# The Ukraine Discourse and Its Consequences

written by Brendan S. | November 6, 2022

*This is part 2 of a 3-part series. Read part 1 here and part 3 here.*




The Russo-Ukrainian War is a conflict that exposes the deep chasms on what self-proclaimed internationalists perceive as internationalism, what self-proclaimed anti-imperialists perceive as anti-imperialism, and even what self-proclaimed socialists perceive as socialism. Many organizations of the "anti-war left" in the West have taken a route of intellectual laziness, frequently regurgitating Russian state narratives directly from the Kremlin as they are most convenient to counter Western state narratives. Contrarily, anti-authoritarian thinkers, including Ukrainian progressives, more often perceive the conflict as an opportunity to dig deeper through a maze of social layers, condemning NATO imperialism while also holding that a population has a right to defend itself. The "anti-war left" relies on its convenient neorealist Cold War binaries of West vs. East, while others have moved on from these obsolete binaries in an increasingly multipolar society.

**Ethical Solidarity**

The question of solidarity in Ukraine is indeed a question that comes with many layers, even when considering progressive forces. Campist approaches tend to homogenize their solidarity into a vague umbrella of the "working class" whereas anti-authoritarian approaches tend to take a more specialized approach to solidarity, emphasizing the class war components of the war and progressive forces on the ground.

While RevDia and other radical units have called for international membership, internationalists should not be passing up or abandoning movements such as the Rojava revolution to join the Ukrainian resistance. This comes off as Eurocentric and misguided when there are already tens of thousands of foreigners fighting for Ukraine, compared to a small handful in Rojava, Burma, West Papua, and other regions of the Global South that are likewise facing existential threats and in need of volunteers.

It must be understood that liberation movements of the Global South are vulnerable as a result of the Ukraine attention vacuum. Police states are once again abusing the neoliberal sphere of consensus as an opportunity to strike a little more quietly but with just as much damage. Solidarity in every struggle for autonomy must not shift just because a European population is in a period of self-defense.

To phrase this in a way that makes sense to some Westerners:

Ukraine is being invaded in Kurdistan, Ukraine is being invaded in West Papua, Ukraine is being invaded in Western Sahara, Ukraine is being invaded in eastern Congo, Ukraine is being invaded in Chiapas, Ukraine is being invaded in Armenia, Ukraine is being invaded in Tamazgha, Ukraine is being invaded in Azawad, Ukraine is being invaded in Tigray, Ukraine is being invaded in Wallmapu, Ukraine is being invaded in the Amazon, Ukraine is being invaded across the Global South. All struggles against state hegemony are interconnected, and one must never feel that Ukraine necessitates more solidarity than anywhere else.

Prioritizing support for Ukrainian anti-authoritarian groups has led some movements of the Global South to feel abandoned by internationalists. This Eurocentrism is something that Western anarchists must review and question more deeply. For internationalists thinking of a region in need of assistance, Ukraine should not be the first to come to mind. On the other hand, elements of the Ukrainian left have expressed their abandonment by the "anti-war left" in the conflict, suspended in the common narratives that there is no Ukrainian left and that the Ukrainian people are a fascist or reactionary monolith. Many in the Ukrainian left now identify campism as the most serious problem blocking international solidarity.

**Responses From the Global South**

The Ukrainian state has spared no subtlety accepting ethically questionable support from some of the world's most hegemonic and genocidal states, leading various marginalized populations to adopt an adversarial stance against the Ukrainian resistance. Incidents of racism in Ukraine as well as the rejection of displaced Afghans in favor of the whiter Ukrainians by Western states has led to an overall negative perception of the Ukrainian resistance among some diaspora populations. This racism begins in European identity itself, with codified separation of Russians from Europeans. Some Western states refused to accept Russians fleeing the mobilization but wholeheartedly accepted displaced Ukrainians. This is nothing short of Russophobia and Fortress Europe in plain sight, then externalized onto diaspora populations from the Global South.

It does not end at the Ukrainian state when the UN approves of genocide abroad in the name of Ukrainians, however. In September 2022, Ukrainian UN Peacekeepers departing the Democratic Republic of Congo were transported back to Ukraine via Ethiopian Airlines, an airline known for its complicity in the Tigray Genocide. The Ukrainian state happens to share a Bayraktar brotherhood with the Ethiopian state under their mutual support from the Turkish state. This partnership has also antagonized the Tigrayan people, who are suffering from genocide at the hands of the Ethiopian and Eritrean states.

Responses to Ukraine among progressive movements outside of the West yield a much wider set of nuances. By accepting a Turkish security pact and massive Bayraktar drone contract without hesitation, the Ukrainian state has alienated numerous communities around the world impacted by Turkish imperialism. The targeted Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), for instance, has understandably taken a more cautious approach to the war, identifying the Eurocentric double standards of the Ukraine spectacle in Western society.

Potential backing from Wagner Group and the Russian military incentivizes separatist movements to support the Russian state, particularly for movements in the Global South and the liberalized post-Soviet realm respectively. Some movements may look to historical Russian intervention in Abkhazia and Donbass as indicators that backing or security guarantees from a great power may eventually become a reality, opening up a new window of opportunities to resist. In the Rojava revolution, for example, Russian military presence has helped deter invasions from the Turkish state. This is a

strategically-minded policy in a movement, aiming to harness an imperialist power for the immediate relief of a marginalized population. From a lens of self-determination, this is permissible so long as it is not abused to replicate coercive structures. One must distinguish existential appeasement policies from genuine Ukrainian state antagonization of marginalized populations through its cooperation with imperialist powers.

The Zapatistas (EZLN) have generally taken an anti-state and anti-capitalist stance to the war, clearly identifying the Russian state and capitalist interests as the main culprits. Though Zapatista communiques have not explicitly lent support for the Ukrainian resistance, they do not deny its necessity either, taking an approach that does not fall in line with the "anti-war left." The communiques identify capitalist interests as the main cause of the invasion, but also that these capitalist interests are rooted in Russian statism first, then externalized through invasion, which necessitates resistance. Some signs from the March 2022 Zapatista march against the invasion read: "Stop the wars of capitalism that murder and conquer the people of Ukraine for economic, political and ideological interests," and "Wake Up peoples of Mexico and the world because one day sooner or later they are also going to wage unjust wars against us, we must organize."

The official Zapatista communique from March 2022 emphasizes the Russian state as the "aggressor force," and goes on to assert that their solidarity lies with those who "are engaged in the struggle for life in Ukraine and Russia…l@s ucranian@s and rus@s who fight in their geographies for a world with freedom." The statement concludes: "Without bending, we shouted and called to shout and demand: Out with the Russian Army of Ukraine." Some have interpreted the Zapatista statements as full-on support for the Ukrainian resistance, however, it appears the Zapatistas want to express their solidarity with certain elements of the resistance without any room for misinterpretation as the state.

Unlike with most organizations to the north of the Mexican border, the solidarity in the Zapatista responses evidently has an object and a subject, being the Ukrainian people in their fight for self-determination, but also Russians who are in resistance against their state. This is a consistent anti-war statement, being one that identifies defense of autonomy as a fundamental right, but also one that identifies the state capitalist nature of the tensions that led to the invasion. There is no talk of "inter-imperialism" anywhere to be found, because the Zapatistas realize that the Ukrainian state is hardly an imperialist state. They also realize that it is certainly not an anti-imperialist one. The Zapatistas make a point to separate the Ukrainian state from their idea of the "resistance" in Ukraine, that it is a capitalist state invading a population and a land who are also unjustly represented by a capitalist state, and that the Ukrainian resistance must both be against the invading forces and against the Ukrainian state. The communique mentions in the fifth section:

"Fifth.- In short, these our relatives, who also raise the flag of the @libertarian, stand firm: in resistance those who are in the Donbas, in Ukraine; and in rebellion those who walk and work the streets and fields of Russia. There are detainees and beaten in Russia for protesting against the war. There are murdered in Ukraine by the Russian army.

It unites them among themselves, and them with us, not only the NO to war, but also the repudiation of 'aligning' with governments that oppress their people.

In the midst of confusion and chaos on both sides, they are held firm by their convictions: their struggle for freedom, their repudiation of borders and their nation states, and the respective oppressions that only change flags."

Though this may sound ambiguous at first, when one connects the dots it becomes apparent that the Zapatista statements fall directly in line with Ukrainian anti-authoritarian forces on the ground

without directly mentioning them. Ukrainian anti-authoritarian units were lesser known at the time (and still are due to censorship and selective solidarity), but were still very much present and gaining traction. The statement does not identify which organizations it is referring to in particular, but one can infer based on the "flag of the @libertarian" that at least one anti-authoritarian militia was part of this communication, given that a seemingly negligible number Ukrainian left-libertarians have opposed resistance to the invasion. If taken literally, it would be a reasonable hypothesis that Black Flag Ukraine was included, given that they are among the most visible flag-wavers among the Ukrainian left-libertarian bloc and also one of the more established groups. They also happen to have their own militia, fighting on the frontlines against the invasion.

Certainly these responses differ widely from the pseudo-internationalist approaches commonly found in Western organizing circles. The Zapatistas acknowledge the presence of Ukrainian progressives on the frontlines and hold solidarity with them. Why is that so hard for the "anti-war left" to do?

**Deconstructing the "Anti-War Left"**

As Marxist-Leninism scholar Tom Dale suggests in his piece "Lenin, Ukraine, and the Amnesia of the 'Anti-war Left'," many elements of the "anti-war left" in the West hold ambiguous analyses of Ukraine pockmarked with glaring contradictions and inconsistencies. Some have been blacklisted in anti-war circles (author included) for their belief that Ukrainians have a right to self-determination and self-defense against an imperialist power, while they are often welcomed in many anti-authoritarian circles that hold a more consistent analysis of self-determination. A prominent "anti-war leftist" of DSA who will not be named here said of the Dale piece: "the article is a polemic in favor of US war policy in Ukraine wrapped in a veil of pseudo-Marxism and totally devoid of the kind of concrete analysis of concrete conditions that the author laments." He went on to explain: "As socialists our primary responsibility is to oppose/resist the war policies of our own government."

Sounds great, but what does that actually look like? The "anti-war left" response to Ukraine has been a strictly performative one, pouring energy into vague statements while refusing to support even the most basic relief efforts for affected populations. In many cases, the "anti-war left" looks fruitlessly to US Congress and Nancy Pelosi for a diplomatic solution in the classic social democratic move of appealing and appeasing instead of resisting. It is rather odd when an organization suggesting that the US is at the core of all imperialism also turns to the US for a resolution while legitimizing both its diplomacy and electoralism. Nothing says controlled opposition like the "anti-war left" lobbying the US while claiming to be a front of resistance to it. Strictly performative "anti-war" campaigns have popped up in cities across the West while affected populations have been entirely ignored, diverting solidarity from those who need it.

*Democratic Socialists of America (DSA)*

DSA's response to Ukraine, and armed conflict in general, is mostly controlled by a small handful of its International Committee membership in the Anti-War Subcommittee (which is nearly impossible to get accepted into). Much like the other "anti-war left" engines, DSA's positions suggest that Ukrainians are monolithic "working classes" that have no right to defend their home. DSA's ignorance on Ukraine has been pointed out by Ukrainian progressives themselves.

DSA International Committee (DSA IC), a member of the Peace in Ukraine Coalition, has notably echoed the inconsistent campist approach to Ukraine. In its first and only recent statement on Ukraine in January, which has been widely critiqued by socialists, DSA IC referred to Maidan as the "2014 US-backed Maidan coup," completely neglecting Ukrainian progressive perspectives on Maidan and choosing to obscure all social nuance. DSA National Political Committee (DSA NPC), on the other hand, took a more mild approach in its February statement. Instead of reducing the entire

conflict to the US and calling Maidan a US-backed coup, DSA NPC calls to "accept any and all refugees resulting from this crisis" and withdraw the US from NATO. In DSA NPC's defense, the statement makes a coherent proposal, being to accept refugees. Still, there is no plan of action that is attached to this proposal, nor any resources to support said refugees.

DSA's "Resources & Actions" tab on the Ukraine page includes nothing to support anyone affected by the war. Instead it is a laundry list of apologia articles to defend the DSA's statements, some articles even framing DSA as an innocent victim to undue criticism. DSA couldn't be bothered to even link something as simple as nowar.help for said refugees seeking support. This is nothing new, however. DSA's responses to every crisis from Afghanistan to Burma have been devoid of any mutual aid. This is when an internationalist starts to understand that DSA IC and NPC don't really care about helping anyone, they just care about the symbol.

DSA International Committee's August 2022 panel on Ukraine featured no more than two Ukrainians on a panel of six guests, being Olena Lyubchenko and Yurii Sheliazhenko. A self-identified pacifist, Sheliazhenko has been especially tokenized as a mouthpiece for DSA and other "anti-war left" organizations to support narratives of "inter-imperialism," platformed for the purpose of policy self-validation. Platforming of Yurii also serves to detract attention from the many radical progressive groups on the forntlines, including Ukrainian feminists. This then reinforces the common dehumanizing assertion that anti-authoritarians are meaningless Western simps, and that revolutionary feminists are devoid of meaning in Ukraine. Though DSA tends to frequently flirt with campist thought, it has at least included anti-campism as an element of controlled opposition within the organization.

Nonetheless, the DSA IC has firmly embedded itself in the campist organizing bloc, placing DSA in the Peace in Ukraine Coalition alongside a large portion of "anti-war left" organizations in the West. DSA IC (really only the Anti-War Subcommittee) and CODEPINK have led this coalition, making them arguably the most influential organizing vehicles for Ukraine. CODEPINK and DSA IC mimic each other frequently, lobbying US Congress and holding feel-good events that do nothing for anyone.

DSA IC and NPC certainly do not reflect the whole of DSA, however. Fellow DSA dissident Dan La Botz has been a crucial voice in actually using DSA to support those affected by war. In his meaningful response to Ukraine, La Botz has shown once again after the unpopular purge of Palestine Solidarity Working Group that the DSA central committees are out of touch with local and regional chapters.

*International League of People's Struggle US (ILPS-US)*

Updated policy on Ukraine among the "anti-war left" has certainly been few and far between. Take ILPS-US, for example, a well-respected organization in the "anti-war left" that has not made any new announcement or statement on Ukraine since February. After giving a highly reductive analysis of the prelude to the war, ILPS-US concludes its first statement on Ukraine with:

"What's happening in Ukraine elucidates the corrupt nature of imperialism and inter-imperialist struggles. The battles between the West and Russia during the height of a global pandemic are deplorable…Working people do not support inter-imperialist war!"

This was followed by another statement:

> "Russian intervention comes after 8 years of US and NATO intervention. The ILPS-US stands with all peoples fighting for independence and sovereignty from the forces of US-

led imperialism and their fascist puppet regimes."

Is Donbass alluded to in "all peoples fighting for independence and sovereignty from the forces of US-led imperialism," or does this include any portion of the Ukrainian population at all? Is the Russian state a "fascist puppet regime" of the US? If it is only Ukraine, then how is this an "inter-imperialist" conflict at all? These concepts must be clearly defined and not danced around in an unintelligible blurb that reeks of campism.

Though it is perfectly reasonable that the Russian state is categorized as imperialist, this analysis completely fumbles in its interpretation of Ukraine as somehow being an equally imperialist power due to its backing from NATO, reducing the Ukrainian resistance to "battles between the West and Russia."

ILPS-US also states: "This is an anti-Russia campaign and doesn't address any concrete issues we're currently facing." The "Ukraine as an anti-Russia" hypothesis suggests that the Ukrainian people are collectively responsible for the Russian state's dissatisfaction. It is curious that many "anti-war left" organizations have adopted this position, which lies at the heart of the Russian state casus belli. Claiming "anti-war" nonpartisanship while insisting that the Russian state's casus belli is legitimate houses a hypocritical and aimless analysis that favors the invader.

On the contrary, the Russian state has abused Donbass as an anti-Ukraine, utilizing Donbass as a justification to invade the entire region. After just barely gaining Yanukovych in 2010, the Russian state adopted an irredentist policy encompassing all of Ukraine, claiming the Ukrainian state as its own property.

From there we must look at the larger "anti-war left" engines, Party of Socialism and Liberation (PSL) second among these organizing giants behind DSA.

*Party of Socialism and Liberation (PSL)*

Though PSL has renewed its statements since the beginning of the invasion, its approach has not changed in the slightest. PSL's main statement from February has already been unpacked thoroughly by Socialist Alternative, so we will not go too in-depth on what has already been rejected. That being said, some of its points are concerning enough to include here, given that they have been doubled down on and emulated by organizations across the West. PSL states:

"While we do not support the Russian invasion, we reserve our strongest condemnation for the U.S. government, which rejected Russia's legitimate security concerns in the region with total intransigence that they knew could provoke such a war. This is the consequence of decades of U.S.-NATO bullying and humiliating Russia…The role of the U.S. antiwar movement is not to follow the line of countries in conflict with U.S. imperialism, but to present an independent program of peace and solidarity and anti-imperialism…The menace of war can only be defeated by international solidarity among the peoples of the world and a resolute struggle against U.S. imperialism, which must demand the abolition of NATO. No war on Russia!"

Again we see easily spoken buzzwords that are attached to no object or subject. It is implied that peace will suddenly appear if NATO is abolished, contradicting this idea that the Russian state is half of the "inter-imperialism" in Ukraine. Solidarity is mentioned aimlessly, this time with nothing connected to the word. PSL then ends its statement with a laughable "No war on Russia!" as if this is an invasion of Russia. PSL claims not to follow the line of countries in conflict with U.S. imperialism, but then what line is it following if only condemning one imperialist power and not the other? Certainly one of neither practical nor ethical significance.

*Act Now to Stop War and End Racism Coalition (ANSWER Coalition)*

Though it is one of the larger "anti-war left" engines, we need not include any sizable description here on ANSWER Coalition's dizzying information warfare designed to disarm populations and keep police state regimes in pristine condition from Ethiopia to Myanmar. ANSWER Coalition has long earned its reputation of being a defender of hegemonic states and ruling classes, standing with anyone who opposes the US no matter how genocidal. Few organizations in the West more naively encapsulate in their policy "the enemy of my enemy is my friend."

Though highly influential in the "anti-war left," ANSWER Coalition is even too campist for the Peace in Ukraine Coalition, being one of few "anti-war left" engines in the US not to join. Answer Coalition still collaborates extensively with many of its member organizations, however, including CODEPINK.

*Progressive International*

Progressive International, an ideologically diverse coalition of progressive movements and organizations around the world (some arguably reactionary), opted to give an extremely short three-sentence response to Ukraine in March 2022:

> "War is a crime.
>
> We stand with the victims of the Putin government's brutal invasion in Ukraine and with the people in Russia suffering from a war that the people did not choose.
>
> We call on progressive forces to push for an immediate diplomatic solution that protects all refugees, guarantees the universal right to self-determination, and moves to dismantle all military-industrial alliances like NATO that endanger peace across the world."

The statement reflects a balance of many conflicting approaches in Progressive International, yet shows arguably the most equal parity of influence from both campists and those in favor of self-determination in all reviewed statements. NATO is directly mentioned in the statement, but not the Russian equivalent CSTO, perhaps exhibiting slight dominance from campists. When a coalition has ardent campist organizations like Qiao Collective in the same room as ardent anti-authoritarian ones like New Bloom, it is surely difficult to make a consensus beyond two or three short sentences.

This may reflect the broader problem of Progressive International being a feel-good coalition in name only that does not actually lead meaningful policy, as it is inherently bogged down in a range of schisms and contradictions. In February 2022, Razem Party withdrew from Progressive International followed by the departure of Ukrainian progressive journal *Spilne* in April, both citing its perceived lack of concern for Ukrainian self-defense. So, there clearly was not even a consensus after all.

*People's Summit*

This year's People's Summit includes not just actions but also a series of conferences within the belly of the beast, as Guevara would say. It is an important presence of dissidence against the most destructive empire on the planet. It is not a summit that is actually internationalist, however, as there is a highly selective criteria for which marginalized populations get solidarity and which do not. This is because a large portion of its panel guests are associated with state ruling classes.

In one concerning example, in the Democracy Beyond the US Empire forum on September 24, 2022, Eritrean diplomats were invited no less than three weeks after the Eritrean state launched its second invasion of Tigray and extended the Tigray Genocide, which the Eritrean state had already been participating in for two years. The People's Summit preconception that the Eritrean state is anti-US is questionable, given that there is a history of incumbent Eritrean dictator Isaias Afeworki begging the US to build a military base then turning on the US for a Russian base instead when the US declined.

The People's Summit, organized by "anti-war left" engines including CODEPINK and ANSWER Coalition, legitimizing a regime currently causing immense violence, war, and destruction in East Africa while sending indigenous populations to the brink of extinction. Why not just invite the Russian state too? Why not invite every imperialist state if the injury of some has no relevance to the injury of all? To People's Summit, if you can have genocidal powers boost your anti-US talking points then surely the struggle of their subjects is meaningless.

The host of one People's Summit forum, in his opening statement, said:

"We also know who our enemy is. We know who the enemy of the planet is, we know who the enemy of humanity is, and that is the one and only US empire." This sounds wonderful until "one and only" suggests all imperialism and all suffering is grounded in the US alone, and Eritrean diplomats are sitting in the room right after helping their regime rape and slaughter thousands.

*Trotskyist Responses*

Trotskyists appear to be the most conflicted on Ukraine, with one faction supporting the Ukrainian right of self-determination, another taking the "inter-imperialist war" route, and another yet claiming that the Russian state is not imperialist at all.

Sam Carliner of Trotskyist-aligned Left Voice falsely claims that "Ukraine lacks a progressive movement in the struggle for its independence from both reactionary blocs in action," being the pro-West and pro-Russia camps. Once again, this analysis entirely neglects the progressive blocs that do in fact exist in Ukraine, and also reduces the Ukrainian people to being a reactionary monolith. One would be curious to know Carliner's opinion of Hamas and reactionary elements of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in relation to Palestine if reactionary elements of a nation are to define solidarity with a marginalized ethnic group, and why he would be neglecting the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in this assessment. By this logic, because every ethnic group has a set of reactionary political factions, we should just forget self-determination in its entirety.

It is worth noting that Trotsky himself played a major role in Ukraine's messy political destiny, having led the betrayal of the Black Army in 1919 from which he then blamed the ensuing chaos on Stalin alone. Trotsky was tasked with the early phases of state collectivization in Ukraine, enforcing its annexation through bloody purges and peasant massacres. Without Trotsky's betrayal of the Black Army, the social and political situation of Ukraine would be unrecognizable in relation to today's Ukraine. In fact, the Soviet Union may still exist if anti-authoritarians were not purged. Nonetheless, Trotsky did provide credible insight on Stalin's enabling of the Holodomor in Ukraine.

*Noam Chomsky*

At 93 years of age, Chomsky is still in his peak discursive form. One has to hand it to him. Chomsky has notably sided with the "anti-war left" in his analysis of Ukraine. A rare miss, but not a surprising one given his past analysis of the Yugoslav Wars, which was clearly complacent toward the Serbian

state. This is important because Chomsky is one of the leading intellectuals of the Western left. Whatever he says is usually followed and repeated by a large number of organizations and thinkers.

Chomsky's modus operandi of analysis on Ukraine has generally been to expose the US instead of making a complete analysis of social conditions, or providing a practical proposal beyond "diplomacy." For internationalists, looking to Chomsky on whom to support and what should be done in this conflict is about as effective as looking to a stone to become liquid on its own. The connection is just never really there, and if it is, it would take millennia of external pressure to achieve. Thankfully Chomsky stops short of faulting Ukrainians for the conflict and dehumanizing them, but framing Ukrainian self-defense as some US proxy ragdoll is one of Chomsky's weaker assessments in his tenure.

In Chomsky's defense, he is among few in the "anti-war left" who have actually updated their responses since the beginning of the invasion, first calling for Ukraine to capitulate and now calling for broader negotiations since the Ukrainian resistance currently has momentum. In his recent interview on New Politics, he states that "Ukraine should receive weapons for self-defense" but does not seem to offer any extension of this assessment beyond conflating it with NATO. Nonetheless, much of the "anti-war left" has clearly gobbled up his initial points and repackaged them in their statements.

*Responses of Symbolic Nothingness*

In most statements from the "anti-war left" there is no clear object or subject of solidarity described beyond this monolith of "working people" and "workers." At best, the statements yield extremely vague criteria of solidarity that hold no material significance, throwing both Ukrainian and Russian "working people" into a category that does not exist on the ground. Homogenizing an invading military with a defending population is not how solidarity works. Throughout human history, there has never been a single conflict that is so simple one can say "solidarity with working people" and call it a day thinking some form of progress is being accomplished.

At worst, the statements dehumanize Ukrainians by conflating them with Western imperialism and make no attempt at even seeking a subject of solidarity outside of the Russian state.

"Anti-war left" statements have been inconsistent soundbites that bear little nuance even from a dialectic materialist standpoint. Mixed journals such as *Left Voice* make an attempt to analyze imperialist interference at the expense of social analysis while campist journals such as *People's World* have blamed the conflict entirely on "Ukrainian fascists." The responses are all similar in that they meticulously seek someone to blame, meanwhile development of solidarity for the invaded population is brushed off as an afterthought if not altogether ignored. They strictly emphasize that there is someone to be blamed and nobody to be supported, that "working people" are most affected yet are apparently undeserving of any further consideration. It is as if the statement itself is more important than the actual reality on the ground.

"**Anti-War Left" as a Philosophy of Contradictions**

> "One of the big victories of the CIA has been creating a situation in which large groups of western leftists assume, without any evidence, that any genuine act of working class revolt against oppression in a foreign country must have been secretly organised by the CIA." -Zoe Baker

"Anti-war left" philosophy, in holding sedentary resistance against US policy supreme, contradicts

grassroots internationalism, holding most significantly the interconnectedness of all struggles. The former tends to isolate populations and confine them to struggle solely against their own states, while the latter tends to emphasize breaking communication barriers and forming a global front that contests *all* imperialism. The "anti-war left" is therefore incompatible with grassroots internationalism. This is evidently reflected in the frequent emulation of destructive Kremlin narratives and hypocritical legitimization of US diplomacy. While claiming to fight imperialism, the "anti-war left" has succumbed to just about every imperialist actor involved.

Perhaps most importantly, the "anti-war left" policy of selective solidarity for marginalized populations makes it pseudo-internationalist. Organizations such as ANSWER Coalition and PSL have directly supported US policy in some cases without asking questions, as we see with the Tigray War. In fact, ANSWER Coalition and PSL have been among the Ethiopian state's most vocal genocide supporters in the West, trying to create a US-Ethiopian state dichotomy that doesn't actually exist at all. Western backing of the Ethiopian state is completely neglected while regime narratives of anti-Tigrayan racism are normalized.

The "anti-war left" has also, on occasion, shown its support for fascist protests in Europe. The International Magazine, a widely acclaimed campist magazine, tweeted its endorsement of the September 2022 fascist protests in Czechia simply because they were anti-EU and anti-NATO. Normalizing fascist collaboration seems to follow a concerning legacy of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) making tactical alliances with the Nazis in the 1930s. While the KPD antagonized anarchists by taking a *complicit* position with the Nazis back then, many in the "anti-war left" today antagonize anarchists by taking a *complacent* position with the Russian state today. Some even condemn the formation of grassroots resistance against the US, such as the formation of autonomous zones that create de facto dual power, simply because anti-authoritarians are involved.

Overall the "anti-war left" is not anti-war by any means, but rather pro-intrastate war that results from status quo negative peace, police statism, and broken diplomacy. There are only rare anti-authoritarian exceptions to this, such as Socialist Alternative, who may flirt with "anti-war left" identity but generally espouse anti-campist views. Socialist Alternative is one of very few large socialist organizations in the US that takes a unique approach to the conflict, insisting that "the Ukrainian people have a right to resist imperialism" while calling for the "forming of democratically run, multi-ethnic defense committees linked to working-class structures, like the unions that Zelensky attacked prior to the war." Other movements such as Disrupt Land Forces also emphasize demilitarization while supporting defense of self-determination.

When one perceives internationalism as "leaving people to solve their own problems" while encouraging an isolated and sedentary position against one's own occupying state, one contradicts and delegitimizes the inherent interconnectedness of human struggle, and therefore delegitimizes internationalism. It is more or less to say to marginalized populations: "Want to resist? Stay isolated, nothing else matters and nobody should help you."

The perils of "anti-war left" gatekeeping can be just as destructive as this pseudo-internationalist mentality, withholding solidarity for a population simply because it does not fall into the Marxist-Leninist-Hoxhaist-Maoist-Sankarist-Kropotkinite-Unicornist-Saxophonist interpretation of never-never land and the political metaphysics of a cumulonimbus cloud. The excuses for withholding solidarity are often extremely childish. The Workers League of Australia's excuse for denying Burmese people solidarity in the wake of the 2021 military coup, for example, was that rebels fighting the military were supposedly US-backed "terrorists." This was accompanied by no credible context to speak of. To hell with even critical solidarity for the immediate relief of a population, we'll just full on reject its humanity entirely.

One should never call themself an internationalist if there is a gag rule on solidarity for any marginalized population. This includes the Russian-speakers of Donbass in the east of Ukraine, Hungarians and Romanians in the west of Ukraine, and Romanis spread across Ukraine, all of whom marginalized by an ethnocentric state power structure that makes little effort to recognize their existence.

Now, when a population's freedom contradicts the power monopoly of the Chinese state, all bets for "anti-war left" solidarity are off. The word "Uyghur" has become synonymous with terrorism and Adrian Zenz in the eyes of much of the "anti-war left," with no functional understanding of their social situation as an ethnic group beyond Chinese state narratives, no communication with Uyghurs themselves, and no consideration of their revolutionary history in the East Turkestan People's Revolutionary Party. Imagine making exceptions to the basic human rights of all marginalized populations simply "cause the US agrees," as if the validity of a population's human rights is determined by what the US thinks. This is accompanied by the pervasive preconception that supporting a population's self-determination means justifying US intervention to achieve it.

Not much energy will be wasted here on neoconservative perspectives on Ukraine with the "nuance is when map" crowd of the Institute for the Study of War and other military sciences think tanks that promote deeply fascist Fortress Europe narratives. It should be worth noting, however, that both neoconservatism and campism stem from the same international relations theory tree. They both hold similar understandings of states and conflict, as they are both tied to realism. Regarding interpretation of international relations: liberalism, social democracy, campism, and neoconservatism are all closer to one another on the theory tree than they may appear on the surface. All insist the state to be the supreme actor of international relations with little to no social nuance required.

Likewise, little energy will be wasted critiquing the liberal approach, sometimes known as the North Atlantic Fellas Organization (NAFO), the opposite pole of the campist approach which tends to defend the Ukrainian police state itself as well as Zelensky. This is the most common mainstream approach found in the West, which campists and internationalists both counter. Liberal parties in Europe have cracked down heavily on members who express dissent with unfettered flooding of Western taxpayers money into Ukraine, going as far as banning their own delegates.

**Subconscious Neorealism and Competing Internationalisms**

The "anti-war left" tends to perceive all interstate wars from a monolithic lens, reducing the state as the central unit of analysis while entirely ignoring social nuances of the populations involved. This approach does not come out of nowhere, in fact, it has unmistakably Eurocentric foundations following a history of Cold War-spawned neorealist thought. Obsolete neorealist-aligned approaches have not changed in any meaningful way since their beginnings in post-WWII realist thought, sharing many state-centered commonalities with liberal approaches to international relations. There is a reason why notorious realist Henry Kissinger holds a nearly identical approach to Ukraine as the "anti-war left."

University of Chicago academic John Mearsheimer, for example, has held a considerable influence over this neorealist approach shared by many liberal and "anti-war left" circles alike. Mearsheimer, a supporter of Bernie Sanders, is a social Darwinist zealot whose tendencies can be viewed clearly in a brief list of his quotes. Among them: "In the anarchic world of international politics, it is much better to be Godzilla than Bambi," and "Great powers must be forever vigilant and never subordinate survival to any other goal, including prosperity." Though Mearsheimer has been widely critiqued for his social Darwinist tendencies, he also shares a nearly identical approach to Ukraine as the "anti-war left," as he is one of the academic influencers of its policy.

Much of the neorealist school follows the legacy of Hans Morgenthau, who popularized realist thought in a series of publications following WWII in which he insisted that states are the central actors of international politics, and that human power is rested in them alone. Tracing realism back even further we find its roots in Thomas Hobbes, who laced social Darwinism with nihilism to create what we know of today as the realist school of international relations. Considering the Eurocentric roots of realism and its corresponding philosophies that have also influenced Marxist and neo-Marxist approaches to international relations, it is not a surprise that many neorealists hold the European republican nation-state model as a static political system that cannot be altered in any way. It is thus also unsurprising that any neorealist-influenced approach will reduce analysis to states and institutions, constantly seeking a binary of West/East, US/Russia, NATO/China, etc., without considering the social reality of the populations most directly affected.

This subconscious neorealism is often complemented by meaningless soundbites from Twitter and Reddit, where the "anti-war left" forges its echo chamber in a maze of catchy buzzwords and glittering generalities. When one refers to the "Western left," the "anti-war left" is an unmistakable pillar of it. Though the largest "anti-war left" organizations are based in the US, their influence has seeped across a sizable amount of self-described anti-imperialist groups in Europe such as Young Struggle, and occasional movements of diaspora populations such as International League of People's Struggle (ILPS) serving the Philippine diaspora. These organizations are rarely conscious of where their lines of thought actually come from and what they have fused with.

Neorealism has been adopted by state socialists and twisted into campism. Internationalist labor organizer Dan La Botz explains: "Campists argue that those who criticize the so-called anti-imperialist nations (Russia, China, etc.) place themselves on the side of U.S. imperialism."

"Campist," then, is a more theory-based version of the term "tankie," which traces back to proponents of the 1956 Soviet Invasion of Hungary, although the two may arguably be interchangeable. Campism is countered by a more intersectional internationalism, which we deem here as "grassroots internationalism." La Botz describes grassroots internationalism interchangeably as "socialist internationalism," expressing with the example of Uyghur persecution:

"The truth is that socialist internationalists who support the Uyghurs do so *despite* the fact that the U.S. government says it supports them. We do so for our own reasons and while continuing to oppose U.S. imperialism. We do so because the Uyghurs, like the Poles and the Irish in Marx's time, have a right to self-determination, and shouldn't be politically, economically, and culturally subjected to China's authoritarian state and its Han nationalism."

If every struggle against state and capitalist power structures is interconnected, then internationalism is, in itself, the interconnectedness of these struggles.