

Discussing the global situation – report of PRMI meeting



Editor

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PRMI Reporters

At the end of December, an international meeting of organisations and supporters from twenty-two countries was held to discuss the current global situation and take a series of political decisions concerning the work of the Project for a Revolutionary Marxist International [PRMI].

Just a week before the meeting, the sixty-year long Assad dictatorship was overthrown. The South Korean President had

attempted to declare Martial law. The French and German governments were in the process of collapse, while the world was bracing its shoulders to prepare for the second Trump term as US President.

This was the background to a very rich discussion, which is intended as one of a series to review and correct the one-sided “geo-political” analysis which became the hallmark of the ISA majority. As Jagan said in his contribution: “There is a sort of complex, intermingling of progressive and reactionary openings in this new situation. This is the dialectic that underlies the need to resist simplistic geopolitical determinism”.

In her introduction **Liv from Sweden** spoke of the scenes of joy and celebration and loss of fear as the Assad regime was overthrown, tempered by a growing worry about what the future holds. The HTS does not have a good record after ruling the Idlib region, but at the same time the spirit of the 2011 revolution still lives on. She warned that there is nothing automatic about developments, but “we should never forget the key factor is the presence of working class people, of oppressed peoples, not least women and gender oppressed people, and of the massive contingent of young people in this region”.

She pointed out that the imperialist and regional powers, including Israel and Turkey, are exploiting the situation to reinforce their positions in Syria. But what makes the situation different today is the mass accumulation of grief, rage and radicalisation caused by the ongoing genocide of the people of Gaza. Even though there is the lack of independent working class and left organisation here at the current time, the populations are young with little to lose, there are layers that lived through the experience of 2011. This means “The process of revolution and counterrevolution remains alive under the surface, and can break out in different ways in the space that is now opening up.”

Liv's full introduction can be accessed here:

Ndumiso from South Africa introduced the situation facing the continent, which he said, is facing not just the effects of the developing new cold war, but the growing competition between regional powers. As none of the world's major economies, the US, EU and China are achieving the growth they want, they are stepping up their squeeze of the Global South.

As inequality is reaching untenable heights, anger within the working class is growing. But the masses are turning their backs on the former leaders of liberation movements who, having been in power for decades and are no longer interested in helping the masses, are only rushing to defend each other as countless waves of mass opposition develop to inequality and increasingly, illegitimate elections. This is reflected in the description of the South African 'Government of National Unity' as the "Government of No Understanding".

The conflict between imperialist powers is playing a really destructive role in Africa. Russia for example is funding both sides in the Sudan conflict. But the masses themselves often take matters into their own hands, as was seen recently in Kenya and in Mozambique. As more than half of the continent's 1,4 billion population are under twenty years of age, while many of the dictators such as Cameroon's 91 year-old Paul Biya are old, Ndumiso highlighted the important roles young people are playing in the fight against injustices and inequality in Africa.

Ndumiso's full introduction can be accessed here:

Christian from Mexico's introduction concentrated on the consequences of Trump's second term. In the context of crisis and conflicts escalating across the world, Trump's victory is seen in a period which is also one of mass mobilisations and actions by the working class. Trump is not simply an individual, but represents the interests of a section of the American bourgeois. The nominations he is making – Rubio, Waltz et al suggest they want a more aggressive approach to US's rivals China and Iran in particular. Although,

Christian said, Trump's cabinet will continue Biden's pro-Israeli policy, it contains a number of extreme hawks, which might take pressure from other arenas in the world.

Latin America though is definitely going to find itself under threat by Trump. Not only is Rubio a virulent anti-Cuban advocate, Trump himself sees Mexico as responsible for the influx of drugs and 'illegal' immigrants, as well as being responsible for the entry of Chinese products to the US market. His promise to treat Mexico's northern border as the first line of defence against China does not bode well. Trumpism too could seriously affect US-EU relations. His boast to solve the Ukraine war in 24 hours and threats to defund NATO are themselves disruptive, there is too the danger of a trade war if Trump implements the tariffs he promises. Whatever his promises though, Christian underlined that to achieve his goals, he will have to confront the working class. It is precisely the struggle by the working class, youth and women that will limit the extent of Trumpism.

Christian's full introduction can be accessed here:

A number of important themes were raised by other participants during the discussion. The depth of the crisis faced by the bourgeois and their institutions in different countries was raised by **Philipp from Austria**. He pointed out that the new Barnier government lasted just three months, the shortest in French history. As the capitalists are not prepared to accept the New Popular Front into government in part because of its promise to repeal the pension reforms, the government they now propose has moved further to the right. But it faces serious economic difficulties, with 300,000 job losses already announced or expected. At the same time, there has been a high level of struggle over the last years, of course, with the coming year the 3rd feminist strike in a row and strengthening of anti-colonial struggles are expected. The radical left needs to build a real opposition of struggle combining that against all forms of oppression with the ongoing strikes both in the public sector and against the wave of layoffs in industry.

Chandimal from Sri Lanka spoke of the devastating nature of the economic crisis that led to mass protests against the regime. Even though these protests forced the resignation of the President and government there was no stable leadership for the struggle. The unfortunate situation is that there is no revolutionary movement or revolutionary party in Sri Lanka capable of leading the struggle – the left is in an historically weak position. In this situation the election saw the victory of Anura Kumara Dissanayake and of the JVP-led alliance, seen by many as a left, but who is in reality pro-capitalist and has no answers to soaring electricity prices, this government is already moving to the right and will not resist IMF demands for reforms.

Talia from South Africa spoke about 2024 – the year of elections in countries home to almost half the world's population. Most were marked by the cost of living crisis leading to rising discontent, which the right and far-right have used to whip up anti-immigration and nationalist policies. Many of this year's elections were not free or fair, and many of the results were disputed. Rather than counteract the racist agenda of the right, governments have been introducing harsh restrictions on immigrants. In the May election in South Africa the ruling ANC saw a massive loss of support because it has failed to tackle rampant poverty, or confront escalating gender-based violence. Despite winning an overall majority of seats in Britain's election, Labour's Keir Starmer did not get a high proportion of the popular vote, and his honeymoon period has been practically non-existent. These features were seen in the US election too with Trump able to use attacks on immigrants, and a strong anti-women, anti LGBTQ+ campaign to win a section of the working class. Elsewhere disputed election results have led to mass protests in Mozambique and Georgia.

Fred from Quebec described how, facing an unprecedented collapse of the country's infrastructure, the government is pushing through major austerity cuts while privatising health services and

paying big subsidies to private business. To divert attention, it is blaming immigrants, and using Trump's threat to impose a 25% tariff on Canadian goods to push through further measures against the interests of the working class, accompanied by new anti-trade union measures. Railway, longshore, and postal workers have been forced back to work by Trudeau and his Liberal party. The turn to right-wing nationalism is seen both in Quebec where premier Francois Legault is promoting islamophobic and transphobic legislation. There is a real danger of more right populist parties winning the federal election in 2025 and in Quebec in 2026. Fred raised the need to ensure that the Project takes the struggle for the rights of indigenous people as a key part of its work.

Daniel from the US spoke of divisions within the US ruling class. Trump's approach will lead to a shift in the traditional global alliances, possibly due to Trump's open warmth to Putin and even create divisions between the US and EU. He will, though continue trying to disarm Taiwan's "silicon shield" by increasing subsidies and research for US domestic production. But his attempts to build links with Modi and Putin can develop a third vector in the current China-US conflict as the EU will not be able to take sides. These are the real and concrete manifestations of the kind of complexities that undermine the rigid narrative that the ISA majority attempted to impose on events. Trump's promises to "end wars quickly" is likely to provoke very unstable situations, especially in the Middle East.

Attacks on oppressed groups and the struggle against them was raised in several other contributions.

Jack from England and Wales spoke about the brutal attacks on trans people being implemented by the Starmer government after it announced a permanent ban on the use of puberty blockers. This mirrors the wave of transphobic laws being passed in the US, and is part of a wider right-wing project to exclude trans people entirely from public life. The UK ban followed the publication of a report in which the trans-community was systematically excluded from the body that

produced it. Doctors have already started to deny proper care to trans people. The issue is just another one leading to the growth of mass disillusionment with the current system. Whilst currently there is a lot of despair in the trans-community, the example of how quickly Assad was defeated should be used to instil hope in the working class that struggle and victory is possible.

Arne from Belgium analysed how Trump's victory illustrated the power and attractiveness of misogyny and racism. In saying this he stressed this does not mean the end of the feminist movement. There were important votes in the US to support access to abortion rights. But it is necessary, he said, to recognize the real social basis there is for this backlash and reaction, and the negative effects on mass consciousness. Events in the past year illustrated how the anti-feminist backlash is part of a much broader backlash. The year-long genocide has normalized the slaughtering of Muslim, Palestinian, and Arab people. It is necessary to identify where reaction will lead to struggle, as more than ever, especially youth and the oppressed will look at the world as only becoming more a place of reaction. It is important therefore to question how we are impacted by the backlash. In the media, there tends to be a lot of sympathy for men that have voted for Trump, arguing that due to economic loss they were prepared to vote for misogyny, but there is much less sympathy for how women feel now as second wave achievements are taken away. We need to be more aware of how this reactionary period impacts us, to be better equipped to resist its influence and continue building all anti oppression movements.

Sofie from the US spoke of how capitalism continues to drive the climate crisis with 2024 set to pass the 1.5 degree centigrade warming mark. Permafrost melting in the Arctic means releasing large amounts of methane gas, a greenhouse gas more potent than carbon dioxide, and accelerating warming even further. Global warming causes more wildfires and droughts, and, ironically blizzards and cold snaps as slightly warmer arctic air is more likely to escape

the “polar vortex” and then drift south. Climate change, urban expansion, and changes in land use increase the likelihood that humans will encounter new diseases that jump from animals to people. Climate change is a public health crisis. Human infrastructure has not responded to climate change. Countries have failed to invest in renewable energy, and also have failed to help populations survive the warming world. Urban centers especially struggle during heat waves. We should fight for governments to help populations adjust to a hotter world, such as improving infrastructure to protect the population from heat and to build better protections against natural disasters.

Other contributions addressed the threat of right-wing populism.

Phoolan from India described how, because of a drop in support in the 2024 election, Modi had to rely on support from the right-wing Hindutva RSS to stay in power. This makes it inevitable that attacks on the rights of minorities, particularly on Muslims will continue. This means the India-Bangladesh relationship has been on a downward spiral, made worse by the ousting from power of the Awami League and Sheikh Hasina. Since the start of the Ukraine war, Modi has increased India’s ties with Russia, importing crude oil and arms. Trump’s re-election given his warm feelings for Russia will probably not affect this, and he will certainly not criticise Modi’s increasingly anti-Muslim domestic policies, attacks on the independent press, freedom of speech, human rights violations, and conversion of India into a Hindu nation. At the same time, if BRICS continues to develop, and decouples from the dollar and Euro, India would find itself at odds with the US, particularly if Trump follows through with his anti-immigration policy promises, since Indians make up the majority of the IH1B visa seekers. Since the US is the 2nd largest trading partner of India, Trump’s proposed increase in tariffs for foreign imports is going to hit India hard. Even though on the surface, it seems Trump and Modi are a good fit, there are issues at stake

which puts Modi and the West at odds if India wants to realise its dream of becoming an important mover and shaker in world politics. **Marcio from Brazil** described some of the details revealed about the attempted coup by Bolsonaro against Lula's victory at the end of 2022. It has come to light that there was also a plot to assassinate Lula, his candidate for vice president and also one of the ministers of the Supreme Court. Roads were closed by the far right, and there was also a plot to explode a bomb in one of the capital's airports. What has become clear is that they weren't able to go ahead because they didn't have the relationship of forces necessary, either within the ruling class or the military. Now within the Brazilian left more and more faith is being put in bourgeois institutions as a way out of these situations and crises, encouraged by Lula's Workers' Party. There is almost a cult of personality around the Justice of the Supreme Court Alexandre de Moraes. In reality, Lula's government over the last 2 years has been one of extreme austerity. This is in the context of increased violence, especially in the countryside as agrobusiness and farmers advance through indigenous territories. What we're seeing is actually a dispute between different factions of the bourgeoisie. Lula's government tends to be the representative of the status quo of the system. The reaction to this is the strengthening of far-right elements. We've seen similar scenarios, this combined and uneven development in other Latin American countries. This back and forth, the coming to power of either far right governments or progressive governments highlights disputes within the actual ruling class, and especially, the inter-imperialist disputes. This creates the level of instability that permeates through everything included in the ruling class. At the same time this tests the capacity of the working class in an organized way to present a more consistent, concrete answer.

Kevin from Ireland spoke to draw some lessons from the recent Irish general election in which our party, the Socialist Party only narrowly lost Mick Barry's seat in Cork by 35 votes and won back

Dublin West for Ruth Coppinger. This election was difficult for the left as, with the exception of the abortion movement in 2018, there has been no significant generalized struggle of the working class for 10 years when the water charges movement was at its height. The victory for Ruth Coppinger was primarily based not on a movement, but on support for our ideas and our campaigns. In general, the election constituted a strengthening of the center-right and the center-left, but in reality, society has moved to the right on a number of issues, and the likely new government will be a particularly right-wing administration. The far-right did not make a breakthrough, however, the ideas they propagate have gained a broad echo. The election could have been more polarized except for the fact that there's no austerity in Ireland at the moment. In fact, there's a government surplus because it's benefiting from being a tax haven where companies are choosing to locate to Ireland and pay tax. But on the basis of Trump's stated policy of reducing corporation tax down to 15%, it's entirely possible that this advantage will be neutralized and the economic situation in Ireland can decline potentially quite quickly. More generally Kevin commented that of course, there's a new cold war, a battle between the US and China, but it is wrong to reduce it down in a black and white way the main developments of inter imperialist conflict and not take into account all other global processes as the ISA leadership did. This completely diminished other aspects and conflicts including issues of national oppression, which was clearly exposed when the ISA leadership understated the significance of what was happening in Gaza and did not root its analysis in what was happening in Gaza and Palestine. Other contributions expanded on the question of the wars currently taking place. **Nof from England and Wales** started by pointing out how Syrian society had reached boiling point with huge discontent with increased fuel prices and inflation in general, which had been met by repression. Nor can the cause of the overthrow be disconnected from the effects of the genocidal onslaught on Gaza

and the war on Lebanon. With Trump's election, the Israeli regime is getting a huge energy boost, and will lead to an even more reactionary nationalist approach. Already in October, Trump publicly encouraged an Israeli attack on Iranian nuclear facilities. This demonstrates what Trump actually means when he talks about peace in the Middle East. His normalization of orchestrated deals, this so-called peace means more war, more occupation, more genocidal attacks. But it's not as if the Israeli regime has free space to maneuver with its plans. In Israel itself, Netanyahu is now facing a trial for corruption, and there's been an increase in support for a ceasefire deal that includes, a hostage prisoner exchange and, withdrawal of soldiers out of Gaza. A recent opinion poll showed support of 71% for such a deal. With the regime more openly exposing its plans of ethnic cleansing and establishment of colonial settlements in Northern Gaza, there's also less motivation for reservists to serve in the army. Recent developments show, there are obviously a lot of contradictions within the movement, but it shows there's also a growth of left wing voices that needs to be strengthened and linked to a program that deals with the root cause of, and how to end the Israeli occupation.

Valery from Russia described how there was a sharp change in mood in Kyiv, which a year ago was optimistic, but is now increasingly in favour of ending the war, not through an acceptance of the Russian occupation, but to avoid further losses. He pointed out that since the start of the war the ISA majority rejected the possibility of negotiations, said that no election could affect the course of the war, denied the desire of Ukrainians to defend their self-determination, and completely overestimated the ability of the Russian regime to continue. But now Russia is finding difficulty in recruiting new troops, its economy is stagnant and showing signs of going into crisis, and while NATO hostile Putin friendly parties have been strengthening their position in elections elsewhere, Russia has been losing influence in its strategic partners and neighbors. The

loss of its friend in Syria has been a major blow to the Kremlin, which has now found its Middle East and Africa strategy under severe threat. What is now significant is that for the first time, the majority of both Ukrainians, 52%, and Russians, 79%, are in favor of negotiations to find a peace deal. In Ukraine, this is partly due to the understanding that in 3 years of war little has actually changed at the front, and now looming is the inauguration of Trump and the fear that he will stop any weapons support to Ukraine. Increasingly, the western powers are putting pressure on Kyiv to negotiate and to accept territorial concessions. And now Zelensky too has changed his position. It is necessary to explain in this situation that any agreement that leaves Russian authoritarian rule occupying parts of Ukraine will merely delay a new outbreak of war when the Kremlin has rebuilt its resources. This really underlines how even in the most brutal of conflicts, it is only an independently organized working class that can actually offer a way out of this crisis.

Concluding the discussion Jagan started by commenting that one key feature of the crisis, the accelerated erosion of the ruling classes traditional political structures and its effects, is clear. The capitalist class has largely lost its ability to sustain widespread consent for its rule through the traditional political and ideological tools it has relied upon for decades. Just look at the killer of the CEO of United Healthcare who is, to use the words of the New York Times, venerated as something approaching a hero. The system is losing its long-standing ideological and political grip. As a result, it reveals more crudely its oppressive, authoritarian, violent, and divisive features. Capitalism is becoming more of an open sewage, and the ongoing genocide in Gaza is at this point the most extreme illustration of how the elements of barbarism and decay have become not only more visible but also more intense.

Trump's second term represents a turning point, not only for the US, but for the world as a whole. It will sharpen tensions abroad, class war, and systemic oppression at home, and already gives a boost of

confidence to far-right forces internationally. The fact that Trump will accelerate the protectionist direction of US capitalism and ramp up the antagonism with China is pretty much a no brainer at this stage. So far this year, Chinese exports have partially helped offset the slump in the property sector and the sluggish domestic consumption. But the threat of Trump's tariff could send the Chinese economy into a deeper downward spiral.

Undoubtedly the fall of Assad represents a tectonic shift in the Middle East. Netanyahu's government might seize an opportunity to try and deliver further blows to Iran, the situation which is obviously pregnant with danger. But the same weakness in the Iranian regime could also embolden the masses within Iran to reignite the struggles against the regime. Capitalism has entered a very dangerous phase with multiplying threats to the working class and the oppressed, but it's also a phase where its inherent weaknesses stand more directly exposed in the eyes of millions. Having said that, it's clear that despite the raw potential expressed in struggles, there clearly remains a historical gap in terms of consciousness and organization, which does leave the working class politically more exposed and leads to all sorts of dangers and complications.

At the moment, it's undeniable that the huge vacuum on the left benefits most of all the far-right, which is gaining ground in many countries. But it's also important to note that this is not universally the case. In Tamil Nadu in India, half a million people, mostly young people, turned up for the launch rally of a new left leaning political party created by the famous Tamil actor, called Vijay. He's no socialist, but he's calling for a corruption free, secular, and social justice government. The point is, however confused or flawed, these are part of the body of experiences which workers and the oppressed will have to pass through, which will include, trials, setbacks, missteps, sometimes costly missteps on their way to identify and build the political forces and methods of struggle in this dynamic, marked today by the global growth of nationalism, of militarism, of

authoritarianism, and the far right, oppression will be a decisive factor in shaping the contours of future struggles and radicalization. Being at the cutting edge of that process will be decisive in building our capacity to be a relevant factor to influence the events that come.