

Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony: Geopolitical Dialogue at the Current Time Threshold*

[*English Version*]

Hegemonía y contra-hegemonía:
diálogo geopolítico en el umbral del tiempo actual

Hegemonia e contra-hegemonia:
diálogo geopolítico no limiar do tempo atual

Received November 30, 2018. Approved April 20, 2019

Mateo Villamil-Valencia**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2488-6558>

Colombia

› To cite this article: Villamil-Valencia, Mateo (2019). Hegemony and Counter-hegemony: Geopolitical Dialogue on the Threshold of the Current time. *Anfora*, 26(47), 17-36. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30854/anfv26.n47.2019.631> Universidad Autónoma de Manizales. ISSN 0121-6538 / e-ISSN 2248-6941

Abstract

Objective: to describe the nature of the global political momentum, identify the strategies deployed in the last decade and those currently being used in the constant race for identification, social majority's organization and dispute over power. In addition, construe the characteristics of the current political struggle and finally, to consider the geopolitical implications of the decline of United States' hegemony and the counter-hegemonic potential of China. **Methodology:** the study employed qualitative methods such as explanatory, historical-critical and interpretive: historical tracking of

* This article is part of the chapter "Geopolitical Dialogue on our time Threshold " of the research "Colombia at the threshold of our time". Politics and culture in the populist era, between August 2015 and November 2018, framed in the line of theory and political culture of the Master's Degree program in Political Studies at the National University of Colombia, Medellín

** Master's Political Studies. Sociologist. Honorary Contributor, Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Adjunct Lecturer, University of Caldas, Manizales, Colombia. Email: mateovillamilvalencia@gmail.com

processes, analysis of context, context and social change, contemporary archeology of Colombian and global political practices and observation and interpretation of national and international discourse. To achieve the above, investigation, organization and analysis of academic and research documentation on the field of study and consultation of secondary sources were made. We also identified authors, focus areas, categories, publications and trends concerning the research problem. **Results:** the analysis of available literature and the contrasting of opposing political theories show the existence of an economic and political impasse. **Conclusions:** China, and its unique class positioning, can offer resolution to this impasse and key leads of universal importance.

Keywords: Hegemony; Geopolitics; Political geography; Capitalism; China; United States.

Resumen

Objetivo: describir la naturaleza del momento político global e identificar las estrategias desplegadas en el último decalustro y aquellas utilizadas en la actualidad en la carrera constante por la identificación, la organización de las mayorías sociales y la disputa del poder. Además, se busca explicar las características de la lucha política actual y considerar las implicaciones geopolíticas de la decadencia de la hegemonía estadounidense y el potencial contra-hegemónico de China. **Metodología:** el estudio implicó métodos cualitativos como el explicativo, el histórico-crítico y el interpretativo: rastreo histórico de procesos, análisis de coyuntura, contexto y cambio social, arqueología contemporánea de prácticas políticas colombianas y globales y observación e interpretación del discurso nacional e internacional. Para ello, se hizo búsqueda, organización y análisis de documentos académicos e investigativos sobre el campo de estudio y consulta de fuentes secundarias. También se identificaron autores, áreas de estudio, categorías, publicaciones y tendencias acerca del problema de investigación. **Resultados:** el análisis de la literatura disponible y la contrastación de las teorías políticas en liza muestran la existencia de un impasse económico y político de carácter epocal. **Conclusiones:** China, y su singular posicionamiento de clase, puede ofrecer respuestas a dicho impasse y tener mensajes de importancia universal.

Palabras-clave: Hegemonía; Geopolítica; Geografía política; Capitalismo; China; Estados Unidos.

Resumo

Objetivo: descrever a natureza do momento político global e identificar as estratégias implantadas na última década e as atualmente utilizadas na corrida constante pela identificação, a organização das maiorias sociais e a disputa pelo poder. Além disso, procura explicar as características da atual luta política e considerar as implicações geopolíticas do declínio da hegemonia norte-americana e o potencial contra hegemônico da China. **Metodologia:** o estudo envolveu métodos qualitativos como o explicativo, o histórico-crítico e o interpretativo: acompanhamento histórico de processos, análise de conjuntura, contexto e mudança social, arqueologia contemporânea de práticas políticas colombianas e globais e observação e interpretação do discurso nacional e internacional. Para tanto, pesquisa, organização e análise de documentos acadêmicos e de pesquisa sobre o campo de estudo e consulta de fontes secundárias foram feitas. Também identificamos autores, áreas de estudo, categorias, publicações e tendências sobre o problema de pesquisa. **Resultados:** a análise da literatura disponível e o contraste das teorias políticas em liza mostram a existência de um impasse econômico e político de caráter epocal. **Conclusões:** A China, e seu posicionamento singular de classe, pode oferecer respostas a esse impasse e ter mensagens de importância universal.

Palavras-chave: Hegemonia; Geopolítica; Geografia política; Capitalismo; China; Estados Unidos.

Introduction

On the verge of beginning the third decade of the 21st century, Colombia is facing global economic, political and cultural transformation. Everything indicates that it emanates from an inflection in the current world order and points towards a reconfiguration of power on a human scale. The decline of the United States, the faltering of the European Union and the difficult challenges it faces, coupled with the vertiginous rise of China, have both causation and implications in the understanding of the scenario confronting Colombia in the information and digital communication era.

To understand the above, the research employed in this article utilized a series of qualitative methods that allowed for the localization and identification of factors that intervene in the disposition of the current situation and forecasts the global trend in economic and, above all, political-philosophical terms. Hence, the investigation, organization and analysis of academic documentation (authors, areas of study and categories) and journalistic publications, through a hermeneutic, historical-critical and interpretative approach (tracking processes, contexts and social changes, media analysis, and discourse analysis), allowed for a broad reading and elaboration of a rigorous interpretation of the political conjuncture of an essential part of the global society. The investigative work provided a detailed contextualization of the situation in Colombia at the unparalleled crossroads in which humanity finds itself.

To begin with, it is important to note that Colombia seems to be, as in any other times of its history, in a political / philosophical impasse that can be resolved in two ways: one being the traditional way, that is, reinforcing the –deeply seated uneven– structures and dynamics of the standing power via the absorption of discontent and the disarticulation of the hegemonic block. The other being, establish a new generalized common sense that serves as a breeding ground for social transformations that a country at the nucleus of one of the leading future geopolitical poles must undertake, if it wants to move away from the constant threat of social collapse.

However, although the philosophical tendency of the so-called "end of history" is practically delegitimized and is in an accelerated decline, its socialist counterpart must deal with the profound transformations that advanced capitalism and digital technology development have introduced in the production field and culture; this makes urgent the unraveling of the strategies that the political forces (mainly social movements, doctrinal parties and the implicated social sciences) have used to encourage social change in Colombia; also, to put on the table the theoretical difficulties preventing that the diagnostics and strategies offer: firstly, a rounded account of the sociopolitical processes that characterize

the turn of the century in our country and, secondly, tangible political results that favor the transformation of the Colombian society into a prosperous and peaceful nation.

To tackle this task, it is essential to adopt an international perspective and draw on contemporary theoretical structures, in such a way, that it encompasses the global interaction of political processes and the academic elaborations that take into consideration the hardships mentioned above. According to the geopolitical situation of Colombia in the emergent multipolar world order, the interest of these reflections lies in the issues of collective identity, the perpetually half done construct of the nation¹, in this case, Colombia, and the role the so-called Third World in global politics and economy. These problems are not only headline news grabbing worthy, but have also come to stay. The conclusions extracted from this Reflection article can provide valuable theoretical references for *political analysis*, not only of our country, but probably also for many of those located in the capitalist realm's periphery.

Methodology

Qualitative and documentary research for which methods such as explanatory, historical-critical and interpretive were applied. This involved the historical tracking of processes, analysis of conjuncture, context and social change, contemporary archeology of Colombian and global political practices, and observation and interpretation of national and international discourse.

Based on the above, we proceeded to investigate, organize and analyze academic and research documentation on the field of study and consult secondary sources. Then, we identified authors, focus areas, categories, publications and trends regarding the research problem.

Results

The Impasse of the Philosophy of Capitalism

In what seems to be the last work of Henry Kissinger (2016) alive –the American diplomat and *lobbyist*, member of the powerful Bilderberg group and head of American foreign policy during the time of the *School of the Americas*,

¹ Benedict Anderson's book *Imaginary Communities*, an extensive historical analysis of nationalism originally published in 1983, represents an interesting starting point for understanding the non-rational dimension of the social construct of the nation.

torture manuals and *Operation Condor*– World Order, published in 2014, provides a thorough description of the historical course of geopolitics, specifically from the sixteenth century up to today. A work with enough attributes to become the contemporary geopolitical manifesto of liberalism, hitherto triumphant and at the insipience of its decline.

This comprehensive analysis of the current world order, which appeals to philosophical and strategic transformations of the main global powers of the last four centuries, in turn reveals what has already been hinted at by the synopsis of the book in question: the author displays an authentic *cri de cœur*², a passionate appeal that seeks, sometimes with extreme endearment, to justify the American hegemony evident in all the spheres of social life. Employing undeniable talent and knowledge, the influential political scientist generates world-wide reading on brand with quintessential imaginary that American persuasive devices have constructed and whose maximum exponent is the cinema.

Us/Them.

The main thesis of Kissinger (2016) situates the origin of the idea of "world order" in the Peace of Westphalia. According to him, what made a politico-military supra-state order possible was to convert, in the words of Wilson (cited by Kissinger, 2016), "the practical means of ending a specific war into general concepts of world order" (page 37).), referring to the notions that emerged from these peace agreements, especially that of state sovereignty. The advent of nationalism and the imperial (or at least expansionist) aspirations of some –in the European order– would create checks and balances that would eventually rationally lead to an equilibrium between power and legitimacy, enshrined in the Vienna congress. Further along, principles such as self-determinism or the universality of democracy (always liberal) would be, at the discretion of the author, the self-manifestation of this rational.

However, this German author leaves clues about the vulnerabilities of an evolutionary dogma that proposes an increasingly intelligent society, which progresses unflinching towards liberty. In the first instance, the most stable international orders, says Kissinger (2016), have had the advantage of having uniform "perceptions". Despite this, he continues to declare next that, the statesmen of the XVIII century "represented an elitist society" that "[pursued] romantic liaisons in each other's capital". Although his national interests varied, explains the author, there was still "the feeling of a common purpose" that allowed, for example, that dignitaries and senior officials work for foreign courts and interests "(Kissinger, 2016, p.48), something less striking in the era of the Na-

2 French expression as in English "chest blow".

tion-States. The consolidation order at that time rested in the creation of an us based on classism. An us that is now an aristocratic construct of political hegemony.

Secondly, the recalcitrant philosophic univocity of thought that distorts Islam, the French Revolution or communism, is very similar to the unipolarity that liberalism claims: Kissinger (2016) criticizes what he characterizes as typical in these three movements, that is, the "improbability of permanent coexistence between countries with different [...] political conceptions of truth" (p.54). According to him, what distinguishes the Western-liberal vision –whose most advanced exponent is the United States– from the other less noble approaches, is that of its concept of world order "[secures] peace through democracy, open diplomacy and the cultivation of shared rules and standards" (p.272). This ignores, however, the fact that his own obsession with the notion of a rational-liberal consensus is potentially authoritarian: any political-strategic conclusion or decision that diverges from the American position automatically becomes irrational and, therefore, harmful to an advanced society³.

Such rational represents the improbability of the coexistence between different conceptions of the political truth that it projects on to others. To ignore the contingency of hegemonic structures and suppositions implies ignoring the adversarial nature of politics (Errejón and Mouffe, 2015). To deny the temporality and uncertainty of political orders facilitates the materialization of totalitarianisms. However, clearly, for the author, the American preponderance is a naturally expected event, and not a matter of unilateral imposition.

The Yankee Cinema.

Hollywood, the home of American film, and vanguard of cinematic art, especially in regards to its technical quality, and its production and distribution capacity, is an industry, whose main purpose is to generate entertainment products, however, like all artistic endeavors, it reflects, modifies and creates sensation and imagery. In the United States, tax incentives or subsidies for film creation, absent repression and censorship of creativity, have shaped the ideological red lines and built the public's common sense, no longer nationally but globally as well. Therefore, it is crucial to deactivate the eschewal disposition of incorporating this subtle American power into current geopolitical analysis.

3 its relevant, in this regard, the discussion that André G. Frank (2009) poses to the Western social theory about the ethnocentrism that characterizes not only the field of political ethics, but also the assumptions of an objective superiority (detected also in the work of Marx) emanating from the ascending succession of economic-financial systems and whose peak could be placed in the European order that starts around 1500. In this article, the author challenges the East-West division of the academic worldview, both mainstream as a critic.

From *One, Two, Three* by Billy Wilder or John Ford's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, through Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, Ted Kotcheff's *First Blood* (Rambo), or Sam Mendes' *Skyfall*, to television series' like *The A-Team* of Universal Television or *Breaking Bad* of Sony Pictures, American fiction prizes implicit and latent values that articulate flawlessly with the requirements of market society, which in turn become hegemonic with surprising effectiveness.

Whether democracy (of owners), positive thinking, predisposition to success by natural born entrepreneurs, or the mythology of the self-made hero, reminiscent of the romantic hero (Moruno, 2014) –who fights against the Soviets (on the side of the future Taliban in Afghanistan or the fascists in Chile), works against Muslims in more recent times; a former ally becomes an enemy, in favor of "justice" and "freedom"– the identification of a common citizenry with the fantasy of meritocracy, the rational of a self-entrepreneurial spirit and of individual justice at the fringes of the State, generate a semiotic consensus around ideas such as democracy, commitment, progress, leadership, power or violence.

Ronald Reagan, the old *cowboy*, Hollywood actor, collaborative volunteer of McCarthy's anti-Communist persecution in the American film industry and who later became president of the United States; His British counterpart, Margaret Thatcher, the successful daughter of a simple shopkeeper who came to deny the existence of society, or Donald Trump, the proactive billionaire who currently presides over the Bald Eagle Nation, are the example of the correlation between the image industry, popular discourse and the exercise of power in the hegemonic control of the field of culture. *The Iron Lady* said that it is not the existence of classes that poses a threat, but rather class sentiments (Rigali, 2015).

However, the film industry has diversified so much so in recent decades that even the *mainstream* filming industry has come to incorporate the common sense and philosophical perspectives of directors. The Mexican, Chinese, Indian or North African cinema has made an echo in global cultural production, in large part, thanks to the distribution and interconnectivity offered by the internet and technological advances in the fields of filming and editing of high quality audiovisual material. The *streaming* platforms, meanwhile, have boosted local productions in their communities. In short, the relative uniformity of twentieth-century audiovisual culture, closely linked, as mentioned, to American liberalism, is being eroded by the plurality of creators and the diversity of aesthetic and ideological sensibilities of a globalized society.

The *Cul-De-Sac*⁴ of the Capitalist Economy

The liberal view and philosophy of capitalism, find themselves in a complex situation. During the last two centuries it has been relatively easy to hegemonize the common sense of the people, to the extent that technological advances generated by the economic system have given the species an incentive to improve their welfare. The deep *hiancia*⁵ between capital and labor (between the capitalist minority and the working majorities) has been preserved through the historical displacement of crises and capitalist contradictions in the center-peripheral sense. However, the current situation of structural unsustainability pertaining to the cumulative model of a political economy, coupled with the high-and growing-social cost of its prevalence, raises the need for a global reformulation of human priorities and appropriate strategies to safeguard social reproduction and eco-systemic sustainability.

James Martín Cypher (2012), emeritus professor at the California State University in Fresno and Doctor of Economics, delves into (in a Castilian, we must recognize, precarious) what he proposes as the three economic stages of the *American dream* by using the Gramscian approach to the two dimensions of hegemony: consent and coercion. According to Cypher (2012), military power, the second component of the Gramscian hegemonic equation, has been fundamental in the attempts of the American elite to maintain power.

Of importance in this consent-coercion formula is the fact that the military industry has always meant the existence of well-paying jobs, on one hand, and the generation of unsurpassed profits, on the other. However, the health of this hegemony has been affected by waning social support for the sector. Growing de-industrialization and industrial crisis meant that between 2007 and 2010, 55% of the labor force were either laid off or experienced cuts in pay and/or work hours. Furthermore, the technological spill of the military industry has made the American dream, based on a permanent war economy, tremble⁶.

4 French expression that translates "the rear of the bag", equivalent to the "bottom of the glass" or "dead end" in Castilian.

5 The expression *hiancia* (*béance* in French) comes from the work of Jacques Lacan (1973) and has been privileged to the detriment of words such as gap, dislocation or emptiness, while the concept of the Parisian author allows, with greater precision, to refer to nature consubstantial of said emptiness in the capital-labor relation. That is to say, between the two factors of production, a vacuum is precipitated which is at the same time an unconscious or invisible gap, through which the irreducible contradictions of the hegemonic production relations sneak in and whose catharsis would imply a double debate that escapes this work: finding a cause of the capitalist order refers to the question of political ethics and the viability of socialist economic calculation.

6 The military innovations published by Russia in March of 2018, are an example.

Furthermore, the American working class is not, says Cypher (2012), a class by itself and for itself. That is, the consciousness of belonging to a class intrinsically opposed to capital has not taken root and in the US. It is possible that social majorities support the abolition of, for example, the estate tax, which was finally repealed in 2010 which by then, only affected 0.24% of the population, who at that time had accumulated wealth superior to \$3.5 million USD (Cypher, 2012, p.320). The fantasy of imaginary potential wealth that can be acquired by all if they participate in the free market, has made ordinary American think that it would be unfair to have heirs pay to access the assets they bequeath, that is, if they eventually becomes rich.

During the years of the New Deal, however, the Industrial organization's Congress had been constituted and a unionized vision on American society was promulgated: the power of the working class had been institutionalized. Organized workers fought ardously for collective bargaining, public education, the minimum wage and social security, among others. The common sentiment during President Truman's rule was that of an agreement between capital and labor. Thus, the value of improving the productivity of the workers was transferred directly to the two, which resulted in a stable period of industrial relations. Even big capital understood that collective agreements and unions were part of American life and democracy. The three stage ages of the American economy (Cypher, 2012, pp. 322-326) describe the path of the current economic order towards a dead end that gives rise to our reflection.

The "golden age" of the US economy (1947-1973) generated GDP growth in relatively equal parts among all social strata of the population: the middle class increased dramatically (with an average annual growth of 80%) and there was a massive rise in the social scale as a result of not only of genuine acceptance of capitalist bargain but also of the organized efforts by unions and the pursuit of social peace by the State.

The arrival of the "leaden age" (1973-1994), however, implied a significant slowdown of the national economy and a worsening of the quality of life and wealth of the working class. The former was solved at the expense of the increase of the latter. On one hand, there was competition from Europe and Japan, already recovered from the Second World War and equipped with a more advanced capitalist composition. On the other hand, the burgeoning idle capacity of the North American economy reflected a worrying overproduction of capital. For the ruling class, the continuance of yearly increases in the rates of profit, meant it had no choice but to attack the capital-labor agreement.

In the face of this attack, and threaten by offshoring, the unions quickly lost the ability to protect its members⁷. Between 1972 and 2009 the increase in productivity (usable) was 55.5%, while compensation (wages + borrowing) increased only 11% on average. This meant that the newly added value did not end up in the hands of the workers, as previously times, but was transferred onto shareholders and executives in the form of multimillion dollar salary packages and bonuses. The capitalists bypassed the workers, in the lapse of four and a half decades, \$2, 15 trillion USD, and more than 15% of the previous year's GDP (Cypher, 2012, p.326).

Lastly, the "tripartite age" (1994-?), which is mainly characterized by the restructuring of manufacturing companies in step with global production. In addition, high-tech companies, especially in the fields of communication and information, rely on venture capital and financial speculation. Similarly, leverage financial firms utilize massive liquidity and financial innovations to appropriate value from other sectors of the economy.

These economic aspects of the last age, represents towering contradictions: if liberalization, outsourcing and relocation dynamited labor stability and that the rupture of the capital-labor pact eliminated social security (unemployment benefit, public health and education, pension system, etc.) Can social reproduction be guaranteed? Can effective demand be sustained? The answer is that the former weakens irreversibly, and the latter cannot be sustained.

For this reason, explains Professor Cypher (2012), the economy becomes a betting game: casinos and lotteries become the final stop for wages and savings that desperately want to multiply, the protestant churches that promote a prosperity gospel serve as an ideological sustenance that for many, helps prevent psychosis, the toxic mortgages tourniquet the risk with real estate bubbles that unfortunately always burst and the stock market, even with the threat of bankruptcy, prolongs the American dream through speculation utilizing funds derived from pensions that now are privatized (pp.334-335).

The crisis at the Nucleus.

In an insightful article about the productive and monetary crisis of the North American country Martínez (2017) suggests that the United States as a

7 But not everything has to do with the clumsiness or strategic slowness of the working class. In a 2014 article, Werner Rügemer describes how the contemporary transnational capitalist class is focused on self-organization. To do so, it looks at the main anti-union practices that developed in the United States since the last years of the 19th century, ranging from the proliferation of the logic of temporary employment agencies to paramilitary anti-union practices, including the creation of employers' organizations, the placement of armies of scabs workers and the infiltration of saboteurs in the unions.

practice raffles off its deindustrialization –which began in the seventies of the last century: while in 1950 60% of the world's industrial production was located in the USA, at the end of the 20th century it represented 25%– through the seigniorage of the dollar, which has led to the securitization of the economy. Thus, what has prevented an explosive social crisis, is its persistence in a productive economy based on a military industrial complex. The country experiences constant trade and fiscal deficits in contrast with the golden age of the capitalist growth experienced between 1943 and 1968. Since 1970, relocation, automatization and offshoring have proliferated. Subsequently, between 1970 and 1990, while productivity up trended by 25%, wages fell by 19%: the American dream was broken.

Hence, although the United States has been able to overcome, the aforementioned, major crisis through the military industry, the source on which this oxygen pump feeds, says Martínez (2017), has been suffering from notable stagnation; its dominion is in question: Vietnam, Afghanistan, Libya, Ukraine, Syria ... we are witnessing a withdrawal from its imperial ambition (p. 63).

However, the North American country had redirected its huge productive economy towards research, development, management and production control, information technology, and financial services, which not only left millions unemployed but also created a sharp downturn in industrial production. By increasing the importation of goods and venturing into considerable trade deficits (with the exception of the last minute save of retaking oil exportation⁸ and taking into account the protectionist economic war occurring while this article is being written), the expansion of credit has in turn produced growing insolvency.

This expansion, together with the dismantling of taxes on large incomes and corporations, has undoubtedly increased the fiscal deficit. In addition, the financing of the venture capital has dealt a hard blow to the taxpayers: the crisis of financial intuitions at the end of the eighties cost approximately \$150,000 million USD and the fall of Long Term Capital Management, a decade later, \$ 3,500 million more (Martínez, 2017, p. 66). During the George W. Bush' rule, as was the case in Colombia in 1998 (through the Guarantee Fund for Financial Institutions and which cost COP \$12.3 billion) or the European Union in 2008, bankrupt financial companies were rescued.

Moreover, Martínez (2017) points out the high dependence of the North American economy on external capital (on a need basis, to maintain functional deficit and consumerism): traditionally public financial bonds. Noteworthy is the fact that these capitals also come, typically, from rich citizens of underdeveloped

8 To see more, <http://www.eleconomista.es/materias-primas/noticias/8275154/04/17/EEUU-ya-exporta-mas-petroleo-que-muchos-paises-de-la-OPEP-y-China-is-your-best-client.html>

economies by way of treasuries fraud funneling monies into tax havens, which are later channeled into the accounts of credit institutions (Martínez, 2017, p. 68). Consequently it is this rational of public debt that is producing the most devastating effect on the US economic hegemony and also, paradoxically, postpones the inevitable cession of predominance to China. The government bonds of the American treasury, asserts Rick Wolff (cited by Martínez, 2017, p.67), are mostly under Chinese and Japanese control (\$900 and \$800 billion USD respectively). China would have a lot to lose should a precipitous fall of the US dollar occur.

Despite this, says the Colombian author, the Han country between 2007 and 2010 got rid of more than 8% of the bonds it had and managed to position three state banks into the Yankee territory (Martínez, 2017, p.67). Russia, for its part, after the fascist coup of Ukraine in 2014, decided to liquidate \$100 billion bonds. Thus, in 2016 the US public debt reached \$19 trillion dollars, which translates to an amount greater than its GDP. Thus it's not surprising that since 2006 the Federal Reserve keeps silent on the amount of dollars it has in circulation, which in any rate is mostly money that circulates outside its borders.

Consequently, it is unreasonable to think that the economic systems of the planet can continue to indefinitely tolerate that US consumes more than it produces. At some point the US will have to start paying off the monetary debt it's accumulated with the world. Without significant devaluing of the dollar and the reformulation of the US trade balance, it will be impossible to pay off its debt.

Rich of the Rich, Poor of the Poor.

Economic inequality has been on an upward trend globally from the last semi centennial. Berberoglu (2014) suggests that the origin of the current crisis lies precisely in the gap between labor and capital that has been widening in recent decades. Proof of this, is the fact that, after each recession (1981-1982, 1991-1992, 2001 [and 2008]), while corporate profits continue to rise, wages are either stagnant or on the decline. Any long-term solution, he states, calls for the complete transformation of global capitalism.

Even when a good part of the world's governments have already spent billions of dollars rescuing commercial and financial institutions, we are in the face of a permanent and irreversible systemic crisis. Unlike Martínez (2017), Berberoglu (2014) affirms, that it's delusional that capitalism can be –or is being– saved, either by neoliberal strategies or by the chess like maneuvers of the Communist Party of China. And further sates that any attempt to rescue the system from total collapse will be an exercise in vain and that –here lies the distinction between the two– we are in a worldwide historical breaking point,

in course with consequential transformation of systemic proportions: we are clearly at the incipience of a period of great importance the planet (p. 6).

The situation is alarming, and it seems that even liberal theorists are giving into reason. Those who advocated for liberalization in all spheres of life are calling for state backed regulation. It begs the question of what ever happened to Friedman's legacy (1962, 1966, 1972, and 1992). The contradiction between technological expansion, massive increase in accumulation and existing social relations portends an epic rapture: overproduction exists as the result of the imbalance between wages and costs, unemployment and underemployment—due to the offshoring and automation of production—, that destroys the authentic demand multiplied by toxic mortgages and the credit cards and, lastly, the increasing polarization of income and wealth, capital and labor, ensures an unsustainably increase in the number the poor.

The reemergence of the rivalries between those who make up the global hegemonic block, yet again in dispute over the dominance over peripheral regions, is becoming more acute as the United States loses control of the world's economy; this leads one to think that if there is multipolarity within the winners' club, the conclusion of capitalism will by necessity end in the redistribution of regional relevance. In this way, the prevalence of the crisis in the countries at the core of capitalism will make the anti-neoliberal and anti-capitalist resistance movements, already swarming in the peripheries, take center in search of a political solution to the economic problems that never stop flaring up. The world re-politicizes.

The Light beyond the Threshold

During the nineteen eighties (1980's) speculation on the transition of hegemony: from the United States to China begun to make waves. Especially with the implementation of Deng Xiaoping's reforms, a change of helmsman for the capitalist world had been proclaimed; according to liberal mainstream views, a new world order would imply only a subtle and, to some degree, innocuous handing over of captainship: Capitalist China (with respect to this philosophical perspective socialism is dead both in the CCP and in the national idiosyncrasies of China) will snatch first place from the United States and will become the new lead of the world system. However, the lessons from the Asian giant's own transformation point to a distinct future from the foreshadowing done by traditional analysis.

The hold out of the socialist organizational spirit in the Chinese political structure, coupled with the day-to-day convulsions of demand and mobilization of workers and peasants in the country, allow us to make an alternative reading:

the lessons over the Communist Party's handling of this era's important affairs shows that they do not represent, in all intents and purposes, the abdication of any capitalist model; On the contrary, the way in which both Chinese theorists and (socialist) Party panels have dealt with the country's growth and its role in the world economy allow us to think of a *post-capitalist* alternative.

Lin (2015) proposes an antithesis at the end of history: capitalism is neither globally irresistible nor the only imaginable horizon. Despite demonstrated resistance and the arrogance that has characterized it –and whose main evidence is "neoliberalism with Chinese infusions" as David Harvey (2007) called it–, the end of capitalism is not only politically desirable, but its beginning to take form (Tauss and Jiménez, 2015). To understand the magnitude of the possibilities offered by the Chinese case it is important to understand its uniqueness through history, from the revolution to the present.

The autonomy of the Great Wall country, both before and after its entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO), has been undermined by increased foreign control of its economy: private and foreign shareholders have entered the state sector. In addition, the national economic security and the trade balance indicate a "Chinese structural manipulation" with excessive exports that make the supply and the market heavily dependent on the exterior. This issue contradicts its traditional principle of self-sufficiency, which is also threatened if one considers that 50% of the oil needed to maintain its economy (already quite polluting) comes from abroad. Lin (2015) suggests that for continuity, the pattern of Chinese development, must change and that a refocus on domestic production and consumption is needed (pp. 90-93).

The Chinese capitalist transition is evident in different aspects. Education, for example, has ceased to be free (this is perhaps one of the greatest losses of national socialism) and since the 16th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, private entrepreneurs are accepted into its ranks: 53% of the billionaires are members of the party (Lin, 2015, p. 95). Likewise, Marxist research carried out in the county's universities and institutes has not been able to prevent the amendment that constitutionalizes the inviolability of private property. To justify this concession to capitalism the euphemistic notion of *buke* has been invented (Lin, 2015, p.98), which means the reexamination of a lesson that had been previously overlooked: according to the theorists, capitalism is a stage of development that it skipped erroneously, because it is indispensable; its desirable traits must be adopted through what they call "primary socialism" (Lin, 2015, p.98).

The growing gap between the elites and the social majorities is secret to no one, which accounts for the abandonment of the founding promises of the People's Republic: equality, power and well-being for the people. It is striking, however, the fact that this has happened, ironically, through the maintenance of

one of the political structures that has provided more stability to the transformation of the political regime: democratic centralism.

Lin explains (2015) that a previous systemic structure can provide a newly established order adjoined by the social net it needs. "The persistence of the old is what sustains the stability of the new": without the socialist state, China could not survive the "commotions, ruptures and devastations" typical of post-communist transitions (p. 101). Hence, the coexistence of a socialist policy (in organizational terms) and a liberalized economy (with the cultural implications that characterize it) means that the political activity of the social majorities ends up acquiring an eclectic like character that creatively meshes elements of Maoism, socialism and liberal ideas of legal justice and citizenship.

Therefore, the political options projected in China's future are not limited to the alternative between continuing with the government of a single party and a multicolored system. In fact, the alignment between their State and capital could perpetuate a "free" authoritarian market and at the same breathe an unequal "civil society" (Lin, 2015, p. 109). For this professor of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) it seems logical the undertaking that China must execute to preserve its socialist position in the world: it is vital for them to redraw "the State and the Party by restoring its original elements. "It will be, he says, a Gramscian war of positions in which a new counter-hegemonic block with respect to bureaucratic capital will reverse "the course of neoliberal authoritarianism with a Chinese infusion" (Lin, 2015, p.109).

The General Dimension of Transition.

Finally, a premise in the form of a double barreled question is fundamental in this *war of positions*: who is the adversary? who are the allies? It seems that—as in the reading of some sectors of the Colombian left wing—the construction of the foundational *mythic totality* that generates the antagonistic populist fracture. That is, the answer to who conjures the interests of the Chinese nation? (*Who is the people?*), is formulated through a chain of equivalences (Laclau, 2016) in the form of a unified front. This strategy links different subject positions (Laclau and Mouffe, 2004) as "working class", "peasantry", "minority urban bourgeoisie" or "national bourgeoisie".

Thus, when the author refers to the discussion around the notion of *class* and the role of the so-called *direct producers* (2015, pp. 153-195), he is pointing out that, in the search and *construct of the People* (Errejón and Mouffe, 2015) in Chinese politics the signifiers "people" and "the social" are a crucial part of the discourse; this, due to its national-class history of liberation due to the citizenship that was formed after the revolution cemented on the working classes: there

exists in China a resolute self-identity of "worker-peasant alliance". Likewise, the signifiers "peasant" and "peasantry" exist as class notions: small and large farmers, manufacturers of small-scale goods, rural workers without land, tenants or agricultural workers, and so on. That is to say (and this serves as a link to the democratic rupture of the Colombian transition in the second decade of the 21st century), there exists structural conditions in the Chinese political economy for the establishment of a new rural decisive subject.

Conclusions

Countries like Ecuador, Bolivia, Greece, Venezuela, Spain, Portugal or Uruguay have suffered, in the last 15 years, political transformations of great importance around the national-popular articulation. When this national-popular spirit has been built around a Marxist-class analysis, the results-far from xenophobia and state racism-have been satisfactory in terms of the democratization of a political system, reduction of poverty, inequality and in the decrease of social conflict. It remains, however, unknown how far reaching this series of transformations can be within the margins imposed by the capitalist system. China, in its rational of multipolar alliance with, among others, Brazil, Russia and India, is, as was the collapsed Soviet Union in its historical moment, the laboratory in which the transition to a world without capitalism is put to the test.

Finally, two strategic responses to both urban and rural problems are currently being considered in the exceptional political and economic situation of the current Chinese system. Two alternatives that, although they differ markedly in priorities, can be a successful if a comprehensive approach is implemented. On one hand, short-term responses to development, modernization and decollectivisation / destatization. On the other, a longer termed one that involves joining 民生 (*minsheng*: *livelihood*) and the end of the violence of standardization. Whatever the path taken by the Asian country, as proposed by Lin (2015), China and its unique class positioning may have implications of universal importance.

References

- Anderson, B. (1993). *Comunidades imaginadas: reflexiones sobre el origen y la difusión del nacionalismo*. Mexico, F.D.: FCE.
- Berberoglu, B. (2014). La crisis capitalista global: orígenes, dinámicas e impacto en Estados Unidos. *Revista del Centro de Investigaciones Económicas, Ad-*

- ministrativas y Sociales del Instituto Politécnico Nacional*, 32, 5-23. <https://repositorio.flacsoandes.edu.ec/handle/10469/7052> [Accessed May 12, 2018].
- Cypher, J. (2012). Las burbujas del siglo XXI: ¿El fin del sueño americano? In T. Dos Santos (Ed.). *Estados Unidos más allá de la crisis* (pp. 316-339). Mexico, F.D.: Dídimo Castillo Fernández.
- Errejón, I. & Mouffe, C. (2015). *Construir pueblo. Hegemonía y radicalización de la democracia*. Barcelona, Spain: Icaria.
- Frank, A. G. (2009). ReOriente. Economía global en la era asiática: Conclusiones historiográficas e implicaciones teóricas. *Revista Crítica y Emancipación*, 1(2), 95-140. <http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/ojs/index.php/critica/article/view/184> [Accessed April 15, 2018].
- Friedman, M. (1962). *Un programa de estabilidad monetaria y reforma bancaria*. Barcelona, Spain: Ediciones Deusto.
- Friedman, M. (1972). *Price Theory. A provisional Text*. Chicago, United States: Aldine.
- Friedman, M. (1966). *Capitalismo y libertad*. Madrid, Spain: Ediciones Rialp.
- Friedman, M. (1992). *Paradojas del dinero: hacia un nuevo liberalismo económico*. Mexico, F.D.: Grijalbo.
- Harvey, D. (2007). *Breve historia del neoliberalismo*. Madrid, Spain: Akal.
- Iglesias, P. (ed.) (2014). *Cuando las películas votan. Lecciones de ciencias sociales a través del cine*, Madrid, Spain: Catarata.
- Kissinger, H. (2016). *Orden mundial. Reflexiones sobre el carácter de los países y el curso de la historia*, Barcelona, Spain: Random House, Editorial.
- Lacan, J. (1973). Le Séminaire, livre XI, Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse. In J. A. Mille. *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse* (pp. 27-28). Buenos Aires, Argentina: Paidós.

- Laclau, E. & Mouffe, C. (2004). *Hegemonía y estrategia socialista*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: FCE.
- Laclau, E. (2016). *La razón populista*. Madrid, Spain: FCE.
- Lin, C. (2015). *China y el capitalismo global. Reflexiones sobre marxismo, historia y política*, Barcelona, Spain: El Viejo Topo.
- Martínez, J. H. (2017). La crisis productiva estadounidense y la insostenible centralidad monetaria del dólar. *Revista del Centro de Investigaciones Económicas, Administrativas y Sociales del Instituto Politécnico Nacional*, 42, 61-72. https://www.mundosigloxxi.ipn.mx/images/61-72_42.pdf [Accessed May 20, 2018].
- Moruno, J. (2014). American Beauty ¿Qué es el postfordismo? In P. Iglesias (Ed.) (2014). *Cuando las películas votan. Lecciones de ciencias sociales a través del cine* (pp. 159-175). Madrid, Spain: Catarata.
- Mouffe, C. (2007). *En torno a lo político*, Buenos Aires, Argentina: FCE.
- Rigali, C. (Productor). (2015). *Fort Apache-Cine con el Tío Sam* [TV Program]. Madrid, Spain: CMI Procuntions.
- Rügemer, W. (2015). Efectos globales de la reestructuración laboral americana. *Revista del Centro de Investigaciones Económicas, Administrativas y Sociales del Instituto Politécnico*. <https://www.mundosigloxxi.ipn.mx/pdf/v10/36/03.pdf> [Accessed October 13, 2018].
- Tauss, A. & Jiménez, C. (Eds.). (2015). *Pensar el fin del capitalismo. Escenarios y estrategias de transformación socio-ecológica*. Bogotá, Colombia: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

