

# Multipolarism is not anti-imperialism!

**Statement from the Revolutionary Communists, Norway (RK).**

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When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the United States was left as the world's sole hegemonic superpower. Various mouthpieces of US imperialism declared that history had reached its end and that the new century would be a new golden age for a «liberal and democratic world order».

Before the ink in Francis Fukuyama's books had dried, it became clear that US imperialism was having great difficulties in maintaining its global hegemony.<sup>[1]</sup>

Now there is talk among intellectuals that the 'unipolar' world order is being replaced by a 'multipolar' world order. In other words, US imperialism is losing its absolute hegemony due to the challenge of competing imperialist powers, notably China and Russia.

There is great confusion on the left about how to relate to the new imperialist powers. On the one hand, there are many who, to varying degrees, have thrown themselves into the new Cold War of US imperialism against China (and Russia). On the other hand, there are those who side with the emerging Chinese (and Russian) imperialism, as a 'counterweight' to US imperialism.

«Multipolarism» refers to the political tendency that promotes the development of several competing imperialist powers in the hope of a «multipolar» world, where the great powers mutually «keep each other in check». Multipolarists often call themselves anti-imperialists, but in reality they prettify the imperialist world system, deny that competition between imperialist powers inevitably leads to war and side with one imperialist bloc against another.

## **China is not a socialist country**

Some of the multipolarists see themselves as anti-imperialists and would like to agree with Lenin. They often claim that the competition between the US and China is not inter-imperialist competition at all, but rather competition «between imperialism and socialism». They see China as a socialist and anti-imperialist counterweight to US imperialism, and pin their hopes on China's growing role in the world system.

China today is a social-imperialist superpower that violates the sovereignty of other countries and competes for markets, trade routes and raw materials. Chinese imperialism is particularly focused on investment in Africa, both through loans and direct investment.

China has not been a socialist country for decades. The dictatorship of the proletariat in China was defeated by the bourgeoisie through the counter-revolution of 1976-78, and the ruling class in China is no longer the proletariat, but a new class of monopoly capitalists. Capital accumulation, not people's needs, is the dominant principle of the Chinese economy.

The multipolarists claim that China is «kinder» than the US because, after all, China has not gone to war against any other country. Firstly, this is not proof that China is socialist or non-imperialist. Secondly, China has been indirectly involved in civil wars in several countries, and is selling arms to comprador regimes that wage war against their people, such as the Philippines, Ethiopia and Sri Lanka.

The CCP's «socialism with Chinese characteristics» is nothing more than imperialism with Chinese characteristics. China is not an «anti-imperialist counterweight» to US imperialism, but a rival imperialist exploiting its socialist history to gain international prestige.

# Russian imperialism and the war in Ukraine

The multipolarists deny that Russia is an imperialist country, claiming that Russia must be progressive and anti-imperialist because Russia is against the United States. They also emphasize that Russia spends less money on the military than the US and is far poorer in terms of both financial and industrial capital.

Russian imperialism is economically and militarily weak compared to US (and Chinese) imperialism. But weak imperialism is also imperialism, and Lenin emphasized that the uneven development of capitalism — an economic law — is reinforced in the age of imperialism.

There is nothing in Lenin's theory of imperialism that says that only the world's very richest countries, or the world's largest exporters of capital, are imperialist. Lenin considered the Russian Empire imperialist in 1916, despite the fact that Russia's economy was «relatively backward» and despite the fact that modern capitalist-imperialist relations were «intertwined with pre-capitalist relations.»<sup>[2]</sup> Monopoly capital is absolutely dominant in the Russian economy today — more so now than when Lenin defined Russia as imperialist in 1916. Monopoly capital is closely integrated with the state, and remember that Lenin defined the imperialist stage of capitalism primarily as state monopoly capitalism. Russian monopoly capital struggles with other monopoly capitals for dominance in semi-colonial countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Rivalry between monopoly capitals is the background to Russia's war against Ukraine. The explanation lies neither in Putin's mind nor in a desire to «de-nazify Ukraine». Russia's war is an imperialist war; a war to maintain access to markets, labor, raw materials and to prevent these from falling into the hands of imperialist competitors.

Among the conflicts in Ukraine, we can mention three of the most important:

- Between Russian imperialism and the Ukrainian people
- Between US imperialism, EU imperialism and the Ukrainian comprador bourgeoisie on the one hand, and Russian imperialism on the other.
- Between the US/EU-oriented part of the Ukrainian comprador bourgeoisie, and the Russian-oriented part of the Ukrainian comprador bourgeoisie.

When Russia invaded Ukraine, the first of these became the primary contradiction. Ukraine's resistance struggle against Russia is first and foremost a war of national defense with secondary elements of proxy war. The Ukrainian people are fighting back against the

occupier to defend their national sovereignty — Ukrainians are not passive chess pieces for the Americans — yet the Americans are no doubt exploiting the Ukrainian resistance to advance their own imperialist interests in Ukraine and weaken their rival Russia.

We condemn the war of Russian imperialism against the Ukrainian masses. We support the right of the Ukrainian people to fight back with arms against an imperialist occupier. At the same time, we do not support the game of US imperialism to expand the war into a major imperialist war against Russia.

## **Inter-imperialist competition leads to war**

A «multipolar world order» with permanent peace between great powers is not possible in the age of imperialism. As long as the imperialist world system exists, there can be no lasting peace. Lenin has established that competition for raw materials and markets by different monopoly capitals must lead to imperialist wars of redistribution, and that periods of «peace» and even «cooperation» between the imperialist powers can only be preparations for war.

As the emerging imperialist powers enter the territory of the old imperialists, inter-imperialist conflict must arise. Wars can only be abolished by the abolition of the imperialist system itself through new democratic and socialist revolutions, as part of the world proletarian revolution.

## **Our position**

Lenin is reported to have said that the real meaning of the First World War was that:

«One slave owner, Germany, who owns one hundred slaves, fights another slave owner, England, who owns two hundred slaves, for a ‘fairer’ distribution of the slaves.»<sup>[3]</sup>

Taking sides with China and Russia in an «anti-imperialist front» against Western imperialism is as pointless as supporting German imperialism in the run-up to the First World War.

In the tradition of Lenin, we will not support this or that imperialist power, or this or that bloc of imperialist powers. We *do* support the international proletariat and all the peoples of the world fighting against imperialism, and we support the new democratic revolutions and people’s wars that are being waged under communist leadership.

At the same time, we emphasize that our main task as communists in an imperialist country is to fight against our own imperialists — that is, Norwegian imperialism with its allies in the US and EU — and work for socialist revolution in our own country. Similarly, the Russian proletariat has a historic responsibility to overthrow its own imperialist bourgeoisie, in alliance with the peoples oppressed and exploited by Russian imperialism. The same, of course, applies to the Chinese proletariat vis-à-vis Chinese imperialism.

Revolutionaries cannot put their faith in «anti-imperialist» powers. China and Russia will not side with the world revolution. The international proletariat must rely on its own forces alone.

### **We say:**

*Multipolarism is not anti-imperialism!*

*Proletarians of all countries and all peoples of the world, unite against imperialism!*

## Notes

- 1.** Fukuyama is most known for a book from 1992, *The End of History and the Last Man*. After Soviet revisionism collapsed, he wrote that the new century would see the worldwide expansion of bourgeois «democracy» and «liberal values». Thus, history was progressing toward a (happy) end.
- 2.** Lenin. 1916. *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Under «VI. Division of the World Among the Great Powers». Marxist Internet Archive. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/ch06.htm>
- 3.** Cockburn, Alexander. 1991. «The melancholy passing of real radicalism». *San Francisco Examiner*. Retrieved from: <https://www.massline.info/mlms/mlch12.htm#n30>