

The Death of Left

**Reclaiming Anti-Imperialism from Eurocentric Orientalism and
Anti-Westernism**

Hein Htet Kyaw

04 March 2026

Contents

Anti-Imperialism of Proletarian Nation and Revolutionary Defencism	3
Anti-Imperialism of Revolutionary Defeatism	4
The relevance of anti-imperialism in 21 st century	4

In the Left movement today, many people today call themselves “anti-imperialists,” but they have a very poor understanding of what anti-imperialism means. “Anti-Imperialism” was a topic of interest in the period between the death of Lenin and the end of the 20th century and continuing until today. “Anti-Imperialism” is incorrectly defined in terms of patriotism, nationalism, and love for one’s nation to militantly fight against imperialism in the modern era. This is the single biggest indicator of how the genuine concept of anti-imperialism has been lost among the people who call themselves Marxist-Leninists, Trotskyists and democratic socialists.

Anti-Imperialism of Proletarian Nation and Revolutionary Defencism

During the early days of World War I, the social democrat camp was split into at least two camps: nationalists (defencist) and internationalists. Julius Martov, a minority internationalist Menshevik who considered the war as “imperialist war” can be served as an example of how internationalist social democrats were alienated among the social democrats during the World War I. Similarly, Leon Trotsky called the Second International a “rigid shell” from which socialism must be liberated. Lenin denounced the Second International as a “stinking corpse” and, called for the formation of a Third International at a Bolshevik conference in Berne in early 1915. However, a lot of social democrats dropped the internationalist class solidarity and showed their solidarity with their own national interests taking part in World War I. During World War I, the prominent anarchist such as Peter Kropotkin considered France as an oppressed nation and German as the oppressor nation. Similarly, Georgi Plekhanov, the father of Marxism in Russia, openly supported the war effort of Tsarist Russia. Lenin called the following pro-war left-wing figures especially those from social democratic Second International as “Social-Chauvinists”. Stalin later appropriated the very similar “Social-Chauvinistic behaviours” into “Social Patriotism” to justify his use of nationalism during the World War 2, which he interpreted as “Revolutionary War” to defend the interests of USSR.

Along with the rise of Revolutionary Defencism among the left, a very similar theory of geopolitics was formed among the proto-fascists thinkers. Enrico Corradini, an Italian nationalist thinker, replaced internationalism, and class struggle with nationalism and national struggle in Marxist theory and founded a geopolitical theory called “proletarian nation”. He advocated his “proletarian nation” theory mainly via *La Lupa*, a national syndicalist magazine founded by Paolo Orano, a syndicalist from the Italian Socialist Party. *La Lupa* magazine considered the war in Libya against the Ottoman Empire as a revolution as Ottoman Empire was considered plutocratic imperialist nation and the Libya as the proletarian nation. For Corradini, the whole nation is either proletarian or plutocratic (imperialist) which essentially erasing the class struggles within the nation, just like Mao’s new democracy theory where national four classes practice class collaboration to fight against the foreign imperialism.

Not surprisingly, both Mao Zedong and Li Dazhao of Chinese Communist Party adopted the fascist anti-imperialist geopolitics of “proletarian nation” as their Marxist anti-imperialism, leaving from Leninism and Marxism. Maoist Internationalist Movement also adopted the term and concept along with Revolutionary Communist Party, USA.

Anti-Imperialism of Revolutionary Defeatism

In Soviet context, Stalin was also the proponent of Revolutionary Defencism.

When Lev Kamenev and Stalin led Pravda, the Bolsheviks' stance were open to cooperation with the Provisional Government. The call for the immediate termination of the war was dropped, and the soldiers were encouraged to continue the fight at the front and keep order. Kamenev claimed that until a peace treaty was signed, the Russian people had to remain at the front and fight the Germans with the same strength. Stalin repeated the same idea, saying the call for "Down with the war" was not feasible. This approach was presented to the Petersburg Committee on the 18th of March and supported by the committee. However, this was a complete opposite stance to the anti-war views held by Lenin from abroad. In order to avoid any conflict with the anti-war stance held by Lenin, the editors of Pravda chose not to publish the "Letters from Afar" by Lenin, with the exception of the first installment after censorship.

During the time when the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed, there were Bolsheviks such as Bukharin, Bubnov, Uritsky and Lomov who argued that the Soviet army should adopt revolutionary war (Revolutionary Defencism) as the anti-imperialist practise.

On the contrary, Lenin argued for the acceptance of the German terms while insisting to take the help of rival imperialist power stall the invasions as much as following". Lenin named the fraction of Bukharin as those who practise "Revolutionary Phrasemongering". He called his revolutionary idea as Revolutionary Defeatism especially during the time of tsarist autocracy. Despite Lenin arguing to abandon the concept of revolutionary defeatism during the era of Provisional Government, he essentially practiced the defeatism pragmatically by giving away a huge portion of land to German imperialism (militarism). Uniquely, Trotsky reported on his mission to Brest-Litovsk and presented his conclusion: 'Neither war nor peace' as he believed that German workers were on the verge of their own revolution. Lenin's idea of a revolutionary strategy to change the course of WWI in 1914 was to "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war" in place of "Revolutionary Defencism," which was the Second International's idea.

This revolutionary defeatism of Lenin has completely disappeared from the political arena in the last seven decades or so after Lenin's death. Due to the perversion of Leninism by Stalin himself, the Russian Federation got involved in wars that were based on the ideals of patriotism and nationalism even though Lenin explicitly warned the dangers of revolutionary defencism by writing:

- Revolutionary defencism must be regarded as the most important, the most striking manifestation of the petty-bourgeois wave that has swept over "nearly everything". It is the worst enemy of the further progress and success of the Russian revolution.

The relevance of anti-imperialism in 21st century

The morality of the left-wing groups especially those who are affiliated to Marxism-Leninism and anti-imperialism were historically quite non-historical, non-authentic, non-universal and always either opportunistic or strategic. In early 1941, the anti-war movements with the slogans such as "Hitler has not attacked us, why attack Hitler" were mostly led by so called democratic socialists and communists. During the period after Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union had signed the Molotov–Ribbentrop non-aggression pact, the Communist Party USA staunchly organised on

the line of anti-war, denouncing WWII as an inter-imperialist conflict and opposed the United States entering World War II by practising entryism into America First Committee, an American isolationist pressure group. After June 1941, when Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union, they reversed positions and denounced the AFC as a fascist front. Those who forgot Lenin's original idea and thought that Stalin's Revolutionary Defencist idea were "Leninist" now decided to combine anti-imperialism with nationalism and came to the conclusion that Marxists and far-right nationalists should unite in every anti-imperialist struggle.

However, Lenin divided anti-imperialist movements into two categories:

- Progressive Struggles with Progressive Outcomes: These were movements that undermined the global capitalist system and took the world one step closer to a socialist future. He supported these movements even if they were led by the "National Bourgeoisie," if they struck a blow against the Great Powers.
- Reactionary Struggles with Reactionary Outcomes: These were movements that wanted to go back to a feudal or monarchist past. If the struggle was led by fundamentalist religious fanatics or tribal monarchs wanting to rebuild an old empire that oppressed their subjects, Lenin was often critical or indifferent.

In that standard, the struggle of the reactionary clerical feudalism such as Hamas, Hizbollah, and ISIS against imperialism and capitalism shouldn't be supported. However, nowadays, Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), along with several other left-wing groups refused to denounce or condemn the war crimes committed by Hamas in the name of leading a revolution. Since a "Western puppet democracy" that allows for unions, free press, and secular education is a massive material upgrade over a "sovereign" clerical dictatorship that shoots the women for showing their hair, those who are supporting Hamas, Hizbollah, IRGC, and ISIS are reactionary at best and counter-revolutionary at worst.

During the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 (which culminated in the Paris Commune of 1871), Mikhail Bakunin had urged the French to resist the invading Germans. But he advocated this be done by forming revolutionary armies of workers and peasants, unconnected to the French state and in revolutionary opposition to it. However, defending the feudalistic oppressive regimes from the western imperialism is not "revolutionary war" nor "anti-imperialism". It's the fascist geopolitics of equating the whole state led by feudalistic oppressive regimes as the proletarian nation. If western left keep allying with sympathisers of Hamas, Hizbollah, IRGC, Myanmar military junta, Baathist regimes, and BRICS sub-imperialism that will only give platforms to the most reactionary populations with nationalist sentiments that are in the service of the current oppressive regimes, it will alienate more of the progressives within the population, at worst giving them no choice but to support the humanitarian imperialism.

If the western left cannot do the sole task of "turning the imperialist war into civil war", the gaslighting behaviours against the diaspora communities such as belittling the Venezuelans who were celebrating the arrest of Nicolás Maduro and the Iranians who are celebrating the death of Ali Khamenei on the street as pro-imperialist or passively portraying as the political illiterate people are pure ignorant, racist and narcissistic.

Also, if the local population demand sanctions, that's not imperialism. The World Anti-imperialist Platform advocates for the removal of Western sanctions against Myanmar, aligning

with the Myanmar military junta's lobbying efforts to achieve the same goal while Myanmar trade union movements and progressives are actively calling invoke Article 33 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) against Myanmar via The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). In that sense, World Anti-imperialist Platform is narcissistic, Eurocentric, and suffers from white saviour complex racism. If Lenin can say "please record my vote for accepting the arms and support of the Anglo-French imperialist bandits", why can't the masses in the non-imperialist countries make good use of imperialism even if the imperialist power have different interests? That would be hypocritical, colonial, and imperialist to deny such rights of people who are being exploited by the imperialist state whose welfare system the western left is benefiting from. That's the very same Eurocentrism and racism people like Noam Chomsky, and Tariq Ali suffered. For example, Noam Chomsky and Tariq Ali who had always been shifting the blames of regimes responsible for genocides in Bosnia, The Khmer Rouge, Rwanda genocide, The Anfal Campaigns, and several other genocides towards western imperialism, don't have tangible solution for Rohingya genocide in Myanmar (Burma) as for them, Responsibility to Protect, sanctions and international interventions are imperialist. For Rohingya people and the activists, Responsibility to Protect, sanctions and international interventions are the only hopes under such a genocidal regime of Myanmar military. People lives are cheap and mere statistics for their geopolitical games of blaming the west instead of pushing for internationally organised initiatives to halt the genocides and massacres. Their anti-imperialism is merely kindergarten level reaction to the US-imperialism, not even matching the standard of fascist geopolitics of proletarian nation, let alone matching the standard of Leninist anti-imperialism. Such people being the faces of anti-imperialism in 21st century is the indicator that the fascist anti-imperialist geopolitical theory managed to absorbed the left as a whole.

In 21st century, the imperialism shouldn't be defined by the imperialist left inside the imperialist states that cannot even do one simple task of its historical duty. That agency should be claimed back by the working-class people and the peasant of the developing countries who are being exploited by the imperialist state. It's time to let the oppressed write their own history, make their own demands, and interpret their own terms. Also, the imperialist left that cannot perform the sole historic task of "turning the imperialist war into civil war", is not worthy of giving lectures to those who have struggled the dictators with very limited resources.

With all the contradictions between Venezuelans, Iranians, Kurds, Baloch, and people of Burma having different interests from the so-called anti-imperialist left who indeed are the practitioners of fascist geopolitics, they either start listening to the real oppressed people of the regions, or the real oppressed people of the regions will seek their alliance with the forces that believes in the humanitarian imperialism as realpolitik.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Hein Htet Kyaw
The Death of Left
Reclaiming Anti-Imperialism from Eurocentric Orientalism and Anti-Westernism
04 March 2026

redandblackanarchists.com.au

theanarchistlibrary.org