

# Consistent Anti-Imperialism

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David F's [On Anti-imperialism and International Solidarity: From Ukraine to Palestine and Beyond](#) is a good start to a discussion of consistent anti-imperialism, linking solidarity with Ukraine and Palestine. It begins well:

Socialists, and revolutionary Marxists especially, support oppressed peoples 'and nations' struggles for liberation and self-determination. It's important from the outset to clarify that our support is based on the fundamental democratic legitimacy of these struggles in their own right, and on the broader liberating possibilities that they may open up. Our support is not dependent on which imperialist power or "camp" is the specific oppressor.

In my view, however, it then slips into its own inconsistency. It presents the Ukraine war as if it were just a war between Russia and Ukraine and not part of the new inter-imperialist cold war. It polemicizes just against anti-US campists who decline to support Ukraine against Russia on the grounds that the war is a proxy war between the US and Russia.

Gilbert Achcar's [The Left and Ukraine: Two Pitfalls to Avoid](#) balances criticism of anti-US campism with the acknowledgement:

The Russian invasion fostered likewise an opposite version of neo-campism, characterized by a perception of Putin's regime — and increasingly China's government too — as the greatest danger, with a concomitant tendency to be soft on, or hardly critical of, actions taken by Western powers in confronting Russia in Ukraine (or China on the issue of Taiwan).

Britain provides a good illustration of the new polarization in the ranks of the left and labour movement between the two types of neo-campism, anti-West and anti-Russia. Most anti-NATO neo-campist milieux in Britain are active in the Stop the War Coalition (StWC). Since February 2022, the StWC has paid lip service to the cause of Ukraine, tepidly condemning the Russian invasion and calling for the withdrawal of Russian troops to where they were before that invasion, without undertaking any action to that effect...

At the opposite end of the left spectrum, key sections of the British workers movement have resuscitated the Cold War type of Atlanticism that characterized the Labour Party, and which Keir Starmer's leadership revived to the point of identifying with Tory braggadocio. Thus, at its latest congress held in October last year, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) adopted a Ukraine-related motion entitled "Economic recovery and manufacturing jobs". As its title indicates, the motion stems more from narrow sectoral concerns about jobs than from internationalist solidarity with the Ukrainians. It praises

defence manufacturing as “essential”, deplores the fact that has been reduced in recent years, claiming that “defence manufacturing cuts have hindered the UK’s ability to aid the Ukrainian people under brutal assault from Putin’s regime”. Asserting that “the world is becoming less safe”, the motion supports “campaigns for immediate increases in defence spending in the UK”.

The National Committee may intend David’s draft to be just a piece to start a discussion of the international situation. If so, great. It does the job. If, however, the draft is to be put to a vote, I’d want to amend it.

I’d want to amend what seem to me some verbal excesses, for example, the following, with changes indicated in red:

It is a **basic principle** of anti-imperialist politics that “our main enemy is at home,” meaning in our case of course United States imperialism and its allies, with all the monstrous crimes against humanity perpetrated by U.S. policies, in our name. That has never meant seeing “the other side,” e.g. today’s powers of China or Russia as the United States’ main imperial rivals, as “progressive” in any sense or viewing their crimes as a lesser evil or simply **“a response to U.S. provocation.”**

And

As consistent rather than selective anti-imperialists, we fully understand that U.S./NATO military aid to Ukraine is based on the interests of the western powers, not on supporting “democracy against authoritarianism” or other **pretenses**. The crimes of U.S. imperialism in particular — in Latin America, in fully support of Israel’s war on the Palestinian people and complicity with the most brutal Middle Eastern dictatorships like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and so much more, continue unabated. None of this negates Ukraine’s right to receive military aid from anywhere it can—**and it is criminal for left forces to oppose such aid.**

The major amendments would be, first, to place the Ukraine war in the context of the new cold war between the US-led bloc of established imperialist powers and the Russia-China bloc challenging them.

Revolutionary socialists should defend Ukraine against Russia, but we should also acknowledge that the war is partly a proxy war between Russian imperialism, trying to reassert its hegemony in the territory of the former Russian Empire, supported by Chinese imperialism, and US and NATO imperialism, trying to keep its rivals down.

And second, to polemicize against both the anti-Russia camp, which slides into support for US imperialism, and the anti-US camp, which slides into support for Russian imperialism.

In the US, the anti-Russia, pro-US camp is far larger, even in the left. To illustrate:

The DSA International Committee seems to be pulling off the coup of having the DSA convention declare against military aid to all governments, a backhanded slap at Ukraine. It's succeeding, so far, not because a majority of DSA opposes Ukraine's obtaining arms to defend itself, but because the Bread and Roses right and others who should know better have ducked the fight.

Bernie Sanders and the Squad will vote for military aid to Ukraine and for the imperial budget as a whole, if their votes are needed to pass it. They have far more influence in DSA than the International Committee does.

Following the basic principle of anti-imperialist politics that "our main enemy is at home," Solidarity should put our opposition to US imperialism front and center, even in articles and statements on the Ukraine war.

To me, the amendments I've sketched would be necessary, both because they are correct and also because they make our overall argument more persuasive.