an attempt to seize power].

Chavez elected

Things really changed in 1999 with the electoral triumph of the popular, progressive, and anti-imperialist forces again led by Commander Hugo Chavez. Since then, imperialism and the right-wing forces of the country have never abandoned their plans to defeat the Bolivarian process, by coups d'état, paralyzing the operations of the oil industry and using mercenary forces and terrorist attacks. We could look at each of these in much more depth, but here it is important to give special emphasis to the mechanisms used against the country since 2014.

With the death of President Chavez on 5 March 2013, imperialism's aggressive plans were accelerated, including an agenda of violent protests, but, the following year, President Barack Obama enacted the famous executive order in which he declared Venezuela to be an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy and national security of the US. This furnished imperialism's justification to begin to apply a set of unilateral coercive measures (UCM), better known as sanctions. These have served to reinforce an economic, financial and commercial blockade.

This new format of war and interference, applied by imperialism in violation of international law, has caused colossal destruction and difficulties for the country's economy, mainly affecting the oil industry. This has generated a 60% reduction in the gross domestic product, as well as a 99% reduction in national income compared with prior to the

blockade; today Venezuela relies on 1% of its oil income.

As part of the imposition of these sanctions, there has been a blatant assault on the resources and assets of the Republic, among them important liquid funds that have been frozen in banks in Europe. This includes 31 tons of gold held by the Bank of England. This was granted, in a decision of the High Court, to a supposed administrative board appointed by the former president of the National Assembly, whom US and European imperialists tried to impose as president.

Blockade

The nation's losses resulting from the blockade amount to 120 billion dollars and in practical terms have significantly limited the Venezuelan State's capacity to address areas such as health, food, and education. The blockade has already claimed the lives of at least 40,000 Venezuelans, and has placed groups such as pregnant women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities in a situation of vulnerability.

The Committee of International Solidarity and Struggle for Peace (COSI) has demanded the unconditional lifting of all unilateral coercive measures and for the policy of placing maximum pressure on the country to cease. These demands are in the context of the ongoing struggle for the defense of peace, sovereignty and independence.

We want to thank the powerful solidarity movement that has been built in Britain. We are sure that you will continue to stand with us in the struggle to reclaim Venezuela's gold frozen in Britain, as well as by building campaigns to develop the awareness of the working people of Britain about the negative impact of UCMs and contributions, through street actions and grass roots struggle, to international solidarity in support of the people of Venezuela in the face of the material difficulties and limitations arising from the blockade.

Let us continue advancing in the struggle! We are still standing.

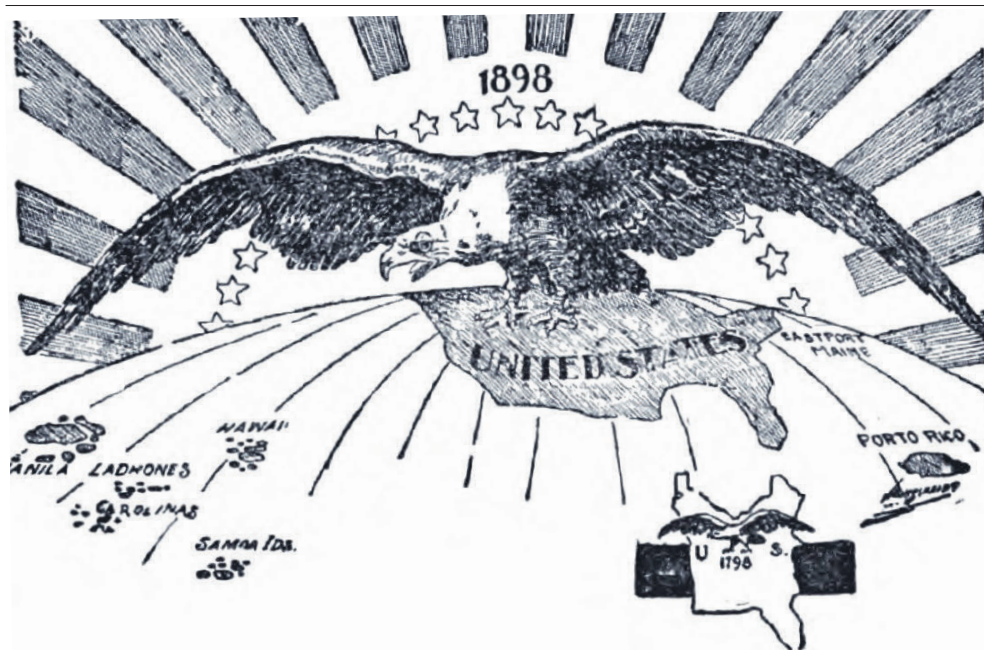
Gabriel Aguirre is general secretary of COSI and based in Caracas. Follow COSI on Twitter @venezuelacosi

Picture top right

Thirty one tonnes of Venezuelan gold are held by the Bank of England

peace and sovereignty/global

'The US is not leaving Afghanistan to cut costs. Its priorities in the Pacific necessitate redeployment of its military to confront Russia and China.'



United peoples' struggle against the enemies of peace

The experience since September 11 2001 is that the peoples can oppose imperial aggressiveness by strengthening their struggle and their international solidarity, argues **Iraklis Tsavdaridis**



WHEN THE international balance of forces changed dramatically in 1991 with the dissolution of the USSR and other socialist countries in Europe, it was broadcasted as the “end of history”, creating false expectations which rapidly turned into illusions about the imperialist-dominated world.

The dismemberment of Yugoslavia, triggered by the unilateral recognition of Slovenia and Croatia by Germany in 1991 and including the criminal bombing of Yugoslavia by NATO in 1999 with thousands of civilian casualties and an unprecedented destruction of hospitals, schools, factories and infrastructure during the 78-day bombardment, led to the creation of a NATO protectorate in the Serbian province of Kosovo where Camp Bondsteel, the biggest US military base outside the US, is located.

Shortly after the attacks of September 11 2001, the United States and NATO, together with their allies, launched an imperialist intervention in Afghanistan on the pretext of the Taliban's support for the leader of al Qaeda. The former “freedom fighters”, the forces that emerged from the mujahedeen, funded and armed by the US and its allies against the People's Republic of Afghanistan and the USSR since the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, now became the “convenient enemy”, providing the US and NATO with a pretext to gain a foothold in an area of major geostrategic importance.

After protracted negotiations with Taliban forces, the country is now being handed over, together with heavy weaponry left by the US, to the “previous enemy” and imminent danger of institutional obscurantism and fundamentalism. Women rights, in particular, will be severely eroded.

The US is not leaving Afghanistan to cut costs. Its priorities in the Pacific necessitate redeployment of its military to confront Russia and China.

The cost of the wars that erupted after 9/11 in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, is estimated at more than \$6 trillion, with over

15,000 American soldiers dead, hundreds of thousands of civilians killed, and millions of refugees.

The imperialists' hypocrisy is stark. Their double-standards are widely manifest. The US and its allies invaded Iraq and destroyed it, killing thousands of civilians and imposing puppet regimes to guarantee the flow of cheap oil. The religious fundamentalists constituting ISIS were similarly used to overthrow the legitimate government in Syria. In Libya, UN resolution 1973 (14 March 2011) imposed a “No-Fly Zone” (without any veto) allowing NATO to bomb and destroy the country to gain control of its rich oil resources.

A key issue for the Middle East remains the occupation of Palestine - its people abandoned to slow genocide at the hands of the Israeli occupation regime, deprived of their land, their freedom, basic human rights and the material basis with which to make a livelihood. Military attacks and invasions of the Palestinian Gaza strip and West Bank, daily harassment and arrest of Palestinians and theft of land from Palestinians in East Jerusalem have gone hand in hand with the Judaization of Jerusalem and discrimination against Palestinians within Israel under apartheid-like laws. The aim is to create frustration and terror so that the Palestinian people lose hope in the only viable and just solution, the establishment of an Independent State of Palestine within pre-4th June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, the right for return of all refugees and the release of all Palestinian political prisoners from Israeli jails.

US backyard

The US and its allies are also actively involved in Latin America, the US' “backyard”. US administrations have a long record of dirty and bloody interventions and coup d'états and are renowned for supporting the most reactionary and authoritarian regimes. This has never ceased, regardless of whether Republicans or Democrats occupied the White House. Currently US, NATO and EU imperialists have three main targets in the region - Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua.

Cuba has been the focus of imperialist forces for more than six decades. The island of the revolution is under permanent attack, with threats, sanctions and a criminal blockade aimed at the overthrow of the regime and a system that was the first of its kind in the region and which has served as source of inspiration to the peoples of Latin America and beyond. But the US and its hired agents inside and outside Cuba have failed in their endeavors for a “Color Revolution”, thanks to the steadfastness of the leadership of the revolution and the mass engagement of the people in the streets. The actions of the Biden administration are also destroying the false expectations of the US Democrats by comparison with the Trump administration. Illusions about the Obama

administration, which applied a different tactic but never a different strategy towards Cuba, have collapsed, together with any hope of normalization of US-Cuba relations.

In the case of Venezuela, the achievements and changes made after the victory of President Hugo Chavez in 1998, with the support of the masses and anti-imperialist forces, created new conditions for the people of Venezuela, opening the way for the social and political emancipation of the people. It is only the people of Venezuela who can decide and determine the depth and direction of these changes, the defense of the achievements and the deepening of the transformation so that the people of Venezuela will become the masters of their wealth and fortune.

Too often, we hear and read that Venezuela is the epitome of the collapse and failure of socialism. The social and economic problems of the people of Venezuela and suffering of the Venezuelan people are not, however, an expression of the crisis of socialism, but rather a clear manifestation of the crisis of capitalism which we observe in the capitalist world in a synchronized way. This is being aggravated by sanctions and imperialist interference in all spheres of life in the country and also by the health pandemic.

EU imperialism

It is important to underline that, while the US is the predominant imperialist force in the region, the EU exercises a similar role, fully coordinated with that of the US. It is not by chance that the EU did not oppose or object to a single action or decree. The EU is interfering in the domestic affairs of countries to secure the interests and profits of the Europe-based multinationals. It is openly challenging elections and their results, speaking hypocritically about human rights and democratic freedoms.

Against the background of further intensification of imperialist rivalries in the current fluid international environment, it is certain that the useful pretext of terrorism will be further utilized against the people. However, with the experience of the 20 years since September 11 2001, the peoples can oppose the aggressiveness by strengthening their struggle, their international solidarity, against imperialist plans, against the reactionary mechanisms and for a world free from imperialist wars and exploitation.

The WPC appreciates very much the role and work of Liberation and of the peace-loving forces and people of Britain and, in particular, that of our member organization, the British Peace Assembly (BPA). We are looking forward to undertaking common actions and coordinating our internationalist solidarity with all people in need.

Iraklis Tsavdaridis is executive secretary of the World Peace Council wpc-in.org

Myanmar/in focus

'Myanmar's descent into armed conflicts provides the ideal situation for imperialism to intervene. After pushing West Asia into chaos and perennial strife, East Asia is now the target'



For the sake of world peace say no to imperialist meddling



For peace to reign, we should demand a stop to imperialist interventions, demand the restoration of democracy and condemn repression of all kinds, writes Arun Kumar

Protest in Myanmar against the military coup 14 February 2021

MYANMAR IS burning. Thousands of people remain on the streets protesting against the dismissal of the democratically elected government and the arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi in February this year.

Military coups are not new in Myanmar. It was only after a prolonged struggle that the military had agreed to cede some of its powers and allow a government to be elected. Previously Aung San Suu Kyi had been imprisoned for more than fifteen years. In the subsequent elections, the party she led, the NLD, won a majority of seats. In the following elections in 2020 many expected Suu Kyi's party to fare poorly. They were proved wrong. The NLD marginally increased its seats. The party backed by the military criticised the elections as marred with malpractices.

It is true that people of Myanmar were not happy with the Suu Kyi government. There was anger on the failure to ensure employment and economic development and the corruption at various levels of governance. All made worse by the pandemic.

The military had expected to benefit. When it did not, it arrested Suu Kyi and her compatriots. This proved to be a miscalculation. The military assessed that there would be protests but failed to foresee their scale. People were unhappy with the previous government but not ready to back military rule and forego their democratic rights.

Over the previous generation the higher echelons of the armed forces had built up a powerful network of patronage and business interests. Lucrative sectors such as precious gems, timber and mining are controlled by enterprises run by generals and former members of the officer corps. Control of the government is essential for maintaining this economic grip and any democratically elected government that does not kowtow to the military was seen as a threat. Hence the new coup and the brutal repression.

The military is now arresting anyone who violates its orders or resorts to civil disobedience. Beatings and torture are increasing. The military alleges that armed ethnic 'terrorist' groups with divisive agendas are leading the protests and has already bombed some of the strongholds of such militant groups like those bordering Thailand. These attacks have destroyed many villages with villagers fleeing across the borders.

Myanmar is country with around 135 ethnic groups. Of these the Burmese are the largest at roughly 50 percent. They inhabit the central lands. The other 50 percent consists of many ethnic groups mainly living around the borders. Myanmar shares 1,600 kilometres of land border with India, an equally long border with China and also Thailand and Bangladesh. Many of the ethnic groups reside in these remote areas and run their own armies - fighting Myanmar's armed forces for decades.

Some of the armed groups, such as the Karen inhabiting the areas bordering Thailand and the Kachin in the region bordering China have now stated that they support the pro-democracy movement. In turn the deposed NLD government, operating as a government in exile has decreed that these ethnic armed forces are no longer 'terrorist' or 'unlawful' organisations and has expressed its intent to work with them, particularly naming the Kachin Political Interim Coordination Team as having 'shared goals' and proposing the establishment of a federal democratic union. Many people who supported the attack on Rohingya's and incited hatred against them are now apologising and appealing for them to join the protests. The call is for the establishment of a 'federal army' to fight the military.

The military too has started appeasing sections of these armed ethnic groups. It had declared that the Rakhine-based Arakan Army, among the country's most formidable armed groups, is not a 'terroristic' outfit. The military's previous attacks on the Rohingyas that shook the entire world were carried in the name of fighting the Arakan army in Rakhine.

All these moves and counter moves are further inciting ethnic conflicts which are likely to spill over to bordering countries, India included.

British imperialism

British colonial rule in Myanmar purposely created ethnic division. From 1886 until 1937 Myanmar was ruled as a province of British India. The lack of any internal immigration boundary led to large-scale movement of Indian labourers and businessmen to Myanmar. The British administered the province used mostly Indian civil servants rather than training Myanmar officials. Unchecked migration led to enormous social tensions and anti-immigrant riots.

The 'divide and rule' approach of colonialism meant that at the time of its independence, Myanmar was rife with inter-group tensions and several ethnic armed organisations fought for greater autonomy. The military rule exacerbated these tensions by curtailing ethnic minorities' rights. Despite parroting its commitment to equality, the State was viewed as privileging the majority Burmans.

In the late 1980s, amidst the collapse of socialist countries in Eastern Europe, the military regime dropped any pretense of socialism and instead focused on securing economic rents and building patron-dependent networks. In order to plunder natural resources in ethnic minority areas, it co-opted local ethnic leaders by giving

them economic concessions and while it plundered it paid scant attention to development. Over the same period the Communist Party of Burma started losing its strength.

All these developments strengthened the tendency for mobilization around ethnic identity - with imperialist forces using this situation to keep the country divided.

The Karen Liberation Army (KLA) is a creation of the British intelligence. The BBC, Radio Free Asia (US-funded) and the Voice of America are aggressively campaigning against the military and are 'closely coordinating with these armed groups'. Britain's MI6 sought to bring together Myanmar's main ethnic separatist guerrilla groups, encouraging them to take advantage of the chaos to open a second front. By mid-April, the first major armed attack on the military was carried out by the Karen National Union, Myanmar's oldest rebel group originally created by the British colonial power as its proxy. These attacks continue.

Myanmar figured prominently at the G7 foreign ministers' meeting (May 3-5). The communiqué issued called for the imposition of sanctions. India's foreign minister was in London at the same time and discussed the issue of Myanmar with his US and UK counterparts. India's cooperation is crucial for the success of the US-UK intervention in Myanmar.

Strategic position

Why this interest? The answer lies in the location of Myanmar. Not only does it share a long border with both China and India. It also has access to the Bay of Bengal. Control of Bay of Bengal and the Malacca Straits means control of the sea lanes of the Indian Ocean. This is what the US is striving to achieve in the name of the 'Asia-pivot' or of controlling the 'Asian Century'.

Myanmar's descent into armed conflicts provides the ideal situation for imperialism to intervene. After pushing West Asia into chaos and perennial strife, East Asia is now the target. Imperialism is implementing its well-known playbook of using popular discontent to encourage armed conflicts, creating chaos to ensure regime change and control. This was done in Afghanistan, Iraq, West Asia and North Africa. Now it is Myanmar.

ASEAN, of which Myanmar is a member, has proposed a five point formula for the resolution of the crisis through discussions.

Allowing imperialist designs to succeed in Myanmar is dangerous. No one should think that conflict-ridden Myanmar would only checkmate China. In fact, India and the entire region would be severely affected. For peace to reign, we should demand a stop to imperialist interventions, demand the restoration of democracy and condemn repression of all kinds.

Arun Kumar is general secretary of All India Peace and Solidarity Organisation (AIPSO). This is the presentation he made at the seminar organized by Liberation on 13 July 2021.

Myanmar/in focus

'The best way to guarantee people's rights in Myanmar is the return in some form of the 1947 Panglong Agreement that promised "full autonomy in internal administration" and to extend it over all ethnic minorities.'



No to military rule, restore democracy and people's rights



A solution to the current situation in Myanmar needs

security and the participation of all the key national minorities that make up contemporary society, as well as the clear articulation of their respective legitimate concerns and interests, writes Murad Qureshi

Top left: Ethical trade?

SINCE ITS Annual General Meeting in March, Liberation has attempted to shed new light on the dire situation in Myanmar for its civilians, offering new perspectives from the workers of Myanmar and the trade union movement. So at a zoom session on July 13 of July we heard the leader of the Industrial Workers Federation of Myanmar, Khaing Zar Aung and in addition Arun Kumar, the general secretary of the all India Peace & Solidarity Organisation (see left), based in New Delhi.

All those who spoke that evening at the Zoom conference supported the return of democracy in Myanmar, condemned the military coup on February 6 and stood with those resisting the military action on the streets. But let us not forget the threat to the Rohingya and other minority ethnic groups in the country posed by the military - Tatmadaw - if we are to restore democracy and people's rights. Furthermore our mantra of supporting democracy and the peoples of Myanmar should not be abused as a pretext for intervention or bringing the country back into the imperial or foreign sphere of control and influence, under any pretext whatsoever.

Rohingya

The Tatmadaw poses a particular existential threat to the Rohingya and other ethnic minorities. They were active in the previous, partially successful, attempts to push the Rohingya out of the country, so who is to say they will not try again with the remaining 700,000 Rohingya in Rakhine state? Indeed the man now in charge of Myanmar, General Min Aung Hlaing, is the very commander who led the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingyas in 2017.

It was Burma's first military coup in 1962, led by General Ne Win, that laid the foundation of the religious and cultural persecution of minorities that have persisted for more than five decades. And it was under Ne Win, the Rohingyas were stripped of their citizenship and subject to human rights abuses

under the military's "Operation Dragon King" in the late 1970's aiming to expel them from Burma.

Since those days the military has been fighting wars in many of the mini-states of Myanmar against ethnic militias from Chin, Kachin and Shan tribes and justifying their existence on that basis. Like many Asian armies, the Tatmadaw say they are keeping the country together yet attack their own people. From the many experiences of peoples around Asia, many of these Asian armies are only good for attacking their own people. This needs to be of paramount concern now for all those concerned for the future of Myanmar and its many peoples.

National League for Democracy

So while naturally we are all supportive of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in Myanmar after their election victory last November, it was an election that excluded many minority groups like Chins, Kachin and Rohingyas. Thus our solidarity is with all the peoples of Myanmar - as opposed to any particular group or current within Myanmar society - with a call for the end of military rule and a return to a civilian democratic government.

We trust they see fit now to include these minority groups who have all been under sustained military attacks in their various regions within Myanmar for many decades like there are now on the streets of Rangoon and cities.

Now the best way to guarantee people's rights in Myanmar, particularly those from the ethnic minorities, is the return in some form of the 1947 Panglong Agreement and to extend it over all ethnic minorities in Myanmar.

On the 12 February 1947, General Aung San, the father of independent Burma, signed the Panglong agreement with representatives of the Shan, Chin and Kachin people, three of the largest of the many non-Burman ethnic groups that today make up about two-fifths of Myanmar's population.

The Panglong agreement promised "full autonomy in internal administration" to "Frontier Areas", as today's ethnic states were then known. Aung San was assassinated just over five months later. Under the 60 years of mostly military rule that followed, the spirit of the Panglong agreement has never been honoured. What Myanmar needs is the Panglong Agreement of 1947 to be honoured to the Shan, Chin and Kachin tribes, promising full autonomy in internal administration" to frontier states or "ethnic states" and extended beyond them to the Rakhine state for the Rohingyas, hopefully making it safe for them to return.

A solution to the current situation in Myanmar requires there to be security and the participation of all the key national minorities that make up contemporary society there as well as the clear articulation of their respective legitimate concerns and interests. Such a solution or movement must closely guard against its exploitation by those forces that do not have a democratic or progressive agenda for the country, as well as the foreign imperialist forces that would seek only to frustrate the will of the people of Myanmar for a peaceful non-aligned future.

So many hope that the resounding victory of the National League for Democracy (NLD) party could revive the Panglong spirit and be extended to the Rohingyas as well. In so doing it guarantees the independence of Myanmar and its need to be a unified federated state, incorporating all its ethnic minorities as the Panglong Agreement intended at the independence of Burma in 1948. By doing so the country can go forward without the need of the military claiming it is keeping it all together under its rule but as a federal state including all their ethnic groups including the Rohingyas and thus securing the conditions for their return to Rakhine state within Myanmar.

Murad Qureshi is a member of Liberation's Central Council and a former member of the London Assembly

new cold war/Aukus

'There is no indication that the policy of the Biden administration towards China will depart from that of its predecessors. And for all of the posturing as Global Britain, the UK government continues to lurk in the shadow of US imperialist policy'



Royal Australian navy

US heats up Cold War with China



The Aukus 'security pact', announced recently involving Australia, the United Kingdom and United States, is the latest step in the ongoing demonisation of China by the West and increases the aggressive posturing by the United States and its allies towards the People's Republic. Steve Bishop assesses the implications.

IN THEIR OFFICIAL announcement of the Aukus pact, the respective leaders, Scott Morrison, Boris Johnson and Joe Biden, were careful to make no mention of China. The emphasis upon defence and security in the Indo-Pacific was clearly disingenuous, however. The need for defence inevitably implies a threat and the dominant regional power is China. It is not difficult to see the conclusions to be drawn in relation to the alleged need for the pact.

While the signing of the 'security pact' alone would raise questions, the fact that it came with increased naval capability for the Australians was evidence of its aggressive intent. A £35 billion deal with the French to upgrade the Australian submarine fleet was unceremoniously ditched in favour of US nuclear powered vessels. The US technology is described as one of the "crown jewels of the American military" allowing submarines to be stealthy when submerged, helping evade sonar detection and allowing capability to be for longer at sea than the French model.

The fact that the reactors will be fuelled by enriched uranium puts Australia one step closer to being able to develop nuclear weapons capability and is indirect contravention of international treaties on nuclear non-proliferation. As well as the rift the Aukus deal has created with the French, the Australians have also undermined the campaign for a nuclear free Pacific, in which New Zealand has been a leading player.

Although the nuclear capability as part of the Aukus pact is not in the form of weapons, the fact that it subverts the nuclear non-proliferation treaty will be noted in Iran. Stringent efforts to restrain the development of enriched uranium for domestic energy

consumption by the Islamic Republic have been the subject of major international scrutiny, resulting in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action agreed in 2015, only to be reneged on by the Trump administration three years later.

The increased hardline character of the Iranian regime, under newly elected President Raisi, may mean that Tehran is less inclined to play by international rules than it has been previously, if it is clear that the same rules do not apply across the board. As well as the waves created by the Aukus pact in the Indo-Pacific, the ripples have the potential to reverberate across a much greater geography.

Demonising China

In the long game to demonise China, US President Joe Biden has history. As Vice-President to Barack Obama, Biden is implicated in the Obama administration's Air Sea Battle doctrine, positioning US air and naval forces with a view to war with China, as well as the Pivot to Asia strategy, initiated under Obama and aimed at the military encirclement of China.

Boris Johnson's own pivot to Asia is a sad reflection of US ambitions for hegemony in the region and aims to locate Britain in its usual position on the coat tails of US international policy. Any hopes that this might result in preferential treatment for Britain in the form of a bilateral trade deal with the US were dashed recently, when the best Johnson could get from Joe Biden was the prospect of junior status in the North American trade bloc with the US, Canada and Mexico.

The anti-China tilt of the US inevitably accelerated under the presidency of Donald Trump. Building upon the campaign against world leading 5G developer Huawei, initiated under Obama, Trump banned the sale of semiconductors to Huawei as well as persuading allies to restrict their trading and cancel contracts with the company.

Britain duly danced to the US tune and in 2020 banned UK mobile providers from buying new Huawei 5G equipment, as well as instructing that all Huawei 5G infrastructure should be removed from British networks by 2027.

Culture secretary at the time of the decision, Oliver Dowden, acknowledged that the cumulative cost of the moves, when coupled with earlier restrictions announced against Huawei, would be up to £2bn with a total delay to 5G rollout of "two to three years".

The arrest in Canada in 2018 of the Huawei executive, Meng Wanzhou, at the behest of the United States on charges of fraud and breaking US sanctions against Iran, further increased tensions. Ms Meng's recent release is more to do with the desire of Canada to maintain trade and diplomatic ties with China than any retreat by the US from its belligerent posture.

US fears arise from the likelihood that China will surpass the United States as the world's most dominant economy and that, through companies such as Huawei, the Chinese will

gain an edge in the field of new technology.

Huawei, is the key player in the deployment of 5G while the United States has no large companies competing in this league. 5G technology is the driving force of developments in artificial intelligence, robotics and the 'internet of things'. Clearly, the USA does not want to leave the leadership of this technical field in the hands of China.

In 2019, the US imposed sanctions on Huawei placing it on an export blacklist, cutting it off from key technologies. In addition to the UK, Sweden, Australia and Japan have also banned Huawei. Other countries, including France and India, have adopted measures stopping short of an outright ban.

The UK Defence Review, published in March 2021, cites China as the biggest state based threat to the UK, mentioning China 29 times. In summing up the British position towards China reflected in the Defence Review, Sir Alex Younger, the former head of MI6, said China represented a "generational threat", going on to tell the BBC that, "There's going to be an ideological divergence between us in the future, that's going to generate rivalry and reduce trust."

Britain's role

In relation to Britain's role in international affairs the review states that, "We will sit at the heart of a network of like-minded countries and flexible groupings, committed to protecting human rights and upholding global norms. Our influence will be amplified by stronger alliances and wider partnerships – none more valuable to British citizens than our relationship with the US."

The Aukus pact is a clear indication of the character of those "alliances and wider partnerships" and points to a very particular interpretation of the concept of "global norms." Such "norms" would presumably exclude the Chinese patrolling the North Sea in the same way as the UK's Carrier Strike Group, led by the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, entered the South China Sea in July, an act of open provocation which prompted China to accuse Britain of "still living in its colonial days".

There is no indication that the policy of the Biden administration towards China will depart from that of its predecessors. That policy has been one of consistently growing economic and political Cold War with the danger of a military hot war in the background.

For all of the posturing as Global Britain, the UK government continues to lurk in the shadow of US imperialist policy. Until that changes, and Britain has a truly independent foreign policy based upon peace and non-interference in the affairs of other nations, the danger of being sucked into the vortex of US global ambition will remain.

Steve Bishop is a member of the Executive Council of CODIR, a long standing affiliate to Liberation.

comment/Roger McKenzie

'Formed in the wake of Kenya's Mau Mau rebellion against the British, Liberation went on to play an important role in the campaign against Apartheid in South Africa and in support of the liberation movements in North Africa.'

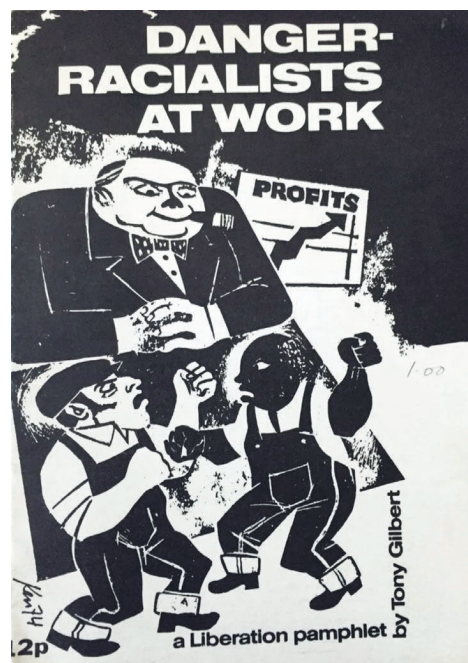
Help us to make a difference



The working class across the globe continue to face attacks from imperialist states and transnational corporations so it is as important as it has ever been to have a vibrant and effective Liberation, writes Roger McKenzie

Above left to right
Lord Fenner Brockway former president
Stan Newens MP former chair
Tony Benn MP
Maggie Bowden
and Jeremy Corbyn MP
joint presidents

Below
Pamphlet by **Tony Gilbert**
with design by Ken Sprague



I AM HONOURED To have been elected as the new general secretary of Liberation. I follow in the footsteps of the great Maggie Bowden who has, I am very pleased to say, agreed to take up the post of joint president alongside our long-time supporter and past Chair Jeremy Corbyn MP, the former leader of the Labour Party.

Liberation has a fantastic history – having been founded on 11 April 1954 as the Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF). We have been fortunate to enjoy the support of notable figures such as Tony Benn, Fenner Brockway and Barbara Castle. The name Liberation was adopted in 1970 to reflect the changing times and language but the mission to oppose neo-colonialism, economic exploitation and racism remains the same.

During the nearly seven decades of our work we have stood up against colonialism across the World. We were specifically formed in the wake of the Mau Mau rebellion against the British in Kenya during the 1950s and went on to play an important role in the campaign against Apartheid in South Africa and in support of the liberation movements in North Africa.

As important as Africa has always been to our work it has not been the only scene for Liberation activity. We have been staunch supporters of the Palestinians – and will continue to do so – as well as the people in many other struggles such as in Afghanistan – where we continue to play an active role in exposing the imperialistic roles of the UK and the USA.

A number of these struggles and our activities in supporting them are detailed elsewhere in this journal so I won't repeat them here. However, building our organisational capacity and sharpening our strategic approach is critical if we are to have the necessary impact on the key global issues.

In a diary entry dated 2 December 1956 the legendary Labour MP and one of the founders of the Movement for Colonial Freedom, Tony Benn, says:

"Today was the third conference of the Movement for Colonial Freedom. It was held in the Bonnington Hotel in Southampton Row and was a much smaller conference than before. This however, was itself a good sign. Only the representatives from area councils and nationally affiliated trade unions had been invited. So that everyone who came carried weight. The Fire Brigades Union, Electrical Trades Union, National Union of Railwaymen

and the Miners from South Wales and Derbyshire of course represent hundreds of thousands of members. Our total strength is 5 million and there are 109 Labour MPs amongst them" (Benn, 1994, p.216).

We need to return to these heights of representative strength and influence but also we must increase the number of individuals taking an active role in the work of Liberation.

Elsewhere in his diaries Tony Benn also refers to the North Africa Committee of the MCF "bursting with activity" with their work on Algeria, Cyprus, the Suez Canal and Yemen (Benn, 1994, p.227). It is the active participation of Liberation supporters that will make a difference not just to the vibrancy of the organisation but our ability to make a real difference to those people across the globe that need our voice to be as powerful as it has ever been.

Liberation can certainly learn from Brockway, Benn and the early pioneers of our movement. They were, as was Jeremy Corbyn, relentless in their support for our movement. However, we do not expect anyone to support us just because of our history. We believe that people will be active in Liberation because of the work we do and how it resonates and dovetails with the work our supporters are already engaged in. That's why we will be looking at what needs to be done to make sure that Liberation is able to be even more effective going forward and, consequently, how we can encourage more participation in our important work.

It is as important as it has ever been to have a vibrant and effective Liberation. The working class across the globe continue to face attacks from imperialistic states and, of course, the power of transnational corporations.

Nowhere is the power of transnational corporation more pronounced at this moment than in the response to the global pandemic.

The massive US transnational pharmaceutical company Johnson and Johnson is a case in point. They felt able to take money from the rich nations of the Global North for a vaccine against COVID-19, even before a vaccine had been invented. They then manufactured the vaccine in South Africa, the African country hardest hit by the virus, and shipped the vaccine back to the Global North. In the meantime vaccination levels in South Africa remained minimal and the infection continued to rise. Aside from the disgraceful and continuing vaccine hoarding of the rich nations it shows the callousness of corporations

such as Johnson and Johnson who were eventually forced to change their approach.

This new form of state and non-state power alongside the continued growth of militarism is the sort of thing that Liberation needs to be better placed to quickly and sharply expose. We can only do that if more people are engaged.

As the years go by the specific issues that we face may change but the fundamentals remain the same. Imperialism, militarism, economic exploitation and racism may have new cloaks under which they hide but they are alive and, sadly, still well. As long as they exist so will Liberation because our historic mission is to fight against them.

I am very proud of the history of Liberation but I am also extremely excited by our future. Come and join us in our work and help us to make a difference. To be frank – if Liberation did not already exist you would have to invent it.

Roger McKenzie is the general secretary of Liberation. This is the first of a regular column that will appear in each issue of the journal.

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New Cold War/Britain's role

'How would Britain react should the Chinese similarly exercise off Cornwall and challenge its sovereignty over, for example, the Scilly Isles?'

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Liberation was founded in 1954 as the Movement for Colonial Freedom. Today Liberation campaigns for peace, economic justice, equality and human rights

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Britain 'back out there' again



Liz Payne
on a
Britain's
dangerous
intervention
across thousands of
miles of Asian water

ARRIER STRIKE Group CSG21, with submarine-furnished cruise missile cover, sailed from Portsmouth under British command on 22 May bound for the Indian Ocean, South China Sea, and Western Pacific. Described as the "largest concentration of maritime and air power to leave Britain for a generation", it was led by the £3.5 billion aircraft carrier, HMS Queen Elizabeth, described as mobile sovereign territory, complete with British and US F35-B Lightning jets and attack helicopters. The Strike Group of warships, submarines and planes from the US, Britain and other NATO countries, epitomised imperialism's intent to demonstrate to friends and foes alike its formidable capacity to impose its will where and when it chooses. When completed in December, Operation Fortis, as it is known, will have taken in 40 countries, with direct combat and live-fire exercises in every arena between here and Japan. The primary purpose of the costly mission has been to re-assert hegemony in the Indo-Pacific region and turn the screw ever tighter on China in the intensifying western-imposed cold war.

For Britain, re-establishment as a neo-colonial power, reversing its 1968 'No troops east of Suez' strategy, and signalling its superior status as number-one-ally of the US have been key motivators for participation. As strike group commander, Commodore Steve Moorhouse told Reuters, the deployment demonstrated that Britain had a global navy and "wanted to be back out there." True to his words, the armada's progress resembled an itinerary of empire, with militias of former colonies lined up to play a part.

On route, in the eastern Mediterranean, the formation's flagship launched F35-B bombing raids on Syria and Iraq. This landmark development demonstrated the crucial role of floating military bases in the mix of modern warfare. Defence secretary, Ben Wallace, described "the ability to operate from the sea with the most advanced fighter jets ever created" as "a significant moment" in Britain's history.

After crossing the Indian Ocean, manoeuvres with Modi's navy and air force in the Bay of Bengal menaced China's strategic oil routes through Myanmar's ports. Then, during progress through the Malacca Straits, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, the strike group exercised with the militaries of Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore, before entering the South China Sea.

The deliberately provocative manoeuvring of such a fearsome assemblage in these disputed waters was little short of reckless. China, claiming "a high state of combat readiness," accused Britain of again operating in the image of its former colonial self. Understandably so. How would Britain react should the Chinese similarly exercise off Cornwall and challenge its sovereignty over, for example, the Scilly Isles?

Passing into the Pacific, the group joined the US to practice a co-ordinated live-fire attack and invasion of a small tropical island. Exercises with South Korea included protracted F35-B manoeuvres in the skies above the Korean Peninsula. This triggered an alarmed reaction from Pyongyang which fired missiles into the nearby ocean. Finally, 12 days of "warlike" interoperability exercises with Japan and the US brought the intervention across thousands of miles of Asian water to an end.

The project embodied Britain and the US's shift of focus from the Middle East to the Indo-Pacific. Now AUKUS-like pacts can be cemented, economies put on war footing, and jingoism promoted. China will be pushed to spend disproportionately on defence rather than prosperity and peaceful development. In imperialist countries, including Britain, war-preparedness already dominates and distorts the economy, while media-promoted xenophobia fosters division. Profits of the arms multi-nationals soar, as people's basic needs remain unmet. This is why Britain's new brand of imperialism and slavish commitment to the US, NATO, and war must be rejected outright, while there is still time.

Liz Payne convenes the British Peace Assembly, World Peace Council affiliate



**For train drivers, trade unions
& the Labour Party since 1880**

*'I always enjoy reading
Liberation, and ASLEF has
supported the organisation
since it was founded, as
the Movement for
Colonial Freedom, in 1954.'*



Mick Whelan, general secretary, ASLEF
Dave Calfe, EC president, ASLEF

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