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The National Question

There is a new factor from which these countries of the periphery can derive considerable advantages: the decline of the hegemony of the capitalist West and the emergence of emerging powers that notoriously expand the margin of action to promote a new world order that is advantageous.



From its embryonic form as commodity capitalism, the capitalist system has had as two of its notable characteristics a marked tendency towards the concentration of wealth and a dynamic of territorial expansion. The concentration of wealth does not mean, of course, that only large companies remain, but it does mean that monopolistic forms – among which financial capital stands out – end up controlling the functioning of the market, ensuring that these hegemonic centers of capital retain the most important part of the surplus value that is generated. In fact, through banking and other economic mechanisms, small and medium-sized enterprises revolve around them, many of which are only

apparently independent, functioning in fact as complements to those monopolies that are hegemonic due to their control of financing, technology and other factors that ensure their real dominance of a supposedly free market.

Territorial expansion has been a phenomenon typical of all civilizations, but with capitalism it acquires much greater dimensions that lead, at present, to its decisive presence throughout the planet, if we exclude some so-called primitive forms that for certain reasons manage to survive independently; In some cases it is the physical environment – the forest, for example – that saves them from being absorbed by capitalism (the so-called "cyclicalization"), in others, their little or no economic importance. Both of these factors can disappear and with it their isolated (and happy, for some) existence. The so-called "globalization" is only the modern form of that territorial expansion, so characteristic of capitalism.



The tendency to concentrate wealth, which generates enormous inequalities and even endangers the very stability of the system, can be moderated by the State, but it is not completely eliminated because it is in the very essence of the capitalist social order; an example of this is the so-called Welfare State, a more or less successful management of this moderating management but which has diminished to the point of being almost nothing even in the places where it reached important levels; [A predominant neoliberal model](#) across the planet would be the cause. An example of this is precisely that the cyclical crisis -typical of the system- that neoliberalism promised to overcome completely, not only continues but constitutes an enormous concern in the centers of thought of the

capitalists, since social protest spreads, equally everywhere, without being able to appease it.



The expansion of capital across the globe is not without its problems either, as it is fundamentally linked in many ways to the different forms of colonialism, traditional and modern. The world currently has at least two major areas, the metropolises and the periphery; The metropolises concentrate the greatest power (at all levels) and are in fact the fundamental axis of the world economy, since the development of science and technology depends on them and they condition in a thousand ways the exports of the peripheral countries, as well as world credit. They also possess an unprecedented military machine that dwarfs the piracy of yesteryear and territorial occupations with the well-known annexations, wars, plunders and exterminations of "inferior peoples".

In this context, for the periphery, the national question requires a very precise reading of events in order to understand not only what is underway but also to make as much progress as possible on the proposals that are considered useful. From this perspective, the idea of minimizing or even denying the national question given the dimensions and scope of "*globalization*" tends to ignore or minimize the potential of the social and political dynamics of each country, the level reached by the protagonists of change, their greater or lesser true consciousness (in Lukács' terms) and especially their level of organization and capacity for struggle. Nor is there much need to debate the forms of struggle in regions such as Latin America and the Caribbean, where the revolutionary uprisings of the peasantry no longer seem to have much prominence given the high degree of urbanization in these countries.



The concentration of wealth (which in the peripheral areas of the system acquires dramatic characteristics) imposes on the left the task of beginning to dismantle the current neoliberal model in at least two key aspects: a decisive increase in the role of the state in the economy and laying the foundations of an economic model that makes feasible not only social justice but also the real exercise of national sovereignty. Returning the State to its decisive role means advancing in the strengthening of public enterprise, so that as soon as possible the State becomes hegemonic in the country's economic fabric. It also presupposes that the State has broad powers to govern the functioning of the economy.

The public enterprise must become decisive in strategic areas (financial system, health, education, research and science, energy, exploitation of strategic natural resources, etc.). The objective is none other than to ensure that the State has a decisive regulatory role when deciding what to produce, what not to produce and in what quantities, always thinking of the immediate interests of the social majorities no less than in a long-term perspective. In particular, the State must be the decisive factor in the country's relations with the international community, with the world market (foreign investment, indebtedness, imports and exports, etc.). In many ways, it would seem that it is simply trying to return to the traditional model of [developmentalism](#); However, there are some new elements that now make the national question of a different nature, more in accordance with the present conditions: it is no longer a question of simply, as in the past, of the local production of articles of consumption, but assuming that everything that allows their elaboration (of articles of consumption) remains in the metropolitan centers.



Only in this way does it seem feasible for the State to promote a system of redistribution of wealth that allows the countries of the periphery to emerge from backwardness and poverty and access real democracy and modernity in all its terms. This is a healthy nationalism that cannot be renounced by the left. It remains to be elucidated which social forces are the effective agents of change today and, of course, what are the paths that lead to national liberation.

For the national question, it is also a question of remaking the current type of international relations, of seeking a new and advantageous way of inserting itself into the world market. The traditional dependence of the peripheral countries on the metropolises – that is, the United States, Europe or Japan – the so-called "international community", has basically been a kind of neo-colonialism, a very acute form of exploitation that turns these nations into simple suppliers of raw materials (without major added value) and cheap labour for metropolitan markets. when not cannon fodder in ongoing wars. The current form of dependency is clearly disadvantageous and is one of the key factors in the backwardness, poverty and even misery that prevails in these countries. Overcoming this condition thus appears to be an urgent task and gives the national question a decisive focus.

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Juan Diego García for La Pluma, November 1, 2023

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