

on sub-10 nanometer (nm) nodes. (...) Companies such as Taiwan's TSMC have announced that they will start operating their first 3nm manufacturing plants by the end of this year." (Expansión, 03-05-2021). This is how a representative of the European bourgeoisie consoles himself: "every chip is a good chip." (Bloomberg, 07-06-2021). Today they will be able to place their outdated chips thanks to the general shortage of supply, but, as soon as the emerging production overcapacity materializes, all these industries will be out of the game.

What interests us here above all are the medium to long-term consequences: the result of this global competition will be a huge increase in the production capacity of semiconductors and chips, with all this investment today preparing the gigantic overproduction of tomorrow.

As in a **TSUNAMI**, in which the preamble of the enormous wave that will flood the market with commodities manifests itself first under the appearance of a backward movement of supply; or as a **VOLCANO** preparing its eruption, as our current defined it when critically demolishing the "study" with which

Labriola would have wanted to condemn the Marxist theory contained in Capital. Labriola in his thesis saw instability in production and the regulating element of agreement and universal solidarity in mercantile exchange. Dialectically inverting this thesis, our current declared: "**Production against exchange! Struggle against social pacification!**

Volcano that promises the upcoming social eruption, against the stagnant waters that would swamp the revolutionary force in the mercantile muck." (Production Volcano or Market Swamp?, il Programma Comunista no. 16/1954).

All this PRODUCTIVE OVERCAPACITY and this relative OVERPRODUCTION of capitals and commodities forms the great VOLCANO OF PRODUCTION which cannot be absorbed by the MARKET SWAMP and shakes the bourgeois relations of production to the core, maturing the material conditions for the **WORLD COMMUNIST REVOLUTION** which will abolish private property, wage labor and the mercantile and corporate regime!

THE SUEZ BLOCKAGE AND THE COMPETITION BETWEEN TRADE ROUTES

Suez Canal Blockage

On March 23rd, 2021, an unprecedented event occurred in the more than 150-year history of the Suez Canal: "The MV *Ever Given*, one of the freighters with the highest load-bearing capacity in the world, heeled over (...) blocked since Tuesday one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world and can cause long delays in the supply of raw materials and oil." (La Vanguardia, 25-03-2021). According to the official version, a "gust of wind" diverted one of the largest freighters in the world, but not the rest of the ships, leaving it stranded in the middle of the Suez Canal.

Canal traffic accounts for between 12% and 13% of international maritime trade, one million barrels of oil per day and 8% of the world's natural gas (La Vanguardia, 25-03-2021), in addition to 2% of the Egypt's GDP according to Moody's (BBC, 29-03-2021).

The freighter in question bore the names and surnames of the anti-Chinese bloc: Panamanian flag, Japanese property (Shohei Kisen Kaisha) and Taiwanese operator (Evergreen Marine Corp). The freighter blocked the canal for a whole week until it could be removed, leading to daily losses for the canal of about 15 million dollars and the blocking of a quantity of goods estimated at 9.6 billion dollars a day, or 400 million per hour, or 6.7 million per minute (BBC, 29-03-2021). The same sources indicate that the German insurer Allianz analyzed that the global cost would be between 6,000 and 10,000 million dollars per week of blocking for all world trade, even reducing annual world traffic by up to 0.4%.

Causality vs. chance

When episodes of this type happen, there are always those who remember *chance*. According to this approach, the events of humanity are explained by *chance* when not by fate or the will of illustrious men. To *chance*, we Marxists have a duty to oppose *causality*.

In several languages these words are very similar and by changing the place of one letter you change from one to the other, but the consequences are devastating.

CHANCE leads to IDEALISM and AGNOSTICISM, to the denial of the possibility of knowledge postulated by the already reactionary bourgeoisie. **CAUSALITY** leads to DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM and ECONOMIC DETERMINISM, leads to the foresight of the overcoming of capitalism at the hands of the proletarian class, to the communist revolution.

The vindication of materialism and determinism is a fundamental point of Marxism, as Marx, Engels, Lenin and the Communist Left have demonstrated in their defense of it. Without them, the whole construction of our doctrine crumbles and, for this reason, this is the target at which the bourgeoisie is generally aimed: "*If a general knowledge of nature and history, or part of it, is possible, it includes, inseparable from itself, the investigation of the future: any well-founded polemic against Marxism can only be on the grounds of the denial of human knowledge and science.*" (Utopia, Science, Action; Property and Capital, Prometeo, 1952).

Lenin drew this conclusion from the uproar caused by the publication of the work of the naturalist E. Haeckel: "*brought out, on the one hand, the partisan character of philosophy in modern society and, on the other, the true social significance of the struggle of materialism against idealism and agnosticism*" (Materialism and Empirio-criticism, Lenin, 1909).

This revindication of determinism should not be confused with a return to mechanism that would lead to a fatalistic vision of history and, therefore, to a devaluation of the Party organ and its historical function: "*it should be noted that the final solution to the posed question is not an immanent formula according to which, once this universal key has been found, it is possible to say that, if economic phenomena are allowed to develop, a foreseen and established series of political events will be determined with certainty.*

Our criticism amounts to a complete and definitive depreciation, not so much of the action of each of the individuals, even presented as protagonists of the historical facts, but of the intentions and perspectives with which they believed they could coordinate such

action; but this does not mean denying that a collective organism, such as the class Party, has or must have an initiative and a will of its own." (Theses of Lyon, 1926).

It would not be Marxism to pretend to have always at hand a causal explanation of any fact or circumstance, for which often even access to determining elements would be lacking, which often emerge with delay. But it would be much less Marxism - a true impugnation of it in fact - to draw from this an apology of chance that in the face of every event and every fact refuses to investigate and search for its material determinations, that in the face of every event and every fact would only have to exclaim: WOW, WHAT A CHANCE!

Of the relation between *chance* (or *accidentality*) and *causality* in the materialistic explanation of the world, the still Marxist Plekhanov gave an accurate formulation: "**Accident is something relative. It appears only at the point of intersection of inevitable processes.**" (On the Role of the Individual in History, Plekhanov, 1898).

It is therefore the task of Marxists to inquire into economic and historical processes from the perspective of dialectical materialism and economic determinism and to place facts and events in the framework of the necessary processes of capitalism development - be it even in the format of hypotheses - in order to be able to fulfill the function of "*the defense and clarification, regarding the new groups of events that arise, of the fundamental programmatic postulates, that is, of the theoretical consciousness of the movement of the working class.*" (Theses of Lyon, 1926).

It cannot be forgotten that the function of the Party is not that of simple historical expectation nor that of a voluntarist action without roots in the development of the material reality, of which it is a product, so that in the defense and foresight in relation to the new groups of facts it has a component of historical foresight, which will allow it to be a factor: "*the party itself is both factor and product of historical development*". (Theses of Lyon, 1926).

"Those who mock the possibility of plotting a great historical trajectory when its course is only halfway down the river (as would happen to those who, having descended the river from its source at midpoint, would begin to draw its map to the ocean; induction that is not unaccessible to the science of physical geography) are inclined to exclude any possibility of influence by individuals and groups on history or to exaggerate it, at least with regard to the immediate future." (Utopia, Science, Action; Property and Capital, Prometeo, 1952).

For this reason, Marxists cannot simply shrug their shoulders at events that have the impact of blocking world trade for a week, but must draw from it an opportunity to analyze the interests at stake and their material evolution, what pushes some and others to act and, as a valid instrument of analysis, ask ourselves who benefits or even who could have benefited because we know well, with Engels, that often the consequences of acts are anything but what was intended by those who carried them out.

If it later turns out that we cannot clearly establish "*it was this one*" or "*it was that one*", we will nevertheless be able to better understand the determining factors that led to the result, the necessary processes at whose intersection the historical "accidentality" manifests itself. If, even worse, the working hypothesis proves to be erroneous with time and elements emerge that would indicate another or completely discredit the previous one, **the damage is equally infinitely less than the position according to which we must always kneel**

before CHANCE and ACCIDENTALITY, according to which any attempt at a materialistic explanation of the events that burst onto the world chessboard of the commercial war must be discarded. This is a real abjuration of dialectical materialism and Marxism, even if it is tacitly implemented, without explicitly affirming it, by shrugging the shoulders at every major event.

Competition among trade routes

Returning to the blockade, this represented a momentary halt to the maritime circulation of goods on a route on which 90% of the goods that circulate have their origin or destination in Europe.

The route through the Suez Canal is in competition with a growing number of other trade routes, to the point that the canal authorities have had to lower tariffs in recent times:

- The hybrid route promoted by Israel, first through the Gulf of Aqaba and then by land train from Eilat to Haifa (train built by China and port also managed by China);
- The Arctic route promoted by Russia (through which it has already been possible to travel without icebreakers);
- The land route by train through Asia promoted by Beijing and its new silk route projects;
- The Cape of Good Hope route which, with fuel oil prices sufficiently low, has been cheaper than paying the passage tariffs charged by the Egyptian government.

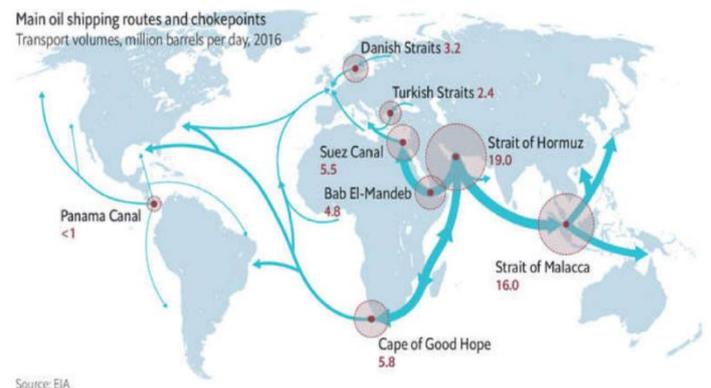
Intentional or not, what the blockade of the Suez Canal highlights is the ease with which a trade route in general and this one in particular can be strangled. This represents a serious warning to China and the EU in relation to their bilateral trade, as well as to Egypt in relation to the toll it takes on world trade.

More than 80% of world trade is carried out by sea. The greatest disruption of the balance between the above routes will be produced by the network driven by China, precisely, by land and through which this imperialism floods the world with its influence and its overproduction of goods.

More world trade bottlenecks

The importance of the Suez route is evident just by listing the military bases accumulating in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden: UAE in Eritrea and Socotra; Russia in Port Sudan; China, USA and France in Djibouti.

But the Suez Canal is not the only bottleneck in world maritime traffic. There are several points on the globe where an action like the one that happened in Suez, or the simple deployment of a flotilla, the dropping of chemicals or the spreading of mines at sea, or any other trick that the imperialism at stage can come up with, can block an important part of the world's maritime traffic.



34% of oil transported by sea passes through the Strait of Hormuz (Cinco Días, 12-04-2021). Consequence: "*Israeli Prime*

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu earlier this month accused Iran of the attack on the Bahamas-registered Helios Ray merchant ship, owned by an Israeli company, in the waters of the Gulf of Oman. Another alleged armed action a month later in the waters of the Arabian Sea - against the Liberian-flagged container ship Lori, also owned by a Haifa-based company - has been aired over the past weekend by the Hebrew press.

Between the two incidents, *The Wall Street Journal* revealed that Israeli Navy commandos have been sabotaging for more than a year a dozen Iranian tankers and ships carrying fuel and alleged military equipment in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. (El País, 02-03-2021).

"One of the largest vessels of the Iranian Navy, the tanker Kharg, sank yesterday in the Gulf of Oman after catching fire the day before for unknown reasons (...) Hours later, state television reported another fire at a refinery south of Tehran (...). Since 2019, several cargo ships have been the target of mysterious explosions in the Sea of Oman, which connects to the Strait of Hormuz, (...) apparently caused by limpet mines attached to the hull of the ships." (El País, 03-06-2021).

In these tight spots, even a flotilla of speedboats, such as the one the U.S. fears Iran has sent to Venezuela and with which it currently operates in the Persian Gulf, may suffice: "The speedboats are of the Iranian Peykaap class (...). Nearly 60 feet in length, they can carry two lethal anti-ship missiles that have a range of about 20 miles in surface-to-surface mode, as well as a pair of 13-inch torpedoes. (...) we see them frequently in the Persian Gulf, harassing merchant ships and occasionally challenging our warships. They are quite dangerous, especially in a constrained seaway like the Gulf." (Bloomberg, 11-06-2021).

As our current affirmed in 1957, the dominance of first British and then U.S. imperialism has been based on its naval military power: "Whoever holds world hegemony in the naval field is qualified for hegemony in the field of world trade, which is the true basis of capitalist imperialism." (The imperialism of the aircraft carriers, il Programma Comunista, n°2, 1957, published in El Comunista n°38, October 1999).

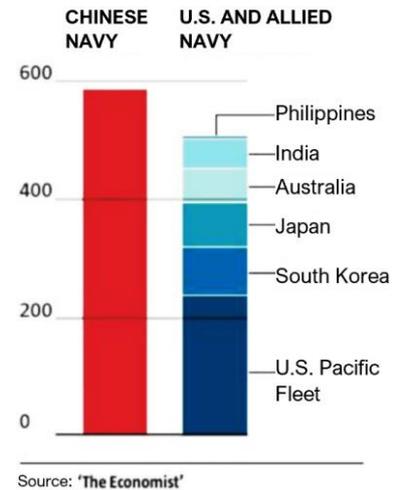
China's naval military development

China is trying to balance this fact through its investments in the so-called "new silk routes", shifting an increasing part of its goods transport to land in order to escape from the control of aircraft carriers (mainly American) and exposure to blockades such as the Suez blockade.

Now, China is not limited to developing a land distribution network, but in recent years it has taken over the construction, participation and management of numerous key ports around the world through its companies China Merchants Port Holdings and COSCO Shipping (Piraeus, Tangier, Valencia, Genoa, Haifa, Gwadar, Chancay, El Hamdania, Rotterdam, etc. including 20% of the Suez Canal Container Terminal itself in Port Said), as well as developing its military fleet and taking up military positions in strategic maritime trade locations: "China is already the country with the most operational warships with 350 (255 in 2015). (...) They have the largest shipyards in the world (...). The People's Republic launches in a year the same tonnage in ships as the entire navy of the United Kingdom combined," warns Greg Poling, of the Centre for Strategic Studies (CSIS) in Washington DC. (La Vanguardia, 20-06-2021).

If China's fleet is composed of 350 vessels, the U.S. fleet has 293 (La Vanguardia, 20-06-2021). In the following graph you can see the growth rate, looking at the new fleet launched between

2015 and 2019 by China and by its competitors, in thousands of tons.



Not surprisingly, the first Chinese military base abroad (which will surely not be the last) was installed in Djibouti, a port that controls the entrance of no less but the Red Sea and, therefore, to the Suez Canal itself. It also maintains a firm foothold in strategic military positions throughout the South China Sea (military maneuvers, construction of artificial islands, deployment of "fishing" fleets, etc.), whose sovereignty is disputed by neighboring countries and Western imperialism in general. The Strait of Malacca carries 25% of world trade goods and is also the main route through which China's imported oil passes (Cinco Días, 12-04-2021).

The NATO supreme allied commander in Europe and commander of the U.S. European Command during the period of the military intervention in Libya in 2011 and of the U.S. secret operations in Syria at the beginning of the 2010s, has just published a novel entitled 2034, which precisely sets off the third world war... in the South China Sea and which does not exactly foretell a positive ending for the United States. THE POWDER KEG ON WHICH WE LIVE COULD EXPLODE ON MANY SIDES, AND EVEN THE IMPERIALISTS THEMSELVES ARE ALREADY HAVING NIGHTMARES ABOUT IT!

Its class interest, makes the American bourgeoisie forget in its fantasy that with the crisis and the war not only the inter-imperialist conflict but the conflict between classes will be born: from its war will arise - if it does not arise before - the social revolution that will put an end forever to the capitalist mercantile monster and its wars.

The crisis of overproduction only aggravates the situation of conflict between imperialist bandits: "as soon as it no longer is a question of sharing profits, but of sharing losses, everyone tries to reduce his own share to a minimum and to shove it off upon another. The class, as such, must inevitably lose. **How much the individual capitalist must bear of the loss, i.e., to what extent he must share in it at all, is decided by strength and cunning, and competition then becomes a fight among hostile brothers. The antagonism between each individual capitalist's interests and those of the capitalist class as a whole, then comes to the surface, just as previously the identity of these interests operated in practice through competition.**" (Capital, Volume III, Chapter XV, K. Marx). This fight will be carried out with all the means at hand: "Capital is said by a Quarterly Reviewer to fly turbulence and strife, and to be timid, which is very true; but this is very incompletely stating the question. Capital eschews no profit, or very small profit, just as Nature was formerly said to abhor a vacuum. With adequate

profit, capital is very bold. A certain 10 per cent. will ensure its employment anywhere; 20 per cent. certain will produce eagerness; 50 per cent., positive audacity; 100 per cent. will make it ready to trample on all human laws; 300 per cent., and **there is not a crime at which it will scruple, nor a risk it**

will not run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged. If turbulence and strife will bring a profit, it will freely encourage both. Smuggling and the slave-trade have amply proved all that is here stated." (quoted in Capital, Volume I, Chapter XXIV, K. Marx).

THE IMPERIALIST TENSIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST FLARE UP IN GAZA

The Middle East continues to be in ferment, with each regional power trying to impose itself on the others and as an effect of the moves on this board of the U.S. and China.

Expansión of China's influence in the region

Chinese influence is spreading in the Middle East, as it is all over the world. With Iran, *"China agreed to invest \$400 billion (...) over 25 years in exchange for a steady supply of oil."* (New York Times, 27-03-2021). Trade exchanges China-Turkey (NATO's second largest army) reached \$24 billion in 2020. (Belt and Road News, 26-03-2021).

China signed agreements worth \$65 billion with Saudi Arabia in 2017. And even with Israel, the U.S.'s prey dog in the region, the relationship has deepened as we already indicated in The Internationalist Proletarian no. 5: *"Israel and China have signed historic cooperation agreements for the construction of the Eilat train, as well as other projects in the future, including the INLAND canal north port of Eilat. (...) The main project on the agenda is the construction of a freight line that will link the ports of Ashdod and Haifa (facing the Mediterranean) with the port complex of Eilat on the Red Sea. In addition, there are plans to extend the line to the Jordanian port of Aqaba. (...) Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has declared that "the train to Eilat is a national priority, because of its strategic and policy importance".* (ICEX, 2012). *"Beijing was in 2018 "Israel's second largest trading partner", (...) the overall amount of their trade exchanges climbed to \$16 billion, being the first importer and the second country where Israeli companies exported the most, which accounted for 10% of total exports."* (La Vanguardia, 09-07-2019).

The USA movements in the Middle East

The rapprochement between Israel and China gives the U.S. no peace of mind: *"A U.S. Senate committee recently approved a bill expressing "serious security concerns" over the contract between Israel and Shanghai International Port Group for the management of the Haifa port facility."* (La Vanguardia, 09-07-2019).

Israel's economic dependence on the USA and the latent threat of supporting the creation of a Palestinian state are the levers with which the U.S. makes sure that the prey dog remains obedient. The U.S. reached with Israel in 2016 a military aid plan: *"for ten years, the largest defense and security package to another country in the history of the first power, according to a State Department statement. The final sum to be received by Israel amounts to 38 billion dollars. (...) Israel is the largest recipient of cumulative U.S. aid since World War II: \$124.3 billion in current dollars."* (El País, 14-09-2016).

But some sectors are beginning to doubt whether the latter will remain loyal: *"Israel could be left out of America's trusted military, financial, commercial and technological networks unless it acts decisively," to limit Chinese investment in the country, Greenert and Bird wrote. [respectively retired U.S. Fleet Admiral and Vice Admiral from think-tank JINSA]."* (Middle East Eye, 17-07-2019). The Chinese ambassador to Israel was in fact assassinated on 17-05-2020.

The issue is whether the U.S. threat to drop Israel can be hollowed out to the extent that China can prop it up on the other side, imposing its conditions on it.

Something similar happens with another traditional U.S. ally in the region: Saudi Arabia. The U.S. bet on shale gas and oil led the Saudi bourgeoisie to make the price of oil sink. The U.S. threats of legal actions against the Saudi royal family for the attacks on the Twin Towers and the signing of the nuclear agreement with Iran followed. The Trump faction again approached Saudi Arabia, breaking the Iran deal in 2015, which did not prevent the signing of the aforementioned Saudi-China agreement. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia is also trying to develop its nuclear program, which is not regarded by the U.S. imperialism that has even circulated that it would be done with Chinese technology: *"In 2018, Mohammed bin Salman, crown prince and strongman in Saudi Arabia, announced that his country would seek to acquire nuclear weapons if Iran continued its work. His words were not lost in the wind. At the time, Senators Ed Markey (Democrat) and Marco Rubio (Republican) launched a bill whose name was a statement of intent: the "To counter Saudi Arabia's possible pursuit of weapon of mass destruction"."* (La Vanguardia, 07-08-2020).

During the previous mandate, the U.S. succeeded in getting the UAE and Morocco to recognize the state of Israel. With Trump's faction ousted, the U.S. bourgeoisie is once again distancing itself from Saudi Arabia: *"the U.S. president has given the green light to the release of the U.S. intelligence report implicating Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, 35, in Kashoggi's gruesome death."* (La Vanguardia, 26-02-2021) and *"Biden also announced the end of U.S. support for Saudi attacks in Yemen."* (La Vanguardia, 05-02-2021). As a consequence of the change in the U.S. ruling faction, Saudi Arabia and its allies have had to relent in the blockade against Qatar *"which since 2017 relied on an air corridor with Iran to break its isolation"* (La Vanguardia, 06-10-2021), blockade motivated by the support of Qatar through the Al-Jazeera channel and together with Turkey to the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas.

The development of productive forces in Asia has won the day over the U.S. in its attempts to encircle and isolate China through its military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In any case, the U.S. ability to keep its "allies" on a short leash is somewhat weakened by the existence of China, which is waiting with open arms for anyone the U.S. wants to punish by "breaking relations".

While U.S. imperialism has based its intervention since the second imperialist world slaughter on directly parasitizing the world and trying to contain or destroy the industrial and commercial development of vast areas of the world, Chinese imperialism goes with the checkbook ahead and exalts the commercial and industrial development of the countries that fall under its influence. It is clear that Chinese imperialism is not doing any act of charity nor does it have an ounce of altruism, but its way of subduing the other bourgeoisies is by exporting technologies, merchandise and infrastructure, which gives it a great advantage over the U.S. which only has greenbacks and