
FIGHTING LIBERALISM WITH LIBERALISM: THE FAILURE OF ANGLOPHONE MARXIST INTELLECTUALS IN THE POST-SOVIET WORLD

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Abstract. The restoration of capitalism in East Europe and the former Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s revitalised capitalism, setting the stage for the resurgent hegemony of United States imperialism. This was accompanied by its economic reflection, globalisation, and its ideological justification, liberalism. Most Marxists in the **Anglophone** imperialist world, capitulated to this dominant liberalism (that is, to US imperialist hegemony), converting Marxism into left-wing critiques of liberalism, not a revolutionary tool to overthrow capitalism. This paper in particular examines Alex Callinicos and his treatment of the antiglobalisation movement of the early 2000s. We are now seeing the breakdown of the post-Soviet hegemony of United States imperialism, which is making the world much more unstable. Again, Marxists in the **Anglophone** imperialist world, instead of using Marxism as a tool to fight against capitalism, are turning it into a liberal tool, in this case by asserting that the current world situation is somehow objectively leading towards socialism. This essay concludes by examining Radhika Desai as an example.

Keywords. Marxism, liberalism, post-Soviet, Alex Callinicos, Radhika Desai, multipolarity, geopolitics, imperialism

EMERGING FROM THE SECOND WORLD WAR, THE UNITED STATES WAS THE LEADER of the capitalist world, industrially, militarily, and politically. The only counterweight to United States imperialism was the Soviet Union and, later, the Eastern bloc countries, where capitalism had been abolished but were not ruled in accordance with the revolutionary internationalist programme of Lenin's Bolsheviks. During the Cold War, the mere existence of the Soviet Union was a threat to the domination of US imperialism; the world was divided into two rival social systems that competed for spheres of influence. As recently as the 1960s and 1970s, with the

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defeat of US imperialism in Vietnam and a series of revolutionary possibilities such as France in 1968, Chile in 1972, and Portugal in 1975, capitalism appeared to be on the back foot. With the lack of a Marxist leadership capable of realising workers' revolution, capitalism was not overthrown, and the bourgeoisie restabilised and went on the offensive (especially in the English-speaking imperialist countries such as Australia, Britain, Canada, and the United States) through a series of attacks on the working class and oppressed, usually called *neoliberalism*. In the English-speaking imperialist countries, this meant union-busting, exemplified by the air-traffic controllers' strike in the United States in 1981 and the miners' strike in Britain in 1984-85; privatisation and deregulation; lower taxes; deindustrialisation; emphasising financial services instead of manufacturing; seeing the "free market" as the answer to all social problems, etc.

The response of much of the left and labour movement was capitulation. In France, Spain, and Italy, this often took the form of Eurocommunism, i.e., Communists explicitly renouncing Leninism in favour of support to bourgeois democracy. In the English-speaking world, one reflection of this was the popular book by Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985) that explicitly renounced Marxism in favour of something called "radical democracy". For the labour movement, it meant prostration to the bourgeois state, a precipitous decline in strikes and other resistance, and the decimation of the unions. Eric Hobsbawm (1978) famously described this in 1978 as "the forward march of Labour halted".¹

By the end of the 1980s, the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc countries faced deep economic and political crises in the face of the pressure of world imperialism and decades of the demoralisation of the working class; through a series of counterrevolutions, capitalism was restored in East Europe and the Soviet Union, a tremendous defeat for the international working class. By 1991, the global balance of class forces had shifted to the side of imperialism, against the working class and oppressed throughout the world. Instead of the conflict between two social systems, the post-Soviet world was defined by exceptional stability and the hegemony of United States imperialism. This gave imperialism a renewed lease on life. Politically this was reflected in the creation of an unchallenged liberal world order that seemed to promise a new vista of world peace, stability, and democracy. Bourgeois ideologues rushed to proclaim American liberal democracy as the apex of civilisation that each country should emulate, most famously encapsulated in Francis Fukuyama's argument (1989) that counterrevolution heralded the "end of history". The

1 According to one study, Hobsbawm himself became known as "Neil Kinnock's Favourite Marxist" and his "interventions can be seen as preparing the ground for Tony Blair, New Labour, and Anthony Giddens, the supposedly theoretical and academic inspiration for the much heralded 'third way'," (Pimlott 2005: 177).

overwhelming power of US imperialism over its rivals, along with the opening of huge parts of the world to capitalist investment, gave imperialism a new vitality and fuelled a massive growth in international trade, moving industrial production to the neo-colonial world (“offshoring”), and increased international capitalist circulation, while avoiding another inter-imperialist war. This became known as **globalisation**, and is reflected in the Maastricht Treaty (1993), North American Free Trade Agreement (1994) and the World Trade Organisation (1995).

Counterrevolution, globalisation and the left

Post-Soviet globalisation posed new challenges, disorientating many Marxists. Living standards increased for much of the global south, but this was coupled to further subjugation to imperialism. For example, in Brazil, the per capita GDP increased from US\$3,085 in 1990 to \$13,200 in 2011 and the adult literacy rate increased from 75 per cent in 1980 to 93 per cent in 2017, while foreign direct investment rose from less than US\$ 1 billion in 1990 to more than \$100 billion in 2011 (including massive privatisation of industry).² Besides the disaster of counterrevolution itself, the increase of productive forces and the concomitant rise in international stability **seemed** to contradict Lenin’s argument (most forcefully made in *Imperialism* [1916]) that the epoch of imperialism was the last stage of capitalism marked by imperialist war and the parasitism of capitalism. In fact, only Marxist analysis could explain these developments since the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and offer a way forward for the working class. The rejuvenation of imperialism in the wake of the counterrevolution, like the original growth of imperialism a century earlier (the time of the Second International), is temporary and augurs a period of war and revolution as intense, if not more so, than Lenin’s time.

Many leftists reacted to the counterrevolution by jettisoning Marxism. Once-huge Communist parties disintegrated, such as in Italy. Many intellectuals, imbibed the “death of communism” and “the end of history” and abandoned any pretence of Marxism. The unions in general continued their decline. The leadership of the Labour Party in Britain moved even further to the right under Tony Blair (symbolised by the rewriting of Clause IV in 1995) (Riddell 1997).

The ideological reflection—and justification—of the hegemony of United States imperialism in the post-Soviet world was **liberalism**. Marx famously wrote in 1845 that “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas”, that is,

2 GDP taken from “Brazil GDP Per Capita, 1960-2023,” Macrotrends.net, based on World Bank figures; Literacy information taken from “Brazil Literacy Rates, 1980-2023,” Macrotrends.net, based on World Bank figures; FDI figures from “Foreign direct investment, net inflows—Brazil”, World Bank website. (All websites accessed 27 September 2023.) On privatisation in Brazil, see Anuatti-Netto, et al 2003.

the ideological expression “of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance” (1970:64). In the post-Soviet world, liberalism represented the views of the imperialist bourgeoisie of the United States, and served to justify and defend the domination of US imperialism in the world. Globalisation was a product of US imperialist hegemony, and liberalism was an ideological cover for the interests of US imperialism.

The liberal view that the world had entered into a period of peaceful and stable capitalist development under globalisation was not just for State Department philosophers like Fukuyama, but also permeated the left. Despite its name, the antiglobalisation movement did not challenge the basic liberal premises but criticised globalisation for not living up to these liberal ideals. That is to say, the antiglobalisation movement never went beyond asking imperialism to change its priorities. Of course, the United States imperialists were never going to do this, and responded with bloody repression—often murderous repression, such as in Genova in 2001. But if some riots inconvenienced the imperialists, the antiglobalisation movement never threatened United States imperialist hegemony. The movement was fundamentally loyal to the bourgeois status quo, and provided no alternative to the offensive mounted by imperialist finance capital in the 1990s and early 2000s. In Anglophone imperialist countries globalisation included massive deindustrialisation as capitalists moved manufacturing to neo-colonial countries; for example, between 1994 and 2010, more than 600,000 manufacturing jobs in the United States were lost, especially in automobile and electronic manufacturing (Scott 2011:2). The response of much of the leadership of the unions was to push protectionism, that is, pit workers in the United States against their class brothers and sisters in Mexico. Many leftists in the United States denounced the chauvinism of the labour bureaucracy and reactionary politicians, but did not offer a Marxist programme to defend jobs and working conditions, which would have been in the interests of workers in the imperialist countries *and* the third world. In time, the left and labour movements abandoned opposition to free-trade such as NAFTA and the European Union, which helped pushed millions of workers to support demagogues such as Donald Trump, Marie LePen, and Giorgia Meloni.

Canadian journalist Naomi Klein’s *No Logo* (2000) was a seminal text of the antiglobalisation movement. Klein criticised the dominant “manic renditions of globalization”, counterposing the reality of “another kind of global village, where the economic divide is widening and cultural choices narrowing”, and “where some multinationals, far from levelling the global playing field with jobs and technology for all, are in the process of mining the planet’s poorest back country for unimaginable profits” (Klein 200: 15). Certainly, the domination of United States imperialism in the post-Soviet world meant an almost infinite list of barbarism. But neither openly bourgeois liberals like Klein nor more radical antiglobalisation activists and intellectuals, including those who saw themselves as Marxists, went beyond offering

a more militant, radical version of liberalism, or to borrow Marx's wording, the ideas of bourgeois domination.

During the First World War, Lenin observed how some Marxists became opportunist during the long period of slow, peaceful, development of capitalism in the late 1800s and early 1900s. When the First World War broke out these opportunists supported their "own" ruling classes in this inter-imperialist war, betraying the international working class. For Lenin, the task of real, revolutionary Marxists, was to break from such opportunist perversion of Marxism. In "The War and Russian Social-Democracy" (1914), Lenin wrote:

The opportunists have long been preparing the ground for this collapse by denying the socialist revolution by substituting bourgeois reformism in its stead; by rejecting the class struggle with its inevitable conversion at certain moments into civil war, and by preaching class collaboration.... The aims of socialism at the present time cannot be fulfilled, and real international unity of the workers cannot be achieved, without a decisive break with opportunism, and without the explaining its inevitable fiasco to the masses (1964:31-32).

Lenin directed much of his attacks on figures like Karl Kautsky, whom he called centrists because they used Marxist rhetoric to forge unity with the openly pro-capitalist betrayers of socialism.

The post-Soviet period was marked, not by inter-imperialist war, but by a long period of relative world peace, under the aegis of United States imperialism. In the English-speaking imperialist countries, the antiglobalisation movement was the most important opposition movement, fuelled by horror at inequality and exploitation in the post-Soviet world. This sentiment could have been a point of departure for a real push back against the devastation of the working class in the west and the increased economic and political oppression of the global south, but this would have required breaking with the movement's bourgeois liberal framework: it is impossible to eliminate poverty, racism, exploitation, etc., created by the liberal world order while sharing the politics of the same liberal order. The task of the hour for Marxists was splitting the antiglobalisation movement along class lines.

Marxists in the English-speaking world did not do this. While recognising that the antiglobalisation movement was not Marxist, most sought to provide a bridge between it and genuine revolutionary Marxism. They confined themselves to being left-wing critics of the antiglobalisation movement, trying to push it from the left, instead of breaking left-wing activists from its pro-capitalist liberal politics—the same bourgeois liberal framework that was responsible for the very social ills they were protesting.

This is clear, for example in *An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto* (2003), written by Alex Callinicos, a British professor and one of the best-known Marxists in the English-

speaking world, and a leader in the British Socialist Workers Party, at the time perhaps the largest far-left organisation in Britain. In this pamphlet, Callinicos writes, “the movement is best described as anti-capitalist” and “an anti-systemic movement” (Callinicos 2003: 14-15). For Callinicos, the task of Marxists facing the anti-globalisation movements in the late 1990s and early 2000s was to champion the movement while offering left-wing advice. This is most evident in the last chapter of his manifesto, “Imagining Other Worlds”. He lays out his vision of “anti-capitalism”, which he argues, should be based on “the requirements of (at least) justice, efficiency, democracy, and sustainability” (Callinicos 2003: 107). To help us imagine another world, Callinicos includes what he calls “A Transitional Programme” that includes demands such as “the immediate cancellation of Third World debt”; “restoration of capital controls”; “defence of public services and renationalization of privatized industry”; “progressive taxation to finance public services and redistribute wealth and income”; “abolition of immigration controls and extension of citizenship rights”; “a programme to forestall environmental catastrophe”; and “defence of civil liberties” (Callinicos 2003: 132-39). He asserts that these demands “go against the logic of capital” and “the tendency of these demands is to undermine the logic of capital.... In other words, while not necessarily formulated for explicitly anti-capitalist reasons, these demands have an implicitly anti-capitalist dynamic” (Callinicos 2003: 140).

The point twenty years on is not whether these are good or bad demands. Rather, for Callinicos the purpose of these demands is to push the antiglobalisation movement further to the left, to make it *really* uphold liberal values. Some of Callinicos’ demands would, in fact, go beyond what is possible under capitalism, such as the “dissolution of the military-industrial complex”. In Marxist terms, Callinicos was trying to fashion the ideology of the ruling class against the ruling class itself, that is, wield the ruling class’s tool for domination—liberalism—as a force of liberation. Even the most left-wing slogan possible would serve to give a more left colouration to the fundamental liberalism of the antiglobalisation movement, i.e., capitulate to US imperialism. As a Marxist, however, Callinicos should do more than offer advice on how to make liberalism more left-wing. His “Anti-Capitalist Manifesto” lays out a vision in which the role of Marxists is to intervene into the antiglobalisation movement, counsel it to raise a series of demands that supposedly implicitly challenge capitalism, and then this will result in a struggle for a non-capitalist world. Somehow this would transform the liberal antiglobalisation movement (or at least some of it) into Marxists; instead, it converted the Marxists like Callinicos into liberals. Capitulation to liberalism meant capitulation to the imperialist United States bourgeoisie.

In 2013, Callinicos wrote an article, “Is Leninism finished?” that, despite its formal defence of Lenin, in fact opposed what Lenin fought for. The article notes, “we have seen since the Seattle protests of November 1999 waves of political

radicalisation directed at neoliberalism and sometimes at capitalism itself” and mentions the Arab Spring, the *Indignados* movement in Spain and the Occupy movement in the United States. He acknowledges that these movements “have not led to or been sustained by workers’ struggles that have reached a similar level of generalisation or intensity.” True enough, but the conclusion that Callinicos draws was that with enough advice from Marxists, with enough emphasis on the working class, these movements could have been turned into anticapitalist movements. Just like the antiglobalisation movement, these movements were motivated by genuine anger at the state of the world, but were completely within the framework of bourgeois liberalism. The task of Marxists was to try to **break** activists from liberalism to a revolutionary Marxist framework; Callinicos sought to build a bridge between Marxism and liberalism, which is, in fact, a dead-end because it guarantees that activists will not go beyond capitalist politics.

This is an abdication of the responsibility of Marxists. But Callinicos is not unique. Take for example David Harvey, a Marxist geographer in New York. In 2005, he published *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* that, after laying out the negative effects of the rise of neoliberalism, notes the rise of anti-neoliberal oppositional movements, from environmentalists, anarchists, religious sects, peasant movements in Latin America, centre-left coalitions, including the Workers Party in Brazil and the Congress Party in India (Harvey 2005: 186). All these movements, Harvey writes, seek to reverse certain aspects of neo-liberalism. He asserts:

Objectives of this sort cannot be realized without challenging the fundamental power bases upon which neoliberalism has been built and to which the processes of neoliberalization have been so lavishly contributed. This means not only reversing the withdrawals of the state from social provision but also confronting the overwhelming powers of finance capital... (Harvey 2005: 187).

Harvey looks at how “neoliberalization has spawned a swath of oppositional movements both within and without its compass,” and emphasises how they “are fomenting quite different lines of social and political struggle” compared to “typical social democratic politics,” particularly from “the worker-based movements that dominated before 1980” (Harvey 2005: 199). Harvey insists on what he describes as “the crucial role played by class struggle in either checking or restoring elite class power” and advocates that resistance to neoliberalism be to “respond to it in class terms” (Harvey 2005: 201-2). Harvey argues against “some simple conception of class to which we can appeal as the primary (let alone exclusive) agent of historical transformation” as the “proletarian field of utopian Marxian fantasy” (Harvey 2005: 202). He argues for “a resurgence of mass movements voicing egalitarian political demands and seeking economic justice, fair trade, and greater economic security” (Harvey 2005: 203-204). Callinicos, and Harvey all see the role of Marxists as lending the anti-neoliberal, antiglobalisation, and other *liberal* movements a left character.

That is, they seek to make liberalism more left-wing and infuse it with Marxist rhetoric. Unlike Callinicos, Harvey has followed his argument to its logical conclusion and stated (Harvey 2019) that “a revolutionary overthrow of this capitalist economic system is not anything that’s conceivable at the present time. It will not happen, and it cannot happen, and we have to make sure that it does not happen.” Instead, he asserted: “We have to actually spend some time propping it [“the capitalist economic system”] up, trying to reorganize it, and maybe shift it around very slowly and over time to a different configuration.” By historical analogy, Harvey, the open reformist, is an Eduard Bernstein, while Callinicos, who has not officially renounced revolution, is a modern-day Kautsky.

The breakdown of the post-Soviet world and the weakness of US imperialist hegemony

The weaknesses of United States imperialism have become more obvious over the last decade. The very strength of United States-led neoliberalism and globalisation has undermined US imperialism hegemony itself. As US capitalism becomes more parasitical, and more hollowed out, the contradiction between US hegemony and its reduced economic power becomes less and less sustainable. In the 1990s the undisputed power of the United States helped suppress inter-imperialist rivalries, and built up the productive forces of the world, contributing to increased world trade, and increasing industrialisation and urbanisation in large parts of Asia and Latin America, raising living standards in a real, if uneven, way. Now the imperialists, to maintain their dominance, are compelled to try to rollback these advances in productive forces. This highlights that the further development of the world’s productive forces runs against the class interests of the American bourgeoisie, the very class that created globalisation in the first place. In other words, we are seeing a confirmation of Lenin’s view of the parasitical, reactionary nature of imperialism. As we will see, just as the creation of the liberal world order disorientated many leftists, its breakdown confuses much of the left.

The final Marxist this paper examines is Radhika Desai, who teaches politics at the University of Manitoba and is the director of the Geopolitical Economy Research Group; she recently published *Capitalism, Coronavirus and War: A Geopolitical Economy* (2023). On its face, this is very left-wing book. For example, it contains trenchant criticisms of social democracy. She observes, “In the neoliberal era, the historic parties of the working class went beyond deradicalisation to outright acceptance of neoliberalism” (Desai 2023: 221) and denounces “social democratic accommodation with the neoliberal settlement” (*Ibid.* 222). Yet for all her criticisms of social democracy, Desai evinces an objectivism that reflects a capitulation to social democracy.

Desai focuses heavily on neoliberalism, writing: “the contradictions of prolonging capitalism’s life through neoliberalism lie at the heart of the capitalist world’s diminishing capabilities, whether in pandemic or war” (*Ibid.* 4) Desai, more so than Harvey and Callinicos, identifies capitalism per se with neo-liberalism. For example, she asserts:

[N]eoliberal financialised capitalism, best exemplified by its leading countries, the United States and the United Kingdom, is the only form in which capitalism—a society in which the state ensures that the investment prerogative remains in the hands [of] capital, which today means monopoly and financialised capitalism—can exist today. The more productively oriented capitalism of the sort that still lingers in countries like Germany and Japan, had always been in danger of serving as a stepping stone to socialism. (Desai 2023: 5)

Several pages later, she states again: “neoliberal capitalism is nothing more or less than the only form in which capitalism can survive today. The alternative of a reformed ‘socialistic’ capitalism would put it back on the ramp to socialism” (Desai 2023: 16).

There are several objections to this argument. First, and most obviously, it is factually wrong. Since the 1970s the bourgeoisies in the United States and Britain have preferred neoliberalism, but this was not always the case (as Harvey shows in his book), and one can imagine a situation that mass working-class struggle or geopolitical relations or conflicts propels the English-speaking imperialist bourgeoisies to increase state intervention into the economy. More importantly, her references to “the stepping stone” or “the ramp” to socialism, suggest that for Desai, if the bourgeoisie were forced to reverse neoliberal policies—say, rebuild a strong social welfare state such as existed in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s—then this would be a step towards socialism. It sets up a counterposition in which the alternatives are not the rule of the proletariat or the rule of the bourgeoisie, but *neoliberalism* or *socialism*. It would mean that any policy or government that opposes neoliberalism *objectively* leads to socialism. If this is the case, then despite all the harsh criticisms Desai has for social democracy, the most that can be said against social democracy is that it is dragging its feet in the movement towards socialism. This is counterposed to Lenin’s understanding that a section of the leadership of the working class—the leadership of the Second International in Lenin’s times—had betrayed the international proletariat and become the agents of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Rather than pointing out the need for workers to *split* from liberalism, Desai *conciliates* liberalism, no less than Kautsky conciliated Bernstein.

In 2021 Desai and the Geopolitical Economy Research Group established The International Manifesto Group which published a manifesto, “Through Pluripolarity to Socialism”. This Manifesto is even clearer in this objectivism. Surveying the

world at large, it sketches out a vision of the dynamics of the world situation leading to a weakened US imperialism. This in turn leads to socialism:

Though neoliberalism reigned, it failed. It could not resume dynamic capitalist growth even in imperialist economies.... Revising economies and addressing the ecological emergency and the pandemic will require industrial policy, state investment, social redistribution, environmental planning and public health infrastructure on a scale comparable [!] to socialism and require ending capitalists' control over the state and policy. (International Manifesto Group 2021: 9)

The Manifesto emphasises the weakening of the hegemony of United States imperialism on a broader geopolitical level and asserts that this situation has created global "multipolarity or what Hugo Chávez more accurately called pluripolarity, referring to the multipolarity of poles of power and the variety of their national capitalisms and socialisms" (International Manifesto Group 2021: 3-4). According to the Manifesto, this opened the road to socialism internationally:

Today a number of peoples are already building socialism, but most are left paying the price of keeping declining and extortionate capital in control. It is high time all working people began building socialism by forming themselves into a 'class for itself', overthrowing the capitalist class and taking political power.... The key is seizing control over the state from capital. The role of the public power, the state, is essential and distinctive and control over it should be in the hands of working people. Though capital may rule over considerable private enterprise, particularly during the early socialist stages, a socialist state must progressively subject all production to social ends through planning for the general interest. Whether to socialise given means of production will be contextual and often pragmatic decision. (International Manifesto Group 2021: 17-18)

Instead of emphasising the necessity of workers' revolution, this passage depicts the development of socialism as an objective, gradual process, in which opposition to neoliberalism is a "stepping stone to socialism". Desai and the Manifesto's "geopolitical" perspective means that any country that resists the domination of the United States is by definition also moving in the direction of socialism, or at least "comparable" to socialism. If all roads lead to socialism, this means that there is no need for Marxists to split with opportunists, which means that Lenin was wrong on the need for a vanguard party.

This is underscored in the Manifesto's conclusion that: "We must oppose the US-sponsored imperialist New Cold War and build an ambitious multilateral governance enabling all countries to develop, create economic, gender, racial and religious equality, and address shared challenges through economic, political, financial, scientific and cultural cooperation for mutual benefit" (International Manifesto Group 2021: 19). The Manifesto adds, "The original ideals of the United Nations

charter...are excellent foundations for further constructing alternatives to institutions of US and Western dominance.” (International Manifesto Group 2021: 20). The United Nations Charter is the quintessential liberal document, since it asserts that it is possible for nations to “practice tolerance and live in peace with one another as good neighbours” and “maintain international peace and security” while imperialism dominates the world. The United States imperialists set up the United Nations to enshrine their power after the Second World War; it brings to mind Lenin’s description of the League of Nations in 1920 as an “alliance of robbers, each trying to snatch something from each other” except the UN includes the neocolonial victims of imperialism, too.

Seeing middle-income countries (such as Brazil) as a counterbalance to United States imperialism is based on the wrong view that they have somehow transcended the domination of the world economy by the imperialist powers. Even though the role of the middle-income countries in the world economy has increased they are still subordinated to international finance capitalism, at bottom, United States imperialism. Desai credits Hugo Chávez with coming up with the concept of “pluripolarity”, but the situation of Venezuela in the last decade—the collapse of much of the economy in the face of unrelenting imperialist hostility—underlines that the US imperialists still dominate the world. A more “normal” country like Brazil, which is not currently subject to coup attempts or sanctions, remains dependent on the imperialist market which is controlled by the United States bourgeoisie.

Conclusion

Instead of peace, the breakdown of US hegemony has set the stage for new wars of unimaginable brutality. For the masses of the “Global South”, what is on offer is further immiseration. For the working class and oppressed in the imperialist countries, a capitalist future promises growing attacks on living standards as the balance maintained by cheap credit, monopoly profits, and speculative bubbles gives way. In Africa, Asia, and Latin America, globalisation has created an urban, literate, and powerful working class, and in the imperialist centres the working class is showing signs of discontent. The fundamental contradiction in the world situation is the decay of world imperialism, the last stage of capitalism, and the interests of the international working class. Finally, we are now seeing the breakdown of the post-Soviet hegemony of United States imperialism, which is making the world much more unstable. This underlines the importance of Marxists to understand—and change—the contemporary world. Unfortunately, Marxists in the Anglophone world, instead of using Marxism as a tool to fight against capitalism, are turning it into a liberal tool. What is needed is a return to revolutionary Marxism, based on the understanding of the need to split with liberalism, not to capitulate or conciliate it.

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