

# Essential Changes in the Imperialist World System since Lenin's Analysis of Imperialism

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Lenin developed Marxism further decisively by examining the development of capitalism of free competition to imperialism. In his unsurpassed work, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, he defined imperialism as the "monopoly stage of capitalism": "*Imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun, in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed.*" (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, pp. 266 f.)

Petty-bourgeois theoreticians like the Italian philosopher Antonio Negri and the American Michael Hardt attack the Leninist analysis of imperialism in their book *Empire*, published in the year 2000, claiming it to be "*completely superannuated*" (quoted in Stefan Engel, *Dawn of the International Socialist Revolution*, p. 527). They maintain that the world has entered a new "*phase ... beyond imperialism*" in the development of capitalism (quoted in *Dawn...*, p. 525), in which international finance capital employs its tremendous power to dampen, regulate and neutralize contradictions. This "theory" has its precursors in the "ultra-imperialism theory" of the Social-Democrat Karl Kautsky, with which he wanted to sell imperialism as social progress.

In contrast, on the basis of Lenin's analysis of imperialism the MLPD has examined the new manifestations and essential changes in the development of imperialism that have taken place since then, especially in German imperialism, in its theoretical organ *Revolutionärer Weg*, and has drawn conclusions for strategy and tactics. Various forces influenced by dogmatism are, in contrast, of the opinion that **since Lenin merely quantitative, but not essential changes, i.e. qualitative changes, have taken place in the development of imperialism.** They do not take note that they are so turning against Lenin himself and his dialectical method. When Lenin wrote his book on imperialism from January to June 1916 he did not yet take into account the further development of monopoly capitalism to state-monopoly capitalism. Only half a year later, however, he mentioned in "Theses for an Appeal – Rough Draft" the "*transition from monopoly in general to state capitalism*" (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 213). And in the preface to the first edition of *The State and Revolution* (written in August/September 1917) he wrote "*The imperialist war has immensely accelerated and intensified the process of transformation of monopoly capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism.*" (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 387) "*We have now reached the stage of world economy that is the immediate stepping stone to socialism.*" (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 386) The driving force for this development was the striving for maximum profits.

**State-monopoly capitalism** fully emerged as a **new stage in the development of imperialism during the 2nd World War**. In his book *State-Monopoly Capitalism in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG)*, Willi Dickhut, leading thinker of the MLPD, examined and qualified this from all sides and exposed the revisionist betrayal of Lenin's theory of imperialism and state-monopoly capitalism. With the development of capitalism to monopoly capitalism and to state-monopoly capitalism **the significance and the role of the state** also changed. "*The role of the state changed from that of a representative of capital in general to a representative of the interests of a handful of monopoly capitalists. ... Only in its function of dampening class contradictions and suppressing proletarian class struggle did the state retain its old role as power instrument of the entire capitalist class.*" (Willi Dickhut, *State Monopoly Capitalism in the FRG*, p. 64).

The 2nd World War shook the imperialist world system even more deeply than the 1st World War. **The world became divided into two camps: the capitalist and the socialist camp**. That also made it easier for the colonial countries to cast off the imperialist yoke, which led to the deepening of the general crisis of capitalism. In Germany and in other imperialist countries a long-lasting upward economic trend developed after the enormous devastation caused by the 2nd World War. In the 1950s and 1960s this created the prerequisites for the internationalization of monopoly capital. In *Revolutionärer Weg*, No. 18, the MLPD established: "*Single multinational corporations already existed in the nineteenth century, particularly in Great Britain and the U.S.A., mainly to extract and secure raw materials like oil, copper, tin, rubber, iron ore or to produce cheap textiles. Following the Second World War, however, the multinational corporations resembled a spring tide pouring over foreign countries. ... The internationalization of production indicates a new phase in state-monopoly capitalism, an extension and at the same time a stronger concentration of the monopolies.*" (*ibid.*, pp. 161 + 171)

The system of neocolonialism emerged, which is not less rapacious than the old colonialism. Through imperialist capital export the production and class relations in the oppressed dependent countries have, however, undergone a **qualitative change**. In most countries capitalist production relations became dominant and an increasingly stronger class division between proletariat and bourgeoisie developed. In most countries a reactionary big bourgeoisie emerged which had close ties with international finance capital and itself had command of developed industrial and agrarian capital. In the 1970s, in a number of countries this process already led to the emergence of domestic monopolies which were dependent on the imperialists to differing degrees. **That significantly changed the conditions for class struggle and the anti-imperialist liberation struggle in these countries.**

With the victory of modern revisionism in the USSR (20th Party Congress of the CPSU, 1956), the overthrow of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, **the world situation had once again fundamentally changed**. With the development of the Soviet Union to social-imperialism **a bipolar imperialist world system** developed with both superpowers, USA and Soviet Union, at the head and two military blocs, NATO and Warsaw Pact. The end of the era of the social-imperialist Soviet Union was the political starting point for a **reorganization of international capitalist production**. This ushered in a **new stage in the development of imperialism, a new phase of the struggle for the redivision of the world**. Today the world economy is dominated by international supermonopolies. This signifies a **qualitative change in**

**societal development.** “*The international working class is the decisive society-changing force in capitalist society. Its vanguard today is the international industrial proletariat as carrier of the most advanced mode of production and direct antipode of solely ruling international finance capital.*” (Program of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany, p. 16)

With the reorganization of international production the national states became service providers for the international expansion of the monopolies. **However, the respective national state remains the indispensable political basis of power** in the struggle for the redivision of shares of international production. It is a petty-bourgeois-revisionist dream when the revisionist German Communist Party (DKP) maintains that imperialism is disengaging itself from the national states in favor of a “transnational power machinery” and that the national states are losing significance.

Promoted by gigantic capital exports of the imperialist countries at the beginning of the new century and in the world economic and financial crisis of 2008–2014, a number of former neocolonially dependent countries developed from mainly agrarian countries into capitalist industrial countries. Through the emergence of monopoly capital and state-monopoly structures **a number of new-imperialist countries emerged.** This is an expression of a new quality of the general proneness to crisis of multi-polar imperialism. The danger of a world war and a threatening global environmental catastrophe that calls the foundations of human existence into question is growing. The proto-fascist politics of Trump, the establishment of a fascist dictatorship in Turkey, the shift to the right of various governments and the fascization of the state apparatuses are the reactionary attempt of imperialism to break out of its proneness to crisis. With the societal polarization and the erosion of the system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking the search for a societal alternative is growing. The leading force in the internationally emerging progressive change of mood is the international industrial proletariat. This is a **challenge and a chance for the international Marxist-Leninist and working-class movement.**

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