

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

By Leandro Morgenfeld

28.09.2023

The theory of imperialism revisited



Sources: Rebellion

Prologue by Leandro Morgenfeld to Claudio Katz's new book "The Crisis of the Imperial System". Virtual edition, Jacobin, 2023.

This book by Claudio Katz takes up and updates his research on imperialism, in a context of increasing global disorder and escalating tensions, including military, between the United States, China and Russia. It dialogues with a previous work of his, *Under the Empire of Capital* (Luxemburg Editions, 2011), a fundamental work in which he analyzes how imperialism operates in the twenty-first century, but which goes back to the origins of the classical phenomenon, that analyzed by Lenin, Kautsky, Luxemburg, Hilferding and Hobson. In that work, Katz took up these authors, made them discuss, dissected them and discerned what continued to serve and what did not of each of them. Already in that work, as well as in *The Theory of Dependence 50 Years Later* (Battle of Ideas, 2018), the

concern of this renowned Argentine economist was not focused on settling the historical debate on imperialism, but on, from a Marxist perspective, elucidating to what extent and in what sense it is valid to speak of this concept today. This way of approaching problems, taking up without dogmatism central debates in the social sciences and in Marxism in particular, is deployed in *The Crisis of the Imperial System*. Unlike what happened a little more than a decade ago, when the concept of *imperialism* still seemed marginal, today, straddling the *cold war* that the United States promotes against Russia and China, it is present in much of the discussions on geopolitics, although it is still omitted by many of the international analysts. We are witnessing, then, a healthy revival of debates about imperialism. Its mere mention, the author emphasizes, makes explicit that the dominant powers exercise their primacy through force.

Without allusions to the particular situation of Our America, which are addressed in another work by Katz of imminent publication, *Las crossroads of Latin America. Right, progressivism and left in The XXI century* (Battle of ideas, 2023), this book edited by *Jacobin* is It consists of a series of articles published between 2021 and 2023, which They are following the complex global situation, while updating theoretical debates and polemicizing with different exponents of the left and other versions.

The Work is divided into 22 chapters, which make up six sections. In The first is defined the *system imperial*, which has been in force since the second post-war period, and which, Katz insists, must be distinguish from its classical precedent. It has a dimension economic – confiscates resources from the periphery – another policy -combats the popular insurgency- and another geopolitical -shows the rivalries between the various powers. The scenarios of Inter-imperialist military confrontations that shook the first The middle of the twentieth century was not repeated in the last 75 years. Of Anyway, beyond the fact that the dreaded one has not been triggered. World War III – and that, for Katz, there are several circumstances that would mitigate that possibility, at least in the future Immediate-, Yes there are elements of continuity highlighted by author: the Coercive element remains central. The, so far, absence of frontal military confrontations between the non-Powers It meant a decrease in military expenditures, if not all the contrary. There are multiple military confrontations, which for analysts like Gabriel Merino are part of a hybrid world war and fragmented. And it cannot be completely ruled out, in the future, the possibility of a military confrontation on a global scale.

In the second section of the book (chapters 2, 3 and 4), Katz discusses one of the most debated topics today: the decline American. The imperial recovery is studied in this part

U.S. failure – having failed the various strategies promoted by Trump and Biden, increase fractures internal in that country-, the discussion between sunset, supremacy or Transnationalization and contemporary imperial indefiniteness. The author is prudent when making forecasts, among others reasons why he rightly points out that there are no prefixed paths or immutable trends, but the resolutions of the Dialectical contradictions have to do with changing correlation of forces and, especially, with the social struggle. Katz Analyze the successes and errors of succession theories hegemonic (China would replace the United States, as before this replaced the United Kingdom) and the global empire, showing the significant differences between the current imperial system commanded by the United States and its British antecedent. When it comes to understanding How the system works, the cases of *alter-imperialism* of the United Kingdom and France, as well as the variants of *co-imperialism* embodied by Australia, Canada or Israel.

In the third part of the book Katz begins to expose a mapping, quite detailed, of the powers that are orbiting outside of the imperial system. The five chapters in that section are dedicated to the study of China: the rivalry with the United States (noting that it is not a bidding between equals), the unique situation of the Asian giant (it is not an imperial power like States United, but not part of the *South Global*), The trade-offs between decoupling and integration through Silk Road, the debate on the character of the system economic-social and political prevailing in China (restoration unfinished capitalist with a singular political regime) and the Projects in dispute within the main challenger of the system imperial. Using the concept of *development uneven and combined*, Katz criticizes lenient views on the Asian giant (disbelieves the possibility of it promoting a "globalization" inclusive") and puts the magnifying glass on the imbalances it already shows as a developed economy and as a very significant creditor, mainly from Latin American and African countries. This without forgetting, of course, the particular characteristics of China, with a very advanced capitalism, but which does not dominate the entire economy, with a unique international insertion (productive expansion, but with geopolitical prudence), and with the absence of neoliberalism and financialization, which allowed for accelerated development in the Recent decades, based on the transformations achieved After the 1949 Revolution.

The Four chapters of the next section are devoted to each other. Exclusive protagonist of the current tensions on stage global: Russia. Katz, unlike many other analysts, prefers characterize it as an *empire non-hegemonic in gestation*. It discusses Lenin's legacy,

continuities, reconstitutions and ruptures since the fall of the Soviet Union and refutes the Arguments of those who, dealing exclusively with questions Geopolitical, they have a benevolent view on the government of Moscow. Russia suffers from visible economic weaknesses and an insertion international semi-peripheral, basically export-based of primary goods (but also armaments). However, this Economic weakness contrasts with its very active intervention foreign geopolitics, which includes military incursions. The current Russia's actions, under Putin's command, differ so much from the Tsarist imperial action as of Soviet expansion, which never It was imperialist. Beyond confrontation with the system imperial led by the United States and NATO, the current government of Moscow, the author points out, is totally removed from the universe progressive, with policies that promote the interests of the oligarchy, balance tensions between chauvinists and liberals and attack left-wing expressions.

The Fifth part is devoted entirely, in its four chapters, To analyze the region that was a powder keg in recent decades: Middle East. Rescuing the category of *sub-imperialism*, the cases of Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia are analyzed. Also Israel's *co-imperial* action is analyzed. The tragedy suffered by this region of the planet is not due to religious or cultural questions, as intended by the apparatus of American communication, but to the attempts of that power to regain primacy. The Pentagon's actions, Katz explains, They are to control oil, subdue rebellions and deter the Rivals. However, the results were negative for Washington. in recent incursions into Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria. The China's growing economic presence in the region is altering the alliances that the United States knew how to build in the decades Precedents.

In The sixth section deals with the political consequences of conflicts that run through the entire imperial system. The defeats of The United States in the Greater Middle East, however, does not imply necessarily popular victories. The examples of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya or Syria offer clear examples of this approach that avoids Manichaeisms. Katz proposes anti-imperialism as the main compass to position oneself from the left in the face of conflicts. Is Fundamental, he argues, to analyze how the protagonism of the popular struggles when confronting the imperial system. Nor absolutize geopolitical alignments, nor fall into neutralism. Chapters 20 and 21 are devoted to the war in Ukraine, demarcating responsibilities, proposing the joint analysis of Geopolitical and Class Struggle Factors and Self-Determination the peoples, and at the same time proposing what they could be Adequate positions for the left. Katz criticizes the Russian invasion (which ignores the right of the Ukrainian people to national self-determination), highlighting at

the same time that it was caused by the imperialist actions of NATO and the policy of attacks on the Russian population in eastern Ukraine. From this positioning, Sponsor international calls to restart urgently negotiations to stop the humanitarian tragedy caused by the war.

In the last chapter Katz responds to the critics of his theses, in particular to those who defend, from an economistic perspective and dogmatic, to analyze the current conjuncture as if it were equivalent to the one described by Lenin more than a century ago. The current scenario, concludes, it cannot be understood as if it were similar to the preceding one, when there was the contrast between imperialisms and semi-colonies.

This The book is part of Katz's vast oeuvre, which addresses the most important debates. important of today, from a Marxist perspective, but without neglecting the contributions of other currents of thought. In the last two decades, this member of the EDI -Economists of Left- published books on the future of socialism, the left in Latin America, the dilemmas between the FTAA, the MERCOSUR and ALBA, the theoretical actuality of Marxist economics, imperialism and dependency theory, among others. The author It always carries out exhaustive states of the question, which allow Target even those who are not specialists in Problems addressed. That is one of his great successes, which is Repeat also in this book. On each theme, Katz organizes and presents the different currents and positions, taking care not to distort them, even when it doesn't match them at all. This approach, Far from the usual dogmatism, it allows the reader to reconstruct problem systems, know the most current debates and even arrive at syntheses other than those of the author. In addition, thanks to its Long experience as a teacher and as a journalist, presents in Simple and didactic topics and problems that usually appear as distant and incomprehensible to the non-specialist reader.

The Specific theme of this work, the crisis of the imperial system, It is of great interest in elucidating where the capitalism and the current world (dis)order. Is there a mutation in Are you moving towards a multipolar system? The decline of the empire American is as broad as estimated? Is the twenty-first century that of the Chinese hegemony? Is Russia an imperial power? What about sub-imperialisms? Does the Global South exist? What role do they play? Europe, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Canada or Australia? Can there be another world war like those of the century? past? What is the character of the armed conflicts of recent years? years? How will trends and confrontations be processed? among the major powers?

Yes well in each topic Katz makes explicit his own synthesis, in many cases It does not propose a conclusive answer to the questions raised. Perhaps it is more fruitful, at times, to explain the contradictions and latent tensions. The author is cautious about forecasts and warns against visions locked in the mere conjuncture and against those who forecast permanently, sometimes without solid foundations, what tendency is going to prevail over the others.

Already in his previous work on the subject, *Bajo the empire of capital*, Katz was so far removed from the orthodox views that put forward the continuity of Leninist schemes, almost unchanged, such as of the globalist theses that simply dismiss the problem of imperialism. Neither approach, he argued, allows us to understand The contradictions of today. We are not in a context like the one that Lenin described, but neither in a world in which Nation states are practically dissolved. Capital pushes Towards globalization, but state mediations continue Current. Discussing and with the founders of Marxism-Leninism, Katz had no problem dismissing hypotheses or analyses he judges. Incorrect. It may seem obvious, but overcoming an approach Dogmatic is a fundamental point of view to keep alive and useful the tradition of critical thinking in which the author is inscribed.

Katz It does not take an exhaustive position in many of the debates it raises. It has neither a Leninist nor an anti- or post-Leninist vision. Katz does not He is interested in pigeonholing or *slogans*, but to put the magnifying glass on the tensions, on the contradictions Dialectical. Is someone who cares more about seeing the differences. tendencies operating -hierarchically- than risking which one can be impose on another. And that's partly because the dynamics of Social struggle, for him a key factor in the analysis, is not easily predictable, if not impossible. The imperial system, In crisis, it will not fall under its own weight, but its fate will depend on it. of social struggles.

This The book is key to understanding the current global crisis. Katz maintains than contemporary imperialism (*the imperial system*) It is distinctly different from its classical antecedent, in the sphere war (there are currently no inter-imperialist wars), economic (increasing globalization of capital) and politics (management) joint collective, led by the United States). It should be noted These changes, which make the contradictions of oppression imperial of the XXI century are not the same as those of the dawn of the last century. Orthodox Leninist approaches do not record these changes, while globalists exaggerate mutations, discarding at present the notion of imperialism, in any of its meanings. For Katz, there is a tendency to Integration of the bourgeois classes, although it is far from having The constitution of a global ruling class without anchors is

consummated local and without the mediation of nation states. The new multinational organizations (NATO, UN, WTO, IMF, G8, G20) absorb powers that in the past were exclusive to States national, but do not replace them. The military organization, by For example, it is no longer an exclusive attribute of each State, but exists coordinated and hierarchical global management, in which States United exercises unique leadership.

The Rising tensions between the United States, China and Russia force Specify the characterization of the time. Geopolitical analyses They should not be ignored, as a fundamental orientation for classes popular and the left, that the focus should always be on the Support for anti-imperialist struggles. This work of Katz, then, It can be read as a map to understand the global disorder, from the perspective that those who want to defeat the imperial system.

Rebelión has published this article with the permission of the author through a [Creative Commons license](#), respecting his freedom to publish it in other sources.

Rebellion 26.09.2023