

George Galloway's No2Nato: War cannot be opposed based on nationalism and an embrace of capitalism's “rising powers”

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The founding meeting of No2Nato took place on February 25 at the Bolivar Hall in central London. Other venues had refused to host the event because of the group's stated opposition to NATO's war against Russia in Ukraine, citing fears of violent counter-protests.

The Bolivar Hall was made available by the Venezuelan Embassy, though its small size meant that the rally was broken up into four sessions of 160 attendees.

George Galloway's Workers Party of Britain and the Socialist Labour Party founded by former National Union of Mineworkers leader Arthur Scargill but now led by witch-hunted former Labour MP Chris Williamson—were co-sponsors of the rally. Galloway, Williamson and ASLEF train drivers' union Vice President Andy Hudd were nominated as No2Nato's “provisional” leaders.

Galloway's political origins are in Stalinism and Labourism, but he has moved in right-wing circles for many years. What he retains from Stalinism, decades after the bureaucracy destroyed the Soviet Union, restored capitalism and mutated into a mafia-style oligarchy, is a fierce British nationalism.

He is ideally placed to lead a movement that opposes NATO within the context of advocating an alternative foreign policy for Britain and, with considerably less enthusiasm on Galloway's part, European imperialism. Against Britain's alliance with the US, No2Nato advocates a global alliance with the “rising powers” led by China, which will supposedly inaugurate a new multi-polar world and bring about world peace.

After a contribution from Peter Ford, the former British ambassador to Bahrain and Syria and a critic of the NATO wars in Iraq and Syria, Galloway gushed, “How I wish you were still in the foreign office and applying some of that wisdom. The purpose of a government, the purpose of a foreign office, is to protect the interests and safety of British people and British interests.”

Protecting British interests led Galloway to suggest, “The Monroe Doctrine was the enunciation by the United States of America that it would not tolerate European interference in the Americas. I say we need a European Monroe Doctrine.”

Galloway's critique was taken up by Dr. David Miller, the academic sacked by Bristol University for criticising Israeli repression of the Palestinians on *Palestine Declassified* on Iran's Press TV, which he co-hosts with Chris Williamson. He stated, “The US is engaged in a process of trying to destroy European countries. That is the purpose of it, to just destroy the economies of Europe. That was always of course the point of NATO. It was to keep Germany down and Russia out. And that remains the point of NATO—to destroy the possibility that Germany can take an independent course. And people in Europe see that it's not just that we support ending of war in Ukraine. It is that we should be directly targeting the US imperial power, which is oppressing all of us.”

Anti-Americanism, not anti-imperialism

Facile claims that the European imperialist states are oppressed by US imperialism confirm that No2Nato is not a genuinely anti-imperialist organisation. Its advocates are opposed to the assertion of US global hegemony because this threatens the comfortable social position of an upper-middle class stratum who see their privileged existence threatened by Washington's predatory ambitions blowing up the world. In response they propose the creation of a global alliance of rising capitalist powers, with the US, UK and Europe accepting an inevitable diminution in their global position.

Galloway insists that No2Nato's chief distinction from the Stop the War Coalition, run by the pseudo-left Counterfire group and the Communist Party of Britain, is that his alliance does not criticise Russia, only NATO.

As the International Committee of the Fourth International has explained, the character of the war cannot be determined by the fact that Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022. That decision was preceded by NATO's extension to Russia's borders and a long campaign to turn Ukraine into a frontline garrison state as part of Washington's drive to secure its global hegemony, centred on destroying China as an economic rival. This has been a strategic US goal since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and was the basis for backing the Maidan coup in 2014, the real beginnings of the war now being waged by Kiev with NATO's backing.

However, this neither excuses nor justifies Putin's nationalist response in invading Ukraine. Putin is a representative of the criminal capitalist oligarchy in Russia that emerged as a result of the Stalinist betrayal of the October 1917 socialist revolution, just as Zelensky represents its Ukrainian counterpart. Putin's invasion of Ukraine was a disastrously miscalculated attempt to pressure Washington to back down and to recognise the national interests of Russian capitalism.

To extend support for Putin's great Russian chauvinism is a political betrayal of the Russian, Ukrainian and international working class and a political gift to the apologists for NATO. A socialist opposition to NATO's war demands a struggle to unify the Russian and Ukrainian workers against both Putin and Zelensky.

Galloway's blind eye regarding the Putin regime is not simply a hangover from his Stalinist past. It is bound up with efforts to be recognised as the premier advocate of a reorientation by Britain towards China, which No2Nato advances as the cornerstone of a strategy for peace.

A new multi-polar world?

Platform speaker Craig Murray, a former British diplomat, was moved by the pro-Putin apologetics he had heard to oppose presentations of Russia as “the good guys” in the Ukraine war. This prompted a public criticism by Galloway who argued that in light of the “great changes that are taking place in the world, it is not necessary for Craig or for me or for you to like or dislike the leaders of these new rising economic powers.”

Galloway expounded, “The tectonic plates have very clearly shifted, and that domination of the Earth by the imperialist club now known as NATO is in front of our eyes coming to an end. A new multi-polar world is being born.

“This is visible not just on the battlefield... it’s being demonstrated on the economic battlefield, perhaps more significantly.”

The war in Ukraine, he maintained, “has accelerated perhaps by a decade, maybe two decades, the rise of a genuinely multi-polar world” involving Russia, India, Latin America and South Africa, but with the leading position economically and politically falling to China... The days when China could be ordered around by foreigners are over, over, over, over.... The sun is rising in the east. The economic power has moved to the east.”

The most extensive presentation of this scenario was laid out by the rapper Lowkey. He complained of the US “having consolidated its military supremacy in Europe,” declaring that the UK “is not a sovereign country” because there are “12,000 US troops in this country... Macron is right the United States is not an ally of European countries.”

The answer to US hegemony, with the European powers acting as loyal subjects, was to be found in the economic rise of China. The US and Europe were attempting to “resist the natural pendulum of history” and their inevitable eclipse. The period of British and then American imperialist hegemony was portrayed as an historical aberration.

“China was the largest still and is the largest still existing polity in the world. Over 2,000 years old and as a civilization it’s actually four thousand to five thousand years old. And there were four to five different periods of human history when China was the most advanced country in the world... Now we are on the precipice of the sixth time in human history where China will be the world’s most advanced country. This is a fact whether they like it or not.”

The conclusion drawn is that pressure must be placed on Britain’s government to avoid “pinning themselves to the United States and a projection of some sort of Anglo-Saxon power,” to not try and go “against the natural movement of history” and blow up the world in the process.

Lowkey’s speech was peppered with rhetorical questions such as “Can Britain adapt to a world where English may not be the lingua franca for business?” and “How can humility be something that becomes part of British diplomacy?”

The task of No2Nato, “as has been the job of anti-war movements in this city is to make sure that we hold them to account and restrict their logic. We limit the parameters of what they are able to do.”

Galloway calls for unity between “left” and “right”

Galloway’s nationalist and pro-capitalist agenda makes him a bitter opponent of the struggle to build an anti-war movement based on the working class and a socialist perspective. This he and other advocates of No2Nato denounce as sectarianism that alienates right-wing individuals and tendencies who would otherwise be won to an anti-war position.

No2Nato is advanced as the British arm of a new global anti-war

movement based on such an alliance between the “left” and right”, standing alongside the Rage Against the War Machine in the US and Sahra Wagenknecht’s Revolt for Peace. The leading force in the Rage Against the War Machine is the far-right Libertarian Party and it has been backed by representatives of the Trump wing of the Republican party and self-declared fascists. In Germany, Wagenknecht has significant support from the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and leading military figures.

Like them, Galloway declares that ending the war in Ukraine and preventing nuclear annihilation transcends all political divisions and even renders them outmoded. He used his chairing remarks to proclaim, “Unlike other organizations, there are no ideological blood tests here. We welcome everybody from left to right through the centre. Whether you opposed the last war or didn’t, whether you have served your time in one or other of the political streams. None of that matters.”

Nick Brana, a former adviser to Bernie Sanders and leader of the People’s Party in the US, was hailed as the personification of this perspective who had “received the entirely predictable vitriolic brick bats of the sectarians” as a result, but who was “surely the hope of the people of the United States, though that’s their business.”

Brana boasted that Rage Against the War Machine had built their rally by “removing all the other litmus tests and by saying that you don’t have to meet any other kind of ideological criteria.” In this spirit he described the Libertarian Party as his and Galloway’s “comrades”.

Galloway has been the most consistent advocate of the reactionary perspective of building movements encompassing the “left” and “right”, based on issues that supposedly transcend such obsolete political distinctions. Whereas he first emerged as an international political figure due to his opposition to the 2003 Iraq War, he has moved happily in right-wing circles for many years.

As a leader of the “Left Leave” campaign, made up of the Communist Party of Britain (CPB), Socialist Workers Party and Counterfire, he claimed that the UK exiting the European Union in the June 23, 2016 Brexit referendum was a progressive development because it restored sovereignty to the UK and would open the door to a left Labour government led by Jeremy Corbyn.

On February 19, 2016, he shared a platform with Nigel Farage of the of the anti-immigrant UK Independence Party, alongside representatives of the arch-Thatcherite wing of the Tory Party. His remarks centred on the claim that the “left” and “right” must unite to defend British sovereignty, including “the right to decide who can come and live and work in Britain, who we can deport from Britain, what level of deficit we can run in Britain, or what our foreign policy in Britain should be.”

For the UK to be able to trade freely “with the Commonwealth” and “with Brazil, with Russia, with India, with South Africa, with Iran where the sun is rising, not setting, and where most of the customers in the world actually live... Now that is internationalism.”

The Second World War was, he declared, “our finest hour. When we all went forward together—Mr. Churchill and Mr. Atlee and Mr. Bevan ... That’s what we are doing here tonight.” On Twitter, he added of Farage, “we are not pals. We are allies in one cause. Like Churchill and Stalin ...”

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) wrote that Galloway did not merely muddy the class lines—he obliterated them. “The first responsibility of a socialist is to oppose the mixing of class banners. In the referendum, this means rejecting all appeals for working people to fall in behind one or another faction of the bourgeoisie who are fighting between themselves solely over which strategy best upholds the interests of British imperialism.

“To do otherwise and to in any way endorse the nationalist and pro-capitalist agendas espoused by both the ‘remain’ and ‘leave’ campaigns sows dangerous political confusion, weakening the political defences of the working class at a time when the noxious fumes of nationalism, anti-migrant xenophobia and militarism are polluting the UK, Europe and the

entire world.”

The SEP’s 2016 referendum statement drew attention to the most notorious of the type of “left-right” alliances advocated by Galloway—the support extended by the Stalinised Communist Party (KPD) to the 1931 referendum initiated by Hitler’s Nazi Party. Citing a common goal with the Nazis of using the “red referendum” to remove the Social Democrats from power in Prussia, the KPD asserted this would be a step towards a “people’s revolution.”

Trotsky’s critique of the KPD serves as a devastating indictment of the role played by Galloway and the pseudo-left advocates of “Lexit” in the Brexit referendum. He explained that the “red referendum” offered no means of distinguishing the opposition of revolutionary-minded workers to the Social Democrats for their role in defending German imperialism, from the counter-revolutionary nationalist agenda of the fascists. The KPD ceded the political initiative to the Nazis, just as Galloway et al. ceded leadership to UKIP and the Tory right’s nationalist and pro-capitalist opposition to the EU.

In May 2019, in Almaty, Kazakhstan, Galloway internationalised his “left-right” agenda, sharing a platform with Trump’s fascist advisor Steve Bannon at the Eurasia Media Forum. Bannon declared that right-wing nationalist forces were on the march across Europe because, “People understand that the highest amount of control they can have is at the national level, not in some amorphous transnational level. You see a rise in nationalism and that is positive... Brexit and [Trump’s victory] are inextricably linked... It’s a revolt by working-class people, particularly in formerly heavily manufacturing countries that live in a new serfdom... That day is over.”

Galloway praised Bannon for his insights, replying, “I am a working-class man from the same ethno-religious background as Steve Bannon, though we have many other differences. But our people of whatever colour, wherever they came from, however they pray, are asserting themselves. And the elites’ day is done... It’s about democracy, not nationalism. Steve Bannon is right. The only way that you have any chance of controlling the elites and monopolies and the exploiters is on a nation state level.”

Opposed perspectives: socialist revolution or capitalism forever

To advance a campaign in alliance with the far-right to pressure British and US imperialism to “go gentle into that good night” as a means of opposing war is politically grotesque. It articulates the position of a layer of the petty-bourgeoisie frightened by the threat of war, but hostile to a struggle against that threat by the working class and possessed of a truly boundless belief in the long-term viability of the capitalist system.

In January 2006, an international editorial board meeting of the *World Socialist Web Site* was held in Sydney, Australia at which its chairman David North delivered the opening report.

North insisted that the formulation of a revolutionary perspective of struggle for the working class “must proceed from a precise and accurate understanding of the historical development of the world capitalist system.

“The analysis of the historical development of capitalism must answer the following essential question: Is capitalism as a world economic system moving along an upward trajectory and still approaching its apogee, or is it in decline and even plunging toward an abyss?”

He then outlined two irreconcilably opposed conceptions.

“The Marxist position is, as we know, that the world capitalist system is at an advanced stage of crisis—indeed, that the outbreak

of the world war in 1914, followed by the Russian Revolution in 1917, represented a fundamental turning point in world history. The convulsive events of the more than three decades between the outbreak of the first world war and the conclusion of the second world war in 1945 demonstrated that capitalism had outlived its progressive historical mission, and that the objective prerequisites for the socialist transformation of world economy had emerged. That capitalism survived the crisis of those decades was, to a very great extent, the product of the failure and betrayals of the leaderships of the mass parties and organizations of the working class, above all the Social-Democratic and Communist parties and trade unions. Without their betrayals, the restabilization of world capitalism after World War II—drawing on the still substantial resources of the United States—would not have been possible. Indeed, despite the post-war stabilization, the global opposition of the working class and oppressed masses in the old colonial regions to capitalism and imperialism persisted; but its revolutionary potential was suppressed by the old bureaucratic organizations.

“Finally, the betrayal and defeats of the mass struggles of the 1960s and 1970s cleared the way for a capitalist counter-offensive. The economic processes and technological changes that made possible the unprecedented global integration of the capitalist system shattered the old working class organizations, based on national perspectives and policies. The collapse of the Stalinist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe—based on the bankrupt anti-Marxist program of a nationalistic pseudo-socialism—was the outcome of this process.

“Despite the rapid territorial expansion of capitalism in the 1990s, the historical crisis persisted and deepened. The processes of globalization that had proved fatal to the old labor movements raised to an unprecedented level of tension the contradiction between the globally integrated character of capitalism as a world economic system and the nation-state structure within which capitalism is historically rooted and from which it cannot escape. The essentially insoluble character of this contradiction—or, at least, its ‘insolubility’ on any progressive basis—finds daily expression in the mounting disorder and violence that characterizes the present world situation. A new period of revolutionary upheaval has begun. That, very briefly, is the Marxist analysis.”

He then laid out a “counter-hypothesis” that defines the politics of the pseudo-left, Stalinist and semi-anarchist milieu.

“What the Marxists, to use Leon Trotsky’s florid phrase, termed the ‘death agony of capitalism’ was, rather, its violent and protracted birth pangs. The various socialist and revolutionary experiments of the twentieth century were not merely premature, but essentially utopian. The history of the twentieth century should be read as the story of capitalism overcoming all obstacles to the inexorable triumph of the market as the supreme system of economic organization. The fall of the Soviet Union and the turn of China to market economics represented the culmination of this process. This decade and, in all likelihood, the decade that follows will continue to witness the rapid expansion of capitalism throughout Asia. The most significant element of this process will be the emergence of China and India as mature and stable world capitalist powers.”

North posed the question:

“Is it reasonable, in light of all previous historical experience, to imagine a set of conditions that would allow the world capitalist system to resolve, or at least contain, the many potentially explosive problems already visible on the economic and political horizon before they threaten the very existence of the existing world order?

“Do we consider it likely that geopolitical and economic conflicts between the major world powers, within the framework of the imperialist system, will be resolved on the basis of negotiation and multi-lateral agreements before these disputes reach, and even pass beyond, the point at which they profoundly destabilize international politics?

“Is it probable that disputes over access to and control of raw materials critical for economic development—especially, but not limited to, oil and natural gas—can be settled without violent conflict?...

“Will the United States be prepared to retreat from its hegemonic aspirations and accept a more egalitarian distribution of global power among states? Will it be prepared to yield ground, on the basis of compromise and concessions, to economic and potential military competitors, whether in Europe or in Asia?

“Will the United States graciously and peacefully accommodate the rising influence of China?

“On the social front, will the staggering rise in social inequality throughout North America, Europe and Asia continue without generating significant and even violent levels of social conflict? Does the political and social history of the United States support the view that the American working class will accept for years and decades to come, without substantial and bitter protest, a continuing downward spiral of its living standards?”

North concluded by warning, “Those who would answer all the above questions in the affirmative are placing heavy bets against the lessons of history.”

The years since that report was delivered have confirmed that no such peaceful resolution of the crisis of world imperialism is possible. Rather than cede the world stage to China, US imperialism is driving headlong towards a direct war with Moscow and Beijing that threatens the survival of humanity.

But those same years have also confirmed that the working class all over the world is not prepared to accept the staggering rise of inequality and is moving into a new era of mass struggle.

These are the political and social realities determining the character of the anti-war movement that must be built. Not the development of a multi-polar capitalist world, but the emergence of a global crisis of imperialism in which only the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism can prevent a descent into the abyss. It is the task of a genuinely anti-war movement to turn to the working class, to intervene in all its struggles, and to unify workers and young people in every country against the capitalist class, all its governments and the state apparatus, and for socialism.



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