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SMAIAS-ASN SUMMER SCHOOL
Harare, 3–7 February 2025



Towards the Re-orientation of Critical Thoughts Following the Zionist-Imperialist Genocide

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Gaza Genocide: A Cognitive Turning Point

The latest phase of the Palestinian anti-colonial struggles and the ongoing genocide in Gaza by the Zionist entity marks a **turning point** in the present global juncture and our comprehension of the world system. Genocide in its modern form constitutes a systemic and enduring feature in the historical development of white-supremacist (settler-)colonialism and capitalist imperialism¹. The current acute form of genocide in Palestine, orchestrated by the Zionist regime and backed, funded, legitimized and enabled by the United States and other Western allies, must also be viewed in this context and analyzed as a mechanism for order-making in the current stage of the global capitalism. The Zionist-imperialist genocide² in Palestine underscores a turning point in the historical shifts towards a polycentric world order, wherein US-led imperialism adopts increasingly aggressive measures to maintain the current order. From this perspective, genocide must be understood as an anticipated outcome of the interwoven dynamics of capitalism, imperialism, and Zionist colonialism³. Furthermore, the ongoing genocidal war in Palestine, extensively publicized, televised and mediated through online platforms, has been normalized and legitimized within Western paradigms and institutions. This normalization reveals a profound complicity and tacit tolerance within Western societies toward systemic acts of genocide.

Thus, this transformative moment compels us to critically interrogate the fundamental geopolitical, economic, and legal assumptions that have shaped our understanding of the current world order and allowed such conditions to persist. In this position paper, we employ an interdisciplinary approach to formulate the urgency of re-orienting, making, and unmaking of critical thoughts. To deepen our understanding of the international legal, political, economic, ideological and intellectual frameworks that not only permit but sustain genocide, we must rethink critical theories

¹ Horne, Gerald. *The dawning of the apocalypse: The roots of slavery, white supremacy, settler colonialism, and capitalism in the long sixteenth century*. Monthly Review Press, 2020.

² Kanafani, G. (2022 [1967]). *On Zionist Literature*. Ebb Books.

³ Agrarian South. "Ali Kadri, The Struggle for Palestine Is the Struggle of the International Proletariat." YouTube, Agrarian South Network, 25 Nov. 2024, www.youtube.com/watch?v=hco42zsu6AA.



and revisit concepts such as racism, capitalism, imperialism, resistance, sovereignty, and development, anchoring these discussions in the context of genocidal war in Gaza. In doing so it is imperative to shift the locus of knowledge production, both intellectually and geographically. Intellectually we must forsake frameworks where resistance and decolonization are merely objects of inquiry for ones where they are the central agents of knowledge and narrative production. Geographically, as the established knowledge industry headquartered in the imperialist core polices the boundaries of tolerable epistemological and analytical discourses, scholars from the Global South should increasingly build their own networks and institutions around the world to reclaim the narrative.

Imperialism and Anti-imperialism Today

The first quarter of the 21st century marks the historical decline of the US-led imperial capitalist world order. It began with the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, which US imperialism sought to subjugate with few restraints so as to realise the 'New American Century'. The targets were either to be forced to integrate into the neoliberal capitalist system or to be liquidated. However, the US failed and its power is in decline. The contradictions of neoliberal financialized capitalism, together with the anti-systemic struggles across the world, have led to the crises of the US-led neoliberal order vis-a-vis the rise of China and other nations of the global South.

This development has been dialectical, involving epic struggles. Policies imposed by international legal and economic institutions dominated by the imperialist countries generated massive social, economic, and ecological loss, harm and suffering across most of the world's nations, and, of course, disproportionately on their subordinated classes. US-led imperialism has also restarted to using increasingly coercive measures to counter its loss of power. As the violence of neoliberalism and US imperialism is laid bare, there is a growing hope among the majority of the peoples of the world for a transition from the current imperialist world order to a multipolar⁴ or polycentric ones.⁵ West Asia, as a resource-rich and geographically strategic region, occupies a central space in this historical process, in which the West-centered world order is challenged by the rising Eastern and Southern powers. The recent history of West Asia has been one of invasion, occupation, sanctions, civil wars, destabilisation (i.e., regime change operations) and de-development. However, the region's history has also always encompassed popular and powerful resistance against imperialism, Zionism, and neoliberalism.

Following the 9/11 attacks, the United States embarked on the 'War on Terror' by invading and occupying Afghanistan and Iraq, with subsequent plans to target Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and finally Iran. The logic of the War on Terror, as of all imperial enterprises, was rooted in the construction of an 'other'—the 'terrorist', the 'rogue'—primarily framed through race,

⁴ Desai, Radhika. *Geopolitical economy: After US hegemony, globalisation and empire (the future of world capitalism)*. London: Pluto Press, 2013.

⁵ Amin, Samir, and Michael Wolfers. "Delinking: Towards a polycentric world" 1990.



economic interests, and the legal discourse of aggressive war as self-defence.⁶ This ‘other’ was systematically excluded from the realm of law, to be attacked, defeated, and transformed into subordinated economies whose resources could be plundered, people exploited and wealth drained; so as to consolidate imperialist configurations and contain potential rivals.

However, resistance against the occupying forces turned the West Asian region into a quagmire not only for the NATO forces but also for the US-led imperialism as a whole.⁷ In response to the Zio-imperialist agenda in the region and the imperial discourse of ‘Axis of Evil’, a Resistance Front, also known as the ‘Axis of Resistance’ emerged, including Iraq, Palestine, Iran, Syria, Yemen and forces beyond.

In Lebanon, the resistance forces imposed a humiliating defeat on the Israeli regime as the Zionist occupying forces were expelled from the country following the colonial invasion in 2000. In Palestine, following the Second Intifada and the death of Yasser Arafat, the US-initiated ‘Peace Talks’ acted as a cover for the ongoing ethnic cleansing and occupation of Palestinian land by the colonial regime while, despite continuous Israeli assassination and terror campaigns, military assaults, and atrocities, Palestinian resistance has grown stronger. After Hamas’s victory in the Palestinian Legislative Elections, the US-Israel plan to subdue Hamas and other resistance forces by imposing a total siege on the Gaza Strip failed. Furthermore, the resistance and its military capabilities have emerged stronger after each brutal war waged by the Zionist army against the Gaza Strip in 2006, 2008-2009, 2012, 2014, 2018, and 2021.

The adoption of neoliberal policies during the first decade of the 21st century that undermined national security as well as development paved the way for destabilisation and other forms of imperialist war and destruction in the region. Following the 2008 North Atlantic Financial Crisis and the trade shock it inflicted on much of the world, neoliberal austerity measures sparked mass protests by the subordinated classes to authoritarian neoliberal governance across the region. The US intervened to support client states such as Egypt, Bahrain and Tunisia, to suppress the protestors and to re-establish a more aggressive disciplinary neoliberal order.⁸ In Libya, Syria and Yemen, countries that rejected the US-led imperialism, the US has intervened through sponsored, ‘color revolution’s style protests and imposed wars by the means of, respectively, direct NATO military intervention, war through proxy forces, and war by the coalition of regional allies.⁹ The imperialist interventions in Libya, Syria, and Yemen have caused immense suffering, massacres, destruction, displacements and humanitarian crises. While the war and destabilisation persist to this day, Syria and Yemen—with material support from Iran, Russia, and Lebanese resistance

⁶ Anghie, Antony. *Imperialism, sovereignty and the making of international law*. Vol. 37. Cambridge University Press, 2007.

⁷ Arrighi, Giovanni. “Giovanni Arrighi, Hegemony Unravelling-1, NLR 32, March–April 2005.” *New Left Review*, 1 Apr. 2005, newleftreview.org/issues/ii32/articles/giovanni-arrighi-hegemony-unravelling-1.

⁸ Hanieh, Adam. *Lineages of revolt: Issues of contemporary capitalism in the Middle East*. Haymarket books, 2013.

⁹ Kadri, Ali. *Imperialism with reference to Syria*. Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2019.



forces— thwarted their enemies and emerged victorious from the war, leading to the re-emergence of a stronger Resistance Front in the region.

The subordinated and resisting nations of the region— Iran, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine— have been under a permanent war of encroachment,¹⁰ together with severe sanctions regimes and hybrid warfare by US imperialism and its allies that has also included sabotage and assassination campaigns. However, imperialism has failed to transform these countries into client states, consolidate and maintain the power of collaborators, or achieve regime change plots. The Resistance Front in the region contributed significantly to the crisis of the US economic and political hegemony, accelerating the shift in global geopolitical power dynamics with the tendency towards the decline of the US-led imperialist order, as well as in constituting international solidarity among the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggles in the world.

The latest phase of the Palestinian anti-colonial struggles and the ongoing genocide in Gaza by the Zionist entity marks a turning point in the present juncture in West Asia. The martyrdom of over 200,000 Palestinians (at the time of writing¹¹) in Gaza generated historically unprecedented solidarity among the peoples of the world and deepened the epistemic divide between US-led Western powers supporting the Zionist genocidal regime and the rest of the world in solidarity with the Palestinian liberation. In West Asia, mass anger at Israel, its Western supporters and its regional collaborators is rising. Palestine's national liberation struggles re-established the principal contradiction of global capitalism between the US-led imperialism and the subordinated nations and classes in the global South. If Zionism is the 'spearhead of imperialism', Palestinian anti-colonial struggle is the forefront of anti-imperialist resistance, in the region and world wide, its ethical, political and cognitive compass.

In contrast to Western Marxism, in the Third World Marxist tradition, the inherent contradiction between working class and capitalist class in capitalist mode of production unfolds globally and historically as the principal contradiction between imperialism and subordinated nations and classes. In this view, imperialism cannot be reduced to military aggression or expansionist policies of a regional or global power; it is an inherent feature of capitalism on a world scale, with its historically configured material relations of exploitation to maintain and extend the dominance of major capitalist powers over the rest of the world.¹² In its neoliberal phase, it involves exercising certain economic, political, judiciary, military, ideological and discursive power relations over the world.¹³ The struggles against the US-led global neoliberal order emerge from many contradictions

¹⁰ Kadri, Ali. *The Cordon Sanitaire: A single law governing development in East Asia and the Arab World*. Springer, 2017.

¹¹ Many estimate that between a 10th and a quarter of the population of Gaza has been killed. These lower estimates are just those that have been officially recorded in a context where officially recording deaths has become very difficult. See Lancet: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(24\)01169-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(24)01169-3/fulltext)

¹² Capasso, Matteo, and Ali Kadri. "The imperialist question: A sociological approach." *Middle East Critique* 32.2 (2023): 149-166.

¹³ Lauesen, Torkil. *The principal contradiction*. Montreal, QC: Kersplebedeb, 2020.



including class, race, gender, land, and ecology and they cannot be neglected. Instead, the strategic assertion of the principal contradiction provides a framework of solidarity for all anti-systemic struggles. It will pave the way for all struggles to go beyond their inconsistencies and shortcomings and to constitute a united front.

International solidarity with and around Palestine today can develop the anti-imperialist solidarity framework across struggles and nations in ways that accelerate advance towards a polycentric world.¹⁴ However, it is silent on or dismissive of the anti-imperialist resistance forces, thanks to a strong tendency, particularly but not exclusively in the Global North, to view the subaltern peoples in West Asia only as victims of imperialism and to disregard the Resistance Front as indigenous popular struggles in the region against global capitalist imperialism. Many factors, related to the Islamic ideologies within the Resistance Front, contribute to this lack of principle.

Imperialist Knowledge Production

Capitalist imperialism deploys ideology and culture to manufacture consensus, and maintain hegemony and undermine the solidarity and unity of the anti-systemic forces.¹⁵ Powerful imperialist knowledge production and media industries¹⁶ are at work to produce certain imperial perspectives and discourses and to ensure their dominance over alternative narratives and ideas.[3] The imperial perspective subordinates the Arab, Muslim and other peoples in West Asia to its White supremacist standpoint; and represent them as essentially dogmatic, backward, reactionary and, most importantly, historically incapable of governing themselves. This is critically important to frame imperialist presence (including through law) as essential for security, authority, and prosperity in the region. In this dominant narrative, forces resisting imperialism are depicted as ‘intolerant’, ‘dogmatic’, and ‘terrorist’, in need of ‘changing’, while local collaborators with imperialism are represented as indigenous people who are tolerant, rational, and peace-enhancing.

This is how unequal distributions of epistemic authority reflect and perpetuate relationships of political and military domination; that is: the military and epistemic politics of the empire go hand in hand.¹⁷ The US-led imperialist knowledge production industry has many centers for ‘Middle East Studies’ to ‘Rethink Iran’ from London to Washington, as well as institutions in the region. They produce the intelligentsia that theorizes and develops Orientalist and imperial understandings of the region and its peoples.¹⁸

¹⁴ Yeros, Paris. "A Polycentric World Will Only Be Possible by the Intervention of the "Sixth Great Power"." *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy* 13.1 (2024): 14-40.

¹⁵ Said, Edward W. *Culture and imperialism*. Vintage, 1994.

¹⁶ Ahmad, Aijaz. "Imperialism of our time." *Socialist register* 40 (2004).

¹⁷ Wilke, Christiane; Doutaghi, Helyeh; Yahya, Hijaab. "Imperial Ignorance and Beyond: Mapping Production and Practices of Organized Ignorance." *Handbook on Politics and Society*, edited by Sheerin Hassim et al., Springer, 2024.

¹⁸ Said, Edward. "1995. Orientalism." *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf)* (1978): 132-49.



This well-funded intelligentsia absorbs many academics, scientists and intellectuals from the region and uses them for validating and justifying imperial culture and ideology and sustaining their supposed ‘superiority’ over knowledge production in the South. Some become native informants who return home and form a pro-Western, technocratic elite within the ruling classes of the region. The knowledge production industry also recruits some critically-oriented scholars and academics of the region so that the rest can be silenced and isolated. Most of the anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist intellectuals who support resistance forces are intimidated, doxxed, and silenced. Their events are cancelled or otherwise censored; and they are rendered more precarious, with almost no prospects of job security, obtaining funds or resources for their academic endeavours and to develop their scholarship.

On the other hand, the system cultivates certain levels of critical voices within the bounds of imperialism concerning racism, feminism, and capitalism by those who seek recognition in Western-authorized political spaces. It allocates resources and funds for their contributions and for the production of certain kinds of knowledge. They constitute the critical or left wing of native informants whose identities are weaponized by imperialist knowledge production. By reproducing Eurocentric epistemologies, they promote an ideology of ‘left secularism’ within solidarity movements. They construct a perspective on ‘progressive’ and ‘regressive’ struggles in the region centered on a divide between ‘secularism’ and ‘Islamism’. It is no coincidence that such left secularism depicts the only anti-colonial forces materially resist colonial and imperial forces in the region as essentially authoritarian, sexist, and reactionary, echoing universalization and demonization of political Islam by the Western states and the xenophobic right in the global North. Thus is the left’s secularism stained by Islamophobic racism that distorts understanding of the principal contradiction among anti-systemic struggles across the world and undermines forming solidarities with the Resistance Front.

Such left secularism and the orientalist perspective of political Islam among the anti-systemic struggles is thus one of the main causes explaining the lack of solidarity between anti-systemic struggles and West Asian resistance forces. To be sure, these resistance forces have their shortcomings and inconsistencies regarding forms of oppressions and contradictions in global capitalist relations. However, the critical native informants spotlight these inconsistencies and overemphasize shortcomings and contradictions to prevent the recognition of West Asian resistance forces as integral components of anti-systemic struggles.¹⁹ They consequently disassociate/alienate/isolate the Resistance Front from the international solidarity movement. In reality, every anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggle suffers from contradictions and divides, which itself implies the necessity of building solidarity frameworks among different struggles to enrich and strengthen one another.

¹⁹ Ajl, Max. "Palestine's great flood: Part I." *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy* 13.1 (2024): 62-88; also see Ajl, Max. "Palestine's Great Flood: Part II." *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy* (2024).



The left secular and Islamophobic perspectives are influential in the ‘international’ solidarity movements, primarily because this movement is centered in the global North and dominated by the voices of Northern movements, institutions, and figures. Furthermore, Western epistemologies, political theories, and traditions are predominant, while indigenous and non-Western perspectives are, at best, tokenized, and at worst demonized. The global dominance of West-centered institutions in academia, media, science, and knowledge systems is an inherent feature of the imperialist world order and simultaneously the epistemic dominance of Western thoughts and narratives is crucial for reproducing existing global capitalist power relations.

This is why anti-systemic struggles must aim to decentralize Western knowledge from its privileged position and re-center non-Western epistemologies and knowledge systems. Establishing an international solidarity framework is possible only through de-linking from the imperialist knowledge production system and aggregating forms of South-South solidarity frameworks and knowledge productions. Thus, the struggle for a polycentric world order is simultaneously a fight for building a polycentric knowledge production system.

Anti-imperialist Solidarity

Historically the movements across the global North, from the Vietnam anti-war movement to the BDS movement against apartheid South Africa and Israel, have led significant campaigns and protests for the divestment of their governments, institutions, and universities from war, and military weapons manufacturers equipping the genocide in Palestine as well as calling for immediate ceasefire and a just and peaceful settlement in Palestine. These actions, though necessary, remain insufficient. Absent a radical and systemic transformation, Western knowledge academic institutions remain materially and ideologically invested in the genocide of indigenous peoples—from Turtle Island to Palestine—to sustain the imperial capitalist system upon which they are built and depend. Any intervention or attempt to ‘decolonize the curriculum’, bring ‘Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion’, or produce anti-systemic knowledge, thus, remains structurally limited and incomplete. It is therefore imperative to operate from and within structures that not only divest from the arms industry, genocide, and apartheid but that are actively invested in anti-imperialism, resistance, and decolonization.

Anti-imperialist solidarity among oppressed classes and nations has a rich history. One major was the Organization in Solidarity with the People of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, established after the Tricontinental Conference in 1966 in Cuba. Envisaged by Fidel Castro as the ‘great feast of international solidarity’, it is rooted in traditions that inspire contemporary international institutions and organizations based in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and other non-Western territories, aiming at creating anti-imperialist solidarity frameworks.²⁰ The accelerating decline of the US-led world order and the rise of powerful rivals such as China and the BRICS+ nations in recent decades have promoted a growing wave of institution building to challenge western

²⁰ Parshad, Vijay. “Homage to Ospaaal, the organization of Solidarity for the Peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America: Newsletter Thirty-One (2019).” *Tricontinental*, 6 Aug. 2019.



imperialist perspectives and strengthen links between anti-systemic struggles and resistance traditions. Today these alignments span China and Venezuela, Zimbabwe and India, and Cuba and Eurasia and beyond and are paving the way for the formation of polycentric anti-imperialist solidarity frameworks. However, anti-systemic struggles in West Asian countries, with their majority Muslim populations enduring ongoing imperialist wars and with the popular Resistance Front significantly contributing to the decline of the US-led world order, are not adequately represented in or integrated into this alternative solidarity movement. The recent international solidarity movement for Palestinian liberation highlights the need to overcome Islamophobic distancing and disengagement from the West Asian Resistance Front. Achieving an anti-imperialist international solidarity framework requires linking and integrating indigenous knowledge centers and initiatives led by the resisting nations in this strategic region.

Conclusion: Re-Orientation after Genocide [conclusion to be completed]

The genocidal violence has been normalized through Occidental discourses and pre-existing Eurocentric knowledge. These dominant narratives and knowledge structures, entrenched in Capitalist imperialist relations, systematically marginalize non-Western perspectives and distort the reality of imperialist interventions and anti-imperialist struggles. In other words, the ‘epistemic injustice’²¹ and epistemic authority of the Global North plays a pivotal role in enabling the genocide before our eyes. Regarding West Asia, the dominant narrative maintains the depiction of Arab, Muslim, and other peoples in the region as backward and incapable of self-governance, which is propagated through media and education systems. Such epistemic authority underpins political and military dominance, with centers for Middle East Studies in the Global North shaping Orientalist and imperial perspectives. These institutions, deeply integrated with the power structures of capitalist imperialism, recruit and cultivate a specific intelligentsia that legitimizes Western ideological superiority, often silencing or marginalizing anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist voices from the region. This systematic oppression and distortion of knowledge reinforce the need for decentering knowledge centers and promoting non-Western epistemologies.

This paper argues that a thorough re-examination and reorientation of critical thought and ideological frameworks—those that have facilitated, legitimized, and sustained the genocidal war in Gaza—is an essential precondition for transitioning from the current imperialist world order to a polycentric global system.

A paradigm shift in knowledge production is necessary— one that relocates intellectually and geographically from Western-centric frameworks and occidental narratives. This transformation necessitates the reinforcement of knowledge production centers in the Global South, where the realities of imperialist violence and the resistance against such atrocities are lived and practiced. Such spaces offer the possibility of transcending the epistemological boundaries policed by the Global North. Rooted in decolonial and anti-imperial thinking, this strategic reorientation toward

²¹ Fricker, Miranda. *Epistemic injustice: Power and the ethics of knowing*. Oxford University Press, 2007.



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the Global South positions West Asia as a crucial site for anti-imperial knowledge production, building upon and amplifying its ongoing Resistance against the Zionist-imperialist genocidal war.