

Vietnam: A Victory Against Imperialism – Lessons for Ukraine Solidarity

Fifty years on from the historic victory of the Vietnamese people against imperialist intervention, it is vital for socialists in Scotland and across the world to reflect on the lessons of that struggle, particularly in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine. The unwavering resistance of the Vietnamese people, in the face of immense military power, offers profound insights for those in solidarity with Ukraine's fight against Russian aggression.

One of the most striking parallels is the incredible resilience of a people fighting for their national liberation. Just as the Vietnamese people demonstrated an unyielding determination to defend their sovereignty against a powerful aggressor, so too have the people of Ukraine mounted a significant and inspiring resistance to the Russian invasion. This popular will to resist is a crucial element in the struggle for self-determination and should serve as a powerful reminder that the resolve of a determined nation can thwart imperial ambitions. The people of Ukraine are "fighting for national liberation, independence, and democracy".

The Vietnam War also starkly illustrated the inherent limitations of even the most formidable imperial power. Despite the vast resources and military might of the United States, they were ultimately forced into a humiliating retreat. This historical precedent suggests that Russia's imperialist venture in Ukraine, despite its initial military advantages, may also ultimately fail in the face of sustained Ukrainian resistance and international pressure. The struggle in Vietnam serves as a powerful reminder that military might alone cannot overcome the determination of a people fighting

for their freedom, a lesson that offers both hope and strategic insight for the Ukraine solidarity movement.

Furthermore, the victory in Vietnam was significantly aided by a powerful international solidarity movement. Mass mobilisations, protests, and various forms of support across the globe played a vital role in raising awareness, challenging dominant narratives, and providing crucial moral and political support to the Vietnamese resistance. This resonates directly with the urgent need for sustained and broad international solidarity with Ukraine today. The anti-Vietnam War movement, like the current efforts to support Ukraine, involved learning and action. The Ukraine solidarity movement can draw inspiration from this history, understanding that providing political, material, and moral support to the Ukrainian people, including refugees and anti-war activists, is indispensable. The Fourth International's recent world congress of socialist organizations highlighted the importance of solidarity and building mass anti-racist movements and organisations for practical solidarity.

The struggle against the Vietnam War also necessitated a coordinated worldwide counter-strategy from progressive and anti-imperialist forces. Similarly, in the context of Ukraine, there is a pressing need to foster coordination among different progressive forces globally to effectively challenge imperialism in all its forms. This means building bridges between struggles, from Ukraine to Palestine and beyond, based on the principle of "solidarity without exception".

Moreover, the Vietnam War era witnessed the growth and radicalisation of left-wing movements internationally. The current war in Ukraine is similarly prompting significant debate and realignment within the left. The Ukraine solidarity movement can serve as a crucial space for learning and clarifying anti-imperialist principles in today's context. This includes addressing complex issues such as "campism" – the problematic tendency to uncritically support states

opposing Western imperialism, even if they are authoritarian – and pacifism, while striving to foster a more robust and principled internationalist left.

While there was widespread support for Vietnamese national liberation, views on the Vietnamese Communist Party were not always uniform. However, unity in action against US intervention and in support of Vietnamese self-determination remained paramount. This offers a vital lesson for the Ukraine solidarity movement, where diverse political perspectives exist regarding the Ukrainian government and the role of external powers like NATO. The central focus must remain on the fundamental principle of Ukraine's right to self-determination and resistance against imperial aggression. Solidarity should be with the Ukrainian people's resistance from below, including trade unionists, feminists, and social and democratic activists, while maintaining political independence and critically assessing the actions of all involved parties.

Ultimately, the struggle in Vietnam underscored that solidarity is an active commitment to stand alongside those fighting for their liberation. This principle must be at the heart of the Ukraine solidarity movement. Scottish socialists should actively seek ways to support the Ukrainian resistance, not just through symbolic actions but through practical solidarity, such as supporting the Ukrainian left (like [Sotsialnyi Rukh](#)), providing humanitarian aid, and advocating for Ukraine's right to defend itself by whatever means necessary. This also includes building direct links with workers' movements in Ukraine and amplifying the voices of Ukrainian socialists.

By drawing on the historical lessons of Vietnam's victory against imperialism, the solidarity movement in Scotland can strengthen its support for Ukraine's struggle for national liberation, contributing to a just and lasting peace based on the principles of self-determination and internationalism. It

is crucial to learn from the past to effectively confront the imperialist aggressions of the present.

Duncan Chapel

Progressing by Grassroot Networks – An Interview with Catherine Samary

Before we turn to the discussion of the war in Ukraine and prospects for left internationalism, let's talk about the recent developments in your home country. How do you analyse the current political situation in France and the role that left-wing politics might play in it?

– Michel Barnier's new government combines two core elements: racism and attacks on social rights. The latter is evident in the ongoing parliamentary debates over the 2025 budget and social security funding. Marine Le Pen's National Rally (Rassemblement National) has played a key role in these discussions, not least due to the fact that no single party has managed to achieve a stable majority in the French parliament. Even though the result of the New Popular Front (Nouveau Front Populaire) in the recent legislative election, which followed the dissolution of the Assembly last June, was unexpectedly high – and most welcome – it is still only a minor and relative victory.

This situation is unlikely to change unless the various forces within the New Popular Front come together, consolidate their victory, and start a large-scale mobilization. This could be achieved through the creation of local political alliances

across the entire country that would be focused on concrete struggles. We should not forget that mass mobilizations against attacks on the social system are still possible – and so is the collapse of the government itself.

Against all evidence, the government wants people to believe that it has not introduced an “austerity budget” plan, but rather “a budget [plan] to avoid austerity” – at least, this is what the Minister of Finance Antoine Armand [declared](#) on the 21st of October. National Assembly deputies have proposed over 3,500 amendments to this plan! And yet, disagreements between different political alliances in the parliament are obvious. At the moment, no single one of them has a stable majority – these political struggles are indicative of what awaits us during the 2027 presidential election. In the current situation, there is a strong chance that the government will once again resort to Article 49.3 of the Constitution to pass the budget without a parliamentary vote. Previously, this procedure enabled the French government under Élisabeth Borne to push through the pension reform bill. However, the decision to use it now would pose a risk of early collapse for the government both due to internal divisions among the ruling classes and the general unpopularity of these measures.

And what better way is there to “divide and rule” than by designating a scapegoat – immigrants? Valérie Pécresse, who has held numerous high-level positions for different right-wing political organizations, has become an emblem of the vile demagoguery that drives much of today’s right-wing factions. On the 14th of October, she had the audacity to declare: “How do you plan to explain to the French that you are going to ask for more sacrifices from them, to pay more taxes, to benefit from fewer and fewer public services, while allowing immigration-related expenses to keep rising?” She added: “When we are too generous, we end up attracting people we do not want to welcome.” Minister of the Interior Bruno Retailleau [shares](#) the same philosophy – his immigration bill

is directly inspired by the National Rally's ideas. It is the duty of the left today to take a strong stance on this front as well and to stand firmly against all forms of racism.

– During the elections this year some of the international issues – in particular, those related to the wars in Ukraine and Palestine – were included in the programmes of all political parties. Would you say that international issues are politically divisive in France? Are they an important electoral factor in national political life?

– I would answer “yes” to the first question, but for the second question I am inclined to say “no.” Political divisions on international issues have never played a central role in the electoral campaign or had any impact on its outcome. As I mentioned earlier, domestic issues have overwhelmingly dominated the political scene, especially in the wake of the crisis triggered by Emmanuel Macron's decision to call early elections. His choice to appoint Michel Barnier as Prime Minister in September – instead of [Lucie Castets](#), the candidate proposed by the New Popular Front, which came first in the legislative elections – highlighted the focus on domestic issues even more prominently. Macron's choice had little to do with international matters: it was strictly about pushing forward his social agenda.

It is also worth noting that parliamentary decisions about the sums allocated to Ukraine were made back in March and did not generate much controversy during the elections. That being said, a lot of things regarding France's foreign policy are up for debate. The country's contributions to European and global aid packages to Ukraine are minimal. The current military budget is more allocated towards nuclear programs, furthering neocolonial interests in Africa (the “Françafrique” policy), and military support for Israel, rather than towards Ukraine. [\[1\]](#) The lack of real debate on these issues does not imply that they are of secondary importance; rather, it reflects the poor state of parliamentary “democracy” and the

limited transparency around France's foreign policy.

– And internally, within political organizations?

– I am not the best person to give a detailed answer here, as I don't closely follow the inner workings of every party across the spectrum. However, what I can say at the very least is that their "political life" lacks democratic transparency. Most of the time, the only thing we see are public "positions" taken by party leaders – and these sometimes shift in noticeable, even awkward ways.

This happened with the right-wing approach to the war in Ukraine. After the invasion, which was widely recognized as an act of aggression, Marine Le Pen, as a representative of the National Rally, had to readjust her public position to distance herself from Vladimir Putin. Macron had to do the same, although this shift did not result from internal debates among his supporters or within his party Renaissance (RE). The same goes for his recent, cautious criticism of Israel's politics in Gaza and his call to recognize the rights of the Palestinians. Yet, overall, there is a consensus among the right on demonizing so-called "Islamism" as a tactic to discredit any form of support for Palestine.

As for the left-wing parties – from the communists and socialists to La France Insoumise (FI) – there are, of course, political disagreements on various international issues, including ongoing military conflicts, both between the parties and within them. Some people on the radical left, in France and abroad, frame the Russo-Ukrainian war as a clash between NATO (the United States, essentially) and Russia – thus overlooking Ukraine itself. They see it through the "main enemy" lens and reduce the equation to a single "imperialist enemy" – in particular, the United States and NATO. As Gilbert Achcar puts it, this view might eventually come down to the following conclusion: "The enemy of my (main) enemy is my friend." This explains Jean-Luc Mélenchon's (leader of La

France Insoumise) once somewhat sympathetic stance toward Putin compared, for instance, to Raphaël Glucksmann's active campaign against Kremlin's politics in his role as a socialist deputy in the European Parliament.

Given this range of political sentiments and positions within the parties composing the New Popular Front, it was reassuring to see straightforward, positive statements on foreign policy in their last program. They have taken a firm stance on "promoting peace in Ukraine," specifically by "unwaveringly defending Ukraine's sovereignty" through arms deliveries and asset seizures from Russian oligarchs. As far as Gaza is concerned, the New Popular Front has called for "an immediate ceasefire" and a "just and lasting peace," condemning the "complicit support" of the French government for Benjamin Netanyahu's policies. The program demands effective sanctions against Israel, along with official recognition of the state of Palestine in line with the United Nations resolutions. However, while these positions are important and encouraging, we have not seen much of a real political "battle" in the parliament or during the elections to make these statements more concrete.

– What do you think about the political situation in France in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022? What discussions took place within your organization, the New Anticapitalist Party?

– The invasion was certainly a major political shock that raised serious questions across all political organizations. As the war continued, these questions have only deepened, and no clear consensus has emerged. Many pre-war conceptions continue to be actively debated – though, unfortunately, many of these views have not been updated. Even the basic condemnation of the Russian aggression has not led to the development of a unified position and approach across the political spectrum, especially regarding NATO or the European Union's planned expansions to Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and

the Western Balkans.

Before the invasion, Macron (much like Putin!) had considered NATO a “brain-dead” organization. His conclusion was based on NATO’s withdrawal from Afghanistan as well as internal disagreements among member countries regarding Russia and its energy resources. Ironically, the war has led to NATO’s expansion, harsher sanctions against Russia, and the legitimization of increased military budgets. At the same time, support for Ukraine has been hypocritically instrumentalized. As I said, a large share of the military budget in France (and in the United States, for that matter) is not actually directed toward Ukraine. There is also significant uncertainty around the United States’ concrete international commitments, which Macron sees as an opportunity to promote France’s arms industry in Europe and beyond. However, all this is not up for debate among the right.

On the left, including the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA), there has been limited debate around what Achcar calls the “New Cold War,” even though it is a necessary discussion. The prevailing logic within the NPA has been the following: even without a clear understanding of the rapidly changing world around us, without understanding the connections between various crises, and lacking viable socialist, anti-capitalist alternatives at national, European, and global levels, we can still fight for grassroots internationalism grounded in the defense of universal equal rights. Echoing our comrades from Sotsialnyi Rukh (Social Movement) in Ukraine, we declared: “From Ukraine to Palestine, occupation is a crime!” We viewed and condemned the war in Ukraine as an aggression by Putin’s Russia against Ukraine’s very right to exist. We stand with our comrades from political organizations and labor unions in Russia and Ukraine, while maintaining independence from “our national governments” and disapproving of their neoliberal practices. We oppose Russian imperialism, shaped – among other things – by czarist and Stalinist legacies, while affirming

our stance against “all imperialisms.” We have also called for Ukraine’s debt to be canceled and, alongside our Ukrainian comrades, we have condemned any attempt by Western powers or the Zelensky government to exploit Ukrainian resistance against the Russian aggression as a pretext for imposing anti-social policies.

Practically, the NPA has supported Ukraine’s resistance, both armed and unarmed. We have recognized its legitimate right to request weapons (from those who manufacture them) for self-defense. Since March 2022, we have been involved in the European Network in Solidarity with Ukraine and Against the War (ENSU), where we remain active both at the European level and through its French branch, working alongside progressive Ukrainian groups.

This does not mean there has been no debate or disagreement. While all of us agree on Ukraine’s right to request weapons for self-defense, several questions and dissensions emerged immediately: Is it politically justifiable for an anti-capitalist organization like ours to request arms from “our own bourgeoisie” and for a bourgeois government? Is it practically possible to call for military aid while also opposing militarism and military alliances like NATO?

Personally, I answered “yes” to both questions, as did the majority of the NPA members. Alongside other comrades, I represent the NPA within ENSU and work directly with leftist, feminist, and student groups in Ukraine engaged in multiple struggles. But this activism requires us to differentiate our position from both “militarist” attitudes and “abstract pacifism.” This is achievable by “politicizing” the arms debate, which entails nationalizing the arms industry so that military budgets and the use of weapons become an object of political debate.

To summarize: “yes” to arms delivery to Ukraine in solidarity; “no” to sales to dictatorships and oppressive regimes like

Israel! ENSU recently discussed and adopted a statement on this issue, which will soon be available on its website.

– And what about Emmanuel Macron’s statements regarding the potential deployment of French troops in Ukraine?

– Macron himself admitted there was “no consensus” – and that is an understatement – on this idea. His suggestion was met with criticism, with many seeing it as dangerously escalatory, if not reckless. Still, Macron maintained that “in the face of a regime that excludes nothing, we must exclude nothing ourselves.” However, critics pointed out the discrepancy between Macron’s “commitment” to helping Ukraine and the limited aid that France has actually provided so far. They also highlighted the difference between “deploying troops,” which implies co-belligerency, and sending military personnel and technicians for support tasks, like managing foreign-supplied military equipment. Macron’s other semantic improvisations were heavily criticized as well, for example his statement that France and the European Union were entering a “war economy.” This notion doesn’t match reality, as current production systems haven’t undergone any such transformation.

As I mentioned earlier, another crucial issue is the need to politicize and increase transparency around military budgets. This requires analyzing what the military industry is really producing and sending to Ukraine, alongside the financial and material aid needed to support Ukraine’s actual “war economy.” If Ukraine’s economy remains state-run and dependent on Western aid tied to neoliberal conditions, it is bound to fail. This is why I support the “internal” strategy of the Ukrainian leftist organization Sotsialnyi Rukh, which criticizes the current trajectory of Zelensky’s government and instead prioritizes the popular and democratic resources of independent Ukraine itself.

– How have people reacted to Vladimir Putin’s repeated nuclear threats?

– Reactions have been mixed and have changed over time. Putin clearly knows that he is spreading fear this is exactly what he wants – and we cannot exclude the risk of a catastrophe. However, it is hard to imagine what “effective” use of nuclear weapons could look like from Putin’s perspective. So far, each of his “red lines” has shifted back in response to the Ukrainian military operations, including those on Russian territories, without triggering the nuclear retaliation he promised. Another reassuring factor has been China’s explicit veto against any use of nuclear weapons by its Russian ally.

Still, some “pacifists” continue to instrumentalize the fear of nuclear escalation as an argument against sending more weapons to Ukraine to avoid further “provoking” Putin!

– Are there ongoing discussions and debates in activist circles about France’s nuclear deterrent and its possible strategic uses?

– No, these debates are not – yet – taking place among activists, who are not necessarily in a position to have such discussions. There is justified political distrust toward our government, especially given France’s post- and neo-colonial history. Both this distrust and our necessary independence from the government make it hard to imagine how a radical, anti-capitalist organization like ours would ask Macron to use “his bomb” in the name of vaguely defined common interests. Journalists have questioned Macron about the French nuclear deterrent in a context of growing uncertainties surrounding the United States’ commitments: while he has not “ruled out” a form of European “mutualization” of France’s nuclear arsenal, he has insisted that command would remain under French control.

However, current discussions about “security” should extend far beyond nuclear deterrence. For instance: How should the military and police forces evolve? How can we exercise civilian, democratic control over their actions? The growing

influence of far-right ideas within the French police force is particularly alarming. Likewise, the European left urgently needs to consider what a progressive, “alter-globalist” approach to “European defense” might look like. The ongoing crisis in global and European social forums has caused significant delay in this area, but there are efforts underway to revive a “European alternative public sphere.” This movement is essential, and we must support it to address these multidimensional “security” issues. I am a participant of a newly formed working group in France comprising left-wing “alter-globalist” activists working on these questions and committed to defending equal social and political rights – both individual, collective, and across national borders.

– Security issues do not solely concern international relations: the ultra-right, for instance, resort to threats, “attacks on the Arabs,” and even murders. What options does the left have to counter the rise of the far-right, which is one of this decade’s most serious challenges?

– Here too, it is crucial to examine how such factors as state structures of “legal violence,” the justice system, and the rise of fascist private militias interact in each country. Much depends on who is in power and the nature of current social struggles. Historically – and likely in the future – the key factor has been the ability of mass organizations, involving both men and women, to self-organize and unite in self-defense while conducting information and denunciation campaigns in the media. This topic is a central point of discussion within the “European alternative political space” that is currently being (re)built.

– What does it mean for the contemporary left to engage in international politics?

– Environmental threats are just as serious as attacks on social rights, with the poor being the most affected. The “contemporary left” is diverse and currently grappling with

issues that weaken its capacity to respond to urgent problems. These issues stem from a series of crises: the crisis of countries that once pursued a socialist project – if not a reality – and those who identified with it, be that in Europe, China, or Cuba; the crisis of social-democratic movements, which have largely given up on transforming capitalist societies; and the crisis within the radical left, which often struggles, for diverse reasons, to offer viable alternatives to the system it criticizes and sometimes indulges in dogmatic, sectarian “vanguard” positions.

These widespread crises have also impacted the global and continental social forums working to invent new transnational modes of operation and action in a rapidly changing world-system. All these difficulties have led to significant political concessions and, at times, acceptance of a “lesser evil” logic. However, valuable assets persist across all the leftist currents I mentioned and beyond. From the radical left to the new social, feminist, eco-socialist, and antiracist movements, there is a wealth of accumulated experience and past struggles. While criticizing “vanguardism” is important when it attempts to substitute itself for social movements, it is equally important to reinforce pluralistic, democratic, international cooperation among anti-capitalist groups. These connections are currently limited, but they are vital for achieving a broad, pluralistic understanding of past challenges and mistakes we made.

It is crucial to progress forward by building strong grassroots international networks that focus on concrete issues. The European Network in Solidarity with Ukraine and the [BDS \(Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions\)](#) campaign in support of the Palestinian cause demonstrate that this is possible. Likewise, we need campaigns that address feminist, anti-racist, social justice, and environmental issues, which are essential to reestablishing a multi-issue, alternative space for rethinking globalization. This vision is taking shape in Europe, and

while there is no magic solution, it is clear that failing to move in this direction will only leave us vulnerable to the rising threat of the far-right.

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Source: [*Posle Media*](#).

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