



Full Spectrum Domination

The offensive of US capitalism

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The world economy entered a period of slower growth in the early 1970s. In the US this slowdown was accompanied by an increased penetration of the home market and a fall in the rate of profit. The response of US capitalism was an offensive on a number of fronts. It launched an attack against its own working class with the aim of reducing the cost of labor, intensifying the exploitation of labor, and in this way increasing profits and productivity. Part of this process was the increased use of new technology and the moving of production to locations where labor and environmental costs were lower. This led to a partial recovery in the profit rate and some success in combating its rivals at home and on the world market. US capitalism was fighting back.

During the 1980s the struggle against the stalinist regimes of the former Soviet Union and China was intensified. Every opportunity was taken to bring down these crisis-ridden systems, including funding and organizing Islamic militant forces which included bin Laden. In the early 1990s the regimes of the former Soviet Union fell and the stalinist regime in China began its long march to capitalism. The new world situation facing US capitalism was summed up in the report of a major US-based corporation: "Suddenly our potential market has been increased by billions of potential consumers". US capitalism moved to seize this potential market and more. Its foreign policy was changed from 'Containment' – the stalinist world no longer existed to be contained – to what it now calls 'Full Spectrum Domination'. This means the total domination of the world's labor, resources and markets.

In the early 1990s US capitalism went to war against Iraq. Later in the decade it went to war against Serbia. No new regional power in the middle east, and no new power in the Balkans which could link with the new capitalist regime in Russia, was to be tolerated. As well as securing its immediate aims in these areas US capitalism was showing in action that it and nobody else was going to rule the world. Along with these wars US capitalism used its dominant position in the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization to blackmail and intimidate any regime that tried to carry out economic policies that would restrict US capital in any way, or that would not go along with its global capitalist offensive.

The two Clinton regimes here in the US were committed to these policies. But US capitalism, to put it mildly, was never happy with their efforts. Clinton tended to seek agreement with its rivals before he acted on the world stage. This left the decisive forces of US capitalism foaming at the mouth. They saw themselves as the most powerful economic, military and technological force in the world. No other power could stand up to them. They believed that the working class threat of overthrowing capitalism and building a new society had vanished forever in the ruins of the stalinist states. What they demanded was an all-out offensive on every front to enforce their total domination of the world and to roll back all the concessions that capitalism had been forced to make under the threat of world revolution in the past century. The Clinton regime was not ruthless enough in pursuing Full Spectrum Domination.

This is where the Bush regime came in. It is made up of corporate thugs direct from the boardrooms of some of the most vicious corporations in the US. Cheney, O'Neill, Rumsfeld, White, Bush himself: all have connections with the energy industry and, in the case of Bush

and Cheney, connections with the oil industry and the bin Laden family. With the Bush regime the most vicious and decisive section of US capitalism got its own direct agents in the White House. It no longer had to work through jumped-up middle class elements like Clinton and Reich.

In the first months of the Bush presidency a number of international agreements and negotiations, in areas such as global warming, so-called national missile defence, money laundering, etc., were unilaterally broken. US capitalism was making clear it would do as it wished and its rivals could take it or leave it. This stepped-up offensive was given an enormous boost by the events of September 11 when 4,000 people were killed in the attacks in New York and Washington. The *Wall Street Journal* of December 18 ran an article entitled 'US plays by 9/11 rules', which stated: "These mean that we help our friends, punish those who impede us, and annihilate those who attack us". This was US capitalism, or US imperialism, stating its policy.

The details of all the forces involved in the September 11 attacks will probably never be known. Speculation on the world's stock markets against airline shares before the 11th show that some forces with significant capital knew of the events in advance. Willie Brown, the mayor of San Francisco, was told by his head of security on September 10 to cancel his plans to fly to New York the next day as there was talk of serious problems in the sky over New York for the 11th. Brown stayed in San Francisco. The CIA and the Bush family have proven links to the bin Laden family and bin Laden himself.

Whoever knew or was involved either in planning these events or in letting them happen, the September 11 attacks were a gift to the Bush regime and to the global plans of US capitalism. Its aim of full spectrum domination was now transformed into the 'war against terrorism'. The attack on Afghanistan opens the door to action in the Philippines, Somalia, Indonesia, Iraq etc. US capitalism, by exploiting the September 11 attacks, has won support to intervene militarily across the globe, supposedly for its 'war against terrorism', but in reality in support of its objective of full spectrum domination and to enforce its global capitalist offensive internationally. The attacks have also allowed it to whip its rivals into line behind its policies, at least for the time being.

The oil and gas reserves in central southern Asia are a major factor in the war in Afghanistan. The reports of the US energy industry itself predict that oil production in the world is set to peak this decade. US capitalism is determined to take control of all the major sources of oil in the world. It is no accident that so many in the Bush regime have roots in the energy industries. But the 'war against terrorism' is not only about oil and gas. This is but one part of the global offensive of US capitalism, which has a number of objectives. The US is aiming for total domination over all its rivals, to become the unchallenged power in the world, and is also aiming to increase its exploitation of the former colonial countries. However, this is not all that US capitalism has in mind.

An essential part of their global strategy is a major assault on the working class, including its own working class. Under the pressure of the international working class and the threat of world revolution in the last century, US and world capitalism had to make significant concessions. Gains were made by workers in many countries in income, in the workplace, in health care, education, organizing and democratic rights. Large sectors of the economy in many countries were taken into state ownership. US capitalism's global offensive aims to take back all these concessions. This is the aim of the policies of the IMF and WTO. In particular, the cost of labor is to be reduced to that of the lowest-paid workers in the world. One aim of the military actions of the 'war against terrorism' is to back up these policies. This is what is not understood by the US working class as it supports Bush and his 'war against terrorism'. The US working class are also a target in US capitalism's war. The reduction of their wages, conditions and rights is one of the key objectives of the global

capitalist offensive led by US capitalism, of which the 'war against terrorism' is a central component.

Here in the US after September 11 American flags sprang up everywhere. From the windows and radio antennas of cars and trucks, out of homes and businesses, at sporting events and concerts, out of trees and buildings, out of the backpacks of yuppies. It was just about impossible to meet anyone who did not support going to war. 'United We Stand'... 'God Save America'... 'Support the War against Terrorism'... these were the slogans that swept the country. Support for Bush reached the 90 per cent level. Then the Taliban regime fell, with minimal resistance and with no US casualties to mention. Support continues to be high for Bush and the 'war against terrorism'. This is the overwhelming sentiment in the US at the moment amongst all classes.

This is partly so because there is no mass force explaining what is really going on. The head of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), Sweeney, was elected with the promise that he would organize the unorganized and take labor forward. The opposite has been the case as there has been one defeat after another, and splits and divisions in the federation. Sweeney, in his speech to its recent convention, bleated that Bush was "waging a vicious war on working families". His 'solution' was to continue the cooperation with the employers known as 'teamwork'—in other words, cooperate with the employers in their attacks, in their 'war' against workers. In the same speech Sweeney "applauded President Bush" for the "excellent job" he was doing in the war in Afghanistan. With no opposition worth the name in the unions, working class people cannot see any alternative.

However, this does not mean that it will be all straight sailing for US capitalism. As its war in Afghanistan and elsewhere enters a more problematic stage, it is set to face increased difficulties at home also. The signs of the future increased class conflict have not been totally eradicated since September 11. Over 200 teachers were jailed for striking in New Jersey. The New York firefighters fought with the New York cops when the number of people searching the site of the World Trade Center was reduced. This was after the gold from the safes in the rubble was found, while the remains of many firefighters and others remained buried. Two million US citizens are prisoners in US jails, out of a total world prison population of eight million. Unemployment is rising and living standards are falling. Bush has given a tax cut, 90 per cent of which goes to the wealthiest top 10 per cent of the population, and is increasing military spending by \$48 billion. As one Republican senator said recently, "it is guns and no butter". The situation of the US working class is changing for the worse.

A major factor that has kept the working class movement in the US quiescent over the past decade has been the economic growth cycle of the 1990s. By working harder, taking on an extra job, even in some cases by investing in the stock markets—that is, by individual actions—the great majority of workers were able to get by throughout the 1990s. Given the fact that the union leaders' policies led to one defeat after another, the alternative of organizing and striking and fighting seemed to be less of an option than working harder and trying to play the system. There were a few exceptions. The carpenters' wildcat strike in northern California was one. The elected leader of the strike, a rank and file carpenter and socialist, was expelled from the union for life after it was over. In St Paul, Minnesota unorganized workers occupied their plant and forced the bosses to recognize them and make concessions. But these were isolated battles as strike figures fell to an all-time low. In the main, working class people sought to survive through individual action, not collective action. The long growth cycle in the economy, combined with the taking on of unprecedented debt, made it possible for the majority to survive without collective action.

This is now coming to an end, as the present recession drags on. There have been many predictions that it is about to end, but an immediate upturn is by no means certain. Capitalism has not managed to overcome its own contradictions. There is now spare

productive capacity in the US economy equal to one third of the gross domestic product. The huge installation of new technology is now being further integrated into the economy, in the form of firing workers and attempting to utilize to a fuller extent the potential of this technology. Profits and investment are down. Private consumers—that is, working class and middle class people in the main—are in debt to an extent never before experienced in the history of the country. Whatever form this takes, the excess capacity and the huge indebtedness will have to be worked off. It is possible that the present recession can end soon but, if so, it is likely to be followed by a weak and short upswing at best. It is also possible that a long period of stagnation like the last ten years in Japan can result. And a deep slump is also possible. In whatever form, the price for the 1990s growth cycle will have to be paid. No repeat of this long cycle of growth of the 1990s is possible. One effect of this will be an open and increased attack on US workers, a polarizing of the classes here in the USA and an increase in class consciousness. The increased opposition that will thus arise in its home base will complicate US capitalism's drive for full spectrum domination abroad.

Already important signs of the future are evident. Enron, the seventh largest company in the US, has gone bankrupt. It wanted to capture the oil and gas market of the world. Based in Texas, its leaders and the members of the Bush regime were almost indistinguishable. The workers in this company had most of their retirement money in the shares of the company. They were locked in and could not sell their shares while their value fell from \$90 to less than \$1 per share. Meanwhile, top management were bailing out, selling their shares and pocketing hundreds of millions. O'Neill, a member of the Bush regime, when asked about this, explained that it "was part of the genius of capitalism". This arrogant over-confidence will be a factor in increasing anger and class consciousness in the future. One Enron worker said that the lesson of Enron was: "Do not trust your company". This last comment is extremely significant. It represents the shape of things to come. As the economy goes into deeper crisis, working class people will begin to draw conclusions much more in line with the real world they live in. Over 5,000 Enron workers have now come together to try and rescue something from the wreckage. They have not yet formed a union, but it is an indication of the process of change from individual action to collective action that lies ahead.

Andersen, one of the top five accounting firms, fiddled the books of Enron. There are many other major companies in the same situation, with books that are doctored to show profits way above what really exists. More of these will come to light in the near future if there is not a rapid recovery. There is the likelihood of the collapse of a number of major companies, and a collapse in the trust that US workers were prepared to extend to their companies in the 1990s. K-Mart, the second largest discount supermarket chain, has just gone bankrupt and 500 of its outlets are to be closed. There are a wide layer of companies of all sizes, and also working families, who have been hanging on to solvency throughout the last months of recession in the hope that the economy will take off again soon and they will be okay. In a discussion with a carpenter in Oakland, California recently, where unemployment has been rising, he explained that if he did not get work in three months he would lose his \$400,000 house. The recession needs to end soon, otherwise there is a significant layer of businesses and families which will go bankrupt and, as a result, a much more serious economic situation will develop and with it an increase in class anger and consciousness. This rise in class consciousness will not be a one-sided process. There will be confusion and even the rise of nationalist, racist and right-wing movements, but the main process will be the increased awareness within the working class that it must unite and fight for its own interests.

The future battles that will develop in the US were heralded by the events around the World Trade Organization in Seattle two years ago, when its meeting was closed down by direct action. This mainly involved the new layer of youth activists who have come forward, but also a large section of union rank and file broke from the control of their leaders and

joined the youth. In the two years since, an anti-global capitalist movement has sprung up in the cities across the US. The youth in these movements see themselves mainly as anarchists: there are many interpretations of what this means. They also seek to practice direct action. This movement began linking with other youth and the anti-global capitalist movement in the former colonial countries that had a more working class base, and the beginnings of the new anti-global capitalist movement have been the result. However, here in the US this was cut across temporarily and partially by September 11. The anti-war movement sprang up, and unfortunately came to be dominated by liberal groups and a number of demoralized left groups who cooperated with them. The wing of the movement that wanted to link the anti-global capitalist movement to the anti-war movement was defeated. 'No to war: No to global capitalism: For direct action and diversity of tactics' was rejected for a few liberal anti-war slogans and pacifist tactics. The youth were alienated and the movement that sprang out of Seattle was temporarily cut across. And the anti-war movement is at best stagnant. However, the anti-global capitalist movement is now resurfacing, and one as yet very small wing of it is seeking to link with the struggles in the working class neighborhoods and workplaces.

The Bush regime, on behalf of US capitalism, will go ahead with its offensive abroad and at home. In its arrogance it thinks it can rule the world according to its own commands. It thinks it can establish US imperialism as the unchallenged ruler of the world. But the crisis of world capitalism, and the balance of forces between the classes that exists and will come to the surface, will result in a powerful movement of opposition internationally and also here in the USA. The recent uprising in Argentina is a sign of the struggles to come against the global capitalist offensive led by US capitalism. There have been many times in the past when it appeared that the US working class no longer existed as an independent force. Developments such as the anti-global capitalist youth movement, the anti-war movement for all its weaknesses, the carpenters' wildcat strike, the St Paul workers' occupation – these represent the seeds of a future movement. When the US working class begins to rise to its feet and organize independently, the impact of this will be felt worldwide. Not only will it undermine US capitalism's offensive for full spectrum domination and a rolling back of all the concessions of the last century, it will also inspire workers globally to build an international working class movement which in turn will seek to build a new world.

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