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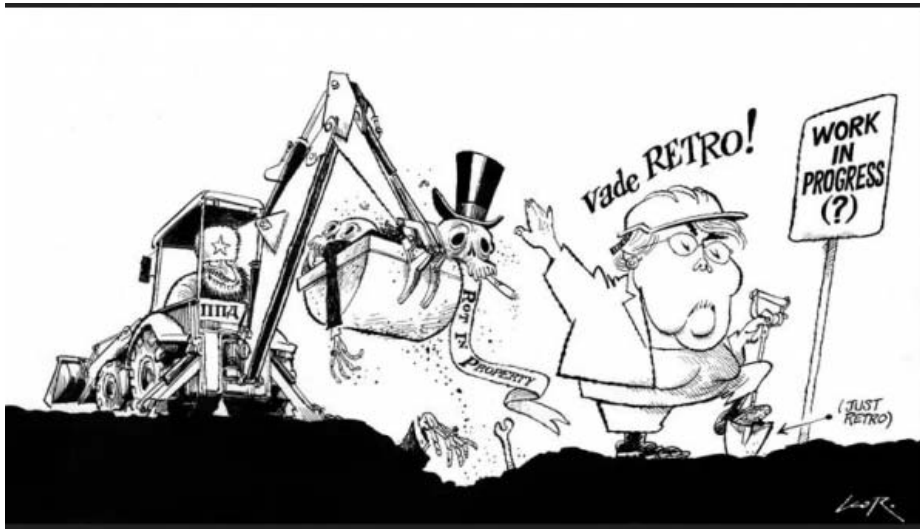
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## The Challenges to Capitalism

The current capitalist system faces a huge challenge after the resounding failure of the neo-liberal model: to re-establish at least partially the Welfare State (in all its multiple expressions) or to further deepen the current model with the obvious risk of increasing social inequalities (taken to the extreme by neoliberalism) and fomenting social discontent and popular protest.

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The neoliberal discourse proposed, among other things, to put an end to the cyclical crises of the capitalist system, giving way to a scenario of permanent progress for all humanity. One of its central measures was precisely to reduce the role of the state to a simple repressive apparatus destined to maintain order, leaving to the market the fundamental role of directing and guiding all the rest of the essential activities in the social order. But the

nature of the system and some conjunctural factors have destroyed these promises, starting with the deep economic crisis of 2008 that has not really been completely overcome and seems to persist almost as a permanent phenomenon with oscillations of boom and bust but far, far from offering that almost idyllic scenario that neoliberals promised (and continue to do). The traditional dynamic of the gap between production and real consumption capacity is repeated, and with it the serious social conflict that the capital-labor pact managed to control for some years. The deep crisis of socialism that weakened communists and social democrats allowed the capitalists to forget the policies of pact with trade unions and left-wing parties and to impose new rules of the game. But neither the crisis disappears nor the forces of the left are annulled, in such a way that to varying degrees, social discontent is generalized, not infrequently spontaneously and not necessarily as a result of the action of traditional forms, parties and unions of the left. In recent years, unexpected factors such as the covid-19 pandemic or wars such as the one in Ukraine should be added to the economic crisis, which in various ways complicate the management of economies and hinder the management capacity of governments and generate an atmosphere of very acute insecurity, lack of perspectives, obscured horizons that cause so many manifestations of collective imbalance and that on many occasions manifest themselves in the form of a very dramatic and even pathological.



Some capitalist ideologues propose to introduce reforms, even partial, in the neoliberal model so that the current social discontent (which is happening practically all over the planet) can be controlled, and some governments such as Sánchez's in Spain are betting on

this trend; it would not be a question of completely dismantling the current neoliberal model, but at least of moving towards forms that respond to the current correlation of forces and, in the best of cases, returning to the Welfare State in some way. Other ideologues, on the other hand, propose intensifying neoliberal measures and allowing the normal dynamics of the market to allow some form of new equilibrium to be achieved. The former would like capital and labor to come to some kind of agreement on the management of social wealth; The latter see in it a dangerous door that would open the way to greater chaos. It is not by chance that they propose very harsh measures to repress discontent and allow security to be born from private initiative instead of betting on traditional forms of state control. The case of the private possession and legal use of weapons, which until recently was a phenomenon exclusive to the United States, seems to be gaining traction even in countries where it would seem absurd; Not to mention in the countries of the periphery where, in addition to official violence (legal and illegal in so many cases), the owners of capital have almost always exercised direct armed violence to repress social discontent and secure their interests.

At the moment, there is an intention to reform the neoliberal model in some governments, but in a rather weak way; At the same time, there is an increase in those who propose to intensify it with measures that on many occasions show clearly fascist traits, since in addition to promoting the full hegemony of the market, they advance in the limitation of traditional liberal democracy itself. What turns out to be a tragedy in the core nations of the capitalist system becomes a brutal setback of the few advances that have been made in the periphery, in the poor countries.



From an international perspective, things are no better, mainly due to the breakdown of the world order that guaranteed the hegemony of the traditional metropolises, the United States, Europe, Japan, etc. If at first the fall of the USSR ensured the full hegemony of the West, the development of events soon showed that a radical change was taking place on the world stage. Russia has recovered and, above all, China has made such remarkable progress that it could become the world's leading economy right now or very soon. The creation of a bloc of nations as an alternative to the traditional powers – the so-called emerging powers – such as China, with China as a decisive component, is gaining ground every day. This new bloc that is already disputing with the West for control of markets, raw materials and areas of influence – the BRICS – is now joined by new partners closely linked to energy production, food, strategic minerals or simply with a not inconsiderable role in the control of trade routes. Russia's recovery and the rise of nuclear-weapon countries has put an end to the West's nuclear monopoly. Even countries of minor importance in this game of powers, such as North Korea, already have their atomic power as a deterrent weapon, which, although it cannot be compared to that of the West, is sufficient to protect them from military intervention. It is not known what has happened to Iran's advances in this field, but it would not be ruled out that Tehran is betting on the same path, given the existence of these weapons in its main threat in the region, Israel.



Thus, the current capitalist system faces a huge challenge after the resounding failure of the neo-liberal model: to re-establish at least partially the Welfare State (in all its multiple expressions) or to further deepen the current model with the obvious risk of increasing social inequalities (taken to the extreme by neoliberalism) and fomenting social discontent and popular protest. In addition, the traditional powers, the metropolitan countries of capitalism, note with great concern how the so-called "emerging powers" are advancing, achieving great autonomy in all spheres: economic, technological and military, and are gaining ever greater sympathy on the periphery of the system, where the power of these traditional powers was unquestionable. On this dilemma, two solutions are also proposed: either to seek a new world order sharing hegemony with the new powers, advancing in a kind of integration with mutual benefits, as proposed by the BRICS countries and the most sensible minds in the West, or to promote an all-out war that manages to subdue China and its allies. A war that does not necessarily have to be with atomic weapons but of unparalleled destructive dimensions. The former respond to the interests of many businessmen who already make profits in their business dealings with these new powers, while the latter express well the interests of the so-called "military-industrial complex" – which is not limited to the United States and for whom arms sales are their main source of profit.

The challenges in the political-institutional sphere deserve a separate chapter for the current capitalist system, with the enormous fragmentation of political parties, the emergence of the so-called "populisms", the resurgence of an extreme right with openly fascist overtones, the increase in abstention (something hardly relevant in the past) and the

discrediting of political activity no less than the appearance as leaders of the parties of pathetic characters (to say the least) and, All this, within the framework of a social order loaded with pessimism and that more than an instrument of well-being, as a system, is increasingly a lethal risk to the very survival of the environment and humanity.

Top Image: Leo Rios

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