

## **MANJANIGH (IRANIAN REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION)**

### **Our Vision on Political Developments in Iran and Imperialism**

#### **Introduction**

We provide an analysis of imperialism in Iran, examining its multi-layered impact at national, regional, and global levels. We begin by highlighting key Iranian uprisings in December 2017 and September 2022, driven by deep-seated socio-economic grievances and reflecting widespread discontent with the Islamic Republic. The influence of right-wing opposition groups aligned with imperialist powers, including Israel, complicates anti-imperialist efforts within Iran, shaping both domestic discourse and international perceptions of the regime. Moving to a broader scope, our analysis explores imperialism's role in Iran's political economy, influenced by historical interventions and contemporary capitalist dynamics. Geopolitical pressures from regional and global capitalist powers further shape Iran's internal struggles for autonomy and social justice, illustrating the intertwined nature of global imperialism and local resistance movements in Iran.

#### **December 2017: The End of an Era and the Opening of Possibilities**

The December 2017 uprising in Iran marked a radical break from the past, emerging from years of labor struggles, social protests, and grassroots resistance, particularly in response to neoliberal policies. For the first time since the revolution, segments of the working class and marginalized groups directly asserted their political agency, targeting the regime's foundations rather than individual politicians or policies, and shattering the reformist-principlist binary. This uprising had clear class content, highlighted by labor militancy at Haft Tappeh and Ahvaz Steel, where workers called for factory councils and control, signaling a shift toward a class-oriented revolutionary movement. However, the 2022 Jina uprising known as the Woman, Life, Freedom movement shifted ideological hegemony back to the middle class, sidelining labor movements and pushing a liberal, identitarian discourse. This shift, following the left's failure to consolidate the gains of 2017, weakened class-based movements and led to alliances between the left and liberals, which diluted the revolutionary potential of earlier uprisings and placed the class-oriented goals of the December 2017 movement at risk.

#### **Committees and Positional Warfare**

After the December 2017 uprising, grassroots committees reemerged for the first time in decades, but many stagnated as mere text-producing collectives or online news outlets rather than evolving into forces for real social intervention; their survival depends on becoming embedded in actual social relations and organizing material capacities. Central to this is the concept of positional warfare, where every act of propaganda and organizing must fit within a strategic map aimed at building infrastructures like cooperatives, mutual aid networks, and cultural spaces to serve as hubs of resistance. A revolutionary organization must operate both underground and aboveground, using legal

public activities as covers for deeper work and embedding itself materially in everyday life to prepare for future frontal conflicts.

### **Reviving the Proletarian Horizon**

The core task for revolutionary forces in Iran today is to revive the proletarian horizon by rooting revolutionary work in the lived struggles of the oppressed rather than relying on media campaigns, charismatic figures, or electoral strategies; confronting middle-class ideological dominance strategically and building the necessary organizations, networks, and infrastructures is essential for preparing for future uprisings, as the December 2017 uprising revealed new possibilities that can only be realized through disciplined, imaginative action to reclaim the revolutionary horizon and ensure that the future is shaped by the working class rather than by hegemonic middle-class forces or remnants of the old order.

### **Iranian Opposition: The Ideological Shifts Toward Imperialism and Israel**

The ongoing genocide in Gaza has highlighted the contradictions within the Iranian opposition, with some segments, shaped by decades of right-wing, monarchist, and liberal-imperialist discourse, aligning with Israeli aggression and framing Palestinian resistance as part of the Islamic Republic's propaganda. This false binary, reinforced by rightwing Persian-language media, forces the choice between supporting Palestine and aligning with the regime or opposing the regime and siding with Israel, thereby erasing the possibility of leftist, anti-imperialist solidarity. Within Iran, the Islamic Republic's manipulation of the Palestinian cause, coupled with brutal domestic repression, has distorted public solidarity, allowing both the regime and its right-wing opposition to monopolize the political narrative. Despite these challenges, some Iranian leftist groups continue to revive anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist, anti-regime solidarity, aiming to construct a transnational, class-based, and anti-colonial politics that connects struggles from Tehran to Gaza and resists both imperialism and regional despotism.

### **Iran and the Specter of Imperialism**

Imperialism in Iran must be understood as both external intervention and an economic structure that integrates the country into global capital accumulation, perpetuating dependency, class exploitation, and benefiting both foreign powers and the ruling elite. While the Islamic Republic claims anti-imperialist credentials, its economy remains tied to unequal global exchanges, with the national bourgeoisie profiting from resource extraction and domestic labor exploitation. Western sanctions have facilitated ruling class's monopolies under the guise of resistance, masking internal class oppression behind anti-imperialist rhetoric. A genuine anti-imperialist strategy must target both external domination and internal capitalist structures, as Iran's integration into the global capitalist system is maintained by both foreign and domestic forces, making the struggle against imperialism inseparable from the struggle against capitalism.

## **Anti-imperialism and Campism**

After World War II and the decline of colonialism, American imperialism became a key force in securing access to Middle Eastern energy resources, especially oil and gas. Arab nationalism initially opposed this capitalist dominance, but it faltered by neglecting class struggle and ultimately aligned with state-centric, nationalist forces, becoming hostile to the left and working class. In the 1970s, amidst the capitalist crisis and oil price hikes, many Arab nations, including Egypt, Algeria, and Tunisia, adopted neoliberal policies, integrating into the global capitalist system. By the 1990s, imperialism had left only the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saddam Hussein's Iraq as residual forces of resistance. However, these were eventually weakened and co-opted, with Iraq facing crippling sanctions and Iran being reintegrated into the global system through IMF structural adjustment programs. Meanwhile, American imperialism succeeded in turning the Palestine Liberation Organization into an extension of itself and Israel through the Oslo Accords, and normalized relations between Arab countries and Israel via the Mecca Conference.

## **The National Question and Imperialism: Class, Ethnicity, and the Periphery**

Modern Iranian history is marked by the formation of a nation-state dominated by the Persian language and Shia Islam, marginalizing other cultural elements, with capitalist development leading to uneven growth and centralized power. Historically, resistance from nationally oppressed groups in regions like Gilan, Azerbaijan, Mahabad, and Kurdistan has been met with colonial policies that divide the working class and are ideologically justified by a Persian-centric discourse of "territorial integrity." The right to self-determination is linked to the struggle against class oppression, as both central and peripheral bourgeoisie exploit resources, and true self-determination can only be achieved through a proletarian-led struggle addressing both national and class oppression. Recent popular protests in Iran, including the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, have exposed an alliance of imperialist-backed factions, such as monarchists, liberals, and rightwing ethnic nationalists, who seek regime change and military intervention, undermining local struggles by aligning them with imperialist agendas. Communist forces must support popular struggles, expose imperialist-backed opposition, and revitalize class struggles to challenge both domestic rulers and imperialist oppressors.

## **The Role of Imperialist Powers and Regional Players**

Imperialist powers, particularly the United States and European Union, have long imposed sanctions on Iran, severely impacting the economy and disproportionately harming the working class, while strengthening the Islamist ruling class who benefit from currency manipulation and black-market trade. These sanctions, intended to weaken the Iranian government, instead exacerbate economic dependency, deepen class inequality, and bolster the state's ability to suppress opposition. Regional powers like Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Turkey further enforce imperialist agendas, undermining Iran's regional influence while preserving their own dominance. Foreign intervention, whether military or economic, only deepens instability and replaces one oppressor with another, yet some Iranian opposition factions continue to advocate for Western intervention, unaware that such actions historically serve imperialist interests rather than the people, as seen in past interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria.

## **Anti-Imperialism Without Class Struggle Is Counterrevolution**

In reflecting on the current global and regional situation, we see the remnants of Campist leftists in the region and Europe who once believed that Russia, under Putin, and China, under Xi Jinping, could serve as military and economic alternatives to American imperialism. Initially, there was some validity in this view, but the Ukraine war and tariff battles have exposed the limitations of this alternative. The idea that China's domestic policies could be a model for developing countries has gained traction, despite China and Russia's reliance on raw material exports and brutal neoliberal policies that destabilize economies and weaken workers' rights. As the global tariff war deepens, the U.S. attempts to relocate production face high labor costs and supply chain issues, exacerbating global economic instability, particularly in developing countries.

This economic crisis, compounded by stagflation and neoliberal policies, is pushing the working class into further impoverishment while leaving them vulnerable to right-wing ideologies, especially in countries like Iran. The crisis leads to massive layoffs and the collapse of industries due to halted exports to China, sparking uprisings that are met with brutal repression. In this context, Iran's working class, weakened by years of de-unionization and the Islamic Republic's propaganda, is increasingly susceptible to reactionary ideologies. A global assessment shows that abandoning class struggle in favor of identity-based movements has led to the anti-imperialist front being dominated by reactionary, so-called anti-American states, resulting in the rise of hegemonic ideologies such as chauvinistic nationalism and gender-based divisions.

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