

What Happens if France's Yellow Vests Win?

A View from Vietnam

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What if protesters in Paris win, and the French government gives in to all their demands?

What if taxes are reduced, wages increased, President Macron steps down?

I am not talking only about the hikes of the fuel tax; attempts to impose it have been already abandoned. I am not talking about increase of the minimum wage – the government already agreed to raise it by 100 euro per month.

What I am talking about are real, *fundamental* changes which many protesters seem to be desiring: substantial tax reduction for the majority of French citizens, generous increase in wages and enhancement of social benefits for all.

So, if the Yellow Vests manage to win all this, then what will happen? Who would benefit? But also, who would lose?

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One of my readers recently wrote to me that France should reduce its military budget and from those billions of euro saved, could easily finance demands of the protesters.

Another reader wrote that the richest citizens of France (or call them 'elites') should be taxed heavily, and the money saved in this way could be then distributed among the poor and the lower middle class.



Sounds 'reasonable'? Yes, definitely; reasonable and logical. The only tiny defect is: we all know that it will never happen this way.

President Macron was elevated to the throne by precisely those so-called elites. In return, those rich folks expect their privileges to be guaranteed, even swollen.

And to imagine that a NATO member country (in this case France) would suddenly slash its military budget and from what is saved, start to finance various new social programs for the poor and the middle class, is unrealistic, even childish.

So where will the funds come from, if the French government decides to do something truly 'radical'; radical at least by the standards of our era of turbo-capitalism: to listen to its own people?

Let me stop beating about the bush and ask my question brutally and concretely: "What if all demands of the Yellow Vests get satisfied; who will pay the bill?"

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To put all this into a context: I write this essay in Hanoi, capital of socialist Vietnam.

Some time ago, I used to live in this city. I spent almost three years here, when it was still poor, and people remembered war, some even the French colonialism.

Right after I arrived, what shocked me the most was that while the Vietnamese people seemed to 'forgive' the USA, they had never forgiven the French colonialists.

"Why?" I asked my friends. "How is it possible? Wasn't the US bombing and killing campaign during the 'American War' (which is known in the West as 'Vietnam War') terribly brutal, with millions of Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians losing their lives?"

"Of course, it was", I was readily explained. "But we fought and, despite the terrible losses and hardship, we defeated Americans in relatively short time. And anyway, it was not only them; members of the coalition also consisted of countries like South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Thailand, and of course, France."

And the story continued:

"The French were occupying and tormenting us for much longer. They also had been humiliating our people, continuously. They enslaved up, tortured us, took our women, they raped them, and they had stolen all that we had."



Some instruments of rape-torture used by the French in Indochina

Near where I used to live, was a notorious "Central Jail", equipped with guillotines, torture chambers, solitary confinement cells. Now, on exhibit there, are monstrous instruments used by the French colonizers, to torture and rape captured Vietnamese patriot women: beer bottles, electric wires, walking canes.

Whatever the colonized *Indochina* had, was stolen: taken to France, in order to finance construction of grandiose theatres, railroads, metro, parks, and universities. And yes, to subsidize formation of that famous French social system which, as the Yellow Vests are now correctly saying, is being dismantled by the French 'elites' and by the political system which they are fully controlling.

Vietnamese people fought bravely against the French, finally defeating them during an iconic battle at Dien Bien Phu. But the victorious Vietnamese Communist forces inherited ransacked, divided land, stripped of its resources and even of its art work (several French intellectuals, including famous writer and later Minister of Culture in de Gaulle's

government, Andre Malraux, confessed to stealing art objects from 'Indochina', when he lived there as a young man).



Needless to say, that until now, French companies are brutally pillaging many parts of Southeast Asia, through mining and other neo-colonialist projects, as they do in various areas of Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America.

Now ask in Hanoi, ask in Phnom Penh or Vientiane, whether people of 'Indochina' (what an insulting and bizarre name was given to this part of the world by the French, during the colonial era!) are supporting Yellow Vests in Paris? Ask whether they think that if they win concessions in Paris, it would improve life in Asia.

Are you guessing what the answer would be?

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I don't say that demands of the people who are fighting in the streets of Paris are wrong. They are not. They are absolutely legitimate.

French elites are brutal, selfish, even perverse. Present French government is simply serving them, as the US presidents are all serving huge corporations, including those deadly military conglomerates. 'They should go', they should disappear, give way to what is logical human evolutionary pattern: a socialist, egalitarian society.

But they are not ready to go. On the contrary. They are robbing, for centuries, the entire planet, and now they went so far as to plunder their own people (who were used to sharing the booty).

French citizens are not used to being plundered. For centuries they lived well, and for several last decades, they were living 'extremely well'. They were enjoying some of the most generous benefits anywhere in the world.

Who paid for it? Did it matter? Was it ever important to those in Paris, in other big cities, or in the countryside? Were the French farmers wondering how come they were getting generous subsidies when they were producing excessive amounts of food and wine, but also when they were asked by the government not to produce much of anything? Did they often travel to Senegal, or elsewhere in West Africa, to investigate how these subsidies thoroughly destroyed agriculture sector in several former French colonies? Did they care that lives of millions there were totally ruined? Or that as far as Indonesia or Brazil, French corporations have been, aggressively, taking over food and beverage production, as well as food distribution, and that as a result, food prices in many poor countries skyrocketed to double or triple of what they are in Paris, while the local incomes remain, in some cases, only 10% of those in France?

And the food is only one example. But this essay was supposed to be about something slightly different: about the Yellow Vests, and what will happen if all of their demands would be met.

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If we agree that the regime that is governing in France, entire West, and in many of its colonies and neo-colonies, is truly monstrous, perverse and brutal, we have to come to a logical conclusion that it is not going to pay the bill for better medical care, education, as well as lower taxes and higher wages of the ordinary French citizens.

If demands of the protesters are met, there will be someone else who will be forced to cover the bill. Most likely tens of millions, or hundreds of millions will be 'taxed'. And they will not be living in France, or in the European Union, or even anywhere near.

Are protesters of *Mouvement des gilets jaunes*, thinking about this? Does it matter to them at least a little bit?

It did not in the past, either. Perhaps when few people like Jean Paul Sartre were still alive, these questions were periodically asked. But not lately; not now. Not during this rebellion on Champs-Élysées.



Treatment of Vietnamese women by the French

Do people in France question how many millions would have to die in order to improve the quality of life in the French cities and in provinces?

Or perhaps, to 'compensate', to cover the social spending, some country would 'have to be' invaded? Would it be Iran? Or maybe Venezuela?

The New York Times, in one of its articles about the French provinces, mentioned that people were complaining they cannot afford to even take their wives to a restaurant for dinner, anymore. That is truly serious, but would it justify a battle for Iran or Venezuela, and their consequent plunder, or would it excuse massacre of further few hundreds of thousands of West Papuans?

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I would suggest something that would help to convince the true internationalists, as well as people all over the pillaged world, that the *Mouvement des gilets jaunes* is not just selfishly fighting for the benefits that would improve lives of the French citizens, at the expense of many others all over the world:

They should indicate that they understand; that they are not indifferent to others. Say clearly that they are against capitalism and imperialism, against colonialism and plundering of the people and their resources in absolutely all parts of our Planet!

Say that they are for freedom, equality, and fraternity of all human beings, not just French!

Say that this is true revolution, true battle for improving the world, not just for more money, lower taxes, and better benefits exclusively for people who are living in France!

Say that they would never accept any benefits or extra money, if they come from robbing

poor and colonized nations of all that have left.

If they do say all this, and if they demonstrate that they truly mean it, I will have to shout *Vive la Révolution!* and join them – the protesters – wholeheartedly.

But until they do, until I am convinced that their victory would not harm others, millions of others, I'll continue to be much more concerned about people of Vietnam and Papua, about Iran, Africa, Syria or the entire Middle East, than about whether someone individual in rural France can afford to take his wife for dinner to a restaurant.

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