

POLITICAL DOCUMENT

AWAMI WORKERS PARTY

Approved by its Third Congress
held at Lahore on 12th to 13th March, 2022

Published by
Publication and Information Department of
A.W.P

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Preface

A party congress is an irreducibly serious matter, especially for a party that considers itself to be ideologically motivated and for which a classless society is the ultimate goal. Hence this Congress can be understood as an opportunity for all party workers to educate themselves afresh, reassert our commitment to collective leadership and establish ideological clarity so as to chalk out a meaningful party strategy for the foreseeable future.

This document posits the party's current position on the domestic and global political economy; the class structure of Pakistan; the ever more acute crises of capitalism; digital technology; the ecological question; the building of 21st century socialism after the experiences of 20th century socialism; the question of imperialism and anti-imperialist struggle in Pakistan; the national question; the military's role in Pakistani politics and economy; patriarchy and the gender question; religious fundamentalism; and inequality/ concentration of wealth.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused not only an inordinate delay in the holding of our party congress, but also signaled intensification of economic, political, cultural and ecological crises at the global scale. At the same time, Pakistan's own domestic and foreign policy contradictions have also grown increasingly acute. There are now different power centres within the Pakistani state. The propertied classes, military generals and bourgeois political elites appear least concerned that their own ruling order is beset by numerous internal contradictions. It is up to us to take stock of these myriad crises because ultimately their burden will be borne by the working masses.

This Congress is a reminder not only that we must establish unity within our own ranks but also lead the attempts to bring all progressive, democratic forces closer together in the struggle against contemporary capitalism. Only then can we hope to throw off the yoke of imperialism, end all forms of class apartheid as well as ethnic-national, patriarchal and other oppression, and thereby transform Pakistan into a genuinely independent and pro-people country.

Introduction

In December 2019, a hitherto unknown virus was identified in the Wuhan province of China. Whose dramatic and rapid spread to all corners of the world confirmed the deep interrelated crises of capitalism that threaten to weave destruction on an unimaginable scale. In the early days after the COVID-19 pandemic was announced, it was often said that all of humanity shares the same future. But time has made clear that the pandemic's effects are clearly structured by one's class, just like everything else in our class-riven societies.

If the wretched of the earth are not struck down by the virus, they are condemned to destitution by lockdowns. Today, two years since the pandemic was announced, Pakistan's working masses are suffering through incessant inflation, rampant unemployment and all manner of hardship. On the other hand, Amazon, Apple and other Big Tech, alongside war-making munitions and other companies are enjoying bumper profits. Pakistan's 'hybrid' civil-military regime has given Bahria Town, DHA and other similar companies all kinds of concessions to legalise their illicitly-gotten monies. The world's 26 richest people now earn more than the 3 billion people at the lowest rung of the global class ladder.

The pandemic also exposed another ugly truth about our current moment; that hate-spewing, right-wing populist leaders continue to occupy the seat of government in many countries of the world. What unites the very many shades of right-wing iconoclasts is their penchant to camouflage the growing contradictions of capitalism by diverting the people's attention to paper tigers. Various, the people are told that 'corruption', and/or 'terrorism' and/or 'foreign conspiracies' are the cause of all social, economic and political crises. All of which is done to create a pretext for 'foreign investment' and 'development' on the one hand, and the arrogation of powers by coercive state

apparatuses to in the name of 'national security', on the other hand. And everything is sanctified as being 'democratic' by toothless bourgeois parliaments and corporate media establishments.

PM Imran Khan and his PTI government briefly opposed pandemic-related lockdowns in the name of protecting the livelihoods of daily wage workers. Whereas in face the same regime has systematically enacted policies that have tightened the noose around the necks of all workers and peasants. Before taking governmental power in 2018, Imran Khan had promised to establish 'Naya Pakistan', where external debt would be whittled down, big political-economic players in Pakistan held to account and the burden of development shifted away from the poor towards propertied classes. After taking power on the back of the military establishment, Khan raised new slogans around a Ryasat-e-Madina. For three years, the hybrid regime has presided over growing inequality, lawlessness and intolerance, while the epidemic of molecular violence, particularly against women and children, grows ever more acute. Working people are committing suicide, while religious functionaries are given a free hand to instigate mob violence. As for state institutions, they have become synonymous with extortion and harassment. Courts dispense selective 'justice'. Police and revenue officials protect organised mafias rather than the public interest. But no civil department can match intelligence and other military institutions who disappear dissidents at will. And no one can dare hold these 'na maloom afraad' to account.

The military establishment has, in fact, upended democracy, federalism and the very meaning of politics for 75 years. But militarisation of state and society has increased markedly since the onset of the so-called 'war on terror' in 2001. Military operations in Balochistan and the tribal districts of KP have been accompanied by an intensification of violence and psychological terror in the rest of the country. Those young people from the peripheries who migrate to and seek integration in mainland Pakistan through education and employment are not spared

repression. Meanwhile the religious right continues to enjoy the patronage of the establishment, the most recent example of which is the rapid rise of the Tehrik-e-Labbaik Pakistan. The incessant lies peddled by the state during the 'war on terror' claiming that the Taliban and other right-wing militant groups have been cut down to size were decisively exposed when Pakistan openly backed the Taliban's reconquest of Afghanistan following the American troop withdrawal in August 2021. Indeed, the Taliban was literally handed back the seat of government in Kabul under an agreement that confirms US imperialism's continuing proxy war strategy, the costs of which will continue being borne by the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan. This strategy, it must be emphasised, is fully backed by Pakistani generals.

Quite simply, capital seeks any and all opportunities to generate profit, including war-making. In 2018, the US military budget was US\$700 billion. In total, the US spent US\$5.9 trillion during its 20 years in Afghanistan. Washington never intended, as it claimed, to eliminate the Taliban or liberate Afghan women and girls. Similar claims justified military operations by Pakistan's security forces in Waziristan and other Pashtun regions, where the Taliban and other right-wing militant groups are now more organised and active than before. Where military establishments benefit from war-making policies, private munitions manufacturers also profit. Even healthcare has become a profit-making enterprise, as was outlined during the COVID-19 pandemic; multinational pharmaceutical companies earned billions of dollars from vaccines, and even refused to distribute these vaccines to the poorest regions of the world despite have excess capacity.

Set against the historical backdrop of the previous century, increasingly exploitative and oppressive social relations ail humanity today, with class, imperialist, ethnic-national, gender and ecological contradictions especially prominent. There are certainly vibrant expressions of popular resistance in Pakistan and around the world but a genuinely hegemonic alternative to

the dominant order remains conspicuous by its absence. Indeed, various shades of right-wing populism – including religious and state-nationalist – have coopted the idiom of revolutionary change. Establishments allow – and sometimes directly encourage – such hateful political narratives to take root, at least partly so as to contain the potentialities for a substantive challenge from the left. Meanwhile the working masses experience unending economic hardship – entire sections of the peasantry are now being dispossessed on account of agribusiness companies that are making food inaccessible whilst also engaging in unbridled land and other resource grabs.

Indeed, the very nature of capital accumulation is evolving, with the historical significance of manufacturing and generation of surplus values through exploitation of labour power being eclipsed by the growing importance of finance. In Pakistan military-dominated companies and other private profiteers have made a killing in real estate, while urban middle classes are being sucked into the web of cheap credit and conspicuous consumption. While everyone is sold the dream of ‘development’, a majority of working people bear the burden of this unsustainable and increasingly financialised regime of accumulation. Privatisation of public services has proceeded with reckless abandon. Health, education, transport and even gainful employment are no longer accessible to many, even while rhetoric about the prosperity guaranteed by ‘free markets’ continues to be propagated endlessly. Indeed, public provision of goods and services is not even on the mainstream political agenda. What Marx called ‘primitive accumulation’ is rampant in our current epoch.

Nevertheless, capitalism’s inherent contradictions cannot be hidden away. Those who rule us are now unable to contain the fallouts of the reckless destruction of nature and unhindered rule of global finance. This was exposed during the financial crisis of 2007-9. The collapse of huge banks and other financial institutions left many working people destitute while governments spent US\$700 billion to bail out the very investors

responsible for the scandal. The IMF itself acknowledged unemployment to be more than 8% in the western world in 2010 – a figure that increased to 14% in succeeding years. Working people responded, supporting a new wave of left-wing politics in western countries. But movements led by charismatic figures such as Bernie Sanders (US) and Jeremy Corbyn (UK) were ultimately unsuccessful in acquiring governmental power and global finance is today completely unhinged. Financial oligarchs are extremely powerful even in countries ruled by communist parties, including China, the effects of which are increasingly dire.

Pakistan is of course one of the most crisis-ridden countries in the world today. Inflation and unemployment are rampant and its debt burden grows with each passing day. Sovereignty exists only on paper, the IMF and other donors effectively dictating economic and social policy. Capitalist and imperialist impositions can now only be resisted through popular means.

We must acknowledge the urgent imperative of uniting all progressive and pro-people forces, in Pakistan and beyond. The barbarism of the global capitalist system is most evident in the form of the climate crisis. Since the onset of the industrial era, the world's natural eco systems have faced massive degradation. The planet's temperatures has risen by almost 1.5 degrees Celsius in barely 150 years. If greenhouse gas emissions are not curtailed drastically over the next decade or so, entire plant and animal species will perish forever, while catastrophic climate breakdown events will become the norm. Pakistan is on the frontline of the climate crisis where floods, glacier melts, droughts and other such events are intensifying rapidly. Our ruling class could care less and is in fact doubling down on a regime of accumulation which will worsen the crisis. A century ago, German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg announced that humanity was faced with a choice between socialism and barbarism. Today there is no longer any doubt that only socialism can guarantee humanity's future.

The basic contradictions of our times

In the current conjuncture, the party understands the global political economy to be riven by the following basic contradictions:

- a. The contradiction between imperialism and oppressed nations/peoples
- b. The contradiction between capital and labour
- c. The contradiction between monopoly capital in the 'advanced' and 'backward' countries
- d. The contradiction between imperialism and socialism
- e. The contradiction between the capitalist world-system and the natural environment

All of these global contradictions also have their reflections within Pakistani state and society. In the era of capitalist globalisation, a comprador capitalist class in Pakistan has become ever more powerful due to the patronage of imperialism. The following contradictions have thereby acquired primary significance within Pakistan:

- a. Class contradiction
- b. The contradiction between imperialism and Pakistan's working masses
- c. The contradiction between dominant and oppressed ethnic-nations
- d. The contradiction between democratic and undemocratic forces (civil vs. military)
- e. The contradiction between feudal-tribal remnants and democracy
- f. The internal contradictions of the ruling class

- g. The contradiction between socialist countries/global communist movement and imperialism/capitalist countries
- h. The contradiction between fundamentalism and secular forces
- i. The contradiction between patriarchy and feminism
- j. The contradiction between capital and the natural environment

To clarify the party line, it is essential to accurately comprehend all these contradictions and their complex dialectical interplay. Feudal-tribal remnants continue to provide a filip to imperialism within Pakistan. These remnants, alongwith comprador capitalist and the militarised state apparatus, prop up the pro-imperialist status quo. It is, therefore, the forces of (1) imperialism; (2) militarised state apparatus; (3) comprador capitalists; and (4) feudal-tribal remnants that are the biggest hurdle to the peace and prosperity of Pakistan's working masses.

The class character of Pakistani society

Pakistan is a neo-colonial state which operates under the patronage of US imperialism, having previously been a colony of the British Empire. The major divisions of contemporary Pakistani society are as follows:

1. **Big feudal landlords/tribal chieftains:** The British Raj extended the *mansabdari* system of the Mughal era and institutionalised a landed proprietary regime which is what we today call 'feudal-tribal remnants'. These remnants remain extremely powerful in various parts of the rural social formation, and have, in fact, adopted modern methods to sustain their influence. The power of landed/tribal forces is most evident in formal elections in which they retain considerable influence over dependent voters as well as local administrative apparatuses. These remnants do not possess economic power in the way they once did, and in fact have been on the decline in economic terms since as long ago as the 1950s, but retain political and cultural power in variety of forms. Pirs and saints controlling vast tracts of agricultural land, for example, remain powerful and are amongst the biggest impediments to social and economic prosperity for common working people. Mechanisation of agriculture has certainly changed relations of production but big traditional sharecropping methods persist in many parts of South Punjab and Sindh and big landlordism on the whole – along with tribal power – remains extremely potent.
2. **Big capitalists:** This class was virtually non-existent in Pakistan until the late 1950s. Ever since, big capitalists have proliferated in sectors like manufacturing, trade, mining, services, finance and agriculture. Big capitalists were initially patronised by the Pakistani state and its

imperialist patrons in the late 1950s and have steadily gained economic, political and cultural power. There have been periods of retreat, but big capitalists gained greatly during the Zia dictatorship and also during the 1990s/2000s. Big capitalists have tried to establish complete hegemony over the state apparatus on numerous occasions, and have generally enjoyed the support of the IMF, World Bank and other global financial institutions. Today Pakistan's biggest capitalists have largely eschewed manufacturing industry and prefer speculative sectors, whilst also investing a significant amount of wealth abroad.

Under the prevailing global division of labour, Pakistan's trader-merchant segments are little more than commission agents. Pakistan's systematic de-industrialisation, and the propensity of big capitalists to become collaborators of multi-national corporations means that short-term profit motives dominate over long-term strategy. Within Pakistan all private capitals are subservient to the military's corporate arms while outside of Pakistan they are mostly subservient to western influence. As a result they are least interested in whether Pakistan's political system is democratic or authoritarian.

3. **Bureaucratic capitalists:** Pakistan's peculiar political economy has evolved such that the military is now its most powerful pillar. As the military's economic interests have grown, it has become even more reliant on political power to sustain these economic interests. As such this has precipitated the emergence of a 'new' kind of capital, which can be called 'bureaucratic capital'. This capital is not only becoming preponderant in industry and trade, but is also the most stable of all competing capitals. Aviation, construction, transport, petrol services, agriculture, logistics and many more sectors are increasingly dominated by bureaucratic capital.

In general the military looks to big landed/tribal interests as its main ally. It has yet not developed any contradiction with imperialist forms of capital (like MNCs). Indeed, as exemplified by the Pandora and Panama Papers, the military, Pakistan's big propertied classes and imperialist interests are all neatly aligned.

4. **Small agrarian capitalists & urban middle classes:** This refers to middle peasants, as well as non-agriculturalists such as owners of cottage industries and trader-merchants (arhi). In rural areas, they are very influential (alongside big landed/tribal remnants), both in economic terms as well as in shaping electoral outcomes. This class supplies a significant number of state personnel to both civilian and military departments, and has generally gained influence with the state apparatus since the 1960s.

It is important to bear in mind that much of what is today's urban middle class has its roots in the small agrarian capitalist class from rural areas which migrated to towns and cities in search of wage employment as well as opportunities in trade, small enterprises and the service sector at large. Doctors, engineers, teachers and other professionals also have their roots in the rural small agrarian capitalist class. They've learnt English, are visible in print and electronic media circles and constantly aspire to further upward social mobility. To the extent that members of this class are interested in politics, they tend toward incorporation into the state apparatus

5. **Working class:** The contemporary Pakistani working class comprises many different segments across rural and urban areas, organised to varying degrees. The majority of working people are still in rural areas and most of them are unorganised.

The rural working class is made of small and landless peasants, low-caste communities and agricultural wage labourers. The biggest segment of all is daily wage labourers (both agricultural and non-agricultural occupations). They are the least organised and with the exception of a handful of peasant movements, do not participate in progressive politics of any kind. But they are highly influential as voters and tend to come out in large numbers to cast their ballots.

The urban working class is made up of industrial workers, other blue collar private and public sector employees, office and bazaar workers, and artisanal castes. The lack of employment in rural areas means that the size of the urban working class is constantly on the rise due to rural-urban migration, especially amongst the young. This younger segment tends to be quite politically active in bourgeois as well as religious parties, and is imbued with a fair level of class consciousness. This was particularly evident in the 1960s and 1970s when this urban working class was organised in trade unions and combined with middle class professionals, students, Lawyers played a vibrant rate .

This brief analysis of the class structure of Pakistani society helps make sense of the major interest groups that influence Pakistani politics.

Pakistan's uniquely militarised polity

The military establishment and its junior partners in the civil state services :

Pakistan's dominant force which rules in the name of 'threats to Pakistan's security' and 'greater national interest, and now also has the most economic interests in the country. It directly or indirectly controls all of Pakistan's major parties, particularly through its intelligence apparatus and cocktail of compromised politicians. However, it faces regular pressure from its external patrons, including over control of the country's nuclear arsenal. It also is unable to suppress those political forces that persistently challenge its political, economic and ideological domination.

Religious right (including mainstream, militant and welfare organisations) :

For most of Pakistan's history, the religious right has been an extremely influential lobby without ever being strong enough to take control of the state in toto. Various class segments are prominent in religio-political organisations, including the lumpen proletariat and professional middle class. Western imperialist powers have patronised the religious right for at different historical junctures to serve their interests whereas the military establishment has been the single most important and continuous patron. At the time of Pakistan's creation, most religio-political organisations opposed it, but many such groups nevertheless ended up becoming very influential within the new state. They were part of an imperialist strategy to suffocate progressive forces whilst also undermining the struggle for a secular polity. Slogans like 'Nizam-e-Mustapha' and 'Ryasat-e-Madina' have littered Pakistan's history.

Religio-political organisations are now powerful enough to bring society to a standstill. First due to their centrality to anti-communism during the cold war and then by preying on anti-western sentiment subsequently, the religious right has

developed a culture of fear in Pakistani society that makes it dangerous to publicly articulate a secular politics. Jihadi organisations and criminal elements are often indistinguishable. Sectarian organisations attack minority groups and engage in gang-like mob violence with the support of trader-merchant elements. Such sectarian groups also represent the competing interests of theocratic states like Saudi Arabia and Iran, which see Pakistan as a battleground for their geo-political tussles.

Imperialism and the prospects of a progressive resurgence on a global scale

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and end of the state socialist projects of the 20 century, capitalist ideologues pronounced the 'End of History', a fantastic vision of free market capitalism and liberal democracy presiding over endless peace and prosperity for humanity. But the honeymoon period for the US-centric unipolar order established after the end of the Cold War did not last long. But the American Empire nevertheless visited death and destruction on large parts of the world, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Palestine and Yemen. It reinforced brutal economic sanctions on Cuba and Iran (among others) and continually undermined left-leaning governments in Latin America.

However, US hegemony is now increasingly challenged by China, which has acquired significant economic and military clout, and enjoys burgeoning economic relations with many countries previously constrained by the unipolar order. This has resulted in Trump and then Biden announcing a 'new cold war' against China. For its part Beijing is both challenging US hegemony and establishing relations with many third world countries in Asia and Africa, most of all through large infrastructural investments. Meanwhile, the US, Britain and Australia have announced a new strategic compact which seeks to contain China's growing power. The compact will see the US provide nuclear technology to Australia. In sum, China's contradiction with western imperialist powers is sharpening, not only because of its economic clout but also because it is challenging the west's monopoly over science and technology. Geo-political tensions are only going to increase in the coming years.

Time will tell whether or not these tensions translate into a genuine political-economic alternative to the contemporary rule of capital. On the one hand is the unchallenged military and financial supremacy of the US, alongside Silicon Valley's status as the world's technological heartland. On the other hand, China now enjoys dominance in manufacturing industry and is also quickly catching up to the US in technological prowess. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that much of the capital in today's world is organised in the form of multi-national companies which means that even global superpowers interests are not easy to disentangle from one another. This does not mean, of course, that there is no contradiction between China and the US. For us in Pakistan, there can be no doctrinaire political strategy – we must learn from experiences around the world. The enslavement of our people to global capital has been enforced over the past few decades largely through international financial institutions like the IMF and WB, and it is in Latin America where the most vibrant pro-people political movements have erupted to challenge the hegemony of these institutions.

Indeed, a plethora of pro-people movements have taken shape in recent decades against neoliberal globalisation, imperialist war and state repression. More than 70 communist and workers parties also regularly convene an international with a lineage to the best revolutionary traditions of the 20th century. The AWP is in solidarity with this international as it offers an opportunity for left-progressives to learn from and strengthen one another. We believe that left-progressives of all stripes must close ranks, so as to challenge the political right which has become stronger since the end of the Cold War.

The contemporary socialist countries

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the remaining socialist countries of the world initiated a process of internal and external restructuring. In fact, China and Vietnam begun this process even before the Soviet Union's demise. China's economic power has grown immensely ever since, while Cuba and Vietnam have also integrated themselves into global economic arrangements to varying degrees. In China's particular case, hundreds of millions of people have transitioned away from rural, agricultural life towards urban areas and industry. Many have vastly improved their standards of living as a result. Among other things, the working masses have shared in the benefits of growth because instead of unregulated 'free markets', the Chinese state has retained considerable control over land, industry and natural resources more generally.

Statistics indicate that China's central governmental authorities control 67% of the country's total GDP, including all of the big commanding heights of industry. All banks are also under public control; the People's Bank of China operates as a regulatory authority supervising all four of the major commercial banks. All land is also regulated by the state, which itself actually owns 53% of agricultural land – that can be used but not held in perpetuity by peasant households. Meanwhile, the remaining 47% of agricultural land is organised as collective farms. According to the Communist Party, the country is on a path towards a complete communistic economy, and has established medium term targets to ensure education, health and employment for the entirety of the Chinese people.

Nevertheless, China today despite State control of land, Industry and productive resources a more unequal country than it was prior to the 1986, with a large number of billionaires. Its model of economic growth has also been very destructive in environmental terms which the Chinese state has now

earmarked ecological regeneration as a major policy goal. For much of the past 30 years, China has benefited from its enormous reserves of low-cost labour and attracted multinational corporations into the country accordingly. The depletion of low-cost labour reserves has also forced a rethink in China – alongwith countries like Vietnam – and Beijing has now started to invest in infrastructural projects in Asia and Africa through the US\$1 billion Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is one the most prominent undertakings of the BRI. While AWP is firmly committed to the development of regional economic ties between Pakistan and neighbouring countries including China, we will continue to be critical of – and resist – such projects that do not directly meet the needs of working people and ethnic peripheries.

The New Left in the Western World

The slogan 'We are the 99%' gained great prominence in western countries after the global financial crisis of 2008. This movement brought together a wide cross-section of pro-people, progressive forces. Prior to this there was also a major social mobilisation against the Iraq War in 2003 which brought millions of people in western countries out onto the streets. All of these uprisings gave a fillip to openly leftist politicians like Jeremy Corbyn (UK) and Bernie Sanders, both of whom contested elections to become leaders of their respective countries. Parties like Syriza and Podemos actually won governmental power in Greece and Spain respectively.

The 'new left' in western countries brought together numerous segments of working people, including white collar professionals who have been ravaged by financialisation. Growing inequality radicalised those who would otherwise have been considered relatively conservative and favouring the status quo. It became obvious to such previously affluent segments that the future was increasingly bleak under neoliberal, financialised capitalism.

Yet the 'new left' has persistent contradictions. For instance, the Syriza government in Greece was empowered by the Greek people to reject the 'austerity' policies imposed upon them by the European Union but ultimately betrayed popular sentiment and privileged ties with Europe's financial oligarchies. Sanders and Corbyn were unable to win governmental power at all, and have since been pushed again to the margins of mainstream political life. The challenge for left-progressives in the western world is the same as the rest of us: do we attempt to eke out a piece of the political pie under conditions of voracious, financialised capitalism? Or do we articulate a transformative project that transcends the rule of capital and guarantees the material, emotional and other needs of the planet's people?

South Asia

Our regions is as affected by the neoliberal onslaught as any other. India, despite a history of non-alignment and socialist-oriented economic development, is today ruled by the right-wing BJP and has clearly aligned itself with imperialist centres of power and openly executes anti-people economic policies. Just like Trump in the US, Bolsanaro in Brazil and Erdogan in Turkey, Narendra Modi has successfully mobilised middle and even working class segments into the web of reactionary hate. The revocation of article 370 by the Modi-led BJP regime has further subjugated the people of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, while ethnic and religious peripheries throughout India are under attack.

While resistance to majoritarian hate in Kashmir and the rest of India, and opposition to capitalist development in general, remains robust, the influence of parliamentary communist parties is waning. The CPI-M's support for land acquisition in favour of multinational corporations lost contributed to the loss of state elections in West Bengal after 27 years in government. The lessons of such defeats have precipitated attempts by parliamentary communists and all other segments of the Indian left to build united resistance to neoliberal policies and right-wing hate. Mass demonstrations of peasants, workers and students are still prominent in the country and offer hope of a progressive alternative in India, as well as peace and prosperity in the region at large.

In Bangladesh too, all mainstream parties have coalesced around 'free market' ideology. Economic growth remains high at 7% but inequality has increased markedly, and reactionary politics is also finding fertile ground. The once centre-left party of national liberation Awami League, and the Bangladesh National Party (BNP), an offshoot of military dictatorship and Islamism, are, unfortunately, increasingly indistinguishable.

Nepal is the only country in the region where a clear left alternative has taken governmental power. A fragmented left has to some extent forged unity and attempted to build a socialist path of development. This is reflected in the new constitution's article 4(1), which states:

Nepal is an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive, democratic, socialism-oriented federal democratic republican state

Nepal is certainly an inspiration for the manner in which a people's struggle abolished a centuries-old monarchy, instituted a democratic government many other long-term policies with a view towards building socialism. But like all left-wing forces around the world, Nepali comrades also face daunting challenges. How can a small country like Nepal resist the onslaught of globalised finance capitalism on its own?

The Pakistani political and intellectual mainstream

At the most fundamental level, Pakistan's working people remain (colonial) subjects, rather than citizens. Indeed, colonial statecraft has become even more suffocating under conditions of globalised monopoly finance capitalism. Nevertheless popular resistance movements continue to rear their head, genuinely organic responses to dispossession by global capital and the state. Whether it is land, housing, livelihoods or even life itself, working people do collectively resist. Where these movements are not explicit instances of class struggle, they articulate ethnic-national or gendered resistance – all, however, ensure that the hegemony of globalised monopoly finance capitalism and colonial statecraft is never complete.

One of the most universally reviled and resisted forms of colonial statecraft in Pakistan is the ongoing struggle against enforced disappearances. The media, superior judiciary and bourgeois politicians may take up this issue from time to time but have to date never unequivocally stood up to the intelligence agencies and military establishment more generally. Indeed, the establishment remains able and willing to deploy the ideology of 'national security' to neuter all incipient challenges, particularly by invoking the threat of Afghan, Indian and other 'enemies of the state'. The formal educational curriculum and media inculcate this the notion of a 'Muslim' state surrounded by its enemies in generation after generation of young people, thus creating the mandate for the 'Muslim' army to save the country. It is on the basis of this ideological claim that the military has progressively increased its control over economic resources whilst also continually denying the multi-national character of Pakistani society and the polity. Meanwhile the military high command has continued to secure geo-strategic rents from imperialist patrons, thus directing natural resources

away from the needs of the working masses and into the hands of a domestic and global plutocratic elite.

Pakistani generals do not, of course, need to directly hold the reins of government to secure their interests. A significant majority of mainstream politicians are loyal to the establishment-centric structure of power. Even when certain politicians do shake the military's boat, generals always have at their disposal the ultimate spoilers: jihadi and other religio-political organisations that they have nurtured since the 1970s. Indeed, the weaponisation of religion and the politics of hate have reached what appears to be a point of no return, a grim reality evidenced most horrifically in 2017 when young, progressive student Mashal Khan was lynched by his peers on the campus of Abdul Wali Khan University in Mardan. Even the historically relatively peaceful Barelvi sect has radicalised to lethal effect in the form of the Tehrik-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) and other violent groups.

Returning to the formal political process, it is an open secret that the military and judiciary facilitated rigging in the 2018 elections, with the corporate media dutifully playing the role of facilitator. The subsequent 'hybrid' regime confirmed that the militarised structure of power has no meaningful competitors in Pakistan's political and intellectual mainstream. No stakeholder, even when in the opposition, is willing to challenge the rule of imperialist capital or the military-led dispossession of working people, ethnic peripheries and nature. Left-wing parties such as the AWP are completely handicapped in mainstream electoral contests because we do not have billions of rupees to spend like bourgeois politicians. Nor is the media willing to give space to dissident narratives that challenge 'national security' ideology or neoliberal developmentalism. Elections are won by the particular group of politicians/parties that are patronised by the establishment and shortly thereafter the latter starts to undermine the sitting government in an endless cycle.

The military in politics

Without discussing and analysing the role of Pakistan Army one cannot fully analyse the politico-economic ?????

Pakistan's army is a colonial hangover of the British Indian Army which defended the British Empire across the world. By the outcome of the 2nd World War it became clear that British rule in India was no longer viable. But the geopolitical conjuncture was notable for two related developments. First, the emergence of the socialist bloc; and second, the replacement of British imperial hegemony by that of the United States. The US sought to establish control over all of European colonies in Asia and Africa that were slowly gaining freedom from formal colonial rule and generally did so through anti-communist military pacts.

The newly created state of Pakistan inherited the reactionary essence of the British Indian Army and quickly acceded to becoming a client state of the emergent military-centric US imperialism. It has continued to serve the needs of imperialist powers in the ensuing seven decades and it is therefore impossible to make sense of Pakistan's polity without always foregrounding the nexus of imperialism-military establishment.

Ayub Khan's dictatorship cemented the relationship between Rawalpindi and Washington, while creating the conditions for the Pakistani army to develop its corporate empire. The elected regimes led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto – and then Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto to a lesser extent – did try and take space back from the military establishment but the latter was always patronised by US imperialism, especially in terms of military aid, and thus Pakistan's consistent slide towards a militarised state and society continued unabated. In turn Pakistan's foreign policy has always been subject to the approval of the State Department, particularly during the tenure of martial law regimes. Pakistani generals do not antagonise the US

beyond a point because of their heavy reliance on US dollars and military equipment.

Yet imperialism is never 'loyal' to its clients, and so it is that Pakistan and its people have suffered the fallouts during the conjunctures that the US has 'abandoned' the country. The army top brass has nevertheless managed to maintain its privileges throughout thick and thin, generally handing over government to a weak civilian regime so that the latter take all of the blame for the relative decline in US aid and other forms of patronage.

As already noted, the military's total manipulation of the political process has never been so evident as the 2018 general election when the Nawaz Sharif-led government was put to the sword and all sorts of methods were deployed to bring the PTI to power. It is worth bearing in mind that the extremely explicit manipulation of the political process reflects that the army has itself evolved and its interests diversified greatly over the decades, particularly in terms of the ever expanding economic interests of high-ranking military officers. Land allotments, high-paying jobs in army-run enterprises, and many other 'perks' have grown rapidly since the turn of the century. The army is, therefore, completely opposed to land reforms or wealth redistribution of any kind as such measures would directly affect the top brass. In a similar vein, entities like the Army Welfare Trust (AWT) are now worth more than US\$20 billion (half in landholdings and half in other assets). The army directly controls about one-third of heavy manufacturing assets in the country, while army officers hold 7% of Pakistan's total private wealth. The army holds 35% of total corporate capital, and 50% of all gated housing schemes (through DHA, Shaheen Foundation, Fauji Foundation and more).

It is therefore self-evident that the military has no interest in supporting genuine democracy or constitutional order as all such political arrangements would inhibit the profiteering of its top brass. There is no other way to reduce the footprint of the military establishment in Pakistani politics without undermining its corporate empire.

The various forms of popular resistance in Pakistan

Marx and Engels wrote that all history is the history of class struggle. But the forms of this struggle inevitably change over time. It is noteworthy that the epithet of 'the people' is common place at the present time, even though mainstream politics is increasingly shaped by 'middle class' discourses. It is therefore essential for left-progressives to identify all pro-people forms of class and popular struggle that can inform a mass revolutionary politics.

The AWP's ultimate objective is the building of a classless society where all forms of exploitation and oppression are relegated to the dustbin of history. In this long and drawn out struggle, we foreground workers, peasants and all other segments that fall into the broader category of working people. And seek to collectively organise them. At the present time, a meagre 2% of the total labour force is unionised in any way. Most working class segments have been ravaged by neoliberal economic policies and are increasingly subject to casualisation and daily-wage/home-based/contractual work. This requires us to not only revive the formal trade union sector but also expand the net of union-building to all segments of the labour force that are currently described as 'informal'. In urban areas, this means organising both at the point of production as well as residential neighbourhoods and any other site where it is possible to create collectivities of working people.

Meanwhile at the village level we continue to struggle for the basic tenure entitlements of small and landless peasants, whilst also trying to organise agricultural wage labourers who have no access to land and are generally subject to additional discrimination on the basis of their caste identity. In this regard, the increasingly monopolistic hold of multinational companies on agricultural input affects all working segments in village

society and must also be resisted as vociferously as possible. More generally we continue to defend the commons and push for agrarian policy that gives all working class segments some form of food/livelihood security.

It is also worth bearing in mind that migration to small towns and big cities – and, indeed, abroad – has changed the dynamics of what was once a self-enclosed village household. If one sibling in a nuclear family continues to work the land, others have migrated to urban areas for work or are employed in non-agricultural occupations. In a similar vein, smallholding peasants either rent out or rent in land from peers based on whether or not they have access to capital necessary to complete crop cycles. The availability of capital also determines whether household or hired in labour is deployed. In general all of these developments confirm that village life has undergone significant transformation. The most exploited segment remains landless wage labourers but it is this segment that is the most difficult to organise, in part because such labourers migrate seasonally. Meanwhile small landholders tend to have economic interests directly opposed to landless labourers. If there is a politics around which they can come together it is that which challenges input dealers (arthis) and MNCs.

Here it is important to note that Pakistan's ruling class and multilateral donors like the IMF have in recent years placed a lot of emphasis on what has been called 'corporate farming' – and thinly veiled handover of agricultural lands to multinational agribusiness companies producing for the export market. Civil and military personnel are also major beneficiaries of this de fact land allotment policy. As such policies reflect the growing power of big capital in the agrarian sector, and the gradual expulsion of small and landless peasants from agricultural in toto. A related phenomenon is the growing proportion of women as agricultural labourers, the majority of whom are exploited far more than men. Overall the transformation of agriculture is coeval with increased (peri) urbanisation, reflected especially in the expansion of gated housing communities and other processes of

financialisation. Villages, forests and other common resources are being expropriated for DHA, Bahria Town and many other similar schemes while already sparse water supplies are directed away from smallholder agriculture towards real estate. Urban geographies are also being transformed in the inner city where katchi abadis and slum areas are bulldozed to make way for real estate. Even where working class neighbourhoods survive, they lack water, sanitation, gas, electricity and most other basic amenities. Despite this, rural-urban migration carries on at breakneck speed, as does the expansion of the urban 'informal' sector which represents the only source of livelihood for the teeming masses. The scale and scope of this sector spans all sorts of occupations, all of which are volatile and subject to repression/high levels of exploitation.

A large number of Pakistani working class migrants leave the country for work. There are approximately 10 million Pakistanis working in the Gulf, Europe and north America – 1 million are low-skilled labourers in the UAE and other Gulf kingdoms and out of 10 million only 700,000 are registered voters back home. Total remittances from migrant workers abroad reached US\$33 billion in 2021.

Approximately half of Pakistani migrant workers abroad enjoy few or no political and economic rights in the countries where they reside. The situation is particularly bad in the Gulf where migrant workers cannot engage in any kind of collective bargaining, business or even marry locals. Thousands are locked up in local jails. Many of the contractors that arrange for workers to reach the Gulf collude with the authorities to keep them in condition of semi-serfdom. Workers are fined heavily for the smallest of misdemeanours, live in sub-human conditions and have their passports confiscated without any redress. Taxi drivers in Dubai are regularly subjected to extortionist fines. AWP believes firmly that migrant workers abroad should enjoy basic rights, including minimum wages, decent living conditions and the right to vote back home.

The struggle against dispossession and attempt to forge new social relations

The transformation of capitalism on a global scale has given rise many distinct social formations but class remains the major question that shapes political life in all contemporary societies. Indeed, the naked expropriation and exploitation of people and nature by the nexus of state and capital has become more acute than ever. The struggle waged by organised trade unions and peasant movements in previous historical periods continues today but with new forms of organisation emerging alongside older ones. The struggle against 'dispossession' is today increasingly prominent because monopoly finance capital is now engaged in more and more violent land and other grabs in comparison to the high-point of industrial capitalism in the 20th century. As such popular movements to protect land, water, forests, minerals and other natural resources that constitute the livelihoods of billions are amongst the vanguards of our struggle today.

Land reform, for instance, remains an essential cog of progressive struggle, but it is now extendable beyond the agricultural landscape to (peri) urban geographies. Even in agriculture it is important to name and challenge multinational agribusiness and civil/military absentee landlords alongwith traditional 'feudal remnants'. Meanwhile many working people struggle for health, education, housing and other basic amenities on a daily basis and the left must find ways and means to integrate such struggles into our long-term political horizon. Even the demand to give all classes and genders access to public space is a left-wing demand. All of this must happen alongside classical trade unionism at the workplace (and against privatisation in general).

However, resistance itself is insufficient. Nor is it sufficient to simply paraphrase our future horizon as 'all resources will be

owned by the state'. We will need to articulate how to ensure that the collective resources of society serve collective interests of all people in democratic ways. This is not just a question of meeting material needs but also of an elevated and dialectical social consciousness across individual and collective spheres of life. AWP will continue to strive to bring together all forms of struggle in rural and urban Pakistan, across metropolitan and peripheral areas, that not only defend the resource commons in the interests of working people but also provide a glimpse of the socialist futures that we seek to build.

Women's liberation from patriarchal oppression

There is no single social segment more oppressed in contemporary Pakistan than women and other oppressed genders. While there has been progress in reducing formal – including legal – gender discrimination, on-ground realities are largely unchanging. While all societies in the world today are patriarchal societies, the daily lives of Pakistan women and transgenders are especially oppressive. Domestic and other forms of sexual violence – including murder – are pervasive. Women are still entitled to only half the inheritance as men, and are similarly considered only ‘half’ of men in terms of legal testimony. Women engaged in paid work not only earn less than men but also work in considerably worse conditions. The cultural norms of Pakistani patriarchy preclude women choosing who they love and marry, and do not even grant the privilege of walking anonymously in public without facing catcalls and other forms of harassment.

On the one hand the feminist movement seeks to address formal and legal discrimination against women/oppressed genders, alongwith other systematic markers of patriarchy like employment, individual liberties and so-called ‘traditional’ cultural practices. On the other hand Marxist and socialist feminists are entirely distinct from the dominant liberal feminist strand of the movement because the former link everyday practices of patriarchy to underlying class, ethnic-national, imperialist and other structures of power that enshrine women’s subjugation in the logic of capital and colonial statecraft. In this sense revolutionary feminism also considers working class men as victims of the same capitalist, patriarchal and racist order and attempts to build a politics that both acknowledges the differential nature of exploitation/oppression faced by different genders while positing a shared universal horizon. For this to be possible the role of women and oppressed genders in the revolutionary struggle has to be acknowledged to be no less significant than that of men – thus the slogan ‘Society will only be free when women are free’ which has been pioneered in the contemporary phase of the feminist movement by AWP.

We understand that, on the whole, more women have seen mobility beyond the patriarchal household due to the penetration of capitalist social relations. Whether in agriculture, manufacturing or services, as well as the rapidly expanding gig economy, more women are joining the labour force. However, this does not mean that gender gaps – in pay, working conditions or other indicators – are being reduced. In fact, there is ever intensifying ‘feminisation of poverty’. In any case it is worth bearing in mind that the majority of working women are not actually accounted for in the formal labour force. For instance, women engaged in domestic service work in elite mansions are subject to completely arbitrary abuse by their employers, often deprived of pay and forced to perform all sorts of reproductive labour. Of course a vast majority of women even in their own homes undertake care and other forms of work which are simply indispensable for the functioning of society but are completely invisibilised in the male-dominated mainstream.

Seen as a totality, women, girls and other oppressed genders are simply not considered equally human in Pakistani society and face all types of coercion so as to reinforce their ‘sub-human’ status. But resistance to patriarchal domination and violence persists nevertheless. Girls fight their parents into allowing them to go to school, and later on to find paid work outside the home. They resist so as to marry of their own choice, while constantly and determinedly staving off harassment of all kinds. The AWP sees all these forms of daily resistance as part of the long struggle to dismantle patriarchy. And we are particularly focused on mobilising the new generation of young girls and women who are using digital technologies both inside and outside the home to build a new progressive feminist movement. The party sees Pakistan’s youth as a major plank of left-wing politics in the years ahead and in this regard girls and women who not only resist patriarchy but also challenge capitalist social relations will be central to our collective struggle. To secure education, health, recreation and other basic entitlements for all working people is amongst our fundamental objectives but the struggle for human freedom is just as much about dismantling patriarchal norms and institutions. Men and boys are also unable to fully become human under capitalist patriarchy and so the feminist movement is as much about the freedom of men as it is about women.

The National Question

All modern nation-states necessarily propagate an 'official history' that conforms to the interests of state elites but the militarised state apparatus in Pakistan is arguably more totalitarian than most others with respect to rigid ideological control of the polity. This has resulted in the deep politicisation of the 'national question', innumerable identity conflicts and contradictions as well as huge outbreaks of violent repression, most notably in 1971 with erstwhile east Pakistan. However the question of 'what does it mean to be Pakistani' remains unresolved. On the one hand is the dominant and exclusionary narrative which is centred around Islam and the Urdu language. On the other hand is the notion that Baloch, Sindhi, Pashtun, Siraiki, Gilgit-Baltistani, Kashmiri, Muhajir and even Punjabi all constitute distinct ethnic-nations, which in turn informs resistance to the unitary state ideology and centralisation of political and economic resources.

In recent times Baloch, Sindhi and Pashtun national movements have been increasingly pushed to the wall, particularly since the state policy of enforced disappearances – of political workers, writers, poets, journalists and more – was operationalised during the Musharraf dictatorship. The contradiction is over identity claims but is also irreducibly material, extending from political self-determination to the control of natural and other economic resources. As already mentioned, such conflicts have a long history and it should be mentioned that east Pakistan's population became increasingly attached to its Bengali identity with each passing instance of west Pakistan's military-led elite depriving it its rightful role in economic and political power-sharing. Pakistan remains the only modern nation-state where a majority of the population (Bengali) seceded from the minority (west Pakistan's combined population).

The AWP is firmly committed to transforming Pakistan's unitary structure so as to enshrine the multi-national character of the state whilst also ensuring that the working masses of all ethnic-nations come to acquire leadership of their respective political movements and thereby displacing feudal-tribal remnants as well as capitalist ruling classes. None of this will happen solely in the discursive realm and the party also stands with all other progressives who resist the onslaught of state nationalism and middle class hegemony in the name of 'development' of the ethnic peripheries. We stand for a genuinely voluntary federal system in which population and coercive force are displaced as the underlying principles of statecraft and instead equality and need enshrined as principles of cooperation between ethnic-nations.

The withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan has once again brought Pashtun and Baloch national questions into the spotlight. A new 'great game' has been triggered which will necessarily lead to new realignments on the part of ethnic-national movements within Pakistan. The AWP is committed to bringing together all progressive elements in various ethnic-national movements who agree on principles of the right to self-determination for all nations, anti-imperialism and a non-aligned foreign policy.

We will also continue to foreground the neo-colonial character of the Pakistani state, especially in light of the 'official history' propagated by Pakistan's mainstream educational curriculum which is completely at odds with the explicitly repressive character of the state machinery, particularly in the ethnic peripheries. The army, police, judiciary, and various other administrative arms of the state continue to reinforce colonial domination and it is ultimately when a mass working class movement with strong roots in Punjab challenges this colonial character of the state in unison with ethnic-national movements that political, economic and cultural transformation will take place, so as to establish a genuinely decolonised, socialist, democratic and federal political order.

Secularism - The Struggle to Separate Religion and State

Secularism is a doctrine that attributes social, economic and political matters to human volition and agency, beyond the spheres of metaphysics and religion. Even more specifically it demands that the state be impartial in matters of religion, not only allowing the existence of various religious beliefs within its borders but also protecting the rights of all religious denominations.

There are very few countries in the world where religion has been weaponised politically as has happened in Pakistan. The military establishment has used religion as a tool to forward its interests both inside the country and as a foreign policy tool. The slogan that has always accompanied this cynical policy is 'greater national interest' but in truth the only interest at play has been a narrow ruling clique that has victimised women, religious minorities and many more by narrowly equating culture to a particular interpretation of Islam. Indeed, this weaponisation of religion has also served to suppress left-wing progressives that have been at the forefront of anti-establishment struggle but have easily been dismissed as 'traitors' and even more threateningly, as 'heretics'.

The militarised state apparatus has used deployed religion as a political tool from the very outset but this policy intensified greatly during the Zia dictatorship. The support for 'jihad' in Afghanistan and India led to the indoctrination of an entire generation of young people and this has led to the penetration of a retrogressive ideas into the deep recesses of Pakistani society. Repression has only increased with time, the mob killing of Mashal Khan on a university campus in Mardan clear evidence of the extent of the crisis. The unspeakable treatment of women and girls at the molecular level is also. Even narratives of history and those who are considered 'heroes' have been given a particularly religious-nationalist colour.

After 9/11 and the onset of the so-called 'war on terror' many claims were made about 'enlightened moderation' but in fact underlying policies have remained intact. Hate-mongering is increasingly commonplace, while the educational curriculum and

corporate media continue to produce indoctrinated subjects. There is no question that Pakistani society – and its youthful majority – is caught in a race to the bottom and the struggle for secularism must be at the forefront of any progressive movement, not at the behest of US imperialism or other foreign powers but so as to provide future generations the chance to defeat the politics of hate through the weaponisation of religion.

This is particularly true as a young population whose aspirations cannot be met is increasingly drawn towards hateful political ideologies. The military establishment has learned no lessons from history and is, in fact, now weaponizing even religious sects like the Barelvis that have historically eschewed militarism. The way in which mobs are being mobilised to enact renegade violence at even the faintest claims of ‘blasphemy’ is nothing short of barbaric.

The AWP firmly believes in transforming the Pakistani state so that it genuinely comes to protect all religious beliefs equally. The party rejects the notion that the Pakistani state must uphold a particular religious ideology. Reform of the educational curriculum and media narratives is essential to propagate the adage that all religions promote peace and are equally deserving of respect. The so-called Single National Curriculum (SNC) introduced by the ‘hybrid’ PTI government must be overturned as it threatens to intensify sectarian, ethnic-national and many other deep contradictions in Pakistani society. Indeed, the SNC also represents a pushback against provincial autonomy and the 18th constitutional amendment. The slogan ‘one nation, one curriculum’ directly impedes the federating units from promoting their own languages, cultures and histories and thereby exacerbates inter-provincial tensions rather than ameliorating them. More generally the emphasis in the SNC on ‘religious’ instruction will only serve to increase all kinds of social repression, particularly against religious minorities which are otherwise granted formal protection by Article 22(1) of the constitution. In principle no religious group will be forced to undertake religious instruction outside of their own free will. The AWP believes that only a secular education can provide the basis for a genuinely peaceful society, free of class and all other deep-seated social conflicts.

The struggle for harmony between humanity and nature, for our collective survival

If there is one point on which all progressives around the world can agree today it is the imperative of a unified political struggle to deal with the ecological crisis. This is not just a matter of future generations of humanity but the planet itself. Capitalist industrialism has always been premised on the conquest of nature and this is no longer tenable because the 'rationality' of capitalism has brought us to a point of no return, even if the proponents of 'virtual reality' continue to distract us from the increasingly perilous state of the world. Climate politics is now attracting a lot of attention, particularly amongst younger generations; it is important to bear in mind that young, working masses will indeed be burdened with much of the fallout of the ecological crisis, but at present the dominant ideology of 'development' is actually exacerbating this crisis. For a socialist 'developmental' paradigm to be meaningful in this day and age it is essential to harmonise human needs with the environment. This means rejecting the kinds of lifestyles prevalent in 'advanced countries' where conspicuous consumption of energy and commodities in general is not only making it impossible for the majority of humanity to acquire basic amenities but also is depleting our already declining natural resource base. This means moving focus away from limitless capitalist 'development' towards a more sustainable and just developmental paradigm.

This does not mean that we collectivise poverty but in fact that we dismantle the hegemony of the profit motive that is driving the preposterous use of unrenewable energy and other natural resources. The challenge is to distinguish what are the real needs of the mass of humanity and ensure these while rooting out luxurious and conspicuous consumption of the

propertied classes. Industries like plastic are symptomatic. It has been made almost ubiquitous by those who profit from its production but it can ultimately be replaced, as can nonrenewable forms of energy like oil and gas if we instead invest in renewable sources like solar and wind. The truth is that the capitalist system actually enforces ideological control and manufactures many apparent 'needs' which drive conspicuous consumption. Instead we need to genuinely rationalise processes of development so as to prioritise real human needs, including recreational and emotional ones, whilst also ensuring harmony with our eco-systems and non-human life forms. It is this imaginary of non-capitalist development that must be at the forefront of socialist politics today so as to win over the majority of young, working people to our cause.

Revolutionary politics in the digital age

The creation of microelectronic conductors in the 6th decade of the 20th century completely changed the trajectory of human history. Digital, self-operating machines became commonplace in many industries as regulatory feedback systems created a whole new stage in the production process. This led to a major displacement of human labour and the onset of a new phase of capital-intensive production. This led to a new set of skilled workers – including engineers and other technicians – becoming central to the operation of high-tech industry. The number of workers employed by French car manufacturer, Renault, for instance fell to a fourth of the previous amount. In other industries the percentages are even more stark; robots and self-operating machines have become increasingly prominent not only in assembly-line production but even in white-collar office work environments. This has resulted in huge job losses for office workers; over one 12-month period 300,000 American office workers were fired while over a five-year period this number rose to 4 million.

Similar processes have taken place in the services sector, many otherwise people of means being made redundant in high-profile multinational corporations. On the other hand, a certain set of skilled workers – including engineers as well as managerial staff have seen their salaries increase consistently and their roles in the MNC sector become increasingly more central. This has resulted in greater segmentation of the workforce, as well as the emergence and production of increasingly new kinds of commodities as well as fictitious capital.

A few decades on, the further development of informations and communication technologies through what has been called the ‘information revolution’ has transformed social relations. The ‘internet of things’ has created new experiences of time and space that were hitherto unimaginable. Between 2003 and 2016,

the amount of information made available on the internet exceeded everything all known information in prior recorded history! It is this same 'information revolution' and associated digital technologies that have facilitated the financialisation of capitalism since the 1970s; unlimited quantities of capital can now span the globe instantaneously by simply pressing a button/key. A similar 'leap' has been made by military-industrial establishments that can now wage war in one geography through manless drones – it is eminently possible that in decades to come wars will be waged with robots rather than human soldiers.

Some thinkers have argued that it is this relentless 'free' circulation of information that will bring an end to commodity production and capitalism itself. The information revolution will herald, they claim, unparalleled development in health and other similar sectors to the benefit of all humankind. A similar argument is made with regards to the inherently democratic nature of virtual spaces which, they say, ruling classes cannot control.

But recent years have confirmed instead that the Big Tech companies (like Google, Amazon, Apple, Facebook, etc) have become huge and unaccountable monopolies which, in collusion with the state – and particularly military establishments – are not only shaping our minds in unprecedented ways but have also spread a web of surveillance with no precedent in human history. Meanwhile 'smart' gadgets now span the globe and are, in effect, cementing the hegemony of the commodity form, each individual now increasingly addicted to the 'ease' and 'comfort' facilitated by smart technology. As far as advancements in health and other similar sectors, it is not at all unambiguous that the ethical and political implications of things like genetic engineering will be beneficial to humankind or if in fact they will hasten our collective demise.

The effects of digitalisation on politics is increasingly clear. Political communication has largely migrated to social media platforms. The platforms are being deployed by virtually all

political actors, including parties. Donald Trump, for instance, regularly used Twitter and other platforms over traditional press conferences. Progressive movements have also benefited from such platforms – take, for example, the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) here in Pakistan. Reactionary political organisations like the PTI have, however, more successfully mobilised young people through social media. Around the world there are examples of social media mobilisation on both the left and right; the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, Brazil's Bolsanaro, India's Modi, etc.

The digitalisation of politics is only going to intensify with time. Our existing party models will have to adapt or become irrelevant. The political lexicon is changing in accordance not only with digitalisation but also class, gender demographic and other social-structural change. In any case it is clear that digital networks will totally transform society and it is up to left-progressives today to adapt their means and methods in ways that previous generations of revolutionaries did due to technological change. At the same time it is also important to acknowledge that the technological leap that we are witnessing in the current conjuncture is qualitatively different to anything that has come before, encapsulated in the emergence of artificial intelligence which opens up the possibility of sentient machines, which, when juxtaposed upon the actually existing logics of the capitalist system, harken to extremely dystopic potentialities. Only by transcending the rule of capital can we hope to harness technology – including AI – to acquire not only all basic freedoms for all humankind but also achieve harmonious co-existence with the natural environment. In this regard it is essential to expose how technology is being deployed by state and capital to aid exploitation and oppression otherwise the nexus of Big Tech and ruling classes around the globe will lead us towards collective ruin.

Technological change also means further automation and this is taking place in different way across the core and periphery of the global system. However, it is important to be cognizant

that even as automation proceeds there is no scenario in which human labour becomes incidental to material production. Furthermore, Marx reminds us that capitalism in any case needs to ensure social reproduction of workers so that there are enough consumers in the market to sustain the circuit of capital.

Finally it is essential for revolutionaries to remain centrally involved in struggles for democracy and civil liberties because of the above-mentioned potential for the nexus of digital technology, capital and state to lead us towards unprecedented forms of totalitarianism, particularly under the guise of 'development' and 'security'. In fact the first principle of revolutionary struggle in our times is to link with all oppressed peoples struggling for freedom and democracy in all their guises. And to convince these disparate segments to stop competing with one another in digital spaces and instead be more strategic in the use of such spaces to build a genuinely anti-systemic challenge to capitalism, patriarchy, national oppression and imperialism. The AWP will work tirelessly to build exactly such a united front.

Youth and students in the vanguard, the future is theirs!

In Pakistan, like the world at large, the left's biggest challenge is to meaningfully and convincingly communicate its ideas and project to the mass of people. In Pakistan, the mass of people is young – 65% of the population is below the age of 23. Most of this mass is currently drawn towards reactionary ideas and it is up to us to draw this majority towards our own politics so as to build a socialist future.

Throughout modern history students and youth have been in the vanguard of revolutionary movements and today a growing number of young people are once again finding their way to the Left. From Pakistan to India, America to Sweden and in many other countries, young people are disillusioned with traditional politics and looking for new avenues to express their aspirations. It is this youth that is most prominent on increasingly ubiquitous social media platforms. However, they are yet to be connected in concrete organisational structures. In Pakistan, one of the main reasons for this lack is the ban on student unions which has remained in place since 1984. This ban has aided the military establishment's vilification of politics and political parties which has resulted in large numbers of young people wanting to distance themselves from political organisations. The AWP is therefore committed to joining other democratic forces in repealing the ban on student unions whilst also finding ways and means to reach out to and mobilise those youth active in digital spaces and eventually convince them to become members of our organisations.

What is to be done?

In light of the analysis presented in this document about the domestic and international political economy, as well as the basic principles inscribed in the AWP manifesto, we reiterate our commitment to political struggle so as to build a society free of all kinds of exploitation – a genuinely socialist society. To do so, we vow to organise the working class – in all of its guises – and continually seek guidance from the principles of Marxist-Leninism towards the following goals:

1. To ensure coherence and discipline within our organisational circles, with the party's federal leadership constantly imparting direction to its lower tiers whilst engaging working class and other oppressed segments of society through various means
2. To secure and end to feudal-tribal remnants and big landholdings through land reform (25 acres ceiling and 50 acres ceiling for irrigated and non-irrigated holdings respectively). Unutilised lands to be allotted to landless segments including agricultural labourers. Cooperatives to be encouraged, especially small and landless segments in barani areas. Displacement of labour in agriculture due to mechanisation to be offset by appropriate labour laws. Wider agrarian policy support mechanisms through the organisation of small landholders to weaken the monopolies of big landowners.
3. Rigorous implementation of rural housing guarantees along the lines of *The Punjab Jinnah Abadis for Non Properties in Rural Areas Act* (Act III of 1986) to be secured through meaningful working class organisations in both villages and peri-urban areas.
4. Substantial cutbacks in governmental expenditure on defence and debt servicing so as to acquire meaningful economic sovereignty. To be supplemented by a complete overhaul in foreign policy with an emphasis on peace, trade, visa free travel and various other forms of cooperation with neighbouring countries. Rejection of all neoliberal dictates from the IMF and

other global institutions. Rehabilitation of all public enterprises. Organisation of the formal workforce under the guise of the Pakistan Trade Union Federation (PTUF) and other sister organisations. Organisation of the vast majority of working in the 'informal sector' through appropriate modalities. Implementation of minimum wage, basic working hours and other labour laws across all working class segments.

5. Struggle for a genuinely democratic and federal system of government free from the interference of the military establishment. All ethnic-nations to be voluntary and equal members of the federation such that only finance, defence, communications and foreign policy fall into the purview of the federal tier. Provinces to be the most powerful tier albeit with meaningful devolution of power to local governments. Meaningful reform in electoral legislation to reduce role of money and also enshrine principle of proportional representation in parliament. All these democratic ends to be achieved in alliance with wide swathe of pro-democratic forces.

6. Total subjugation of the national security apparatus, including intelligence agencies, to the will of the people. An end to the heinous practice of enforced disappearances alongwith all other forms of political repression.

7. Bringing an end to the weaponisation of religion, sectarian violence and all other manifestations of political religiosity. Personal beliefs to be protected by law and meaningful institutions created to enshrine secular principles in the polity.

8. Strong emphasis on cultural regeneration and scientific education through complete overhaul of educational curricula and pedagogical methods. Struggle to revive student unions by working with and through the Progressive Students Federation (PrSF). Alongside quality public education the prioritisation of gainful employment for youth as well as public health for all.

9. Dismantling patriarchy and sexual/gender-based oppression in all its guises with and through the Women's Democratic Front (WDF) with the express objective of equal representation, pay and equality in all other spheres of public life for women and all

other oppressed genders. Also address inequality and oppression in spheres of social reproduction, including the nuclear family. Transgenders to be given more importance in organisational work.

10. Adapting our organisational methods to correspond to the information revolution. The deployment of social media platforms to supplement the party's work, and particularly to propagate our ideology as well as alliance-building so as to take forward revolutionary political agendas, particularly amongst younger segments of society.

11. Strengthening links with revolutionary internationalists around the world, particularly in the context of anti-imperialist struggle against the US and its western allies. Particular emphasis on joining the International of Communist and Workers Parties which has representation in more than 70 countries.

12. Building of meaningful united fronts within Pakistan so as to bring together all progressive nationalists, democrats, feminists and secular forces to take the country closer to fundamental social change.