

The transformation to a neo-colonial world has only begun, but it promises to be as drastic, as disorienting a change as was the original european colonial conquest of the human race. Capitalism is again ripping apart and restructuring the world, and nothing will be the same. Not race, not nation, not gender, and certainly not whatever culture you used to have.

In this wrenching transformation, national empires, national borders and national economic rivalries are becoming less important to the international ruling class. To them, nations are less like the fortified bases of monopoly they used to be, but more like mere provinces, commercial suburbs, places of convenience for their multi-national corporations. Nations are being subdivided, built and torn down at an increasing tempo by capitalist evolution itself.

--Butch Lee, Red Rover, 1993¹

I think every radical should read *The Global Perspective*. It can help you make up your mind about the way forward for anti-imperialism.

The Global Perspective, over 500 pages long, is a deep dive into the past, present and future of imperialism, from the point of view of die-hard militant Torkil Lauesen. Lauesen has thought a lot about almost every aspect of imperialism. His ideas are drawn from theory, anti-imperialist practice around the world, and his own direct experience, which is extensive. *The Global Perspective* presents his conclusions, and the evidence behind them, not as academic exercises but as weapons of struggle.

The Global Perspective is so big and covers so much ground that it might seem intimidating at first glance. But fortunately Lauesen's style is engaging. His writing is clean and direct, making it a pleasure to read. (Credit must also be given to Gabriel Kuhn's translation, which is seamless and convincing.) Almost every paragraph sets out a clear idea--a lesson from the past, an observation about strategy, an illuminating example. This means that the reader can put the book down, pick it up later, and get quickly pulled back into the discussion.

The Global Perspective certainly doesn't have all the answers. I disagree quite strongly with some of its politics. But that's not surprising given how comprehensive it is. Despite my reservations and criticisms, I consider *The Global Perspective* to be a great resource, and an excellent launch pad for discussing imperialism today. My experience with the book is that, even on matters where I differ, Lauesen has provided worthwhile insights and information that advance my thinking.

Global inequality, global anti-imperialism

Lauesen's grand survey is motivated by his righteous outrage about the economic inequalities created by imperialism. His focus on this injustice provides the logical and moral foundation for the various parts of the book: his review of anti-imperialist theory, his descriptions of revolutionary struggles, his analysis of the current world order, and his predictions and prescriptions for the future.

¹ Butch Lee and Red Rover, *Night-Vision: Illuminating War and Class on the Neo-colonial Terrain*, Kersplebedeb, Second Edition, 2017, p. 246. This is a good book to read alongside Lauesen's.

Lauesen never loses sight of the difference between life in the privileged Global North and the oppressed Global South. He reviews the convincing evidence that populations in Europe, Japan and North America, including large swaths of the working class, profit from, and have become complicit with, imperialism.

The Global Perspective recaptures the heady revolutionary optimism of the 1960's and 70's. It's interesting, for me, to view the events of that era through the eyes of a European militant. (He and I are about the same age.) There's a lot of overlap with my own experience in the US, but everything looks slightly different. That may be partly because Lauesen's political environment wasn't as directly influenced by the *internal* anti-imperialist struggles that broke out inside the US, including the Black Liberation Movement, the Chicano movement, the Puerto Rican independence movement, and Native American freedom movements.

New landscape of imperialism

The Global Perspective recognizes that there have been changes in the organization of imperialism in recent decades. Lauesen writes intelligently and at some length about the decline of national liberation struggles, the failure of socialist revolutions, neo-colonialism and globalization.

But from my point of view, this is where the book falls short. Like much of the anti-imperialist Left, Lauesen evades the full implications of the changes in world capitalism that have happened in the last several decades. He relies on a somewhat mechanical model of imperialism:

It can be summed up like this: The world is divided into rich and poor countries; this division has economic causes and is reflected in class relations and politics. (p.23)²

Within the general framework of rich vs. poor countries, Lauesen considers the sole headquarters of imperialism to be "the Triad." This term, popularized by Samir Amin and other theorists, denotes a transnational alliance of powerful countries--the US, Europe and Japan--that has played a hegemonic role in the global economy and geopolitics for decades.

This way of describing imperialism has the virtue of simplicity. The Triad countries attack; the Global South countries defend, either alone or together. It can be plotted like moves on a chessboard. But imperialism is more complicated than that.

Imperialism is a world system under the domination of parasitic monopoly capitalism. As it evolved out of European capitalism, imperialism definitely caused some countries to become much richer than others. But no countries, no matter how rich they are, own imperialism--it would be more accurate to say that imperialism owns them.

Monopoly capital doesn't dominate the world only by directing the actions of rich countries, either. It (also) promotes, and profits from, the oppression of genders, the exploitation of the proletariat, the subjugation of nationalities and races, and the commodification of the natural world. These expressions of imperialism frequently transcend country vs. country dynamics. In fact, today, as we live through the most recent wave of globalization, it's clear that monopoly capital depends less and less on countries all the time.

² Lauesen uses the familiar terms "Global North/Global South," "First World/Third World" and "core/periphery" to describe rich and poor countries. I sometimes use them, too. But they seem inadequate today: they imply a particular configuration of imperialism that has undergone significant changes.

It's still true that a core coalition of monopoly capitalists based in the Triad countries makes up the richest and most powerful imperialist center in the world. But that configuration of imperialism has been eroding for some time.

First of all, Triad capitalism is in decline, while new partners and competitors are emerging. The US's infrastructure, educational systems and social services are falling apart; its bloated military is unable to prevail in many situations. The EU is being weakened by centrifugal internal conflict and economic imbalances. Japan's economy is mired in debt. Meanwhile, monopoly capitalist classes have appeared in many countries we once thought of as solidly part of the Global South: China, Brazil, Hong Kong, South Africa, South Korea, India, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Singapore and others. Some of these rising monopoly capitalist classes are closely integrated with Triad capitalists (meaning it isn't really just a "triad" any more). Others are rivals, working to split the Triad or supplant it at the top of the imperialist heap.

But what's even more important is that the overall class and spatial organization of imperialism (including Triad-based imperialism) is being transformed by neocolonialism and globalization. Today, imperialism is relying less and less on Triad armies or Triad colonial regimes. Increasingly monopoly capitalism dominates world society through privatization and financial loan-sharking, implemented through transnational institutions like the World Bank, IMF and WTO. And monopoly capitalists from all over the world, including former colonies, are getting in on that action.

Neocolonialism is spreading imperialism out geographically, distributing it across, through and inside countries in a way never seen before. It's loosening the bonds that connect pools of monopoly capital to their "home" countries. It's dramatically changing the class structure of the imperialist system from top to bottom. It's transforming the nature of women's oppression. It's tearing up the natural world at an accelerated pace.

If we restrict ourselves to a "Triad vs. poor countries" framework, we'll lose sight of these radical changes, and their far-reaching political implications. This in turn can lead to errors in identifying who are our friends and who are our enemies.

Globalization of classes

At the top of the global class pyramid, the monopoly capitalist classes are increasingly adopting transnational investments, institutions, and strategies. The flip side of the coin is that Triad-based monopoly capitalists are gradually disinvesting from their "home" societies, a trend which hollows out the national economies of those countries, and degrades their once-holy "social contracts." Imperialists no longer rely as much on their "home" country labor forces, governments, or domestic consumers. Pools of monopoly capital have started to float free of their countries of origin, and to dissolve into even larger, truly transnational pools of capital. This change has caused a huge political backlash among outraged privileged Triad populations, who feel abandoned and disrespected. This nationalistic sentiment may slow globalization, but it isn't going to stop it in the long run.

Radical class transformation isn't just happening at the top of the class pyramid, of course. Neocolonial globalization is causing significant changes at all levels of the world class structure. Perhaps the most important change, from the point of view of the Left, is that massive migration out of rural areas, combining with the rise of global transnational labor forces, is forging a new, cosmopolitan incarnation of the global proletariat,

centered around women.³ A volatile and diverse lumpen/proletariat also exerts a growing influence on nations and world society.⁴

Another important change in the imperialist system's class structure is that new middle classes are emerging rapidly in the countries once assumed to be monolithically part of the Global South. *The Global Perspective* is dismissive of this change, treating it as a minor phenomenon. In accordance with his overall model of imperialism, Lauesen associates consumerist society and middle-class privilege almost exclusively with Europe, the US and Japan.

In a recent interview with Gabriel Kuhn, Lauesen says, "In most countries of the Global South, the so-called new middle class makes up less than ten percent of the population."⁵ Perhaps. But the population of the countries Lauesen calls the Global South is some 4-6 billion people, depending on how we calculate it. At the low end, ten percent of that number would be 400 million people--more than the entire population of the US. At the high end, it would amount to 600 million--similar to the number of middle class people in the whole EU. (It turns out that both figures are probably low.) As capitalist investors know, the fast-expanding new middle classes inside the former colonial countries aren't "so-called" classes; they are real.⁶ The formation of large populations of middle class people inside these countries is one more indication that radical change is happening within world capitalism.

All over the world, what used to be essentially "national" classes have now been plugged directly into the global economy. Capitalists eagerly embrace transnational mobility and global elite culture. Middle classes are becoming distributed around the world. They pursue multinational careers and interact globally online; they share music, tech, clothes, consumer preferences, habits. Tens of millions of proletarians, technicians and professionals cross borders to work in transnational industries. Hundreds of millions more work within global supply chains, and know full well how that affects their lives and futures.

A new geography of economic stratification

Over the past several decades, as classes have globalized, the spatial organization of imperialism has also changed noticeably. There are still tremendous differences in *average* income between rich countries and poor countries. At the same time, the borderline between global wealth and poverty has become much more convoluted. Today, in many countries, the Global North is inside the Global South, and the Global South is inside the Global North.

This reconfiguration of wealth and poverty within the imperialist system is a process, not a sudden event. Old and new forms of imperialism exist side by side. The older model of country vs. country inequality still exists, as does colonialism. But the previous geographic line between privilege and oppression is fracturing and gradually re-forming in a new, class-inflected pattern.

³ For more on this, see Bromma, *Exodus and Reconstruction: Working-Class Women at the Heart of Globalization*, Kersplebedeb, 2014.

⁴ For an in-depth analysis of the lumpen/proletariat, see J. Sakai, *The "Dangerous Class" and Revolutionary Theory: Thoughts on the Making of the Lumpen/Proletariat*, Kersplebedeb, 2018.

⁵ <http://kersplebedeb.com/posts/anti-imperialist-combeack-an-interview-with-torkil-lauesen/>

⁶ China is by far the world's largest car market--about 30% of the total. [https://mmta.co.uk/2017/06/22/chinese-automotive-market-much-just-large Western "prestige" brands like Apple and Starbucks make about 20% of their revenue in China.](https://mmta.co.uk/2017/06/22/chinese-automotive-market-much-just-large-Western-prestige-brands-like-Apple-and-Starbucks-make-about-20%-of-their-revenue-in-China) <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/07/magazine/when-it-comes-to-a-trade-war-china-takes-the-long-view>

One aspect of this transformation is that income inequality has skyrocketed within the former colonial world. Today, countries which used to be solidly part of the Global South--including China, India, Brazil, South Korea, Saudi Arabia and many other places--now have fantastically rich monopoly capitalist classes and significant consumerist middle classes living side by side with impoverished proletarians, poor peasants and lumpen. These classes may reside in the same country, but they live in different economic worlds. In our emerging social reality, the line between the world's exploited and the world's privileged now runs right through the middle of these countries.⁷ Meanwhile, the differences in wealth among former colonies, becoming dramatic in some cases. This is not the distribution of wealth and poverty we that were familiar with during colonialism.

Not just countries, not just the Triad

Treating imperialism as a plague which particular countries inflict on other countries is a tempting shortcut, especially since that's still one of the forms imperialism does take. But I think that if we stop there, we'll end up with a superficial and outdated view of world society. I would argue that imperialism is a world system ruled by shifting coalitions of monopoly capitalists. Because of its inner contradictions, monopoly capitalism requires constant expansion in order to survive. Like a metastatic cancer, it constantly overflows borders of all kinds, aggressively seeking profit. I don't mean it just overflows the borders of countries, either.

For instance, the oppression and exploitation of women--which is actually far more important to monopoly capital than any particular country--isn't just carried out by the Triad. It isn't just a country vs. country issue. The oppression of women is (also) carried out on global, regional and local levels, with the complicity of men on each of those levels. This oppression is a systemic manifestation of imperialism, fundamental to its continued existence. Particular empires rise and fall, but the oppression of women continues seamlessly.

There is change happening for women, though. Today, the imperialist system is overflowing the borders of families.

Domestic labor by poor women has existed in one form or another for centuries, as we know. (About 67 million domestic workers around the world are laboring in private homes.)⁸ In the last several decades, a new kind of large-scale, globalized, migrant domestic worker industry has arisen, which includes about 11.5 million workers, mostly women.⁹ It's highly organized, usually involving formal agreements between the governments of the sending and receiving countries. This industry is concentrated, so far, in two regions of the world: Latin America, and the south Asia/Pacific region. The workforce in the latter region is made up mainly of Indonesian, Filipina, Sri Lankan and Thai women, who have been pulled out of their own families to serve as live-in maids, nannies, housekeepers and caregivers for families in foreign countries.

What's happening to these proletarian women reveals a lot about how the imperialist system is changing. But this is not something dictated by the countries of the Triad. It's mainly sponsored by the ruling classes of former colonies. Most of the migrant Asian women don't end up in Triad countries either (although about 22% go to Europe). In fact, the biggest destinations for these millions of proletarian women are Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong, where they labor mostly for middle class families. The use of overseas domestic workers in these countries is much more pervasive than it is in the US, Europe or Japan.

⁷ For different reasons, having to do with slavery and settler colonialism, this is also true in the US, South Africa and other settler states.

⁸ <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/domestic-workers/who/lang--en/index.htm>

⁹ http://www.idwfed.org/en/resources/regulating-international-labour-recruitment-in-the-domestic-work-sector/@_@display-file/attachment_1

To give some idea of what this looks like as a social phenomenon: A third of all Hong Kong families now employ a domestic worker from this transnational labor pool.¹⁰ The internet is full of slick websites for "domestic helper agencies" where people from the receiving countries shop for "employment packages," including placement fees, paperwork, "free replacements," medical checkups, transportation, and "lodging of transfer domestic worker during your vacation."¹¹

Not to be left behind, mainland China's government recently started looking into legalizing the hiring of Filipina migrant domestic workers.¹² While that idea wends its way through the government bureaucracy, there's already an active black market for maids in the People's Republic. This involves about 200,000 undocumented Filipinas who live the insecure lives of "illegal immigrants."¹³

I should also note that Arab-majority countries are also major destinations for transnational domestic workers; they receive about 19% of the world's migrant domestic workers. Most of those workers are from the same four Asian countries.¹⁴

The transnational domestic worker industry is encouraged and facilitated by the women's home ruling classes and professional classes, who profit from this expanding industry as well as the remittances that it generates. The industry is also heartily embraced by ruling classes and middle classes in the receiving countries. After all, it allows professional women to have modern careers without "burdening" their husbands with any shared housework, elder care or childcare.

The growing global domestic worker industry is a significant change in the world imperialist system, impacting the lives of tens of millions of women while transforming the nature of families. It's exactly the kind of development that anti-imperialists should be studying. But trying to understand it mainly through the lens of "the Triad vs. the Global South" would be, in my opinion, a waste of time.

Systemic contradictions

This isn't just true for the oppression of women, either. Imperialist national oppression isn't defined solely by the struggle between countries, either. It couldn't be: many oppressed nations exist as internal colonies; others (like the Kurds) are spread across multiple countries. Something similar can be said about the exploitation of the world proletariat: as an increasingly transnational and migratory class, it is no longer fully "owned" by individual countries. Imperialism's drive to privatize and commodify the natural world and information obviously transcends countries, as well.

In other words, while country borders are important to how imperialism is organized, imperialism has always been about much more than those borders. And in the neocolonial era especially, country borders are one among many factors that capitalists manipulate in their drive for growth and profit.

I do think the "Triad vs. poor countries" model can still be useful. But it only describes one layer of imperialist reality. I don't think it's helpful at all--either theoretically or politically--to treat Chinese monopoly capitalists as part of the Global South, while categorizing oppressed people in the US as part of the imperialist Triad. Nor is it useful to act as if consumerist middle classes only play a significant role in the Triad countries.

¹⁰ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5791470>

¹¹ Examples: <https://www.thebestsingapore.com/services/the-best-maid-agencies-in-singapore>

¹² <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/economy/article/2105001/philippine-official-moves-quash-reports-mainland-china-will>

¹³ <https://www.sixthtone.com/news/1002446/chinas-undocumented-filipino-housekeepers-eke-out-risky-living>

¹⁴ <http://www.wiego.org/informal-economy/occupational-groups/domestic-workers>

I think we need to dig deeper with our theory, working towards a class analysis of the modern, evolving imperialist system. We can never ignore the enormous privileges that most people in the Triad countries hold, or the widespread poverty that those privileges are linked to in the Global South. We should support national liberation struggles, and oppose Triad parasitism. But we should also be aware of how patterns of privilege, poverty and oppression are changing as neocolonialism and globalization remake the world economy and the class structure connected to it. Instead of locking all our attention on *countries*, we should be studying *all* the multiple ways that pools of monopoly capital operate in the world, and the specific ways they parasitically exploit various populations of the oppressed--inside, across, and sometimes without regard for, country borders.

*We are now experiencing the integration of former national capitalisms, colonies and monopolies into one borderless world economy (although to workers there are many borders) and one class structure. A formally de-colonized but unfree world.*¹⁵

The poor and "their" ruling classes

There's a particularly compelling reason why imperialism shouldn't be reduced to "the Triad versus the poor countries": the rulers of almost all the countries with large poor populations are reactionaries. In fact, as Lauesen recognizes, the ruling classes of the ex-colonies are now fully integrated into the world imperialist system.

*The former colonies have not been able to escape imperialism, despite independence. The ruling elites of the newly-independent countries constitute--more or less willingly--a class of compradors. (p. 219)*¹⁶

The ruling classes in the former colonies hardly ever actually represent their impoverished citizens--they represent themselves and monopoly capital. Almost all of the "Global South" ruling classes enable and facilitate the imprisonment of oppressed people--especially women--within world imperialism. They are connected to monopoly capitalist groups and institutions. A number of these ruling classes have become imperialists in their own right.

Yet Lauesen, along with many other anti-imperialists, still counts on these very same capitalist men to forge a "South-South" anti-imperialist front. This seems to confuse enemies with friends. Taking reactionary elites' hypocritical rhetoric largely at face value, *The Global Perspective* evades the fact that the oppressed people of the Global South will have to fight to *overthrow* these ruling classes as part of their struggle against world imperialism.

Chinese imperialism

What this means for anti-imperialist strategy comes into better focus if we look at how *The Global Perspective* discusses China.

Lauesen says that China "is no longer at the periphery of the global economy." (p. 443) In an interview, however, he calls it a "peripheral state."¹⁷ He says that China

¹⁵ Op cit. *Night-Vision*, p. 251.

¹⁶ "Comprador" is a term from the colonial era; it could be misleading today. Within neocolonialism, imperial functionaries don't necessarily work on behalf of a particular country, as they did in the colonial past. More typically, they collaborate with neoliberalism and its global institutions (like the IMF and World Bank), and serve the interests of diverse monopoly capitalist groups.

is emerging as a leader of the Global South and the main rival to the US for global dominance. While the US is trying to maintain global hegemony by imperialist means, China aims to shed its economic and political dependence on the Global North. (p. 307)

I find this passage baffling. It's not clear what Lauesen thinks China's "global dominance" would actually look like. One thing is very clear, though: he thinks that it's impossible for China to be an imperialist power, because "it does not have a periphery it can exploit." (p. 315). He doubles down on this assertion:

We must not confuse the current situation in China with that of Europe in the late nineteenth century. Even if the Chinese government's long-term goal is less dependency on exports and a stronger domestic market, and while working-class demands appear compatible with capitalism and the imperialist system, China cannot copy European social democracy. It has no external proletariat to exploit. (p. 344)

The Global Perspective is critical even of those who call China "sub-imperialist." Lauesen admits that China's policies in Africa and elsewhere have an "exploitative character." But he absolves China's capitalists (and middle classes) of responsibility for this. Rather, he argues that Chinese exploitation is being carried out for the eventual benefit of the "Triad" countries. This, Lauesen alleges, marks a "fundamental difference between China and the imperialist powers." (p. 372)

At one point, Lauesen calls the Chinese economy "a dynamic form of state capitalism." Yet he also says that China is "led by the largest communist party in the world." (p.356) In his interview with Gabriel Kuhn, Lauesen calls for anti-imperialists to support "left factions of the Communist Party," along with "left wing intellectuals, and the workers' movement."¹⁸ *The Global Perspective* urges the Chinese working class into "open conflict with the pro-capitalist wing of the Communist Party." (p.378)

I have a very different analysis. I think that there's overwhelming evidence that China is a rising imperialist power. And that its "Communist" Party is a party of monopoly capital.

Capitalist restoration and the Chinese periphery

For many generations, China's huge population made up a significant proportion of the world imperialist periphery. The Chinese proletariat and peasantry were heavily exploited by a variety of imperialist powers. One of the great achievements of the Chinese Revolution was that it essentially tore this huge chunk of the periphery--many hundreds of millions of oppressed people--out of the grasp of Western and Japanese capital. But then, disastrously, socialism was defeated, and capitalism was restored in China. The new ruling class rushed to exploit its own people--it's own captive periphery. In fact, this great opportunity for exploitation was the motive and main objective of capitalist restoration.

In the years since capitalists gained full control of the country, the Chinese Party and state have cynically pimped the Chinese proletariat to Western and Japanese capital. In return, predatory foreign investors agreed to allow the Chinese oligarchy to skim a large stream of profits off the top. Chinese capitalists, concentrated in the Party's top ranks, also invested heavily in the stocks and bonds of the same Western monopoly capitalists who

¹⁷ Interview, op. cit. This contradiction is revealing, as I will discuss below.

¹⁸ Ibid.

were exploiting their own people. China's state capitalist oligarchs became fabulously rich, and fabulously corrupt.¹⁹

Transitioning out of socialism, the Chinese Party was centralized, organized, and capable of strategic planning. It understood the need to control foreign investments on its turf in order to claim a share of the profits and avoid being marginalized by outsiders. Most foreign corporations were therefore required by law to give the Chinese state a majority stake in their investments, and foreign banks were excluded almost totally. As full partners with foreign industrial and finance capital, Chinese oligarchs were able to gradually accumulate not just obscene profits from the exploitation of their own proletariat, but also the latest technologies and production methods used by their foreign mentors and rivals. This accumulation process eventually allowed Chinese capitalists to start creating their own cutting edge enterprises. (Xiaomi, the massive Chinese smartphone company, is one example. Chinese auto firms are another.)

China's ruling class has now decided that it's time to transition away from reliance on domestic low-wage labor and exports to the West. It wants all the profits from exploitation, not just some of them. It wants to ramp up its internal consumer markets, as well as its export of capital. And it wants to move up to the top of the capitalist food chain.

Chinese middle classes

As part of this process, the Party is encouraging the growth of Chinese consumerist middle classes. According to McKinsey, there will be almost 400 million middle class people--making the equivalent of \$9,037 to \$34,495 a year in PPP US dollars--in China's urban centers by 2020. (Most of them will be in the upper half of that income range.) In Shanghai, the median wage in 2017 was \$13,620 a year. That's higher than the median wage of EU members Croatia, Lithuania and Latvia. Average manufacturing wages in China are higher than in every major Latin American economy except Chile; 40% higher than in Mexico.²⁰ The average factory worker made PPP \$3.60/hour in 2016, up 64% from 2011. That figure, low as it was compared to the US that year, was more than five times average manufacturing wages in India, and similar to wages in Portugal.²¹

Increased wages aren't simply the result of strikes and other worker struggles. As during the US's New Deal, the Chinese government is openly calling for higher wages. In line with this objective, particular parts of the workforce are being groomed to become labor elites, with pay and conditions far above regular proletarians. For instance, assembly line autoworkers in the biggest cities make about \$10 PPP an hour. This is almost three times China's manufacturing average wage, and several times what non-manufacturing workers are paid.²² But our comparisons shouldn't stop there. That wage is roughly ten times what the Chinese women who sewed garments for Ivanka Trump got paid.²³ It's more than 50 times the income of the country's rural poor.

¹⁹ For a close look at the almost unbelievable pervasiveness of corruption in the Chinese state and Party, see Minxin Pei, *China's Crony Capitalism: The Dynamics of Regime Decay*, Harvard University Press, 2016.

²⁰ http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-10/02/content_32752727.htm

²¹ <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/02/27/chinese-wages-rise-made-in-china-isnt-so-cheap-anymore.html> The US had similar wages as a rising power. In 1915, full time male income in the US averaged about \$16,000 a year calculated in 2015 dollars; women made about half of that. Manufacturing wages were presumably lower. <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2016/article/the-life-of-american-workers-in-1915.htm>

²² <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-24/gm-is-building-cheap-cars-for-china-s-masses>

²³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/workers-endured-long-hours-low-pay-at-chinese-factory-used-by-ivanka-trumps-clothing-maker/2017/04/25/b6fe6608-2924-11e7-b605-33413c691853_story.html?utm_term=.45483fad5fe4

The growth of middle classes is very useful to the monopoly capitalists, just as it was in the US and Europe. Not just because it creates a large domestic consumer market for Chinese capital. But also because middle class privilege creates a social base for China's regional and global drive for dominance, and helps the state ramp up mass patriotism and jingoism. Pro-imperialist and militaristic propaganda appears to be reaching a receptive audience among middle classes in China, just as it does in the West.²⁴ Many millions of people are hoping to benefit if Chinese imperialism continues to expand.

Overall, China, which has almost 20% of the world's population, is now one of the most unequal places on earth. Lauesen reports that "in 2006, 0.4 percent of the richest families controlled 70 percent of the national wealth." (p. 369)²⁵ It's not too surprising that there are big disparities between monopoly capitalists and proletarians. But huge discrepancies also exist, as I have already indicated, among workers, between men and women and between urban and rural areas. While tens of millions of rich and middle class people are profiting from a raging real estate bubble and shopping in fancy malls in the coastal cities, there are also tens of millions of other Chinese living below the government's official poverty line of \$334 a year--less than a dollar a day. 40% of China's population survives on \$5.50 a day or less.²⁶ This is Global North and Global South *in the same country*.

Exporting exploitation

While Chinese monopoly capital still relies considerably on sending consumer goods to the West, it has given that trade a neoliberal twist: it uses the proletariats of other countries for cheaper outsourced labor. In other words, Chinese monopoly capital participates actively in international wage arbitrage. Chinese capitalists are buying hundreds of millions of dollars worth of clothing from sweatshops in Bangladesh, then reselling it for export. Some Chinese entrepreneurs subcontract their labor from Bangladeshi firms; others are opening their own factories there.²⁷

Chinese textile firms are also sending fabric across the border to North Korea, where it is turned into garments with "Made in China" tags.

"Manufacturers can save up to 75 percent by making their clothes in North Korea," says a Chinese trader who has lived in Pyongyang.... In North Korea, factory workers can't go to the toilet whenever they feel like, otherwise they think it slows down the whole assembly line."...North Korean workers at the now shuttered Kaesong industrial zone... received wages ranging from a minimum of around \$75 a month to an average of around \$160.²⁸

This year, hundreds of Vietnamese protesters have been arrested, and many more tear-gassed, beaten and blasted with fire hoses, during big demonstrations against three "special economic zones" that their government

²⁴ For instance, a recent surge of Hollywood-style jingoistic movies has been setting box office records in China. The tag line of "Wolf Warrior 2" is: "anyone who offends China will be killed no matter how far the target is." <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/23/china-finds-its-own-top-gun-and-rambo-in-wave-of-patriotic-movies>

²⁵ All observers agree that inequality has risen sharply since 2006.

²⁶ <https://borgenproject.org/top-10-facts-about-poverty-in-china>

²⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-19394405>

²⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-labour-china-insight-idUSKBN1AT00Q>

plans to lease to foreigners for 99 years. The zones are expected to be dominated by Chinese capitalists, with a Vietnamese work force.

China exports more goods to Vietnam than any other country in Southeast Asia, sending textiles to be made into shirts and sneakers, and electronic components for mobile phones and large flat-panel displays. Those completed products are exported around the world, as well as back to China. Vietnam also makes electronic components for factories in China, and exports computers for Chinese consumers. Manufacturers see Vietnam as an attractive base, with wages as little as a third of those in coastal regions of China, according to employment consultants.... Exports [from Vietnam] to China jumped nearly 43 percent to \$13 billion in the first half of 2017 from a year earlier, according to customs data.²⁹

Chinese capitalists have opened massive textile factories in Ethiopia, spending tens of billions of dollars to build new industrial parks from scratch. Chinese banks give hefty loans to the Ethiopian government, which then turns around and gives major tax breaks to Chinese textile investors. Ethiopian women, earning a base salary of about \$25 a month, labor in enormous metal sheds; the clothes they make are sold by Chinese capitalists to global companies like Guess, Levi's and H&M.³⁰

Exporting capital

China's investment banks, as Lauesen mentions, are among the largest in the world. In fact, in 2017, of the top ten world banks, ranked by assets, Chinese banks--not "Triad" banks--ranked as #1, #2, #3 and #4.³¹ These banks export waves of capital around the world. China's outbound direct foreign investment is huge--it rose to 17 percent of the global total in 2016. Chinese companies hold almost 11 percent of foreign direct investment assets in the world--second only to the US, and twice what is held by British, Japanese or German firms. In 2017, Chinese companies made up 109 of the Forbes Global 500 list, an increase from 30 companies in 2007.³² Chinese capitalists have made some ten thousand business investments in Africa alone.³³

China's monopoly capitalists, we should note, are an integral part of the WTO, World Bank, IMF and other institutions of rapacious neoliberalism. China's stakes in the World Bank and IMF are now roughly the same as Japan's.³⁴ In addition, China runs the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, a new multinational lender similar to the IMF. Plus, along with other BRICS nations, it is a founding member of the New Development Bank. The

²⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-vietnam-china/despite-strains-vietnam-and-china-forge-closer-economic-ties-idUSKCN1BC3S2>

³⁰ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2018-03-02/china-is-turning-ethiopia-into-a-giant-fast-fashion-factory>

³¹ <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/122315/worlds-top-10-banks-jpm-wfc.asp>

³² <https://thediplomat.com/2017/12/how-chinese-fdi-will-transform-the-global-economy>

³³ <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/middle-east-and-africa/the-closest-look-yet-at-chinese-economic-engagement-in-africa>

³⁴ <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/memdir/members.aspx>; <https://www.yicaiglobal.com/news/world-bank-capital-injection-gives-china-more-voting-power>

latter has recently come under criticism in South Africa for catering to Chinese capital at the expense of the local population.³⁵

In fact, like other imperialists, China's ruling class is becoming well-known for unequal trade deals and financial loan sharking. One of their characteristic scams is to make backroom deals with corrupt politicians and dictators overseas that lock poor countries deep into debt. This gives the Chinese capitalists significant geopolitical and economic leverage.

One recent example is the Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka. China gave the country's corrupt president, Mahinda Rajapaksa, a series of loans to finance this vanity project, which by all reasonable business metrics was destined to fail. (There was already a port nearby, with room to expand.) The original financing agreement mandated that a Chinese company would be hired to build the port. As part of the deal, Sri Lankan officials were reportedly expected to provide the Chinese government with information about the movements of foreign shipping in the harbor. By the time the initial loans had rolled over, with constant new requirements and higher interest rates, Sri Lanka owed Chinese capitalists over 10 billion dollars. When Rajapaksa was up for re-election in 2015, Chinese corporations funneled tens of millions of dollars directly and openly into his (losing) campaign.

Sri Lankan officials tried to get their country's out-of-control debt written down in 2016. But in talks with Chinese officials, they were informed that, in order to get meaningful debt reduction, they would have to give a Chinese company full control of the port, plus 15,000 acres of surrounding land (to build an industrial zone), for 99 years. Today, Sri Lankans, having lost control of a chunk of their territory, are wondering whether China will start to base submarines in Hambantota Port, something that would realistically be very hard to prevent. Despite the draconian "relief" terms negotiated with China, Sri Lanka continues to sink further into debt as a result of the Hambantota Port project. They are locked into Chinese financial terms much worse than they could have gotten from other international lenders.³⁶ This is pure neo-colonialist loan-sharking.

We should bear in mind that, besides its neocolonial activity, China is also a direct colonial power. Its violent occupation of Tibet rises to the standard of genocide. It has made Xinjiang, the home of the Uighurs, into one of the worst police states in the world, complete with enormous gulags, omnipresent electronic and physical surveillance, and racist cultural suppression.³⁷ The regime is even monitoring Uighurs who are living abroad. These emigrants--some of whom are already citizens of other countries--are forced to hold Chinese ID cards and to carefully document their activities; otherwise their families in China will be punished.³⁸

On the rise

There's no guarantee that Chinese monopoly capital will succeed in achieving global dominance. For one thing, high levels of leveraged debt make the Chinese economy extremely vulnerable in the event of a global economic depression. Imperial ambitions may have to be put on hold if the debt bubble pops.

The Chinese proletariat has shown signs of combativeness. In the long run, this is a huge threat to the Party--one they are well aware of. Also, many middle class Chinese have a cosmopolitan view of the world and understand their class interests in global terms. They don't necessarily like being censored, restricted from full participation in world culture, or forced into rigid compliance with Chinese monopoly capital. They are worried about pollution, corruption, war, and the long-term consequences of inequality. If the Chinese economy falters,

³⁵ <https://mg.co.za/article/2018-06-22-00-brics-bank-fails-to-live-up-to-hype>

³⁶ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/business/behind-on-payments-to-china-sri-lanka-coughed-up-territory-instead/articleshow/64746755.cms>

³⁷ <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2018/05/31/china-has-turned-xinjiang-into-a-police-state-like-no-other>

³⁸ <https://www.thedailybeast.com/chinese-police-are-spying-on-uighurson-american-soil>

middle class loyalty could falter as well. Alternatively, an economic downturn in China could lead to an embrace of militarism and jingoism as an aggressive way out of crisis.

We can't predict the future. But looking at the current reality, China's expansionist ambitions are obvious. It claims huge swaths of the territorial waters belonging to its neighbors, which it is trying to seize through force, bribery, and threats. Xi Jinping has told the military to "get ready to fight and win wars."³⁹ China spent \$150 billion on its modernizing military last year, second only to the US. China is a nuclear power, with ultra-long-range ballistic missiles, cutting edge fighter jets, submarines, drones and aircraft carriers. Its army is 2.3 million strong, roughly a million people larger than the US's. Its armed forces are skilled at cyberwarfare, and are about to complete an independent global satellite network that will allow it to guide Chinese military assets with high precision.⁴⁰

The Chinese military is still no match for the US in an all-out war. But it's already a powerful enough force for potential regional domination, and certainly for extensive low-level and proxy warfare. Its hundreds of nuclear weapons can threaten any army or city. Its ability to project force completely overshadows that of Japan, a Triad member with a token military.

The expansionist Belt and Road Initiative has major military and geostrategic components. For instance the People's Republic is investing billions of dollars in 15 port projects around the Indo-Pacific region, officially with economic motives. But among themselves, "Chinese analysts unofficially discussing port investments routinely prioritize China's national security interest over the objective of mutually beneficial economic development." Eight of the port projects are completely unprofitable, useful mainly for their strategic value.⁴¹ This is a time-honored pattern of expansion employed by rising imperialist powers: paying for penetration, geostrategic influence and long-term profitability for their monopoly capitalist class.

No room for new empire?

But what about the idea that the imperialist world order is essentially closed: that only the Triad can exploit the periphery or create significant consumerist classes; that there's no room for China or another imperialist center to muscle in and supplant today's apex predators? In my opinion, this doesn't make sense theoretically, nor is it supported by history or current events.

Instability, crisis and change is built into the very nature of monopoly capitalism. Imperial centers rise and fall; the periphery gets divided and re-divided by rival monopoly capitalist groups as their economic, military and political fortunes go up and down. England once ruled most of the world, now it's a second-rate power. Spain and Portugal had to cede most of their empires. The US was subordinate to continental Europe for generations; now it's Europe's "big brother." Russia was a backward semi-feudal country, then the core of an imperialist superpower, which then imploded. Today, Russia is trying to claw its way back up to the top again. Japanese capital became all-powerful in Asia, then was devastated by WWII. It charged back into imperial prominence again. Now Japanese capitalism has entered a prolonged period of stagnation.

What we see in the case of China is another bid, by rising imperialists, to re-divide the globe in their favor, financially and geographically. That drive isn't going to be held back by any lack of a periphery, or lack of proletarians. Chinese monopoly capital starts out with its own internal Global South to exploit, complete with

³⁹ <https://www.yahoo.com/news/special-report-satellite-tech-race-china-hitched-ride-195616719.html>

⁴⁰ Ibid. Some analysts claim these satellites can be used as offensive weapons.

⁴¹ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/566ef8b4d8af107232d5358a/t/5ad5e20ef950b777a94b55c3/1523966489456/Harbored+Ambitions.pdf>

the world's largest proletariat. And Chinese-based capital is moving steadily into parts of the Asian, African and Latin American periphery that the US, Japan and Europe once firmly controlled.

Often, Chinese capitalists are content to gradually replace Western or Japanese capital--something that the financialization of imperialism makes quite practical. After all, Chinese capitalists are heavily intertwined with capitalists from other imperialist countries--sharing investments, owning each other's stocks, sitting on each other's boards of directors, funding the same transnational groups. Other times, like rising imperial powers before it, Chinese imperialism is quite nationalistic and aggressive: undertaking risky initiatives in unstable or unsavory situations in order to get a foothold for its capitalists. But one way or another, Chinese imperialism is on the move all over the world. It has little choice, actually; expansion is part of the DNA of monopoly capital.

I find it revealing that China has been able to profit even from Triad military actions. For instance, in the aftermath of the bungled US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq, it is Chinese capitalists who have taken control of much of Iraq's oil--without firing a shot.⁴² China is waiting patiently in the wings for the US to get out of Afghanistan so they can "reconstruct" the country, and plug it into the Belt and Road Initiative.⁴³ This is yet another reminder of how much imperialism has changed since the days of direct colonialism.

We shouldn't have any illusions that a new, rising imperialist power like China will act with any less brutality than a stronger, established power. We should recall that some of the US's worst crimes were committed while it was fighting its way to the top, before it became the biggest imperial center.

For instance, at the end of the nineteenth century, the US gave material and political aid to the rebels who were struggling to throw off the yoke of the Spanish empire in Latin America and the Pacific. Some of the insurgents were grateful; they took the US's professed "anti-imperialism" at its word. But as soon as Spain folded, the US violently crushed the real anti-imperialists and began more than a century of massacres, invasions and colonialism in the Philippines, Guam, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and throughout the rest of Latin America and the Pacific. This was a key turning point for US imperialism in its rise to global prominence.

Why it matters

It makes a big difference whether we analyze the Chinese regime as an imperialist power or a progressive leader of the Global South. Should we be cheering it on, or recognizing it as an enemy of the proletariat?

I come down squarely on the latter side. The Chinese regime represents some of the largest pools of monopoly capital on earth. And all monopoly capital is exploitative and oppressive.

It's almost inconceivable to me that oppressed people around the world would look to China's ruling class for "anti-imperialist" leadership. The Chinese Party isn't a communist party--it's a deeply corrupt, solidly capitalist party. I've never seen any indication that there's such a thing as an anti-capitalist left wing in the Party that wants to "throw a monkey wrench in the global chains of production."⁴⁴ I'm pretty sure that anybody who proposed such a program, and backed it up by mobilizing internationalist proletarians, would end up in a prison camp.

I agree with Lauesen in one important respect: it will certainly be a major advance for anti-imperialism if the Chinese proletariat rises up and takes control of China. We should support any movement in that direction, as

⁴² <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/03/world/middleeast/china-reaps-biggest-benefits-of-iraq-oil-boom.html>

⁴³ <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2098585/how-much-danger-can-china-tolerate-war-torn-afghanistan>

⁴⁴ Interview with Gabriel Kuhn, op. cit.

always. But that will require another revolution. The idea that the Chinese Party can be reformed out of capitalism with the help of "left wing factions" is, in my opinion, pure wishful thinking.

China is not the main danger to the world's people today. It's simply a strong, rising imperialist power, doing what rising imperialists do. It isn't nearly as rich or powerful as the US today. The US is a vast criminal enterprise. Its resident monopoly capitalists and their illegitimate state have no right to oppress and bully the people of the world.⁴⁵ So I'm not going to shed a tear if China-based monopoly capitalism ends up someday supplanting US-based monopoly capitalism as the top global parasite. And as a US citizen, I take it as my personal responsibility to fight first of all against my own country's imperialists, something I have done my whole adult life.

In addition, I'm in favor of the oppressed taking tactical advantage of contradictions among monopoly capitalists when possible. But as anti-imperialists, we have to be crystal clear that our enemy's enemy isn't necessarily our friend. (Haven't revolutionaries learned this enough times, the hard way?)⁴⁶ China's ruling class is utterly reactionary. Recommending that the oppressed and impoverished people of the world should rely on monopoly capitalists in China as their best hope would be asking them to commit political suicide.

Right-wing "anti-imperialism"

To build a new global anti-imperialist movement, we have to confront the growing problem of right-wing "anti-imperialism." This ugly trend constitutes a major crisis for the Left. Lauesen has it on his radar screen. He makes brief mention of the "populist right-wing movements" that profit from the current crisis of capitalism. (p.430) He specifically identifies one of the main forms of right-wing "anti-imperialism"--Islamist fundamentalism. (p. 218) I certainly agree that this is a big danger. But right-wing "anti-imperialism" exerts a strong attraction on Left activists in the US and Europe, too.

For instance, today we see the rise of a Left-Right alliance centered around the imperialist Russian regime. Former left-wing anti-imperialists are uniting with the forces around Vladimir Putin and his favored fascist ideologue, Alexandr Dugin. Critics call this a "Red-Brown" alliance.⁴⁷

Leftists, unmoored from their principles, attend conferences, go on tours, give speeches, write articles and books, and appear on Russian state TV, sharing platforms with holocaust deniers, white nationalists and anti-immigrant thugs, pledging to "fight Western imperialism" side by side. They are united in the view that it's a good thing to strengthen Russia--and China--in order to weaken the Triad. The euphemistic buzzword for this opportunist strategy is "multipolarity." Its advocates allege that having more imperialist powers contending for power will open up (unexplained and unspecified) "opportunities" for anti-imperialist movements. This perspective has been endorsed not just by fringe elements like LaRouchites, crypto-Stalinists and the Workers World Party, but a host of well-known mainstream leftists from the US and Europe.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ For my views on this, see "Divisible: Breaking Up the US," 2017. <http://kersplebedeb.com/posts/divisible-breaking-up-the-us>

⁴⁶ *The Global Perspective* doesn't actually discuss this principle, unfortunately. But Lauesen brings it up in an interview recorded after publication of the book. He mentions Iran (not China) as an example; he calls it "anti-US but not anti-imperialist." He advises radicals to be careful: "It is a dangerous, difficult game.... Will my friend turn against me?" <https://soundcloud.com/hospitalprisonuniversityradio/conversation-with-torkil-lauesen-on-anti-imperialism-with-maria-berrios-jakob-jakobsen-june-18>

⁴⁷ See, for instance, Bill Weinberg: <https://countervortex.org/node/16036>

⁴⁸ The most thorough documentation of this unholy alliance can be found at:

<https://ravingssofaradicalvagabond.noblogs.org/post/2018/01/15/an-investigation-into-red-brown-alliances>

It goes without saying that members of this Left-Right alliance absolve Russia of any bad behavior in the Crimea, Ukraine, or Central Asia. The most prominent focus of this opportunist united front right now is Syria, where supposed "anti-imperialists" from the Left and Right join together in supporting the brutal Russian-backed Assad regime--barrel bombs, poison gas and all. The Left-Right alliance falsely defines all opposition to Assad's dictatorship as fundamentalists. This convenient lie apparently eases their consciences about deserting the secular resistance--they simply pretend it doesn't exist. This same lie allows them to politely avert their eyes while Assad's torture chambers work overtime, and while Russian bombers massacre civilians in support of the dictatorship.

The Left-Right line on Syria has been adopted by, among others, Glenn Greenwald, Julian Assange, John Pilger, Patrick Cockburn, writers for *CounterPunch*, *Black Agenda Report*, and *The Nation*, Slavoj Zizik, Ben Norton, and, notoriously, by Max Blumenthal, who completely switched his position on the Syrian regime after a paid trip to Moscow in 2015.⁴⁹

I think that the Left-Right alliance currently gathering around Russia clearly demonstrates the dangers of embracing one imperialist power in order to oppose another. Is anybody asking the hundreds of millions oppressed by Russian and Chinese imperialism how "multipolarity" would work out for them? Are the people of Chechnya or Tibet supposed to endorse their tormentors as advocates for the Global South?

I want to be clear. There are times when progressive forces must try to take *tactical* advantage of contradictions between imperialists. This is what Kurdish activists in Rojava are trying to do now, for instance.⁵⁰ But the global Left isn't strong enough to "play" one imperialist center against another as a *strategy for anti-imperialism*. And even if we were, it would be an opportunist strategy: sacrificing large parts of the Global South--especially its women--to oppression, while destroying the legitimacy of the Left, all in the name of a manipulative capitalist geopolitics.

Anti-imperialists have to build mass internationalist struggle against all monopoly capital--Chinese and Russian imperialists included. There aren't any shortcuts.

A gateway drug

This isn't the place to try to explain why so much Right-Left convergence is happening all over the world today. One specific thing needs to be said, though: Left-Right alliances are enabled by male opportunism.

What might be called a gateway drug, for those who become addicted to right-wing "anti-imperialism," is a tendency to accept almost any form of oppression of women and macho authoritarianism, as long as it presents itself with an anti-US or anti-Triad face. *The Global Perspective* doesn't endorse this false "anti-imperialism," but it doesn't confront it head-on either. I've already mentioned the Assad regime. But really, the list of false "anti-imperialist" populist strongmen supported by leftists is long and growing. Ruhollah Khomeini, Robert Mugabe, Slobodan Milosevic, Saddam Hussein, Victor Yanukovych, Daniel Ortega, Muammar Gaddafi, Manuel Noriega, Nicolás Maduro, Vladimir Putin, Bashir al-Assad, Kim il Sung, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad... on and on. Some of these men started as revolutionaries, but became renegades as they gave in to the lure of male capitalist power. Others were thugs from the start.

⁴⁹ https://medium.com/@_alhamra/documenting-max-blumenthals-regime-change-from-assad-opponent-to-assad-apologist-8715eb9d941b

⁵⁰ Kurdish relations with the US and Russia constitute a perilous tightrope-walk, with no guarantees about its success. See Bill Weinberg, "Syria's Kurdish Contradiction," Countervortex: <https://countervortex.org/node/15715> Also <https://jamestown.org/program/imperial-strategies-russias-exploitation-ethnic-issues-policy-middle-east/>

All it takes is a few "anti-imperialist," anti-Triad or anti-US slogans, and there are leftists ready and eager to overlook all forms of oppression, whether it's gender apartheid, homophobia and transphobia, denial of women's reproductive rights, repression of proletarian struggles, attacks on Native peoples, torture and murder of progressive activists, use of chemical and biological weapons against civilians, or genocide.⁵¹

To the extent that *The Global Perspective* looks at the world like a chessboard, with the Triad countries and poor countries acting as the chess pieces, it tends to normalize the "leadership" of male authoritarians--including imperialist collaborators and even imperialists--as champions of the Global South.

In fact, *The Global Perspective* doesn't recognize women's pivotal role within imperialism at all. It ignores the global war on women, which, in my opinion, is central to how imperialism is organized.

*The most important commodity in the neo-colonial system is neither the computer chip nor petroleum, but Third World women. This one fact alone stamps the entire face of the neo-colonial age.*⁵²

All over the world, reactionary men are fighting among themselves over who gets to own women's bodies and exploit women's labor within a rapidly-changing neo-colonial environment.

A political vacuum has been left by the world-historic defeat of socialist-led revolutions and the neocolonial corruption of many former national liberation struggles. Reactionary men are now freely adopting a populist discourse of "anti-imperialism" as they stake their own claim to women's bodies and labor. I'm referring here not just to Islamist fundamentalists or rebellious neofascists but also to fake "leftist" dictators and rising imperialists.

We have to expose the lies these authoritarian men tell. We have to drop all pretense that giving our support to certain capitalistic men--as they struggle against other capitalistic men for women, power and profit--will somehow advance the cause of anti-imperialism. Instead, we need to base our politics on loyalty to the expanding, transforming proletariat, and the women at its heart.

We have to strike at our enemy--monopoly capital--wherever it is found. Not by using stale maneuvers from an expired anti-imperialist playbook. Not by pretending that the Triad's hungry imperial rivals are our friends. Not indirectly, through the supposed "representation" of men who have their own reactionary agendas. But directly, by building a global force for justice, women's freedom, national self-determination and proletarian power, from the bottom up.

As part of that struggle, we will need to keep learning about how neo-colonialism has transformed the world's class structure, and about how monopoly capital is configured today.

A timely intervention

Despite my differences, I recommend *The Global Perspective*. It embodies the best of the old anti-imperialism, while also opening a window to anti-imperialism's current confusion and crisis.

⁵¹ I have written more about this in "False Front: The Left and the "Anti-Imperialist" Right":

<http://kersplebedeb.com/posts/false-front-the-left-and-the-anti-imperialist-right>

⁵² Butch Lee and Red Rover, op. cit., p. 144

I respect Lauesen's palpable hatred of inequality. I appreciate his emphasis on long-term strategy, even though I have issues with his particular strategy. I agree with Lauesen's insistence on the need for proletarian struggle, and his attack on worker elites and their politics. I unite with his revolutionary optimism, even though my own is founded on a somewhat different basis.⁵³

The internal contradictions evident in *The Global Perspective* provide numerous openings for productive debate. Lauesen has some undogmatic views about the global order that seem to signal an open-minded attitude and respect for complexity. At times, he seems to be struggling towards a less country-based theory of modern imperialism. He is attracted to a future anti-imperialism in which, as he puts it, "class identity is more important than citizenship." (p.451)

The Global Perspective includes valuable observations about the Zapatistas, the labor theory of value, South African trade unionism, the Arab Spring uprisings and dozens of other subjects. And even where a reader might disagree with him, Lauesen usually gives us something specific to respond to, unlike the slogans or vague generalities common in anti-imperialist literature. So overall, *The Global Perspective* rewards critical reading and thinking.

I strongly believe we need a serious discussion about imperialism today. *The Global Perspective* is a timely and thoughtful intervention. I think--I hope--that it might be the book to kick off the discussion we need.

⁵³ For my views on this, see, for instance, *Exodus and Reconstruction: Working-Class Women at the Heart of Globalization*, 2012. In print through Kersplebedeb, or online: <http://kersplebedeb.com/posts/false-front-the-left-and-the-anti-imperialist-right>