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solidarity is
essential**

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in plastic is
not fantastic**

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Liberation

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An elderly man is shepherded to safety after an attack by US-Israeli warplanes on Tehran on 3 March 2026, which left scores dead and gravely wounded
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Join the struggle

**Defend the sovereignty of the
Global South against US aggression**

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Keep calm and carry on: the struggle for peace democracy, and liberation!

IT IS COMMON across the media, both mainstream and social, to find commentary questioning the mental let alone political competence of Donald Trump.

From his ignorant pronouncements on the future of Greenland, Panama, Canada, and Cuba, through to his delusions of demanding the unconditional surrender of the Iranian government, the claims of at least serious incompetence seem reasonable.

However, the instability and suffering in the world, especially in the Middle East, is not down to Trump alone. For the time being, despite his foolish outbursts, the US president continues to enjoy the broad support of the US political establishment and the big business interests that bankrolled both of his elections to high office — as have his predecessors since the end of the Cold War in 1991.

It is important to recall that George Bush Sr, Bill Clinton, George Bush Jr, Barack Obama and Joe Biden have all been responsible for a series of catastrophic wars of intervention including: in the Persian Gulf (Iraq), Haiti, Somalia, the Balkans (the former Yugoslavia), Afghanistan, the Middle East (Iraq again, Syria), and Libya, to name but a few, all with devastating and lasting human, economic, and environmental consequences.

The flagrantly illegal US-Israeli war on Iran shows the growing desperation of US imperialism in its attempts to bolster its global economic hegemony. This is a process whereby the US military industrial complex continues to consolidate major corporate financial ambitions, no matter the cost in lives and destruction in many parts of the world.

Instability and the threat of war now cast a shadow over development and politics around the globe. Central to this are the attacks and threats to the sovereignty and independence of the countries of the Global South, such as Iran, Lebanon, Palestine, Venezuela, and Cuba — all of which are often accompanied by tactical moves to deploy

US troops and weaponry even more extensively in overseas countries.

Yet despite the use of overwhelming force, the White House has manifestly failed to coerce the Iranian nation into submission. The democratic opposition to the theocratic dictatorship in Iran continues to resist but rejects US aggression and intervention, while the regime itself is only concerned with ensuring its own survival whatever the cost to the country and its people.

Now Trump also has his sights set on Cuba, using an illegal blockade and piracy in an attempt to starve the Cuban people into giving up their hard-fought-for progressive developments and returning to US domination and vassal status.

Following its criminal flash raid on Venezuela, the Trump 'empire' is now looking to expand its ambit into the rest of the Caribbean and South America. Thus, the Trump administration now projects control of the western hemisphere as Washington's indisputable backyard.

This situation is a major challenge to all those in every land committed to democracy, peace, and social progress — towards a world based on international law and the inalienable right of nations to self-determination.

Liberation will continue its commitment to these goals and urges other progressive organisations and currents to firmly and righteously oppose US diktats, the all-pervasive threat of war, as well as the undermining of national sovereignty and human rights across all five continents.

To this end, we renew our impassioned plea for closer cooperation between all such progressive and like-minded groups to more effectively calibrate, indeed optimise, the urgent campaign against imperialism, war, and injustice!

Jamshid Ahmadi
Editor

Liberation / news

AKEL strengthens links with Britain

LIBERATION assisted a series of parliamentary meetings held on 28 January 2026 between a senior Cypriot political delegation and British Labour MPs, focused on the Cyprus problem and broader social policy challenges.

The delegation, led by Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL) general secretary Stefanos Stefanou, met Liberation parliamentary chair Brian Leishman and six other Labour MPs: Ian Byrne, Richard Burgon, Kim Johnson, Mary Kelly Foy, and Neil Duncan-Jordan.

Separate discussions were also held with former Labour frontbencher Angela Rayner. Jamshid Ahmadi, assistant general secretary of Liberation, accompanied and supported the Cypriot delegation throughout the meetings.

Discussions with MPs centred on recent developments in Cyprus and efforts to break the longstanding deadlock in negotiations with Turkey, stalled since 2017. Stefanou outlined AKEL's commitment to a negotiated settlement based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with political equality, in line with United Nations resolutions.

He emphasised that any solution must end the Turkish occupation, reunify the island and its people, and abolish the existing system of external guarantees.

Stefanou highlighted Britain's role, noting the country's responsibility in drafting relevant UN Security Council resolutions on Cyprus. He



stressed the importance of Britain remaining consistent with agreed UN frameworks and its past support for ending the guarantees system.

In his meeting with Angela Rayner, discussions expanded to housing and social policy. The delegation exchanged views on tackling housing shortages, energy poverty — particularly acute in Cyprus — and the need to strengthen workers' rights and incomes. Both sides agreed to maintain ongoing contact to share policy experiences.



Derby denounces 'barbarous' US bombing of Iran

A DERBY meeting denounced "barbarous" US aggression against Iran, blasting the latest in a series of attempts by Washington to subjugate the country to plunder its huge oil and mineral resources.

Tudeh Party of Iran international secretary Navid Shomali said the US also wanted to use Iran's key geopolitical position linking Asia, Europe and Africa as a key part of its ongoing ambition to dominate the world, militarily, economically and politically.

The meeting, organised by local Liberation Journal readers and Derby Stop the War Coalition in March, heard that US President Donald Trump had made a great mistake in thinking that the "spirited and determined" Iranian people would submit.

Shomali described Trump's isolation internationally and the growing opposition to him in the US caused by his "reckless and stupid acts of aggression." This could only grow as will further splits in the imperialist camp, he predicted.

Responding to an Iranian monarchist's attempts to disrupt the meeting by lauding the US bombing and potential invasion, Shomali stressed his total opposition to the Islamic Republic. He argued its demise should not be the result of foreign imperialist invasion and control, with the installation of a puppet regime.

The reactionary Islamist regime tortured Shomali's brothers — among thousands of activists involved in the country's 1979 revolution against the US-backed puppet dictator Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi — and forced him into a 40-year-plus exile.

He continued: "If we want a world at peace and with prosperity for its people, we need to defeat imperialism, defend independence and sovereignty, and fight for socialism."

A full report and more at: liberationorg.co.uk/tag/iran/

Packed NEU fringe hears horrors of attacks on Iran



IRANIAN teachers, campaigners and journalists shone a light on the dire situation in the Middle East at a packed official fringe meeting at the National Education Union's conference in April.

Nearly 150 NEU delegates packed the room to hear from Esmail Abdi, the formerly jailed leader of Iranian teachers' union CCITTA, about the struggle of the Iranian people caught between US-Israeli bombs and an increasingly repressive theocratic dictatorship.

He highlighted his union's public campaigns, including symbolic abandoned backpacks representing lives lost to the air strikes and empty seats in classrooms due to repression facing older students.

Liberation affiliate the Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights (CODIR) organised the meeting, chaired by NEU deputy general secretary Sarah Kilpatrick.

CODIR assistant general secretary Jamshid Ahmadi hailed the NEU conference as one of the few occasions on which British trade unions have discussed Iran as a serious issue and called for international mobilisation to stop the war which "is already a catastrophe for the people of Iran and the region."

Dr Azar Sepehr of the Democratic Organisation of Iranian Women told the meeting that, while the people of Iran have suffered for decades under the "medieval" approach of the Islamic Republic to social rights and freedoms, along with its neoliberal turn in economic policy and widespread

poverty, they are now defending their sovereignty against aggression since the record of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria shows that "regime change orchestrated by foreign powers would only replace one dictatorship with another."

Middle East Eye journalist Joe Gill pointed to the similarities between the false narratives used to attack Iran — its alleged development of nuclear weapons or supporting democracy — with those used to attack Iraq in 2003.

Noting her union's consistent stance in support of peace and human and democratic rights in Iran, the NEU's Louise Regan argued that "as educators we need to talk about these issues in our schools." Regan recounted how in her work as a teacher she had recently organised an assembly focusing on Iran and the war, and recalled the gratitude of an Iranian colleague.

Liberation and CODIR shared a stall at the conference, engaging with delegates over struggles against imperialism in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and South America.

Liberation wishes to thank NEU for the opportunity to be at the conference for the third year running and our wonderful Liberation volunteers for taking the time to support this event. Liberation will continue to build awareness of our work in the labour movement throughout the year by once again sharing a stall with CODIR at Unison's national delegate conference in June, among other union conferences and events. Check our website and social media for further details.

27 MPs reject war on Iran

TWENTY SEVEN MPs have back an Early Day Motion to bring to an end the US-Israel aggression on Iran and Britain's complicity with it.

Tabled on 2 March by Liberation parliamentary chair Brian Leishman, EDM 2880 Escalation of conflict with Iran notes the "illegal, unjustified, and unnecessary large-scale military attack" on Iran and "the risk of a widening and lengthy regional war."

It "calls on the government to press urgently for an immediate ceasefire by all parties; further calls on the government to support a central role for the United Nations, including engagement through its Security Council, in facilitating de-escalation, dialogue and a return to diplomacy."

It also "urges the government to reverse its decision to allow the use of UK military bases, including Diego Garcia and RAF Fairford, for military action connected to this escalation."

Labour, Green, Lib Dem and independent MPs have signed.

Write to your MP to ask them to support. Full text of the EDM and signatories at: parliament.uk/early-day-motion/65329/



The speakers at the fringe meeting (top) and (below) NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede visits the Liberation/CODIR stall

Imperialism / analysis



A defiant Nicolas Maduro after being kidnapped by US agents
Photo in public domain

Imperialists seek to abolish all third-world sovereignty

The US, Israel and their allies now feel emboldened to carry out a wholesale project of re-colonisation, says **Prabhat Patnaik**



THE VERY concept of sovereignty of third-world nations is now being sought to be abolished by imperialism in violation of all canons of international law, as is evident from the bombing of Iran by the United States and Israel with the explicit objective of “regime change.”

Until now, even when the objective had been to change a regime that had become congenial for imperialism, it had been carried out through coups, as against Guatemala’s Jacobo Arbenz or Mohammad Mosaddegh in Iran or Chile’s Salvador Allende.

Now imperialism is bent on effecting “regime change” through direct military intervention. Iraq and Libya were early examples; Venezuela where President Nicolas Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores have been abducted in a stupefying act of aggressive thuggery came next; and now there is an unleashing of full-scale war on Iran, where massive bombing has been undertaken even as talks on Iran’s nuclear programme, the ostensible issue of contention, were going on — and reportedly even making progress.

By its action therefore the US has now arrogated to itself, for the first time since the end of the colonial era, the right to carry out “regime change” wherever it likes within the third world.

The point here is not whether the Islamic Republic was repressive, or allowed free speech, or tolerated opposition; the point is that it is the people of Iran who *alone* have the right to decide on any “regime change” in their country and work for it. It is not the job of US imperialism, which has no business to intervene militarily in the affairs of another country.

That is what the sovereignty of a country implies, the sovereignty that anti-colonial struggles had achieved in the aftermath of the second world war. Imperialism’s open military intervention in Iran constitutes a direct attack upon national sovereignty, and therefore paves the way for an effective reversal of decolonisation.

Two questions immediately arise: how does imperialism feel emboldened to undertake

such an attack? And why does it feel the need to do so especially at the present juncture? The answer to the first question is simple: the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War has left it in a position where it does not feel as constrained as earlier

In Cuba, for instance, where imperialism is also talking of “regime change” now, the contrast with the missile crisis of 1962 is absolutely striking. At that time the Soviet Union had asked its ships heading for Cuba to shoot their way through the US blockade of the island, thereby risking a possible nuclear war; and the US was forced to compromise. One result of it had been the absence since then of any direct imperialist military intervention in Cuba; that kind of constraint on imperialism no longer exists.

The answer to the second question lies in the crisis in which world capitalism is currently enmeshed. This crisis has two distinct components. The first is that over the last three or four decades, the share in national income of workers in the advanced capitalist countries, and of the working people in the third world, has undergone a drastic decline; and since consumption out of a unit of the economic surplus is lower than out of a unit of workers’ — or working people’s — income. This redistribution towards economic surplus gives rise to a tendency towards over-production relative to demand, and hence to an increase in unemployment (which may be camouflaged, as in the case of the US, as a decline in work participation rate). This entails a sharp increase in the distress of the toiling people.

The second component contributing to the present crisis of capitalism is that, unlike in the heyday of colonialism prior to the first world war, the leading imperialist power of today lacks the ability to meet its balance of payments deficit through the imposition of a “drain of surplus” or of “deindustrialisation” on a colonial empire.

The leading imperialist country at all times invariably runs a balance of payments deficit on autonomous transactions; in the present case an important reason for the deficit is the US

running a string of over 750 military bases in 80-odd countries to maintain its global dominance. Before the first world war, Britain as the leading imperialist power covered this deficit at the expense of its colonies.

The absence of a colonial empire of its own has meant that the current leading power, the US, has been meeting its deficit by printing dollars. It is today the world’s most indebted country, and the world is awash with dollars or dollar-denominated assets that constitute US liabilities. This poses a serious threat to the stability of the financial system of the capitalist world.

It is often suggested that since there is no other currency as frequently used as the dollar, the latter faces no credible threat. But even if there is no credible threat from any other currency, a sudden shift from the dollar to *commodities* is always possible, and, if this happens even for a while, it could cause massive inflation in the capitalist world. This is exactly what had happened in the early 1970s and had formed the background to the rise of Thatcherism and Reaganomics that had created huge unemployment in their respective countries to counter inflation.

But that imposition on the workers had come in a situation where they had experienced a significant post-war boom, while any repetition of such a situation in the present context, coming on top of acute workers’ distress, for reasons discussed above, would greatly threaten the social stability of the system.

The response of imperialism in this conjuncture to pre-empt such a threat has two components: one is the installation of a neo-fascist regime in the form of the Trump administration in the US (and similar regimes elsewhere); the other is an attempt to reinstate colonial-style domination around the world by instituting obedient regimes.

The criminal abduction of Maduro, and the war against Iran are examples of such re-colonisation. Both Venezuela and Iran are oil-rich countries, with the former possessing the largest oil reserves in the world; and the capturing of their reserves by US companies would open the way for another phase of “drain of surplus”, this time towards the US, that would ease its payments problems.

Re-colonisation however is not confined to extracting a “drain” from oil-rich countries; it also takes the form of seeking to impose “unequal treaties”, such as the Indo-US Trade Treaty, which create captive markets for US goods, as in colonial times. Of course, with this effort at re-colonisation, whether imperialism would succeed in overcoming its present crisis is beside the point; what matters is its belief that re-colonisation constitutes a way out of the present crisis.

Re-colonisation as an imperial strategy was “sold” by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio to a group of European leaders recently. His argument was that the glorious “Western Civilization” had in recent years suffered a setback because of the rise of communism and of anti-colonial movements supported by communism; this setback had to be reversed. This obviously meant a reversal of the gains of the anti-colonial struggles, that is, a re-colonisation of the world.

Rubio’s argument apparently proved persuasive for the initially sceptical European leaders. Not surprisingly, there has been no major opposition from Europe, other than by Spain, to the latest US-Israeli atrocity inflicted on Iran. It would appear therefore that, if the US succeeds in Iran, then we would be witnessing a concerted drive by it, supported in varying degrees by other imperialist countries, to reverse the gains of decolonisation.

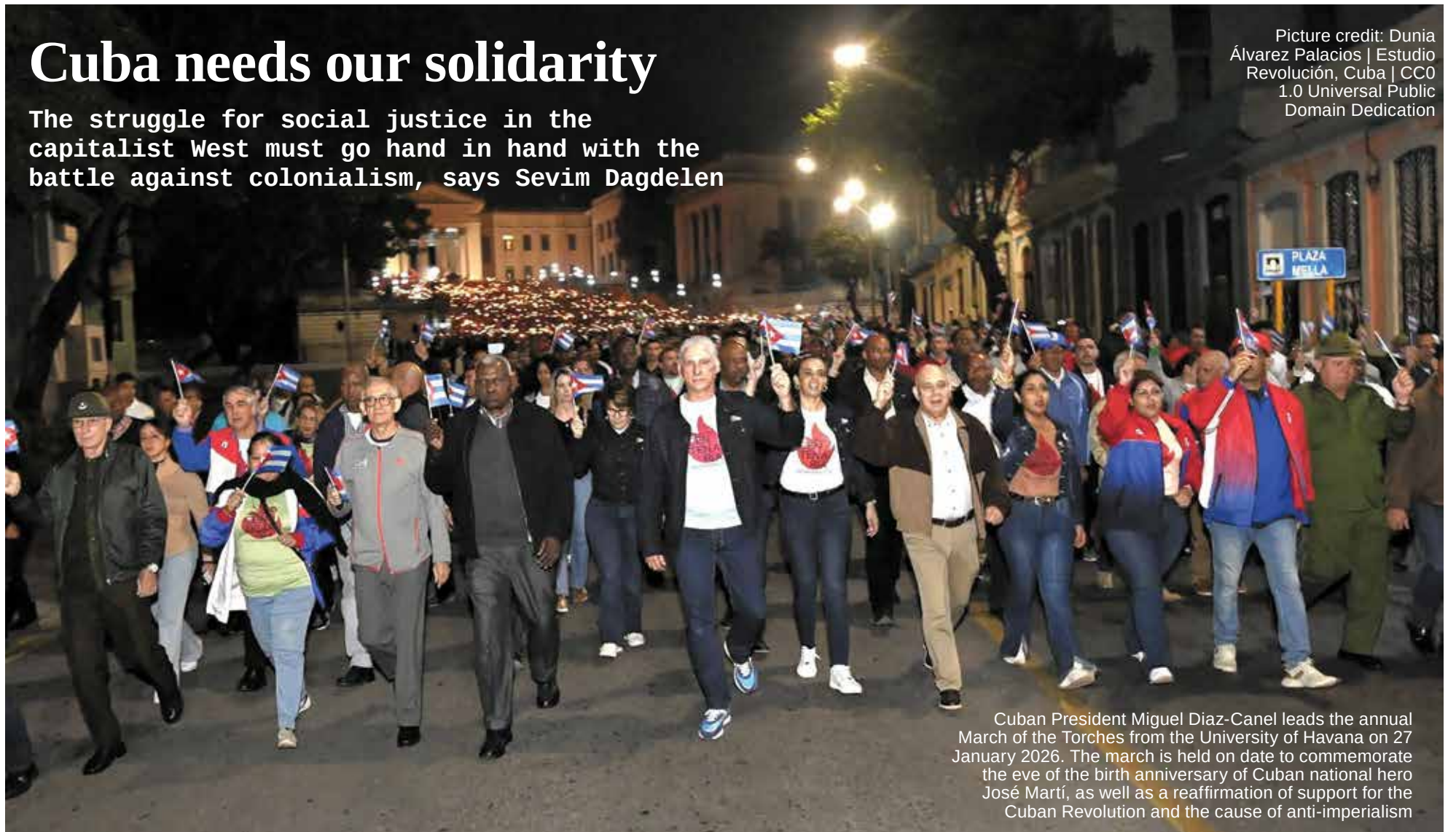
Prabhat Patnaik is an Indian Marxist economist, who taught at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, from 1974 until his retirement in 2010.

Cuba / analysis

Cuba needs our solidarity

The struggle for social justice in the capitalist West must go hand in hand with the battle against colonialism, says Sevim Dagdelen

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Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel leads the annual March of the Torches from the University of Havana on 27 January 2026. The march is held on date to commemorate the eve of the birth anniversary of Cuban national hero José Martí, as well as a reaffirmation of support for the Cuban Revolution and the cause of anti-imperialism

EVERY DAY, US President Donald Trump announces anew that Cuba is about to collapse and will bow to the dictates of the US.

“Cuba is in the final moments of its existence. It will begin a new life,” says Trump. But what is really happening on the ground? One thing is certain: The US is no longer merely blockading Cuba — it is literally besieging it. Through its strategy of no longer allowing any oil to reach Cuba, it is strangling the entire economy of the island.

This is a deliberate starvation of the Cuban population, a strategy that aims at the suffering and death of the weakest. For it affects both the health system and the food supply.

It must be stated bluntly: the US is pursuing in Cuba — as in Gaza and in Iran — a strategy of genocide. This genocide is an integral part of a US style of warfare that relies on lightning successes. In the end, the colonisation of Cuba is supposed to result in a system like the one before the 1959 revolution, in which only US-loyal oligarchs determine the fate of the island and help to further exploit Cuba for its neighbour.

But what, according to the counter-argument, should actually be the economic interest of the US in Cuba? What would Washington gain from it if it succeeded in bringing a compliant oligarchy back to power in Cuba? In Cuba too, it is about control over important raw materials.

Cuba has few oil or gas reserves, but is among the top five countries in the world when it comes to the raw materials important for renewable energy battery storage: nickel and cobalt. As a result of the US embargo, the exploitation of the deposits by Canadian companies has practically come to a standstill. China, which is helping Cuba to build up solar energy capacities, could step in here and modernise

and resume the extraction. It is precisely this that the US strategy is designed to prevent.

As in Iran, it is less about bringing the oil under its own control, since this seems hardly promising, but nevertheless about preventing China from gaining access to materials that are so important for the expansion of electromobility. Colonisation means destruction. But that is really not such a new concept if we think, for example, of the systematic destruction of the Indian textile industry in the 18th and 19th centuries by British colonialism, in order to be able to protect its own market as well as to use India as a supplier of raw materials.

The Cuban population is defending itself against this cynical and perfidious strategy, but it is a biblical struggle — David against Goliath. The building up of its own capacities for energy production is becoming a race against time. China is helping here to rapidly increase electricity generation from renewable energies to one third of consumption. And Russia is breaking through the blockade and delivering oil via tankers, which Trump allows to pass with a humanitarian gesture.

But the question is whether the next Russian tanker will also be allowed to pass. The pressing question remains: How can tourism return to Cuba when there is no more jet fuel? How do we wrest this weapon from the US? How can Cuba live securely?

We must confront the new quality of US imperialism. It is by no means only Trump who is playing the madman here. No, it is an entire elite that wants to secure its profits worldwide with genocides.

What we are observing is nothing other than the mindset that comes to light in the Epstein files — a mindset that is only comparable to the ancient Caesarean madness, albeit deployed with cold rationality to stabilise the declining

US hegemony. To counter this, we need a mindset that is revolutionary and conservative at the same time: the defence of life. Long live life!

Let us do everything we can to ensure that the US does not succeed with its murder strategy. Cuba’s struggle is also our struggle. Anyone in the capitalist metropolises who does not understand this will also find it difficult to defend themselves against the impositions of the Western oligarchy in their own country.

It is time to rediscover the buried traces of the international solidarity movement. It is not that international solidarity with Cuba has declined in recent decades. But the idea that the struggle against war and for social justice here can only be waged successfully if it is linked to the struggles against colonialism — this insight is only insufficiently present, especially in the countries that are members of NATO and whose elites, like comprador bourgeoisies, want to help maintain US hegemony.

Let us take, for example, the Vietnam Congress of the Socialist German Student Union (SDS) in 1968 in Berlin. The central theme was resistance to the Vietnam War and to US imperialism. In the concluding declaration, which seems extremely topical, it said: “Today, US imperialism is trying, via NATO, to incorporate the West European metropolises into its policy of colonial counter-revolution.”

The planned campaign for which “Smash NATO” was intended never really gained momentum. As we learned only decades later, NATO itself destroyed the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial movement in Europe through its stay-behind networks. With a strategy of tension, using right-wing extremist networks, mass loyalty to imperialist US policy was attempted to be established.

Solidarity with Cuba today must therefore include an archaeology of the anti-colonial

movements and their combat by the US and its NATO allies. For it is also always about the argumentative disarming of the solidarity movement. A typical figure of argumentation today is the downplaying of the consequences of the merciless US economic war against Cuba, following the motto: yes, why didn’t they just get themselves a good power grid in time, even though US policy is precisely aimed at preventing this independent development.

One should actually be somewhat grateful to Trump, because in a short time he has torn the mask of human rights from US imperialism. Trump’s imperialism is honest imperialism. With Trump, it is openly about crimes for one’s own profit and about plunder for one’s own oligarch clique.

It becomes all the more difficult for the European allies to continue the fairy tale of the community of values. The plundering of the world is and remains the business model of the US; its instrument is NATO. But the more this model comes under pressure, the harder the violence it applies and is prepared to apply. But that was already the case in Vietnam 50 years ago and is all the more so today in Gaza, Iran and Cuba.

The policy of US imperialism is a policy that works with genocide. For only genocide is the guarantee that the colonised can no longer resist and refuse the US conception. Here the US has taken up the legacy of historical fascism, which linked genocide and colonialism. The struggle against US imperialism is an existential struggle, also in Cuba. A struggle for sovereignty that more than deserves any solidarity.

Sevim Dagdelen is a German politician who was a Left Party and Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance MP from 2005 to 2025.

Iran / analysis

SELF-INTEREST can be a great motivator when it comes to the silent majority taking notice of major international events. Two months ago, not many people would have been familiar with the Strait of Hormuz, its location or its strategic significance for international trade.

Now, few are unaware of the importance of this stretch of waterway, not least because it is affecting the price of their petrol, their food, and may affect their ability to take a holiday if jet fuel supplies continue to run low.

It is a cruel reality that for many this impact is far greater than the fact that the people of Gaza, Lebanon and Iran are facing the might of the world's biggest military power, the United States, and its powerful regional ally, Israel, on a daily basis. Thousands have lost their homes, livelihoods, and many their lives in the past three years, in the escalating war zone of the Middle East. However, this does not always register, until it has an impact upon day to day living in the West.

Which is not to say that millions have not protested against the genocide in Gaza, the illegal aggression against Iran and the invasion of Lebanon. Protests have been widespread and vociferous with anti-war movements across Western Europe and the US mobilising to pressurise their governments to halt the carnage and take the path of negotiation. However, the desire of the military industrial complex of the US and its NATO allies to reshape the Middle East and reassert Western hegemony over the region's resources remains the most powerful driver of current events.

US imperialist ambitions have never been far below the surface as interventions dating back to Korea and Vietnam, then more recently, Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq and Syria illustrate. Interventions in Latin America alone have included the coup d'état in Chile in 1973, interference in Grenada and Panama, the 60-year-long illegal blockade of Cuba and the abduction last year of Venezuelan President Nicholas Maduro and his wife Celia Flores. Countless other examples could be cited.

US interference in Iran predates the 1979 revolution in that country and is embedded in the interest of US corporations in exploiting the oil and natural gas wealth that Iran enjoys. The combined efforts of the CIA and British MI6 were instrumental in bringing down the democratically elected government of Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953, when moves were made to nationalise the oil industry. The installation of a dictator, in the form of the shah, was designed to defend an imperialist foothold in the region and head off the tentative steps being taken towards a wider people's democracy in Iran.

The 1979 national democratic revolution opened up the possibility of Iran moving in a progressive direction, before being hijacked by the Islamist clergy and the establishment of a theocratic dictatorship in the form of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

As the standard bearer of Shia "political Islam" the adventurist foreign policy of the Islamic Republic, through its "Axis of Resistance" network, presented a challenge not only to Western hegemony in the region but the fundamentalist Sunni Muslim vision of Saudi Arabia and the Zionist expansionism of the Israeli right. The pressures which have resulted in the current war of aggression, initiated by the US and Israel, have been building for decades.

Before the ramping up of US assets in the region for the present military conflict, the US had an estimated 45,000 personnel in the Middle East. Bases in Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait and Jordan housed fighter jets and refuelling aircraft, all within striking distance of Iran. Add to that the massive military presence of the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) and it is clear that the present conflict was not only planned for but regarded as a likely scenario.

The trajectory of the war has not however



A US sailor checks missiles about to be used on Iran
Picture credit: US Navy/public domain

Middle East impasse threatens world peace

The shockwaves of US intervention in the Middle East can be felt in the West, but as Steve Bishop points out, the way ahead is still uncertain



gone according to plan for the US and its allies. While overwhelming military capability has clearly been on the side of the US-Israeli axis the strategic hold which Iran has upon the Strait of Hormuz has proven key to the resistance of the theocratic dictatorship.

The ability to halt supplies of fuel and fertiliser, essential for agriculture, has brought the conflict directly into Western homes as prices begin to spiral and murmurs of discontent with the conduct of the war and its objectives, such as they are, begin to grow.

The proclamations of US President Donald Trump, ranging from the incendiary to the insane, have not inspired any confidence in the wider public in the US and elsewhere that the war will either be brief or succeed in its claims of regime change and reducing the impact of political Islam in the region.

The two-week ceasefire, announced on 8 April, was immediately mired in controversy with the US and Iran having widely differing interpretations and the IDF claiming, with US

support, that Lebanon was not part of the deal, so the bombing of that country continued uninterrupted. The US claims that Iran has agreed to give up its current stockpile of enriched uranium, while Iran is adamant that it has struck no such agreement.

The 10-point plan put forward by Iran, as the basis of the ceasefire, runs counter to the positions articulated by the US as its red lines for reopening the Strait of Hormuz and allowing the free movement of international shipping. Trump has described the Iranian proposal as no more than a "workable basis on which to negotiate."

It is doubtful that the US will concede entirely to demands such as the lifting of US sanctions, releasing frozen Iranian assets, Iranian control over the Strait of Hormuz or the withdrawal of US forces from the region, although Trump has said: "Almost all of the various points of past contention have been agreed to between the United States and Iran, but a two-week period will allow the agree-

ment to be finalised and consummated."

At the time of writing, the ceasefire has been extended indefinitely by the US, although it continues to blockade Iranian ports and cargo is not moving through the Strait of Hormuz, as the Iranians exercise their control over the waterway. The impasse is being felt most keenly by the Iranian people but is increasingly impacting upon the region and wider world economy.

Pakistan continues to offer to host further peace talks but the Iranian and US-Israeli positions remain far apart. Hardliners within the Iranian dictatorship increasingly appear to be prepared for a long war, to wear down the US and undermine the world economy, while the US continues to threaten to resort to more force if Iran does not back down. Uncertainty about the way forward prevails but unless serious negotiations get underway soon the prospects for the people of the region, and for world peace, will continue to be extremely bleak.

Steve Bishop is an EC member of the Committee for the Defence of Iranian People's Rights (CODIPR), the solidarity organisation campaigning for peace and progress in Iran. Steve is a member of Liberation and a regular contributor to Liberation Journal.

Middle East / analysis

US imperialism is getting bogged down in the quagmire of Iran

Washington mapped out a lightning campaign to force regime change. But **Peter Mertens** says all Trump has done is prove the era of unipolar power is over



ECONOMIC WARFARE is never abstract. It always cuts deep into the daily lives of ordinary people. For decades, the United States has deployed devastating sanctions and strangling tariffs as weapons against Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, and a host of other countries. But in March 2026, Washington got a taste of its own medicine when Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz. The imperial boomerang returned at breakneck speed sending shockwaves through global supply chains.

Today, the pulse of our global economy is determined by a bottleneck barely 33 kilometres wide. There, in the Strait of Hormuz, a fifth of the world's daily oil production glides past. Before the illegal US-Israeli attack, that vital waterway functioned almost without a ripple. Today, the situation has escalated entirely.

The consequences for the world market are nothing short of catastrophic. Across large parts of Asia, the impact is devastating. Sri Lanka was forced to introduce a four-day working week and ration fuel. In Vietnam, the government is asking citizens to work from home to conserve energy. Millions of families in India and Pakistan are confronted with unaffordable basic necessities such as cooking oil. They are paying the price for Trump and Netanyahu flouting international law.

But as always, not everyone takes the same hit. While the working class is left to pay the bill, the oil giants are cashing in. In the early days of the war, the hundred largest oil and gas companies were estimated to be earning an extra \$30 million per hour from war-inflated prices.

The vampire that lives on debt

In her documentary *Earth's Greatest Enemy*, US film-maker Abby Martin exposes the inconceivable scale of the US war machine. It is a monster that devours 270,000 barrels of oil per day, sucks up billions in capital that could be spent productively elsewhere, and must constantly fan the flames of conflict in order to sustain itself. The US military is an insatiable glutton: the more oil, capital, and war it consumes, the greater its hunger becomes.

No state on earth can plunge itself into debt as deeply as the United States. Washington can do so by virtue of the dollar hegemony. In the spring of 2026, US national debt reached the astronomical threshold of \$39 trillion. That invisible mountain of debt is the only means of keeping the visible war machine turning. German poet Peter Hacks once wrote with great precision that imperialism is a vampire. "The beast is dead," he observed, "and it stays out of death only for as long as it can keep sucking fresh blood."

The myth of invincibility

US hubris has been shattered against a hard strategic reality. The assumption that a nation of 92 million people could be destabilised through bombardment has proved a fatal miscalculation. Rather than bending, Iran has responded with a lethally efficient asymmetric

maritime strategy. The large, conventional vessels of the Iranian navy absorbed heavy blows, but Iran continues to dominate the Strait of Hormuz with an agile mosquito fleet. Fast patrol boats, mobile coastal missiles, and small submarines are proving virtually elusive.

For US naval planners, this is a sobering moment. Their enormously expensive aircraft carriers and destroyers have suddenly been exposed as unwieldy, outdated instruments. They have been reduced to strategic ballast that must remain far beyond the range of enemy fire simply to survive. In the Red Sea, we already witnessed a comparable scenario, when the US was forced to back down against the Houthis, simply because the expensive Western munitions stockpiles were running dry.

European complicity

Donald Trump may loudly complain that the Europeans are doing too little to support him, but the reality behind the scenes paints a very different picture. European leaders condemn

the violence in West Asia, at best, with lip service, while their NATO bases operate like a well-oiled logistical machine for the US war effort. US bombers, drones, and warships are continuously resupplied, rearmed, and directed from military staging posts in Britain, Germany, Portugal, Italy, France, and Greece. Ramstein Air Base in Germany functions as the beating heart of the operation. Europeans are thus fully complicit in the escalation in West Asia. Without European facilities, the entire US air bridge to the Gulf region would crumble.

The shadow of Gaza over Lebanon

The quagmire into which Washington is sinking is deepened further by the actions of its genocidal ally Israel. Under the dark banner of Operation Eternal Darkness, the Israeli army is waging a war of annihilation in Lebanon that seamlessly replicates the gruesome tactics of Gaza. The result is devastating. More than a million Lebanese have been driven to flee. Thousands of civilians have lost their lives in bombardments that do not distinguish between military targets, civilian neighbourhoods, and refugee camps.

What we see here is a deliberate strategy to pulverise entire societies. Military analysts point to the genocidal aspects of this doctrine: the Gaza model is becoming the blueprint for the entire region. It is precisely this merciless approach in Lebanon that caused earlier ceasefire attempts to founder. For the Zionist hawks who dream of a "Greater Israel," diplomacy is not an option; the goal is the absolute annihilation of every Iranian counterforce in the region.

A dress rehearsal for the abyss

Arms giant Lockheed Martin is working at full stretch, yet is managing to scale up production

only in dribs and drabs. This bottleneck in supply is forcing Washington into drastic choices: military deliveries to West Asia are now inevitably coming at the expense of supplying Ukraine, while simultaneously draining strategic reserves in the Far East at a rapid pace. And that is precisely the crux of the problem. For in the eyes of the US hardliners, this entire war against Iran is merely a preparation – a dress rehearsal – for the real, great confrontation: the one with China. And that rehearsal is shaping up to be an exhausting one. The giant from Washington is unsteady on its feet.

Washington was rock-solid in its conviction that the Russian economy would implode under the weight of Western sanctions within a week. Reality proved more stubborn. They thought they could strangle China's technological advance by banning microchip exports. The opposite happened: Beijing accelerated the development of its own independent industry. And Washington deluded itself into believing that the Iranian regime would collapse after a few air strikes. Today, all Western intelligence agencies must concede that they have grossly underestimated the balance of power.

The war against Iran reveals not the omnipotence of the US empire, but its ultimate inability to adapt to a multipolar world. Imperialism is choking on its own debt, stumbling over its own technological arrogance, and failing morally on every front. The Strait of Hormuz is far more than a choke point for oil tankers; it is the rocky seabed on which the old, unipolar world order has definitively run aground.

Peter Mertens is general secretary of the Workers Party of Belgium (PVDA-PTB). He is a member of the federal parliament and author of *Mutiny* (2024) and *The Last Days of the Old Normal* (forthcoming), among others.



Imperialism / analysis

The permanent war economy and the crisis of US hegemony



The guided-missile destroyer USS Delbert D Black fires a Tomahawk land attack missile at Iran in February. Picture credit: US Department of Defense/Public domain

Imperialism has built a network of military power that is integral to its interests and the global economic system. Eoghan O'Neill shines a light on the situation



OVER THE past 80 years, the United States has fought wars across multiple continents, overthrown governments, imposed sanctions on dozens of countries, and constructed a global military network without historical precedent. These actions are often presented as responses to individual crises or security threats. Viewed over time, however, they reveal a consistent pattern rooted in the dynamics of modern capitalism.

The end of the second world war marked a decisive turning point. The old European colonial empires emerged weakened and exhausted, while the US possessed the world's most powerful industrial economy, dominant financial system, and unmatched military capacity. From this position it constructed a new form of global dominance built on military alliances, financial institutions, and political intervention. The structure of international capitalism became inseparable from US strategic priorities.

Since then a vast system of global power has taken shape. Military bases span the planet, alliances shape entire regions, and sanctions can isolate whole economies from global financial networks. From Korea and Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan, from coups in Latin America and Africa to sanctions regimes across the world, what appear as separate crises form part of a coherent system through which political and economic power are exercised.

The permanent war economy reflects the priorities of capitalism rather than social need. Military spending, sanctions, and global interventions function not simply as instruments of foreign policy but as mechanisms through which capital accumulation and geopolitical dominance are sustained.

The modern international order was stabilised through institutions designed to organise

global capitalism. The Bretton Woods system placed the dollar at the centre of global finance, while the International Monetary Fund and World Bank regulated credit and reconstruction. NATO provided the military framework for the Western alliance, and the Central Intelligence Agency became a principal instrument for covert operations and regime change.

Externally the US confronted a world shaped by anti-colonial movements across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Many newly independent states sought to break from colonial economic structures, often drawing on socialist ideas. Washington interpreted these developments as threats to the emerging capitalist order and intervened repeatedly to prevent such governments from consolidating power. The overthrow of Iranian prime minister Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953 remains one of the clearest early examples of this logic.

Beneath the surface of post-war expansion, the system's contradictions were already developing. By the late 1960s and early 1970s the collapse of Bretton Woods, the oil shocks, and stagflation signalled the exhaustion of the post-war boom. As profitability came under pressure, the system entered a new phase of restructuring.

The response took the form of neoliberalism: deregulation, privatisation, attacks on organised labour, and the liberalisation of global capital flows. At the same time the US expanded its use of covert operations, proxy wars, and support for authoritarian regimes to maintain influence across the Global South.

During this period the US also consolidated its dominance within global finance. The dollar became the central currency of international trade, particularly in energy markets, while banking systems and payment networks reinforced this position. Access to dollar markets became essential for trade and credit.

This architecture gave Washington extraordinary leverage. States that challenged US priorities could be disciplined through financial isolation, exclusion from banking systems, or sanctions targeting key sectors such as energy and finance. Over time these mechanisms developed into a form of financial warfare capable of destabilising entire economies. The blockade of Cuba, and sanctions on countries such as Venezuela and Iran, illustrate how economic pressure is used to reshape political outcomes.

The end of the Cold War appeared to confirm the dominance of this system. The collapse of the Soviet Union left the US in an unprecedented position of global power. The Gulf War demonstrated overwhelming military superiority, while NATO expansion and the deepening reach of global financial institutions extended US influence across multiple regions.

The attacks of September 11 accelerated this trajectory. The invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq were followed by interventions across the Middle East and beyond. Yet these wars also revealed a recurring paradox. Military dominance did not produce stable outcomes. Instead, cycles of intervention generated new instability, often creating conditions for further conflict.

The scale of these interventions has been immense. They have cost trillions of dollars, displaced millions, and contributed significantly to environmental degradation. Despite this, they failed to produce lasting political stability. Afghanistan collapsed rapidly following US withdrawal, while Iraq and Libya remain deeply fractured.

At the same time, deeper shifts were taking place within the global economy. China emerged as a major industrial and technological power, Russia reasserted itself militarily,

and many countries across the Global South began exploring alternative forms of cooperation. The tools that once reinforced US dominance increasingly encouraged the development of alternatives.

The global balance of power is now undergoing a profound transformation. Efforts to develop alternative financial systems, expand trade outside the dollar, and build new alliances reflect a broader movement toward a more multipolar world. The paradox confronting Washington is that the mechanisms used to maintain dominance are contributing to its erosion.

It is within this context that the confrontation with Iran must be understood. Iran occupies a strategic position within the global energy system and maintains close relations with both Russia and China. The long history of intervention, beginning with the 1953 coup, continues to shape the present.

Sanctions targeting Iran's energy exports and financial sector form part of a broader strategy of economic pressure designed to constrain its development and influence. Yet such measures also carry wider implications. Escalation risks destabilising global energy markets and accelerating efforts by other states to bypass the dollar system.

The conflict with Iran is therefore not an isolated dispute. It is one expression of a broader attempt to manage the transition from a unipolar system to a more contested global order. Across Latin America, Africa, and West Asia similar dynamics are visible, as states seek greater control over resources and economic sovereignty while facing pressure from established centres of power.

The trajectory of the past eight decades reveals a consistent pattern. Military intervention, covert destabilisation, sanctions regimes, and financial pressure form part of a broader system through which the United States has sought to maintain its dominant position within global capitalism.

The human and environmental costs of this system have been immense. Wars, sanctions, and political destabilisation have produced widespread suffering, while military production and global operations contribute to the accelerating climate crisis. Yet the consequences are not only destructive. The same processes are generating the conditions for systemic change.

Violence and economic coercion rarely produce the stability they promise. More often they deepen contradictions and encourage the emergence of alternative arrangements. The order that emerged after 1945 is increasingly unstable. Whether the coming period leads to deeper conflict or opens the possibility of a more cooperative and socially just system will depend on the balance of forces shaping this transition.

In the end the question is not simply geopolitical but social. The structures that sustain the permanent war economy are rooted in the interests of the capitalist system itself. As long as those interests dominate political power, the pressures that produce militarisation, intervention, and economic coercion will continue to shape the international order. The emergence of a different global system therefore depends not only on shifts in state power but on the capacity of working people to challenge the conditions that make such a system possible.

Eoghan O'Neal is a post-primary teacher, musician and author of *The Capitalist Illusion* and a brand new book *Breaking Dependency: Ireland's struggle for Class Power and Sovereignty*. He is a regular contributor to the *Socialist Voice* and a member of the national executive committee of the Communist Party of Ireland. This article is a condensed version of a longer analysis published in *Socialist Voice* (April 2026).

Environment / plastics

Switching from Western oil-derived plastics: avoiding a menace and grasping new opportunities

Microplastics appear to pose huge risks to human health, warns **Dr Tom Shelley**, but the developing world shows a way to end our reliance on them



WESTERN oil-derived plastics and the microplastic particles they produce are proving to be a menace to human health and threaten the survival of their societies. Less developed countries have not reached the same levels of pollution because they use less of these materials. In many cases, they produce agricultural products which can be used as sustainable alternatives that threaten nobody and so can follow a different path. They can also initiate industries that can avoid problems locally and potentially export products to the developed countries when they realise that they need to use them.

This would appear to be the latest example of corporate colonialism where large, wealthy companies continue to sell products they know are hazardous. It may be noted that the United States, where a number of chemicals known to be hazardous continue to be used, has a life expectancy of 79 years, whereas the EU which has banned them has a life expectancy of 81.7 years, and countries considered “comparable” to the US have a life expectancy of 82.7 years.

Conventional oil-derived plastics do not last forever, but when they break up, they disintegrate into smaller and smaller pieces, the most dangerous of which are only 1-10 micrometres across. These are small enough to cross from the human intestines into the blood stream but large enough to block microcapillary blood vessels in the human brain. They can also get into and cross through the human placenta and, it may be assumed, get into the brains of unborn children.

It cannot yet be proved beyond doubt that they damage human health. But in a paper published last year, University of New Mexico researchers investigated autopsy specimens and found microplastics in human brains at much higher concentrations than in other organs.

“Worse, the plastic accumulation appears to be growing over time, having increased by 50% over just the past eight years,” said a university press statement, adding; “Brain tissue from people who had been diagnosed with

dementia had up to 10 times as much plastic in their brains as everyone else”

While monitoring systems do not yet exist that can observe and track exactly what microplastic particles are doing in human bodies, especially in unborn children, anything that prevents oxygen getting to brain cells has to be very bad.

At the same time, UK government figures show that there is a rapid growth in patients with dementia and children with special educational needs. The human fertility rate is now 1.41, well below the replacement rate to keep the population stable at 2.3. While socioeconomic factors also undoubtedly play their part, there are increasing numbers of couples who desperately want children but are finding they cannot have any for reasons that are not obvious, except that foetal heart rates drop during pregnancy until the foetus is no longer viable and miscarries, or worse, is born with serious defects.

It is not just the plastic particles that cause trouble, but chemicals such as Bisphenol A that are released during the breakdown process. Research studies suggest that autism in some children may be related to this chemical since some children cannot break it down.

A UK government source I have contacted told me that they know all this and added that microplastic particles also cause cancer — if the other problems were not bad enough on their own.

Microplastic particles get into our food chain and that of wildlife in at least three ways. Much plastic waste gets dumped illegally. Sewage sludge is being put on fields and plastic fishing gear, lost overboard containers and dumping gets into the sea. Only about 50% of plastic in the UK gets recycled despite best efforts, and the world figure is about 9%. Good uses for waste plastics are limited because they degrade naturally over time, especially if they are reheated and include different products that do not mix when melted together.

The human body can tolerate a certain amount of toxic chemicals and foreign matter

but it appears that we have exceeded tolerable limits in the developed world, while they have not got there yet in the less-developed world.

One of the first things that US President Donald Trump did when he got into office was to rescind the ban on plastic drinking straws. If he chews his polypropylene drinking straws, he will be ingesting quantities of microplastic particles, blocking his brain microcapillaries and constantly having to make new brain pathways to keep going. This could explain a lot.

The governments of less-developed countries now need to avoid going down the path of developed countries, blocking up parts of the brains of their citizens, especially those of their children, and follow a different, sustainable path.

Not all oil-derived plastics can be done away with. Synthetic plastics are essential to make electrical insulation. The alternatives used previously were rubber, which perishes, and shellac, which comes from insects. But the vast majority of plastic products can be made from natural ingredients which break down in ways the human body and the environment can deal with without greatly affecting their usefulness.

The first step for less developed countries is not to follow the primrose path to disaster being pursued by the developed countries under the thrall of the big oil companies.

A good step is exemplified by Bangladesh, which in 2002 banned the production, sale and use of polythene bags, with a thickness of 20 micrometres or less, following major floods where plastic bags were identified as a primary cause of drainage blockage. In August 2024 the government of Bangladesh identified 17 types of single use plastic items, including bags, for phased elimination. It also promotes biodegradable bags including those made from jute plant fibres.

In developed countries, jute and sisal fibres, derived from a flowering plant native to southern Mexico are sold as hessian and burlap. My colleague Matthias Luethi invented hessix, a hessian-based material made from reinforcing jute fibres with a naturally produced resin. It's used to make low cost, vertical axis wind turbines for farmers.

In 1998, I sat down to dinner with Don von Schrlitz, DuPont's global director for engineering polymers, who told me that the company's polymer business was originally founded on cellulose derived from wood and he could see it returning to those roots in the future. He retired shortly after.

Wood is a renewable resource and many generations of children have enjoyed wooden toys that were almost indestructible before the fashion came to make them out of breakable plastic and powered by ecologically unfriendly and fire hazardous lithium batteries.

But for those who need or want mouldable plastic products, there is a whole plethora of materials that are as biodegradable as anyone cares to make them, starting with polylactic acid, that is widely used for surgical implants that once they have fulfilled their purpose do not have to be surgically removed because the human body breaks them down.

Many plastics can be derived from locally produced natural products, either plants or even seaweed. Henry Ford developed a prototype car with panels made of composite plastic reinforced with hemp fibre in 1941.

And as Ford pointed out to a bunch of technical journalists when we visited their research centre some years ago to see their hydrogen-powered car engine running in its test cell, they — and all the motor manufacturers — are happy to make and sell whatever their customers want, and it is up to governments, not oil companies to make financial decisions that favour “green” alternatives.

Dr Tom Shelley is an independent engineering consultant.



Imperialism / analysis



The G20 Summit 2023 hosted by Modi's government in India is widely regarded as significant in that it represented the pro-US/Western riposte to the multi-polar vision increasingly gaining traction across the Global South and championed by the People's Republic of China. Picture credit: Wasiul Bahar/Creative Commons 4.0 International

Sovereignty and democracy in an age of empire

In a time of 'maximum pressure,' **Harsev Bains** explores how we can reclaim popular power



IN A PREVIOUS article, *Dreams of an empire* (Liberation Spring 2025), I examined the enduring tendency of dominant powers to project influence beyond their borders, reshaping the world in their own image. Today, that tendency is no longer latent — it is resurgent, explicit, and increasingly unrestrained.

At the centre of this moment lie two foundational concepts of the modern political order: sovereignty and democracy. Both are invoked as universal values, yet both are routinely hollowed out in practice. The contradiction between principle and reality is not accidental — it reflects the underlying structures of power that govern the global system.

To understand the present crisis, we must revisit the origins of sovereignty and democracy and examine how they are being redefined in an age marked by renewed imperial ambition.

The origins of sovereignty: authority and order

The concept of sovereignty emerged from the turmoil of early modern Europe. It was, fundamentally, an attempt to impose order on fragmentation — religious wars, feudal loyalties and competing authorities.

Thinkers such as Jean Bodin argued for a single, indivisible authority capable of maintaining stability. Thomas Hobbes went further, proposing that individuals must surrender their freedoms to an absolute sovereign to escape chaos.

It was Jean-Jacques Rousseau who reoriented

the debate, placing sovereignty in the hands of the people — the “general will.” This marked a decisive shift from monarchic to popular sovereignty, laying the intellectual foundations of modern democracy.

Yet from the outset, sovereignty carried a dual character: it could legitimise authority from above or empower participation from below.

Westphalia and the unequal world order

The Peace of Westphalia (1648) is often regarded as the birth of the modern state system. Its principles — territorial integrity, non-intervention, and formal equality — remain central to the international order embodied in the United Nations.

However, the promise of equality among states has always coexisted with material inequality. Powerful states have consistently reserved for themselves the right to intervene, while insisting on non-interference when it suits their interests.

This contradiction has deepened in the contemporary era. Sovereignty is increasingly conditional; respected for some, denied to others.

Sovereignty under pressure: the new imperialism

In the 21st century, sovereignty is being reshaped by competing forces. On the one hand, it is constrained by international law, human rights regimes, and multilateral institutions. On

the other, it is eroded by the unilateral actions of powerful states with nuclear capabilities.

Military alliances such as NATO and economic blocs like the European Union represent forms of “pooled sovereignty.” Yet more troubling is the selective application of doctrines such as the “Responsibility to Protect,” which have too often provided cover for intervention rather than protection.

This dynamic has reached a new intensity under Donald Trump. “Make America Great Again” has translated the rhetoric of national renewal into a foreign policy defined by coercion, unilateralism, and the open pursuit of regime change.

Cuba: sovereignty as resistance

Nowhere is this more evident than in Cuba. For decades, Cuba has defended its sovereignty against sustained economic and political pressure. Under Miguel Diaz-Canel, this defence is framed as the right to maintain an independent political and economic system.

Recent developments, however, signal an escalation:

- An intensified blockade extending into energy supply, resulting in widespread hardship for all;
- Explicit calls for regime change from figures such as Marco Rubio;
- Renewed military threats and destabilisation efforts.

What is presented as a campaign for “democracy” is experienced in Cuba as economic warfare. Sovereignty, in this context, becomes not an abstract principle but a lived struggle for survival.

Venezuela and Iran: the collapse of legal norms

In Venezuela, actions targeting Nicolas Maduro — including direct military intervention — represent a profound breach of international law. Sovereignty entails exclusive jurisdiction within national borders; external enforcement of domestic law through military means fundamentally violates that principle.

In Iran, attacks against civilian infrastructure and leadership figures further undermine the legal framework established after the second world war. The blockade of the Strait of Hormuz has massively impacted the world economy. Such actions raise serious concerns under international humanitarian law and challenge the prohibition on the use of force enshrined in the UN Charter.

In both cases, the justification of “security” is deployed to override legality. The result is a world in which rules are applied selectively, and power becomes the ultimate arbiter.

Marxism and the question of sovereignty

Marxist theory provides a critical framework for understanding these developments. It rejects the notion that sovereignty is neutral, instead locating it within the dynamics of class power.

From this perspective:

- The state is an instrument through which ruling classes maintain dominance;
- National sovereignty often masks the interests of economic elites;
- Genuine liberation requires international solidarity among working people.

The call “Workers of all lands, unite” captures this insight. Workers share common interests that transcend national boundaries, even as they remain embedded within them.

Democracy: ideal and reality

If sovereignty concerns authority, democracy concerns legitimacy. Yet the history of democracy reveals a persistent gap between ideal and practice.

In ancient Athens, participation was limited to a narrow band of elite citizens. In Britain, democratic rights were historically tied to property ownership. Even today, formal political equality

coexists with profound economic inequality.

The central question remains: democracy for whom?

Aristotle distinguished between rule by the many and rule by the few, often expressing concern that democracy could become rule in the narrow interests of the poor. Modern critiques invert this concern, highlighting how systems labelled “democratic” frequently serve the interests of the wealthy.

Marxist analysis goes further, arguing that liberal democracy functions as a form of class rule—providing formal rights while leaving real power concentrated in economic institutions.

Lenin and the limits of liberal democracy

Lenin sharpened this critique by distinguishing between two forms of democracy:

- Bourgeois democracy, which offers formal equality but concentrates power in the hands of capital;
- Proletarian democracy, which seeks to empower the majority through direct participation.

His concept of democratic centralism — “freedom of discussion, unity of action” — was intended to combine internal democracy with collective discipline. While its historical application is sometimes distorted and contested by academics opposed to the relevance and science of Marxism, its underlying premise is clear: democracy cannot be separated from material power.

There is no “pure democracy” in a society structured by inequality.

Sovereignty, democracy, and the Global South

For nations emerging from colonial rule, sovereignty is not an abstract legal principle but a hard-won achievement. It is inseparable from struggles against domination — political, economic, and cultural.

Organisations such as Liberation and the Indian Workers' Association have long recognised this reality. Rooted in anti-colonial struggle, they continue to advocate:

- Respect for national sovereignty,
- Opposition to imperial intervention,
- Solidarity among working people across borders.

In this context, sovereignty and democracy must be understood together. Sovereignty without democracy risks authoritarianism; democracy without sovereignty risks subordination to external power.

Conclusion: reclaiming meaning in an age of power

We are living through a period in which the language of sovereignty and democracy is increasingly detached from its substance. Powerful states invoke these principles even as they undermine them.

The task before us is not simply to defend these concepts, but to reclaim them.

This means:

- Defending the sovereignty of nations against imperial coercion,
- Expanding democracy beyond formal institutions into economic and social life,
- Building international solidarity rooted in justice, not domination.

The “dreams of empires” have not disappeared—they have returned with renewed force. But so too has the possibility of resistance.

If sovereignty is to mean anything, it must belong to peoples, not powers. If democracy is to endure, it must serve the many, not the few.

Only then can these ideals move from rhetoric to reality.

Harsev Bains is chair of Liberation's education sub-committee and Indian Workers' Association (GB) national president.

Liberation / in Parliament

IN AN INCREASINGLY polarised and volatile world, it is more important than ever that we unite our voices and stand up for human rights.

That is what I have attempted to do as the parliamentary chair of Liberation, highlighting a range of issues that are of concern to us all over this past year.

From the use of legislation to suppress the right to protest in the UK, through the humanitarian catastrophe because of ethnic cleansing and genocide in Gaza, to the current crisis in the Middle East, we have seen time and time again the destruction capitalism, imperialism and colonialism causes.

The work of Liberation remains just as relevant as it was when it formed more than 70 years ago. The feelings of internationalism and solidarity that our organisation prides itself on are as strong today as it has ever been in these past decades.

We know that power concedes nothing without demand and it is by challenging and applying pressure, sometimes on our own government, that progress is made and peoples who do not have a voice can be heard.

In the past year, Liberation has raised in Parliament the incontrovertible fact that Britain owes a historic debt to the people of Palestine, who have been the victims of relentless persecution for decades. I visited the West Bank last November where I saw a variety of different types of genocide being committed by Netanyahu's regime.

I heard of the cultural genocide taking place — students and lecturers unable to go to university due to roadblocks and checkpoints. How implementing barriers to education is a tactic to subjugate the Palestinian people. How students and lecturers are arbitrarily detained by the Israeli Defence Forces. How education establishments have been destroyed in Gaza, with teachers using tents as makeshift classrooms and educators walking miles to find an internet connection to upload lesson content.

Then there is the economic genocide, with the ability of Palestinians to trade being restricted, forcing them to rely on goods from Israel and Western countries instead. This is capitalism benefiting from this form of reliance. This is economic terrorism.

Israel is a capitalist and imperialist project that was created by Western power and shamefully continues to be aided and abetted by the UK and many others.

Parliamentarians who demand to see the UK on the right side of history continue to raise the oppression of the Palestinian people in and around the House of Commons.

The Middle East has been a regular theatre for United States imperialism and what we have witnessed with Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu launching an illegal war on Iran to achieve regime change, has seen innocent Iranians being killed. The Iranian people have long been denied basic human rights, they have suffered from systemic discrimination against women and ethnic groups with political opposition stifled by an oppressive authoritarian regime. But with their illegal actions, Trump and Netanyahu have eroded the rules-based world order built around international law.

These autocrats chose violence and military action over diplomacy and peace. Israel has been a consistent danger to peace in the region. In 2025, it launched attacks against Palestine, Iran, Qatar, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen with other military sorties in Tunisian, Greek and Maltese waters on aid flotillas destined for Gaza. Between January and December Israel carried out more than 10,000 offensives. It is important that politicians in Westminster draw attention to these facts.

The illegal war on Iran is victimising the Iranian people, perhaps the most shocking incident being the Shajareh Tayyebah girls' elementary school in Minab with 120 schoolchil-



Rescuers search the rubble at the Shajareh Tayyebah school in Minab
Credit: Mehr News Agency/Creative Commons 4.0 International License

Raise your voice for human rights

In an increasingly polarised world, it's vital we speak out. **Brian Leishman MP** reports from Parliament



dren killed by the United States. This is a war crime committed by the UK's most important ally.

I tabled an Early Day Motion at the start of March to note a profound anxiety over the military escalation involving the US, Israel and Iran, squarely branding the large-scale military attack "illegal, unjustified, and unnecessary." I thank my fellow MPs who added their names.

The UK's only role in this conflict should be in bringing it to an end. I will continue my calls for an immediate and effective ceasefire, de-escalation and a return to dialogue, diplomacy and adherence to international law.

Many of my constituents had already been struggling to make ends meet even before the US and Israel's actions that are creating a global economic shock that is driving the price of essentials upwards and contributing to more poverty and inequality, here in the UK but also around the world.

Talking of poverty created by US actions, in September I represented Liberation at a Morning Star/Cuba Solidarity Event in Brighton. For over six decades now, Cuba has been the victim of economic and diplomatic warfare. From the sanctions designed to impoverish the Cuban people and cripple their economy to a programme of almost relentless pressure being placed on the international community by the US to treat Cuba as a pariah state.

The state-sponsored attempted coup that was the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, then the missile crisis a year later in 1962 with the world on the brink of nuclear war, to the 1980s, with the designation of Cuba as a sponsor of terrorism by Ronald Reagan — while he was funding anti-communist forces in Afghanistan and

Angola and by covertly selling arms to Iran to then fund the Contras in Nicaragua.

Most recently, Trump issued a memorandum that will impose even tighter sanctions on Cuba and the blockade that is devastating to Cubans.

Back in Westminster, Liberation welcomed a delegation from Cyprus, led by Stefanos Stefanou, general secretary of AKEL. As a progressive party for working people, AKEL is promoting a bi-zonal and bi-communal federal solution to the Cyprus problem with political equality.

It was a very productive visit, focusing on breaking the deadlock which put a stop to negotiations in 2017. The UK continues to have a major role to play through UN resolutions and ultimately, we must put an end to the Turkish occupation so that Cyprus and its people can be reunited.

In December last year, Liberation hosted a Parliamentary discussion to commemorate one of the world's most important pledges: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris in 1948 it set out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected.

As a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, the declaration is as relevant today as in 1948, as humanity was rebuilding after the horrors of the second world war.

Decades after the declaration, the theme was "Human rights, our everyday essentials" and reminded us that rights are the freedoms that we rely on every day and how they positively shape our daily lives.

The human rights that unite people of different race, gender, belief or background and that the everyday choices we make of treating each

other with respect, tolerance and understanding is the foundation on which community and nations are built, as is speaking against unfairness and discrimination and listening to those people whose voice is ignored or have that opportunity taken from them.

In concluding, I tabled another Early Day Motion recognising our dearly missed comrade Maggie Bowden. Maggie passed away in September 2025 and she was the joint president and long-serving former general secretary of Liberation. For decades Maggie championed internationalism and was a campaigner for peace, showing solidarity with peoples oppressed by neo-colonialism and despotic regimes across the world. Maggie's lifelong commitment to justice and anti-imperialism is inspirational.

When the UK wilfully ignores or supports the oppression of people in foreign countries, when our political class is happy to oversee that, then Liberation will always look to our original principles of campaigning for the rights to self-determination of colonised peoples in their fight against imperialism.

The UK must adopt a new approach to foreign policy. One that is independent from the influence of the United States. One that protects human rights, upholds international law and uses our diplomatic position to promote peace and economic and social justice across the world.

The founding aims and principles of Liberation are as pertinent now as they were when we were founded.

Brian Leishman is MP for Alloa & Grangemouth, Scottish Labour Party, and parliamentary chair of Liberation.

Book review / Latin America



The World Bank building
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The World Bank and the Cold War in Latin America – the Argentine Challenge

This valuable new book from Claudia Kedar traces the story of how the World Bank has served US capitalist interests. John Green reads with interest



THIS BOOK reveals the intricate and, up to now, untold story of the World Bank and its relationship with Latin America during the Cold War.

The World Bank (WB) was established in the aftermath of the second world war in an attempt to address the needs of economic cooperation and global economic stability. It became the most influential financial organisations globally, directing the development agenda and providing financial and technical assistance for thousands of projects in developing countries worldwide.

It was established at the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944 along with the International Monetary Fund. The WB became a central pillar of the Liberal International Order (ie the imposition of market capitalism) that the United States promoted in the post-war period.

To begin with, it granted reconstruction loans to a war-torn Europe, but later expanded its role to middle and low income countries, beginning with Chile in 1948. Over time the bank evolved into a powerful institution that supported development projects but at the same time advocated sweeping structural reforms, as it did in Latin America following the debt crisis of the early 1980. It also oversaw the transition of the former Soviet bloc from socialism to capitalism.

From an initial membership of 45 Western states, the WB evolved into an almost universal institution with 189 member states today (the UN has 193).

Although the WB has nominal autonomy, it has been and still is tied in closely with US political aims and financial interests. It has been, Claudia Kedar writes, “largely designed and funded by the US government, invariably headed by a US citizen and symbolically located within walking distance from the White House.”

Kedar’s book examines closely the role of the WB, largely through the lens of its relations with Latin America and particularly Argentina. She writes that the WB can’t be looked at in isolation.

The bank’s leading operations are just the tip of the iceberg, she writes, decoding the bank’s black box requires delving into the negotiations and decision-making processes driving both its lending and non-lending decisions. Looking at detailed case studies represents a first step in understanding how the bank works. Her book provides a comprehensive exploration of the

WB’s pivotal role during the Cold War in Latin America.

The WB was instrumental in persuading Argentina and other Latin American borrowers to adopt policies advocated by Washington. This was all part and parcel of US attempts to contain communism and ensure countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa remained anchored in the Western orbit.

Kedar emphasises that, “although the WB’s management and staff may have strived to comply with the bank’s supposed commitment to political neutrality, they frequently found themselves serving US Cold War interests.”

She argues that the WB did struggle to shield itself from the constraints of the Cold War, but emphasises that this struggle “was Sisyphean due to the DNA of the WB, which bore the genes of the United States, its primary architect and most influential member-state.

“Additionally,” she writes, “during the Cold War, the WB depended on US financial support. In a conflict where any departure from economic orthodoxy was perceived as a potential risk to the US-led Liberal International Order, the WB’s policy recommendations were an integral component of the Cold War dynamics.”

Kedar bases her arguments on a whole cache of recently declassified files from WB archives and other primary sources. These demonstrate clearly that Argentina’s retreat from the “statism”, interventionism and economic nationalism of the 1940s and ’50s to a more orthodox capitalist model was a policy pursued relentlessly by the WB. This pattern could be seen throughout Latin America.

Through its close examination of the bank’s interactions with Argentina, one of Latin America’s largest economies and an influential actor in the region, the author provides revealing insights. She closely examines the dynamic, and often fraught, relationships between Argentina and the US, and exposes the ideological impact of the Cold War on those relationships and the promotion among “Third World” countries of developmental models rooted in Western notions of progress and modernisation. Argentina, despite increasingly large loans from the WB, is still experiencing serious economic problems, widespread poverty and inequality.

What becomes very clear from the author’s investigations, is that the WB was primarily a means of imposing a Western (ie US) model of capitalism on all those countries which accepted its loans. These loans, despite their avowed intention of stimulating development, often created situations of dependency and certainly rarely helped true national development, nor did they help overcome crass social inequality. The WB appeared to be indifferent to the type of government to which it was lending, whether a nominal democracy or a military dictatorship, as long as the economic model conformed to its demands. It has always been more concerned with keeping out any communist or even socialist ideas, than in protecting human rights or countering endemic corruption.

While Kedar’s work is very much an academic treatise and hardly aimed at a wider readership, it does, in a very accessible way, provide invaluable information and new insights for anyone interested in the more detailed role of the World Bank in a global context.

The World Bank and the Cold War in Latin America – the Argentine Challenge, By Claudia Kedar. Published by Stanford University Press.

John Green is a former trade union official, a journalist and former documentary film-maker, which in the 1970s involved clandestine filming assignments in South Africa aimed at helping bring the abhorrent practices of the apartheid regime to world attention.

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75-77 St John Street, London
EC1M 4NN

Email: info@liberationorg.co.uk

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