

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد
بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم
از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

By Stephen R. Shalom

Sources: New Politics

30.12.2022

Interview with Gilbert Achcar on the war in Ukraine

"What peace are we talking about?"

The war in Ukraine has renewed and prolonged the debates within the world left on the question of anti-imperialism and the strategic positions to be adopted.

In this interview, Gilbert Achcar takes up a short text recently published on our site in which he advocated a "democratic position against war". In particular, it questions the conditions of a true ceasefire, criticizing both the positions that support the Russian conquests obtained by military force, and the warmongering positions that demand an even greater involvement of NATO, which suggests the apocalyptic scenario of a generalized war and a nuclear escalation.

-The November 30 you published a short article entitled "For a position anti-democratic war against the invasion of Ukraine" (<https://correspondenciadeprensa.com/?p=31162>). In this article, you begin by distinguishing two common positions in the left with respect to Ukraine. One of these positions is opposed to the arms supplies from NATO countries to Ukraine, with the I argue that, as a peace movement, we should advocate diplomacy and de-escalation with regard to the supply of weapons. Could you explain what is wrong with this position?

The My main position on this issue is the call to An unconditional ceasefire. It is often associated with the position that You just described. At first glance, it is motivated by a desire for peace, which is certainly a very laudable goal. And I have no doubt that Among those who defend this position are authentic pacifists and people who legitimately suspect

that Western governments, the First, they use Ukrainians as meat for cannon in a proxy war against its imperialist rival Russia. By Of course, I sympathize less with those who only began to advocate for a Unconditional ceasefire when Russian forces proclaimed that had achieved their primary goal or when they began to lose ground in Donbass itself.

There's Several issues are at stake here. The first is that it has no It makes a lot of sense to call for peace in the abstract. The question What immediately emerges is: What peace are we talking about? The domain imperial has often called itself "peace" since the time of the Pax Roman, at the beginning of the Common Era, if not much earlier, until the Sinister "pacification" undertaken by French colonial troops in Algeria or U.S. troops in Vietnam. Peace must be Always explicit: against wars of conquest, the right position It is a just and lasting peace, which can only be a peace without annexation. Calling for an unconditional ceasefire does not meet this standard when it can signify the perpetuation of the conquest and the acquisition of territory by force. The call becomes patently Suspect when it is done at the same time that the victim is beginning to push back the invader, as if the goal were Keep as much conquered land as possible under control of the invader.

Since The prospect of a just peace, the only position consistent with this Aim is the call for a ceasefire together with the withdrawal of invading troops to their pre-war positions. Everything It follows from this: those who are in favour of a just peace, who oppose wars of conquest while supporting wars of liberation as wars of self-defense, they cannot oppose the Delivery of defensive weapons to victims of aggression and invasion. They should not oppose such renditions until there is a ceasefire. associated with the condition I have mentioned, and the victims do not have of means to deter further aggression against their territory.

This It does not contradict the call for Western governments to make real efforts to bring Russia to the table of Negotiations. It's clear to me that the Biden administration has not actually and actively pursued this objective, unlike the governments of Paris or Berlin. But the truth is that it is the Russian side that that has adopted the most bellicose position, blocking any Perspective of peace. The best illustration of this and everything I have ever done Explained on the call for a ceasefire is the speech of Vladimir Putin at the ceremony of finalization of the annexation of the four Ukrainian oblasts of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhia End of September. Putin said:

"We urge the Kiev regime to immediately cease fire and all hostilities; to end the war that began in 2014 and return to the negotiating table. We are prepared for it, as we have said more than once. But we will not discuss the choice of the villages of Donetsk, Luhansk,

Zaporizhia and Kherson. The decision has been made and Russia will not betray it. The current authorities in Kiev must respect this free expression of the will of the people; There is no other way. This is the only path to peace."

Is Obviously, if he calls for a ceasefire while claiming that the only peace Possible is one that includes recognition of its annexation of territory by force, and that this annexation—which he describes as a result of the "free expression of the will of the people" – is not even discussed, It is slamming the door on any prospect of peace negotiations. The Russian government has a responsibility to prove that it is really open to negotiations for a peaceful solution, which It implies their willingness to put everything on the table, rather than demanding the Recognition of his conquest as a fait accompli.

-Say that those who believe in the right to self-defense in a just war do not. may oppose the handing over of 'defensive' weapons to victims of the aggression and invasion. What do you mean by "defensive"? ¿Enters artillery in this category? What is excluded?

Since The principle I have insisted on the defensive purpose of the deliveries of arms to Ukraine. It is true that there are no clear boundaries between weapons. defensive and offensive, but the clearest distinctions are two types: one refers to the entire range of "anti" – anti-aircraft weapons, anti-tank, anti-missile – which are defensive by definition. I support fully the surrender of such weapons.

The Another distinction concerns the range of weapons. I do not support that the NATO supplies Ukraine with weapons with a range that allows its forces to armed forces strike deep into Russian territory. Not because this was Unjust: in reality, Ukraine has a full moral right to hit Russia deep within Russian territory, as Russia is extensively hitting Ukrainian territory and thus commits, blatantly, war crimes by deliberately destroying the Ukraine's civilian infrastructure. It is clear that Moscow intends to plunge The Ukrainian population in the cold and dark and in other upheavals mortals to force her to surrender. The recent Ukrainian attacks on Russia with old converted drones are all the more than legitimate in the To the extent that they were not directed against civilians but against bases military from which the planes that bomb Ukraine take off.

But would not support NATO handing over to Ukraine aircraft and missiles from long range, rather than limited to anti-missile and anti-aircraft weapons. Nor would it support NATO imposing a no-fly zone over Ukraine. Such measures would entail a dangerous escalation of the NATO's involvement in this war, and no territory on the planet It is worth taking the risk of a major world war and a Nuclear confrontation.

Observe that even Washington wishes to avoid this qualitative escalation, and it has refrained from delivering long-range weapons to Ukraine. The who blame Washington for this and demand that the type of Surrendered weapons are mainly among the Ukrainian ultranationalists and in neighboring countries where the Anti-Russian resentment is greater for historical reasons.

To this is added by warmongers on the side of NATO, the opposite side of those on the Russian side. One example is the former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, retired US General Philip Breedlove, who has called from the outset for NATO's direct involvement in the war and the establishment of a no-fly zone over Ukraine. This General Breedlove reminds me a lot of Dr. Strangelove [from the movie] by Kubrick]. It is totally irresponsible.

-In Your article of November 30, criticized not only those who ask for a Unconditional ceasefire, but also to those who "place the too high demands for peace." Can you describe this point of view and explain what is the problem?

Me He was referring to statements along the lines of which they do not even mention a ceasefire and its conditions, while claiming there can be no peace without a total withdrawal of Russian troops from all territories occupied since 2014, Crimea included. This amounts to a call to an all-out war against Russia, which cannot be fought, let alone winning, without a much greater degree of commitment, both military and economic, by NATO. There are three big problems with these Positions.

The First, and most obvious, is that what is defended does not have the support from most Western states, including the most nor of the majority of public opinion in those States. The Proponents of that position would have to campaign with people like the General Breedlove / Dr. Strangelove in favor of a qualitative leap in NATO's commitment, which constitutes a warmongering position, be it whatever legitimate principles it invokes. The road to Hell, as we know, is paved with good intentions.

El segundo problema es que, al establecer condiciones maximalistas para la paz, sin mencionar siquiera el alto el fuego, esa posición le hace el juego a la posición contraria que mencioné en respuesta a tu primera pregunta. Sus partidarios corren el riesgo de aparecer ante la opinión pública como belicistas irresponsables en la línea de los ultranacionalistas ucranianos, mientras que la posición contraria aparecería como la única preocupada por salvar vidas humanas, ya que sería la única en pedir un alto el fuego, aunque el alto el fuego que pida sea de hecho similar al alto el fuego anexionista exigido por Putin.

The The third problem is that, as anti-war progressives, or internationalists, we believe that when there are legitimate disputes over The status of a territory, the question must be decided democratically through the true "free expression of the will" of the people", not through a staged farce under the occupation of the people. Invaders. So, of course, the "referendums" held under Russian control in Crimea and parts of Donbass in 2014 and 2022 have no no moral or legal validity, let alone those celebrated also this year in parts of Kherson and Zaporizhia provinces.

Without However, from an internationalist perspective, it seems obvious to me. that there are legitimate questions about the status of Crimea and even of parts of the Donbass identified by the Minsk II agreement of 2015. I am against any 'solution' to these problems through the war, and in favour of a peaceful democratic solution based on Right of peoples to self-determination. The Will That Must To express oneself is that of the original population of these territories such and As they were composed before the forced change of their status, it is That is, before 2014.

Envelope This basis I have defined what I consider to be the type of position that Anti-war internationalists must adopt on the issue of the ceasefire and peace negotiations. These are, again, the Three points I have proposed for a democratic platform against war:

- 1- Ceasefire with withdrawal of Russian troops to their positions on February 23, 2022.
- 2- Reaffirmation of the principle of inadmissibility of obtaining territory by force.
- 3- Negotiations under UN aegis for a lasting peaceful solution Based on the right of peoples to self-determination: deployment of blue helmets in all disputed territories, both in Donbass as in Crimea, and organization by the UN of free referendums and democratic measures that include the vote of refugees and displaced persons originating in these territories.

Would who seriously misinterpret the real situation to see in it a A reversal of my position against the invasion, if not a betrayal of the invasion. Ukrainian cause. The fact is that putting as a condition for a halt the fire the withdrawal of Russian troops to their positions on February 23 It is already a very high level of demand. Because, as I explained in my text, this already requires a significant amplification of the Ukrainian counteroffensive, with significantly greater support from the NATO countries, as well as an increase in economic pressure that exercise over Russia.

Without However, this is the only acceptable condition for a ceasefire in a perspective that rejects the acquisition of territory by force. Only the Ukrainian side has the right to accept a ceasefire by Below those demands, if de facto conditions push you to it. As for waging

war until reconquering all of the Donbass and Crimea, well, if Ukraine had launched such an offensive earlier Of the Russian invasion of February 24, I would no doubt have considered it An irresponsible nationalist adventurism, however legitimate. It is for this very reason that I do not support the call for War will continue until all these territories have been recovered. by Ukraine.

-Your The third point is based on the United Nations. But given the veto power of Russia in the Security Council, in fact, this does not Would it allow Moscow to impose its will on the disputed areas?

Let me ask yourself first: what alternative to the UN is there to supervise? a peaceful and democratic resolution of the conflict? Could it be NATO? that alternative? To ask the question is already to give the answer. As soon as the so-called Normandy format (Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine), It has failed irretrievably.

To unless Putin's regime collapses and radically changes the situation, the only way to get Russia to respect the terms of a peaceful agreement is to be dealt with by the UN, where the approval of Russia itself, as well as China. Of course, Russia It will accept such an agreement only if it is obliged to do so by the military situation on the ground and its economic situation. But the objecting that going through the UN would give Moscow a right to veto is tantamount to saying that an agreement could be imposed on Russia in against their will. This would bring us back to the stage. catastrophist of warmongers.

There's to look at the issue from another angle: a UN-controlled agreement which implies an agreement between the major NATO powers, by on the one hand, Russia, on the other, and China. It is clear that there cannot be a A peaceful solution that ends the war without such an agreement. The deployment of UN troops in the disputed territories is the The only way to achieve genuine referendums on self-determination organized by a UN-mandated body.

The Ideally, a simultaneous withdrawal of Russian troops would be achieved, but This option would still be valid even if it proved impossible to achieve such withdrawal before the process of self-determination and if these troops had to remain until completion, as long as were confined to their bases and barracks. Only one solution of This type can be based on international legality supported by the consensus of the great powers. I can hardly imagine another Scenario for a peaceful and democratic solution.

-In Your November 30 article states that the movement anti-war should try to pressure China to contribute to a Satisfactory conclusion of the war. How could that be exercised? pressure and why do you think China might play that role?

El camino más corto, y el menos costoso en términos de vidas y destrucción, hacia un alto el fuego en las condiciones descritas anteriormente es que las potencias de la OTAN consigan que China añada su presión «amistosa» a la presión militar y económica sobre Moscú. Berlín y París han hecho intentos en este sentido, pero el obstáculo es la actitud provocadora de Washington hacia Pekín, que Donald Trump llevó al extremo y que Joe Biden mantiene.

China está claramente descontenta con la guerra actual, que va en contra de sus intereses económicos y ya ha reforzado en gran medida el Occidente geopolítico que EEUU intenta construir contra Pekín y su «amistad sin restricciones» con Moscú. Esto significa que China puede darse cuenta de que Putin no le hace ningún favor a su oposición conjunta al «hegemonismo» estadounidense y que si se le permite continuar con su invasión mal ejecutada sólo conseguirá agravar los daños. Además, el silencio de Pekín sobre esta invasión contradice totalmente su proclamado compromiso con el derecho internacional y los principios de soberanía e integridad de los Estados.

Todos los documentos chinos de política exterior hacen hincapié en el papel central que debe desempeñar la ONU en la política mundial, sin embargo, hasta ahora China no ha hecho ningún esfuerzo en la ONU para conseguir que ésta desempeñe un papel clave en el fin de la guerra, que es el objetivo principal para el que se concibió la ONU. En lugar de ello, Pekín se ha refugiado en la abstención ante la amenaza más grave para la paz mundial de la historia reciente, una actitud que sin duda no es digna de la segunda potencia más fuerte del mundo.

In In this context, I think the anti-war movement should pressure not only on Moscow and Washington, as it is doing, or more so exactly as different parts of it are doing on a or another of these two capitals, but also to Beijing, which has great Part of the responsibility in the continuation of the war for its decision not to act to stop her. The anti-war movement should realize that China, and increasingly, is also one of the world powers responsible for the current state of the world.

Gilbert Achcar, is Professor of Development Studies and International Relations at SOAS, University of London.

(Interview originally published in New Politics, 10-12-2022: <https://newpol.org/ukraine-which-peace-are-we-talking-about-an-interview-with-gilbert-achcar/>)

Press Correspondence Translation

Rebellion 29.12.2022