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- Dialogue on Imperialism, Polarity, and the International System
- British Imperialism – A Threat to World Peace
- The Biden Administration' s Imperialist China Policy, and the Taiwan Issue
- Xinjiang and the Uyghur Question
- Australian Imperialism
- Private Property Ownership as a Human Right Under Neoliberalism



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THEORY  
POLICIES  
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DISCUSSION

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The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi at the Signing Ceremony of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit, in Qingdao, China on June 10, 2018. Photo: Prime Minister’ s Office (GODL-India)

Western imperialist claims of being inclusive and “progressive” have been ever-present, while simultaneously it binds peoples and nations in chains of exploitation image: Norman B Leventhal Map Center – flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

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# Dialogue on Imperialism, Polarity, and the International System

AMR Editorial Board

## Introduction

This dialogue between the members of the AMR editorial board was prompted by the significant and rapid changes taking place in the international system. Readers may remember that back in the 1990s, Western pundits proclaimed the “end of history.” The Soviet Union had collapsed, socialist countries in Eastern Europe experienced a series of counter-revolutions, and a “new world order” of capitalist economic and democratic systems would – the pundits confidently asserted – for the first time become global. As is the way with such statements, there were proved false. History has not come to an end. Instead, it has sped up, and we are now experiencing changes not seen in a century or more.

In these changing times, there is an increasing discussion in our Party, and internationally, on imperialism, polarity (uni-polar, bi-polar, multi-polar), and how we should understand the changes underway. In many respects, it is still too early to gain a full understanding of these questions, but we must begin the process. It goes without saying that we do so by deploying the Marxist-Leninist method, which does not give us ready-made answers, but provides the most comprehensive and insightful method for analyzing concrete historical developments.

A few words on how the dialogue developed. Initially, the topic was raised in one of our editorial meetings, and we discussed it further at following meetings. By that time, we decided to continue the process in writing and email exchanges. Initial questions were framed, answers written, and the dialogue grew. The reader will find that we have somewhat different perspectives, but that is what one would expect. At the same time, we do so from the world outlook of Marxism-Leninism.

This discussion is the beginning of a process. We hope and expect that other comrades in our Party will make contributions to the AMR on a most important topic of our time. We know from first-hand experience that you have been thinking about and discussing these questions. We would like to see your thoughts in print. The AMR – our Party’s theoretical journal – is the place to do so.

## Part 1: Definitions

The metaphor of “polarity” is a common way of speaking about the international system. What is the meaning of “polarity” in international relations?

**CG:** To my understanding, “polarity” uses an analogy from physics where magnetic poles are connected by attractive magnetic forces to their opposite poles, and where poles of the same polarity repel each other. This analogy of poles illustrates connective relationships of alignment and forces between centres of expansive political power and influence, referred to as poles, within the international system based upon states. These poles in the modern world are composed of states with globally significant military, economic, and political power – thus, they are termed “great powers.” These great powers have an ability to independently pursue their interests globally. Great powers in their geopolitical interactions with each other and other lesser states cause other states to react to the forces between these great powers. These lesser states form relationships and alliances with these great powers based upon an assessment of their national interests and the political realities to which they are subject, and which reinforces one or more of these great powers in its competition against other great powers. Since the Russian Revolution in 1917 that created the Soviet Union these interactions of power between states have, while consisting of a “great game” between the bourgeois-ruled capitalist states seeking to redivide the world amongst themselves, seen the addition of a dynamic of global class struggle between the capitalist countries and the countries where the working class has risen to power and taken the socialist road towards communism.

**RB:** The metaphor of “poles” has also arisen from the study of planetary bodies – the first visible way for human science to understand the world (so Engels). Other terms have also been used, such as the three “worlds” – first (capitalist), second (socialist), and third (developing countries). The problem: guess who is the “first world”? There is also “world-systems theory,” which divides the world into core, semi-periphery, and periphery. The core has highly developed industries, while the semi-periphery and periphery supply raw material and cheap labour, and are forced to buy overpriced products from the core. “World-systems” theory has its problems: by now the “core” has largely ceased to innovate and tries to plunder

“semi-peripheral” countries that now outpace the “core” in terms of innovation and industrial production.

## Part 2: History

Staying with the “pole” metaphor, we can see global history since the Great October Revolution in terms of three phases: bi-polar (Cold War), uni-polar (1989-2008), and multi-polar (2008 until now).

What was the structure of the international system during the Cold War (1949-1991)?

**CG:** The Cold War has been described as having a bi-polar international configuration as the competition between the USSR and the USA completely dominated international politics. During the Cold War the world was split into capitalist and socialist camps, along with a non-aligned block of nations between them that sought cooperative relationships with both the capitalist and socialist worlds.

**RB:** We can date the beginning of the Cold War with Winston Churchill’s infamous “Iron Curtain” speech from 1946. Anyone who reads the speech can immediately see its deeply racist undertone, as Stalin noted in his response soon afterwards. Stalin points out that Churchill “sets out to unleash war with a race theory, asserting that only English-speaking nations are superior nations, who are called upon to decide the destinies of the entire world ... Mr Churchill, and his friends in Britain and the United States, present to the non-English nations something of an ultimatum: ‘Accept our rule voluntarily, and then all will be well, otherwise war is inevitable.’” Of course, the Soviet Union and other socialist countries were not going to accept this ultimatum, but Stalin’s words were primarily directed at countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific, many of which were still engaged in anti-colonial struggles for liberation.

**DM:** What was described by some as three-world theory or by others as a bi-polar world was the creation of the aggression of the imperialists and the dominant role that the USA had played post WW2. Bi-polarisation was the Cold War strategy adopted by imperialists including Churchill with his Iron Curtain speech. This was preempted in the attempts by John Foster Dulles to reposition the USA and its Western allies for a new aggression against the Soviet Union and to roll back the national liberation struggle. The Soviet Union attempted to counter this aggressive strategy with support for the non-aligned movement and the development of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (the Warsaw Treaty, or “Pact” as the West liked to call it) to counter the aggressive NATO policy. Looking ahead, the multi-polar world can be seen as a continuation of support for the national independence movements and to counter the aggressive imperialist military blocks.

The bi-polar era saw a tremendous uplift in the class struggle and independence movements, but these were overshadowed by the nuclear weapons being developed by France, UK, and USA. This strategy was designed to subvert and weaken the Soviet Union. Further, the re-installing of Social-Democratic governments in Europe combined with anti-communist activity stalled the class struggle. There were also activities to subvert socialist countries from within. The strategy was to draw the Soviets into armed conflicts and create national tensions. It would have to be said that this strategy was not without its successes. They also tried to split the socialist camp. The most successful of these was to split Yugoslavia and China from the Soviet Union. The development of a Left tendency with nationalism in the movement also assisted.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, we can speak of a US-led uni-polar imperialist system. What were the key aspects of the US-led imperialist system?

**CG:** Following the counter-revolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union from within in 1991 and until recently, the USA had a unique position of having no rivals able to frustrate its global designs or significantly restrain its various initiatives. This era was described as uni-polar. This uni-polar moment has now ended, and the international system is transitioning into a multi-polar system. It’s reasonable to argue that this transition began with the global financial crisis that emerged in the USA in 2008 and has since accelerated with the rise of China.

**RB:** In the heady days of the 1990s, the old colonial powers swaggered and claimed to have “won.” They began promoting “universal values,” such as “democracy and human rights.” Of course, they forgot that these values were Western liberal ones, which had originally been developed during the era of primitive accumulation through slavery. In other words, the “universal values” constituted a dictatorship of the small community of the free over those not worthy of freedom. The international dictator was, of course, the USA. It thought it was the only hegemon, laying waste to country after country, simply destroying them so as to extract valuable resources for next to nothing. The vast resources of the Russian Federation were pillaged. The treatment of countries was like the treatment of workers: reduce them to the lowest level and then exploit them as much as possible.

Looking back now, we can see that 1991 was actually the beginning of the end. The 50-year economic decline of Western capitalist countries had already begun in the 1970s. Economic stagnation, decline, and fragmentation has been coupled with similar processes in capitalist democracies. The euphoria of the 1990s concealed the hard facts on the ground. Western capitalist countries were gradually de-industrialised. For example, today only about 10 per cent of the total GDP of the USA is generated

by industrial production. What is left of US production can make only overpriced products of inferior quality, such as the Apple iPhone and the F-35 fighter jet (known as the “flying lemon”).

What defeats has the US led imperialist system experienced since 1991? Is there a trend in the outcomes experienced by the us led imperialist system.

**RB:** The US has not achieved its strategic aims through war for more than a century. In WW1 it came in late. In WW2, the western front was a sideshow. In the Pacific, the US faced only 25 per cent of Japan’s total forces and it struggled even then. In terms of notable defeats, we need to go back to the Korean War. While the US has been at war for 228 years of its 245 years of existence, it now no longer needs to “win” a war in the old sense, but simply destroy a place. Then it can be plundered for a while – think of Iraqi oil or the massive growth of opium production in Afghanistan for 20 years until 2021.

**CG:** During the “uni-polar moment” the USA was able to impose its will without any real constraints. It bombed Serbia and forced a change in its government and was able to organise “colour revolutions” that succeeded throughout central Asia and eastern Europe. It achieved its objectives in the first Gulf War. It was able to invade Afghanistan and Iraq and pursue regime change. But as it achieved each military operation it was not able to reckon with the consequences. Afghanistan and Iraq turned into humiliating and protracted quagmires that ended in failure. Libya was bombed and destroyed and became a failed state with endless civil war and open slave markets in spite of early optimism of a “democratic transformation.” A major defeat came with the failure to overthrow the Syrian Baath government and the significant defeat of its proxies in the Syrian civil war that also saw the re-emergence of Russia as a global power. It’s “colour revolutions” have repeatedly failed, most recently in Belarus, Hong Kong, and Kazakhstan. As time has moved on the US has become less powerful, and its ability to succeed has reduced. There is a clear trend of more defeats of greater severity for US Imperialism.

What is multi-polarity and when has it happened before?

**CG:** A multi-polar world consists of an international configuration of states where multiple great powers with competing interests interact with each other and shape the behaviour of other lesser states in such a way that, to prevent instability and war, a balance of power between great powers is required to stabilise the international system. Such a system has broadly existed at multiple points in world history. A multi-polar system is characterised by the number of great powers involved and the need for negotiated restraint between them to prevent destabilisation of the world system.

Whilst each configuration of the international system is different, there are commonalities between previous “multi-polar” configurations. Following the end of the Napoleonic wars and the signing of the treaty of Vienna in 1815 that established the European international system described in history as the “Concert of Europe,” a multi-polar system was established that sought to stabilise European geopolitics through a consensus between multiple great powers on the maintenance of a balance of power between them and respect of their claimed spheres of influence over lesser powers. This multi-polar system largely prevented major wars between European great powers from 1815 until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

**RB:** It is important to understand the history behind what the Russians in particular – now followed by other countries – call a multi-polar world (a term and reality fiercely resisted in Western capitalist countries). To begin with, Marx and Engels saw anti-colonial struggles as a form of anti-capitalist struggle. It can be argued that for Marx and Engels anti-colonial struggles were a species of international class struggle. The Soviet Union highlighted this feature as a result of concrete practice. In the 1930s, clear policy was developed to support anti-colonial struggles, since these were in the “rear” of capitalist imperialism. Military, economic, logistical, educational, and other assistance was given directly to these struggles. By the first half of the twentieth century more and more colonised countries achieved liberation. In the 1950s, the Soviet Union proposed in the UN a declaration concerning the right to independence from colonialism. This was taken up by African and Asian states and, when the critical voting majority was achieved with new countries taking up membership, the *Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples* was approved by the UN General Assembly on 14 December, 1960. At the same time, many formerly colonised countries had gathered in Bandung, Indonesia, for the Asian-African conference of 1955. Here the famous “Ten Points” stressed sovereignty, territorial integrity, mutual non-interference, world peace, and economic and cultural co-operation. This became the non-aligned movement, which included China and India. The concept and practice of a multi-polar world is the successor to this development, and it can be seen as a new stage of the anti-colonial struggle as countries seek to move out of the neo-imperialist stage.

**DM:** Yes I think that is right. One other aspect that is overlooked was the debate between the capitalist powers preceding the Second World War as to how to deal with socialism and the emerging liberation movements in colonised countries. At one stage under Chamberlain and King Edward, the British and other European capitalist powers were surrendering sections of Europe and some colonies to Germany on the belief that an invasion of

the Soviet Union and European states would defeat the workers' movement. This political difference broke into armed conflict in which France capitulated and the USA remained neutral. For example, Finland, Lithuania, Japan, Austria, and Spain were under the domination of fascist movements. Britain retreated from Europe and the conflict was moved into the colonial holdings. It was the international communist and workers' movement that acted as a brake on the capitulationists. The development of a national liberation movement throughout Europe and Asia in resistance to the occupations added a new element. In India, the independence struggle had to overcome British suppression and also to struggle against the attempts of the German and Japanese militarists to create false movements designed to substitute one imperialism for another – think of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, right-wing, nationalist, and paramilitary organisation) in India and Chiang Kai-Shek's Blue Shirts.

Are other configurations possible in the international system?

**CG:** The question of the configuration of the international system largely depends on the number of great powers present in the world, the class nature of the states involved, and the acuteness of the competition for power between them. If each "great power" with a capacity to pursue an independent agenda is a pole, then the configuration of the international system depends upon the number of "poles" present and the distribution of power between them.

**RB:** I would like to make two points. The first is more cultural and even philosophical. The few former colonisers that make up the "West" (about 15-18) have an inbuilt assumption of either-or: either I win or you win. It is also called zero-sum. Many parts of the world simply do not function in this way, and prefer "both-and," which may be put as "things that contradict each other also complement one another." This requires a setting aside of differences and focusing on common ground. The US-led imperialist system simply does not understand this approach.

In this light, a different configuration of the international system is a properly democratic one in international terms. Already in 1953 Zhou Enlai proposed the "five principles of peaceful coexistence," as in "mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence."

**DM:** It was interesting to see that the policy of peaceful co-existence as espoused by Lenin to overcome the military interventions against the Russian revolution and develop a space for socialism to develop was adopted and improved in respect of China. The Imperialists sought to split the socialist world and had some success with Albania, Yugoslavia, and later with conflict that came about between China and the Soviet Union. The cooperation

of nations in defence of their sovereignty and economic development away from being dominated by imperialism is important. The struggle is still playing out and former colonial powers such as France and other Europeans are pursuing aggressive policies in Africa and the Pacific. The old colonial powers are seeking to impose dependence and underdevelopment of African and Pacific nations.

## Part 3: Specific Questions

### 3.1 Collapse of the Soviet Union

The principal contradiction in the world before the collapse of socialist countries in Europe was described as between the socialist camp and the capitalist camp. How has this changed since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the counter-revolutions in Eastern Europe?

**RB:** On the question of the Soviet Union, we need to adhere to a basic principle of dialectical materialism. The problems and collapse of the Soviet Union were primarily due to internal causes. For example, Chinese Marxist scholarship emphasises the internal breakdown of the CPSU, ideological disarray, lack of discipline and unity, and the rise of opportunists as the main cause. Other items include the inability to innovate in terms of economic reforms, and failure to update the preferential policies for minority nationalities. External causes contributed, especially pressure from capitalist countries, but these were not primary and could gain traction only because of internal disintegration. Chinese Communists have learnt many lessons from the Soviet Union's collapse – in terms of what to avoid and how to reform in light of the times.

As far as the principal contradiction is concerned, it seems to me that the principle contradiction is still between socialism and capitalism, and it will be for a long time to come. Despite the immense setbacks after 1989, socialism survived and is once again on the rise. It cannot be vanquished.

**CG:** Even with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the efforts to destroy the remaining five socialist countries have not ceased, and countries pursuing an independent path have been routinely maligned, attacked, and destroyed. At the same time, the success of China strengthens the position and options available for the development of socialist countries and the global south. It is worth questioning what fundamental contradictions may exist within the international system so we can assess if the conflict between capitalism and socialism remains fundamental. It's worth considering that the imperial powers headed by the USA are no longer able to rule in the old way. The ability for imperial powers to carve up and dominate the world has been based upon a monopoly held by the imperialist core in the strength of productive forces – being science, technology, and production capacity – which gave it a decisive

advantage. This monopoly in force facilitated the exploitation of the rest of the world by the imperialist core. This monopoly, which first came under threat during the Cold War, has now been decisively broken, even though the imperial powers still hold (eroding) relative advantages.

### 3.2 US imperialism and resistance

How has the USA tried to stifle the international struggle of the working class and struggles for national liberation? Did Soviet assistance, and mutual assistance from socialist countries, assist developing countries to move away from dependency on capitalist imperialist countries?

**CG:** The emergence of the USSR as a great power was accompanied by new people's democracies in eastern Europe and Asia following the Second World War. In the mid-1940s these developments produced a reaction from capitalist countries. To preserve capitalism globally and ward off the perceived danger of socialist revolution, the capitalist countries and empires united around the USA, the only remaining superpower through relevant alliance structures. These countries also altered the form of their imperial project in developing countries into a neo-colonial form with formal independence for previously colonised nations, but with de facto foreign domination by imperial interests. The USA is the bulwark of capitalism globally and has acted as the greatest opponent to progressive peoples fighting for independence, national sovereignty, and social and economic progress. It has continued to fulfil this function since the collapse of the USSR. The USA suppresses the international working-class struggle through a variety of means. The use of its intelligence agencies to organise coups against elected socialist and independently minded governments, murder activists, rig elections, and preserve the interests of its monopolies is well known. Less well recognised were the various economic and cultural forms of domination it used to defend the interests of capital globally.

**DM:** An outcome of the Second World War was the USA became the leading force as other imperialist powers were weakened. The restoration of a type of "Second International" produced a force within the working class that enabled imperialist subversion of class struggle and to buy off a layer of the class. There was an attempt within the working class to resist this split through the United Front strategy. But in the USA, the development of extreme anti-communism, coupled with ultra-left movements, weakened the working class movement and enabled the attacks on national independence to assume extreme anti-communist agendas. In this light, we should see the wars against Korea and Vietnam, and the Malaya and Borneo coups, along with military attacks in Latin America and interventions in the revolutionary civil war in China. Imperial powers like the UK and France no longer had the capacity to hold on without US political and military

support. There was also the support for Jordan and Saudi Arabia, as well as coups in countries as diverse as Iraq, Iran, and Indonesia. The USA assumed the resources and political assets developed in Nazi Germany and used these in its campaigns. The USA military and Intelligence budgets have escalated since the Second World War.

**RB:** We are talking here about the bi-polar era of the Cold War, during which the struggle between the capitalist and socialist camps was played out in developing countries. I would like to elaborate on an earlier point concerning the Soviet Union's support for anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggles for national liberation. It was actually comrade Stalin who made the major breakthrough in a series of speeches and published texts from 1918 to 1927. The breakthrough: there is a direct connection between the national question within the Soviet Union and the question of liberating colonised countries. This breakthrough was both theoretical and practical, which can be summarised as follows:

First, the liberation of nationalities within a socialist country like the Soviet Union is necessarily connected with the liberation of the many peoples in the world suffering from colonial oppression. Communists were the first to make this connection.

Second, for too long socialists (of many types) had looked to Western imperialist countries for successful proletarian revolutions. Instead, they needed to look East, where the real revolutionary upsurge was happening. And by "the East" is meant China, India, Egypt, Morocco – in fact, all of the countries in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific that were still colonised.

Third, capitalist imperialism relies on colonies for food, fuel, raw materials for industry, cheap labour, and closed markets to sell their over-priced products. This is the "rear" (a military metaphor) of capitalist imperialism. It follows that Communists resolutely need to support anti-colonial struggles for national liberation.

Fourth, this meant that the Soviet Union, along with other socialist movements, should "support – resolutely and actively ... support – the national liberation movement of the oppressed and dependent peoples" (Stalin). This concrete reality meant a consistent flow of arms, technology, advice, education, so as to assist these anti-colonial movements, from the Chinese Revolution to liberation movements in Africa and elsewhere.

### 3.3 US dollar hegemony

After 1945, it became increasingly common to speak of "US dollar hegemony." How did the US dollar, as the global reserve currency, play out in terms of capitalist imperialism?

**RB:** I am persuaded by the argument that the resort to

the US dollar as a global reserve currency was a retreat. After the decline of the British Empire, the US attempted an empire with colonial possessions. This was an abysmal failure. In reply, it resorted to a financial empire, underpinned by the US dollar. This has led to one crisis after another, with ever more wild proposals to solve the crisis. These desperate measures included dispensing with the “gold standard,” petro-dollars, unlimited US debt (Reagan), “quantitative easing,” and so on. Trying to enforce the USD has required a perpetual state of war. But it has not worked. Since 2008-2009, the US dollar as a global currency has been in notable decline, so much so that less than 40 per cent of global transactions took place in USD already in 2019. In 2022, the USD became a toxic currency for many countries. It should be obvious that I am inclined towards the “paper tiger” position: the United States may be described as a failed empire.

**CG:** The financial hegemony of the US Dollar (USD) has been used as a means of financial domination of the rest of the world by the USA. A notable change in its functioning occurred with the abandonment of the gold standard in the 1970s. The mechanisms of USD hegemony have been well outlined by economists like Michael Hudson, and while there isn't space in this discussion to go into the full detail of how it works, its general features can be described. While the USD's status as the global reserve currency has enabled countries to easily trade goods and services through an intermediary with an agreed value, it also has given the US substantial imperial privileges. These include the unique ability of the USA to have near limitless military spending which it uses to maintain a global system of hundreds of US bases as well as its ability to inflict unilateral sanctions on countries it deems to be its enemies.

The USD's status as a global reserve currency ensures it is continually in demand by the world's nations to facilitate trade and government borrowing, particularly for the trade of oil which until very recently was priced and traded almost exclusively in USD. This means that the USA is continually able to print more of its currency without deflating its value, allowing it to avoid the hyper-inflation that would occur if any other country were to endlessly print more money. This spending uncoupled from the actual income of the US economy is used to maintain a hegemonic military power. Countries like Libya and Iraq that were destroyed by US military power during the uni-polar moment of the early 21st century often had announced an intention to sell oil in currencies other than the USD, which undermines the reserve status of the USD. The use of the USD in trade more broadly has devastating effects when the USA unilaterally imposes financial sanctions on its perceived enemies. The illegal blockade and embargo of Cuba following its socialist revolution can be maintained in the face of universal opposition from almost

every other nation on earth due to the ability of the US to cut off entities from world trade that seek to bypass these sanctions. USD sanctions have been over-relied upon by the USA, and this has constructed the incentive for countries like China and Russia to commence work to undercut the USD as a global reserve country by the mid-2010s. If the USD loses the position of global reserve currency then the US will not be able to maintain its enormous government debt, its endless spending on its military and wars, or unilaterally cut its enemies off from global trade. The costs of maintaining its imperial and hegemonic position will fully be borne by its people and its time as a global hegemon would end.

### 3.4 NATO

New blocks have been formed after the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (the Warsaw Treaty, or “Pact” as the West liked to call it) has ceased to exist, but NATO now has incorporated much of former Warsaw Treaty members in eastern Europe, extending to Nordic countries. What do you see as the role of NATO today, and why are Social Democrats so prominent in its leadership?

**RB:** Since the attack on Yugoslavia in 1999, which was without UN approval, NATO has become an overt aggressor that is guilty of war crimes. That said, NATO never had to confront an adversary equal or better. Think of Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan. It is notable that since February 2022, NATO is confronting a real and better army, and will suffer its second major defeat after the debacle in Afghanistan.

**CG:** Alliances like NATO among the advanced capitalist countries are a means by which these countries organise for the collective defence of the capitalist system. In this defence of capitalism, they are also defending their unique privileges within this system. This explains why, even with the loss of the Soviet Union at the end of the Cold War, NATO not only remained but expanded. Social democracy, since its betrayal of the working-class movement during the First World War by supporting the war, has been revealed as a tendency of a subsection of the working-class movement that defends the continuation of the capitalist system and seeks to win special privileges within capitalism. It is hardly surprising that social democrats would be prominent in an alliance like NATO that exists to defend capitalism.

### 3.5 AUKUS

Are the new AUKUS pact and the Quad different forms of internationalising alliances like NATO? What are the aims and objectives of these alliances?

**DM:** Given that Australia already has a defence pact with the USA in the form of ANZUS, the AUKUS alliance must be seen in terms of the new strategic relations developed



in Europe. The USA was keen for the UK to leave Europe and thus to assume some of its former colonial role in the Asia-Pacific region. The alliance must be seen as part of this strategic manoeuvre. The submarine deal was symptomatic of this as it was a “to hell with France.” It was an over-calculation as both the USA and Australia were forced to make concessions to the French. It would not be surprising to see a push for a French component to this alliance. Germany is already frozen out of the Pacific and Asia by previous conflicts, so tensions could increase amongst the European countries.

**CG:** The emergence of new alliances is a continuation of the expansion of NATO, which fundamentally aims to defend global capitalism. The expansion of NATO and the emergence of new alliance structures are an expression of the growing fear and unease developing in the ruling class about their ability to maintain their hegemonic position. Losing this hegemonic position would not only imperil their position of privilege, but it would also call into question the long-term survival of capitalism. AUKUS is fundamentally about cementing Australia’s position in this defence of global capitalism against a rising China. AUKUS does this specifically by increasing Australia’s dependency on the USA, integrating it more completely into its force projection structure, and closing off any potential for Australia to move in line with its economic interests in an independent direction.

**RB:** Neither AUKUS nor Quad includes countries in continental East Asia and southeast Asia. Most of these countries – Indonesia and Malaysia most strongly – have objected to both. Japan is regarded by many in East Asia as a highly westernised country that is occupied by the USA. India has its own agenda. A question in relation to the Anglo-supremacist AUKUS that needs to be asked here is why not South Korea or Japan for significant bases? The answer is that China now has area-denial capabilities for the western third of the Pacific, and Australia is currently outside that zone. Note that the flight time between Sydney and Beijing is 11 hours and 30 minutes – the same as London to Beijing.

### 3.6 A new bi-polarisation?

Is it the case that the USA has now begun to try to bi-polarise the world between itself and China? Will the USA be able to achieve this?

**RB:** It takes two to tango. China is simply not playing the game, since it does not follow a zero-sum approach. This is profoundly disconcerting and confusing for the USA and its hangers-on.

**DM:** Later leaders in the Soviet Union allowed themselves to be wedged into an arms race with the USA, and this contributed to the decline of the Soviet Union’s economy. Despite this, it was not inevitable that the Soviet Union

should have declined. It is important to strengthen the socialist forces in China and this has been done by rooting out corruption and strengthening the Party and its connections with the people. It is this that seems to enrage the USA and its supporters, who have hopes of some type of “colour counter-revolution” to spread to mainland China from Hong Kong or a terrorist movement from Tibet or the Uyghur Autonomous Region. Attempts to crash the Chinese economy have so far rebounded on the US stock market.

For some time now, the Communist Party of China has been resisting bi-polarisation with a series of Initiatives. Under this strategy, we have the BRICS, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and whole series of cooperation and trade agreements.

### 3.7 The Russian Special Operation in Ukraine

Was the outbreak of war in the Ukraine between the Russian Federation and the US-led system a phase change in the international system?

**DM:** The war has had a tremendous effect on the world and US economy. Military expenditure has never been sustainable except by the looting or destruction of peoples living standards. All wars lead to poverty among the people; only the arms dealers gain and the banks who finance them.

**RB:** It is interesting to note that countries across Africa, Asia (western and eastern), and Latin America, have not bought into the sanctions frenzy. The West is really isolated on this matter. The many countries who do not engage in sanctions recall very clearly the role of the Soviet Union in assisting them in anti-colonial struggles.

**CG:** The war in the Ukraine was a result of a long period of build-up of tensions and stresses in eastern Europe over the divergent interests of NATO countries led by the USA and the Russian Federation. It indicates that these tensions have reached the point that force and violence are the only tools left to solve the political problems that underline these tensions. It shows that the old way of managing the world that allowed the USA and NATO to unilaterally act without consequence no longer works. It particularly reveals that the “uni-polar moment” of exclusive US hegemony has been cast into the dustbin of history, replaced by a multi-polar world marked by great power competition. The war is a revelatory moment in that it shows how much has changed simply by the fact that it occurred at all. This is without discussing the very real and serious economic and trade disruptions that are being unleashed by this war. Briefly on these, the war is causing enormous disruptions into the prices of basic inputs into the global agricultural and industrial system. It has caused huge price rises in energy, fertilisers, grain, seed oils and many other

products that are the foundation of any modern industrial economic system. These prices are flowing through into many essential commodities like food and electricity. It has raised the spectre of a major famine occurring in the global south due to food price rises. The rise in prices of food, petrol and power are also occurring throughout the global north. These are dangerous circumstances for any stressed, fragile society with particularly acute internal contradictions. It can be expected that these changes will produce further unpredictable changes in the coming few years. As communists, we can only hope that communists internationally are able to use these coming crises to strengthen the position of the working class and where possible push for revolutionary transformations of society from capitalism to socialism.

### 3.8 BRI, BRICS, etc.

Should we campaign for Belt and Road Initiative and against a new bi-polarisation as part of our struggle for socialism?

**DM:** It is certainly important for our Party to speak up in support of Australia joining the Belt and Road initiative. It needs to be pointed out to the people of Australia that trade with China has been beneficial to them, and that a strategy of creating a war in Asia is one of creating a disaster. We need to be encouraging bilateral exchanges and opposing belligerent language. We need to counter the new form of racist “yellow peril” language that is being fostered by the main parties.

**RB:** The BRI should be seen as a major new stage in the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle. The primary beneficiaries are those countries that were assisted formerly by the Soviet Union: developing countries, formerly colonised countries. In this respect, China shares a deep experience with these countries, an experience that those in the West simply cannot comprehend.

### 3.9 An emerging multi-polar world

Is the emerging multi-polar world a world safe for socialist revolutions to occur and succeed?

**RB:** It may perhaps be seen as a transitional stage. It gives existing socialist countries room to move, consolidate, and further build their socialist systems. Historically, however, proletarian revolutions have occurred during times of great economic, social, and political upheaval. The emergence of a multi-polar world will by no means be smooth, with many bumps and crises on the way (as we see in Ukraine). It is too early to tell whether the increasing unrest in some countries in the world today, against the backdrop of growing economic crisis, provides pre-conditions for socialist revolution.

**CG:** The great advantage of a multi-polar world would be the reduced ability for all leading capitalist countries to agree on how to respond to future socialist revolutions, and the inability for a complete embargo to be imposed against these breakaway countries. It would have its own risks and dangers, but none that aren't already present today to socialist countries. When the Russian Revolution occurred 14 nations invaded the disintegrating Russian empire to defeat the revolution. They failed in this attempt. In the emerging multi-polar world such an intervention into a hypothetical revolution could be highly complicated and made less effective from without. It would not have been possible for the USA to easily intervene in the Middle East in the early 21st century if the Soviet Union had still existed. Even in recent years the growth of China and Russia has enabled more assistance to be given to Cuba despite the illegal US embargo. While this assistance isn't exactly comparable to that of the Soviet Union's, it is placing Cuba in a better position than what it was. This specific case is symptomatic of the broader trend in current prospects for socialism, being that the situation is improving for the working-class struggle to make new achievements worldwide, and this improving situation is a relatively new development.

AMR