

9 Theses on our still precariously intact lifeworld.

Global cooperation in diversity or submission to digital imperialism

Dr. Ali El Hashash (Al Azzam), May 2020

1. To many people around the globe today one fact has become unmistakably clear: **The production of our material and intellectual livelihoods has become internationalized.** Our global mutual dependence on each other is our commonly lived reality. No society can survive alone. No force will succeed in turning the clock back without societies destroying themselves or each other.

The basis for this development was laid in 1989. With the victory of the USA over the socialist community of states, the capitalist mode of production extended its reach at breathtaking speed, a process subsumed under the term globalisation. The main features of this phase were the formation of joint ventures, acquisitions and the relocation of parts of the production process to locations where, by shaping the costs of production, constant as well as variable (**rent, transport, electricity and especially cheap labour**), maximum added value could be extracted. After major barriers to the mobility of capital, labour and goods (**e.g. WTO/ over 3000 bilateral cooperation agreements**) were removed at the beginning of this century, a profound transformation of production took place: the **globalisation of the capitalist model of society advanced hand in hand with the internationalisation of the production process itself.**

The international character of the production of a good or service can be clearly seen today in each link of the so-called value chain. From the extraction and procurement of raw materials to the manufacture, marketing and consumption of products, this process is globally interwoven and completely independent of the location of the respective company. This also applies to the necessary flows that every organisation and every business, whether small, medium or large, must ensure, i.e. the flows of money, goods and information (**sources of finance and payment transactions; means of transport and routes; means of communication and channels**).

In terms of labour (**from management to cleaning crews**) and equipment, whether on a farm, in a restaurant or in a small, medium-sized or large enterprise, the production process cannot take place without the global mobility and activity of international labour. In some regions, such as the Gulf region, these countries would disappear into thin air – remain barren mounds of sand – without the input of international labour. Even our legendary Swiss Confederation would quickly fragment into at least 26 units of economically enfeebled provincialism without such labour internationalism.

So when I try to imagine this fundamental change by reflecting on the production of a simple commodity, such as a pencil, I am immediately jolted out of any sentiments of national elation I might still harbour about the functioning of the world:

From the glasses I wear and the coffee with which I stimulate my cognitive abilities, to the pencil and paper on which I formulate my thoughts, right down to the very thoughts themselves – all of this is a product of complexly interlinked and interwoven global human activity.

By no later than the beginning of the current century, **every economy at every location is embedded in a cross-border network of complex relationships** and exchange encompassing access to raw materials, supply chains, working tools and, of course, the mobility of living productive forces. For this reason national appendages to corporate names such as "German, French, Swiss" etc. are today nothing but empty shells. To draw **conclusions of any kind from national location names** about the **national character** of production is today an intellectual folly, ignorant localism or an

optical illusion. The loud calls for a return to - or a revitalisation of - national conceptions of production, or even the wishful thinking of a multipolar world order based on centuries-old notions of national conditions characteristic of the 1st and 2nd Industrial Revolutions, will ultimately shatter on the walls of today's global reality.

The question is therefore not **whether** we want to **live like this**, but **how** we want to or can **live like this**.

2. In contrast to the horizontal character of the productive forces (*labour and tools*), the ownership and control of the flows necessary for production exhibit a vertical and extreme centralisation and monopolisation (**= imperialism**). This is because from 1989 onwards, not only has the capitalist mode of production been globalised, but social owners of formerly public assets have also been expropriated and such wealth subsequently brought under the extensive and systematic control by US financial institutions and their monopoly corporations. In due course they have managed to secure and consolidate their hegemonic power with effective instruments. The most important financial instruments include the privately owned US Federal Reserve (**FED**), the US dollar as a world currency, **SWIFT** to control global payment transactions, the bank used for steering the world's central banks (**BIS**), and the World Bank Group (**IBRD, IDA, IFC, MIGA, ICSID**), the Monetary Fund (**IMF**) and their offshoots (**Club of Paris/ Club of London**) for ensuring overall country-specific structural connections to the US financial center.

In addition, this US hub is perpetually able to draw on its global system: over **800 military bases** outside the United States, the Military Pact (**NATO and Associated Partners**), the financially bolstered political administrations (the **US system and its parliamentary offshoots around the world**), the countless think tanks (*such as PNAC until 2006, and today's CNAS*), the opinion-forming institutions (*such as Hollywood, Netflix, Facebook, Google, etc.*), the periodic meetings of selected key players (*such as Bilderberg Meetings, WEF, ASEAN Summit, etc.*), the foundations (*such as the Open Society Foundation*) and, last but not least, the **NGOs** specialized in the emotive replication of a message conducive to being instrumentalized for hegemonial purposes. Particularly through the foundations and the NGOs, the oligarchy has succeeded in forming islands of support from below everywhere (with or without weapons) that seek - with economic and political means - to prevent any novel structural changes or reform detrimental to finance capital (*as in Venezuela, Bolivia*), to systematically destroy existing state sectors (*as in Syria*) or to villainize significant armed resistance movements (*as in Lebanon, Yemen, Colombia*) in the media.

This process of centralization of hegemonic power has taken place worldwide in a manner very similar to that of any class society, that is, one in which the powers of ownership and decision-making become increasingly concentrated in favour of a dominant social class after it has come to power.

The **global center of imperialist rule** today is clearly in the hands of the **US financial oligarchy**. The sanctions alone imposed on the world stage (who punishes whom) leave no doubt whatsoever as to where the "master race" of the 21st century is at home.

Today's **global monopolization of the ownership and control of** all areas of life by the USA **hinders** the development of the internationalized productive forces and production processes. The development of any kind of **cooperative** life form is to be prevented by force. We are hence dealing with a fundamental **contradiction worldwide**. In terms of our lifeworld, there can only be one logical and practical consequence of this contradiction: **putting an end to the contradiction by putting an end to the existing relations of ownership and control**.

3. There is an increasing general awareness of the **virtual accumulation of financial capital** that runs parallel to the appropriation of added value in the real economy. Under the leadership of the US financial center, financial institutions, investment platforms, central banks and policy makers have constructed a kind of illusory virtual world of finance in recent decades. By **decoupling financial policy** from the production of real livelihoods, by the continuous printing of worthless **money out of nothing** and by the complex mechanisms of so-called **financial engineering**, a highly precarious make-believe world of apparent social prosperity has generally been created.

The world of finance has indeed succeeded in promoting a global attitude among people that elevates money in and of itself to a status whereby it becomes a **catalyst of all value systems**, the god of all gods. This certainly makes mutual solidarity and the common struggle considerably more difficult. Yet, however unshakably dominant such consumer-centred attitudes may appear to be, real life is most likely to have the last word. Because with every existential crisis or life-threatening danger, people increasingly realize that their money is not worth the paper it's printed on. Second, the real **beneficiaries of** this illusive wealth are the same people who own the real means of production of our livelihoods and who will torpedo any global cooperation outside their domination. These are therefore **two sides of the same coin**.

4. In the last decade these globally **superordinate production processes and relations of domination** have been in a process of transition to the **digital stage**, whose lifeblood is **Big Data**. In this stage people function as both raw material suppliers and consumers. This change not only affects the **role of humans** in production, but also involves fundamental intervention in their **biological architecture**.

Basically, the new constellation in the course of the so-called *Fourth Industrial Revolution* implies the following:

Not **if**, but **when** will mankind for the first time in its history as producer of its own livelihood be subordinated to the "artificially intelligent" machine and banned from the digitalised production process?

Or will artificial intelligence (= *algorithms and their machines*) as a meaningful tool be subordinated to the primacy of the biosphere and humans as part of it?

In the former case, humanity would henceforth **submit** to **US digital imperialism** and degenerate into test objects of its world laboratories.

In the second opposing case, the **forming of classless social relations**, in which people satisfy their needs cooperatively rather than at the expense of others, would be the crowning achievement. **Never has human civilization been as close to such an outcome as it is today measured against current objective conditions.**

5. The two main paths leading to their respective destinations are characterized as follows:

The **one path to digital imperialism** presupposes a disruptive (= *destructive*) logic. This logic evades any purposeful human planning (*anarchy of capitalist production and the market*). In essence, this means that all known forms and notions of how we live and who we are will be obliterated. There will be no stopping at the biological production of human selves or human-like forms. The human being and life itself will be perceived and treated as an object. The **obstacles along this path**, which still have to be removed, are not of a scientific-technical nature. They consist merely in the still valid **country-specific laws** (*based on data protection and ethics*) and in the still lacking general **acceptance by people** around the world.

By contrast, the **other path** can only be a transformative one: a slow evolutionary process in which man as subject acts consciously and shapes his existence in harmony with his living environment. To take this path, however, requires the abolition of global structures of ownership.

6. The **systematically generated collective panic** around the corona virus worldwide, the unprecedented measures taken and the disruptive dynamics they unleashed make this antagonism, in its global intensification, unmistakably more blatant. Therefore, and regardless of the origin of the current virus (man or nature) or its real life-threatening danger, **the question** is:

Do we allow ourselves to be shaped by the elite of Silicon Valley (= **the digital center of US finance capital**) into pathologically alienated individualists, irreparably damaged and disoriented, and turned into **mercenaries of digital imperialism**? We needn't do anything to pursue this life alternative: it is enough to remain in a state of persistent biological anxiety and, at best, to protest against visible side effects.

Or: Do people manage, despite the Social Darwinian media manipulation of the masses, to create **cooperative forms of relationship and resistance** out of presently existing global conditions?

A century ago, humanity experienced a pandemic that killed over 50 million people. This tragedy did not lead to a cessation of thought and action. On the contrary, the revolutionary anti-capitalist forces in Russia managed not to sink into social chaos but were in this period able to carry out the first liberation process in human history.

7. At present, the **Chinese and Russian** leaderships are attempting to gradually free themselves from the direct US imperialist structures of rule (*such as the Fed, the US dollar, SWIFT, etc.*), but not from the **internationalized production process of the digital age**, which, however, necessitates cooperative forms of relationships as a **global vision**.

States such as **Cuba, Venezuela, Syria, Iran and DPR Korea** are directly mounting historical anti-imperialist resistance while buckling under the strain of the US-led multidimensional embargoes.

In this epoch the **People's Republic of China** has a central role to play: If the Chinese leadership, i.e. the **Chinese Communist Party**, succeeds in formulating its cooperative vision explicitly as a real alternative, both internally and externally, and takes the offensive in advocating it, global resistance from both states and movements will benefit from such potent support. Yet such backing can only be effective in a context within which the forces of global resistance as a whole move towards a powerful coordination of their actions. The **key to the unfolding** of the global liberation process, however, lies in **West Asia**. This will be the epicenter where this global conflict is played out.

8. **Essentially**, regional wars, civil wars, economic wars, wars on terror, wars on corona, the use of biological-chemical weapons of war, wars for drinking water, financial crises, environmental disasters and similar phenomena of our age **do not pose a threat to the financial oligarchy centralized in the USA**. On the contrary, all this is, both historically and currently, an integral part of its life cycle. The reason for this is that by means of subordinate networks of organisational forms, such as its **investment platform Black Rock**, which also owns major listed corporations in Europe, the center can guarantee the increase of its own profit in any situation. For example, the military industrial complex is making gigantic profits from the fundamental destruction of Iraq. By means of so-called reconstruction in accordance with their own ideas, their other companies are quickly on the spot to likewise profit from the initial devastation. In this way everything remains in the same hands. As far as the killing of millions of people is

concerned, be it their own citizens and soldiers or the attacked population, this is merely necessary collateral damage. To think otherwise would be sheer naivety. For imperialism, both historically and in terms of the future, the specific dangers mankind is confronted with are irrelevant as long as designs for ways out remain within the framework of global capitalist structures. **Existential danger** for the US oligarchy and its local appendages only arises when an **opposing vision** for the life of mankind emerges somewhere and becomes **globally** relevant to practice. We are still some way off from this at the present time.

9. **In the last instance**, people will have to decide between a **vision entailing the free design of cooperative forms of life**, in which artificial intelligence (AI) is assumed to be an instrument of the lifeworld (nature with the human species) and hence subordinated to the purposes of humanity, on the one hand, and a vision of **submission to US digital imperialism**, on the other.

The design of cooperative forms in socio-cultural diversity and in accordance with the material conditions of existence requires, however, a **mental paradigm shift**. For this purpose, **brain research** today offers revolutionary insights into the foundations of our feeling, thinking and acting.

A key point of these findings, in contrast to previous theories, is that all people on the globe have the same limited and constant needs, which are inseparably linked with one another. And all these needs have the same value for the continuity of life. If these needs are not satisfied, we fall ill and sooner or later we die for not having met them.

In addition to the **biological-physiological** (*such as breathing, sleeping, nutrition, sexuality, etc.*), there are a handful of **biological-psychological** needs (*such as social bonding, orientation and control of one's own living conditions, as well as the protection and enhancement of self-esteem*). However, the means of satisfying these needs are variable and diverse, i.e. they vary according to the community in which a person lives. For example, an individual may satisfy his or her self-esteem needs by purchasing an extravagant automobile, by participating in resistance to oppression or by means of an activity that contributes to the common good. Some puzzling phenomena like the existence of multiple ideologies, such as religions, can also be understood with the help of this knowledge. For example, dealing with death as a definitive end is still unbearable for many people today. Since a living being like man cannot exist without orientation, we create our own ideas about how to deal with our inevitably approaching end during our lifetimes. For this purpose, religions offer simple solutions - such as life after death.

The paths one takes or the manner in which a person satisfies his or her needs can be **cooperative** or **competitive**, i.e. with or against each other, without cost to others or at the expense of others. The diverse socio-cultural conditions undergirding societies are designed accordingly. Thus, the nature of the intellectual tools (including ideologies such as religions) and the social organization within which these needs are satisfied **always correspond to** the way in which these needs are satisfied. In the last millennia of our existence as a human species, satisfying needs at the expense of others became the dominant strategy and was elevated to a **fundamental principle** of interpersonal relationships. As a result and without reflection, we pass it on, like mother's milk, to our children, taking it for granted that there is but one principle of need satisfaction. This is also the centrifugal force of a socioculture (by socioculture we mean the art of shaping interpersonal relationships). This is, moreover, the fundamental principle of any social and world order divided into classes, no matter what names we give them, such as feudal or capitalist society. This also explains the deadly tendency with which people reproduce class structures again and again, or why we ourselves, in a partnership or small association, have great difficulty in living or working together and satisfying our needs cooperatively.

This life-threatening fundamental principle is not a law of nature. It is created by ourselves and we can change it ourselves. However, by reproducing it again and again, we re-create the basis for our servitude and for the social class that keeps us in a stranglehold. So, the **source** of the clout wielded by that parasitic chosen elect, which in terms of numbers is an increasingly shrinking minority both locally and globally, is not their superhuman abilities. That inexhaustible source lies within us, embodied in the basic principle of satisfying needs at the expense of others. Hence the agents of imperial rule become our powerful role models or supernatural guides, and the rest, the struggle of **ALL against ALL**, we dutifully undertake on our own initiative.

If we now want to realize global as well as local visions of new social relations, we must therefore, individually as well as collectively, **consciously** elevate the **principle of the cooperative satisfaction of needs** in socio-cultural diversity to a status whereby it becomes the **basis of all human actions**, to make that principle the measure of all things. Ideologies and other intellectual edifices are not decisive to such need satisfaction. Essential is rather the **basic principle** contained and **practiced** therein.

Today we humans are globally connected in creatively shaping the production of our material and intellectual livelihoods, and our continued existence is dependent upon cooperative relationships with each other. On the other hand, the hegemonic power over us has become centred in the hands of the US imperialist oligarchy. By means of its bundled and manifold range of instruments and local power, it is able to rob individuals and societies everywhere of their existence. It can sanction a person, a country, a whole region or any organisation without further ado and attack militarily if resistance becomes manifest as concrete practice. **Rule is global, resistance to it likewise.**

The historical experience of human history suggests that every transition to a new stage is inevitably associated with social chaos, wars and unimaginable suffering. For the birth of new forms presupposes the fundamental transformation of old structures. In stark contrast to earlier epochs, the global character of today's **scientific and technological revolution** that forms the basis of transition makes it possible for humanity to choose which path it will ultimately take on the global scale: will this scientific and technological **basis** lead to **digital imperialism**, in which, for example, AI is used around the clock in the service of the US financial oligarchy? Or will we be able to enrich this **basis** by endowing it with **the opposite character**, i.e. use it in the **service of the lifeworld** – of humanity? In choosing the latter path, the transition towards the creation of classless social relationships – or whatever name we choose to give a progressive new social constellation – becomes a real possibility. The chance of this alternative taking root is also real because today's anti-imperialist resistance from state leaders and movements is stronger and becoming increasingly cooperative across borders and ideologies.

By struggling locally and regionally for their sovereignty and for the power to decide upon the formation of their own specific type of society against the rule of US imperialism, people are laying in equal measure the bedrock for a new world of cooperative relations in socio-cultural diversity. **Local sovereignty means global cooperation.**