

Goodbye, “Russian Romance!”: an Interview with Kavita Krishnan

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Kavita Krishnan, Indian feminist activist, Marxist and editor, explains why international emancipatory movements should stand with Ukraine, why supporting Putin benefits the global far right, and how to challenge the geopolitical approach to the leftist politics

You stepped down from the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation (CPIML) because of its stance on the war in Ukraine. What are the differences in your perceptions? Why did it happen at this precise moment, not earlier?

I had been uneasy with the CPIML’s position on various international conflicts for years. I realized that what we wrote about the war in Syria was focused on the possibility of US intervention. There was very little acknowledgement of repressions conducted by the Assad government and, later, the military intervention of Russia, its actual scale and impact. I have to confess I came to this realization gradually, because initially, I was sharing this attitude. When you read leftist websites worldwide and articles by people you have always respected, you think they must have done their homework. It took me some time to realize that something was wrong with the picture. I have to thank people from Syria in the UK, who found a way to put their positions out on the internet and say that coalitions like “Stop the war” are simply not allowing Syrian antiwar voices onto their platforms. That was a turning point, and since then, I have been extra alert in this kind of matter.

Before the war in Ukraine, I had already been reading some books on the history of Ukraine. Of course, I should have started much earlier. I read about the period under Stalin’s rule and what it meant for different nationalities, especially peasants, since the national question was particularly acute in the agrarian regions. When the war in Ukraine was about to start, the CPIML brought out a statement, which I helped to edit. I said that we needed to clearly state that the Russian troops should return to the [pre-war] border, and my comrades agreed. However, during informal conversations, they admitted they believed that this situation was just American war-mongering, and that Russia was not going to invade Ukraine. I remember saying it had already invaded Ukraine in 2014, “what makes you think it won’t do it now, as Putin keeps denying Ukraine’s right to exist?” The answer was that it was just rhetoric, and the real problem was that NATO surrounds Russia, and Putin had to use this kind of rhetorical escalation because he was worried Ukraine might join NATO. The following day Russia invaded Ukraine. I immediately called my comrades, and we brought out another statement, on one hand condemning the invasion and Putin’s assertion that Lenin created Ukraine, and on the other hand explaining the role of NATO.

“This war is a question of life and death for Ukraine, and if it stops fighting, it will cease to exist as a country and as people”

I also suggested a protest against the invasion of Ukraine, and the party organized protests in different parts of India. We were the only ones to do that. The slogans condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as well as the USA’s, and NATO’s involvement. Still, I thought the situation was

salvageable, because people needed more time to learn the facts they might have missed. The thing that gave me hope was that the CPIML's position had always been different from the Communist Party (CPI) and Communist Party (Marxist) (CPIM). These are two major left parties that have been a part of the central government and currently hold power in Kerala. Their position is openly pro-Russian, and they don't even use the word "invasion". They don't even say that this is a conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and Ukraine is barely even mentioned. They view this conflict as if it is between Russia and NATO. For a long time, they have seen Russia and China as challengers of US hegemony, so they have sided with them. The CPIML is different, so I thought this was a matter of knowing more.

However, then I realized that there was tremendous resistance to the facts. For instance, this year there was an editorial in our weekly magazine that I strenuously objected to. According to it, Putin invaded Ukrainian territories after an elected president was "toppled", a word that reminded me of a US-backed coup. There is no way we would say something like that about what happened in Sri Lanka recently. That was a people's uprising against a corrupt president. The editorial also said in 2014 there was a disproportionate presence of nazis in the Maidan movement. Of course, every European country has the far right, fair enough. However, saying Maidan was fascist is false, because it started with [a Muslim journalist of Afghan origin](#), who posted a call to come out to the streets on Facebook, and he did that in Russian. And then I met with the seniors of the party, and they told me there was no way to know the facts about 2014: "All the websites we trust say this." I suggested we should read Ukrainian accounts, and if you don't trust just any of them, read what Ukrainian leftists have to say. I kept trying to send them what Ukrainian leftists wrote, for example, the open letters to Chomsky explaining what he got wrong. For six months, I was struggling.

So it means that the party was not responsive to your concerns?

Because of my intervention, the CPIML adjusted its position. I wrote an article about Putin's fascist project represented by [Aleksandr] Dugin, and how the invasion of Ukraine fits into it. The article was published in *Liberation* (CPIML's magazine), but it wasn't endorsed as the party's position. Several seniors admitted that Putin and Dugin are fascists. CPIML's position now is that "we don't blame NATO for the invasion, and we hope that Ukraine will succeed in defending its sovereignty". But they still insisted that the party could not support Ukraine like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Vietnam, because the balance of power is entirely different, and Ukraine has all the Western countries on its side. They wanted to remind people that the USA was benefiting the most from this war, while Ukraine and Russia were bleeding. To this, I said: "Of course, Russian soldiers are bleeding, and the country is suffering, but that is because the Russian regime is invading, and it can stop bleeding at any moment." One can not equate Russia and Ukraine. This war is a question of life and death for Ukraine, and if it stops fighting, it will cease to exist as a country and as people. It will be genocide. How can one imply that Ukrainians don't have a right to take arms from NATO and the USA? They have a right to demand arms. There was also this thought that there was so much sympathy for Ukraine [but not Iraq or Syria] due to racism. Well, yes, and we should have said that Syrian people also deserved the arms, and supported them. Moreover, Ukrainians still face racism in Europe despite being white.

"The colonial character of Russia's relationship with Ukraine and Stalin's remarkable contribution to industrialization could not have happened without the expropriation of grain and other resources from Ukraine and other colonies"

There was also little analysis of Putin's speeches and what he meant by this invasion. The part about Lenin, the party was happy to analyze, but not other significant parts. Every line is worth examining, to understand his vision of the world and what he says to like-minded leaders and regimes worldwide.

The party also felt very uneasy about me referencing Stalin, genocide, Holodomor, and mass killings. They say they are a party critical of Stalin, but they agree that 70% of his doings were good. Even if one could say that 30 years ago, it is no longer acceptable, because there is an immense amount of archival material and studies. I explained the colonial character of Russia's relationship with Ukraine and Stalin's remarkable contribution to industrialization could not have happened without the expropriation of grain and other resources from Ukraine and other colonies. They were not ready to accept that, and promised to look into it at some point, but claimed that there is a national priority to fight Modi's regime. "Why are you obsessed with Ukraine and Stalin? You are losing focus on the present moment." I disagreed. I am concerned about fighting fascism. Still, I feel that while they see that Modi is close to Trump, they don't see the relationship between Trump and Putin, which is a material relationship, not only ideological.

I said that we need to dig deeper into the shadowy relationships the fascists have. Russia is developing relations with China and Israel, while India is also getting closer with the Chinese. Officially there is a conflict between Modi's party and China; there is a lot of anti-Chinese rhetoric. The USA indeed hopes to use India to contain China. The CPIML criticizes China in a very fraternal way as if it is a socialist regime gone off its track. The regime, however, is not concerned with any communist positions; it is authoritarian. In that sense, Modi has taken a lot of cues from China, Xi Jinping's regime in particular, and reproduced many similar practices in India, including surveillance technology deployed against Muslim minorities. My comrades didn't understand that point, saying I was just dragging everything into the argument. They forbid me to write anything on these issues publicly. This is how it came to the breaking point.

Even though the CPIML supported Ukraine in their statement, they undermined their stand by adopting the arguments used by Putin's propaganda. They also keep calling for negotiations to end this war: if more autonomy is given to the Russian-speaking regions, Putin will back off. However, Putin has declared those regions are now a part of Russia. How can one just accept that? The fascist can do whatever he pleases, and everyone is OK with it? What kind of negotiations are these? I don't remember any negotiations with George Bush when he invaded Iraq and Afghanistan. When the USA invades another country, we go into every element of their propaganda exposing racist and islamophobic dog-whistles. In 2003, I was an editor of the Liberation magazine, and there was no problem with this national priority back then. Now Putin is threatening Ukraine with a nuclear attack, killing civilians, and somehow we are all silent about this and his ideology's danger. He cites actual fascist authors like Ivan Ilyin. This bothered me a lot; it is unacceptable.

You said that supporting Putin plays in the hands of Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Why is it so?

While fighting Modi's regime, if we don't get the international relations right, if we keep acting as if the world is the same as it was 20 years ago, we will make a big mistake affecting national struggles. It's clear that Modi cultivates relationships with the USA and vice versa. There are all kinds of dubious interests involved here, those of American imperialism, those of Modi's supremacy. The better sections of the Indian left who are not Putin's fans, like the CPIML, think that Modi cultivates relationships with Russia and China just to have more bargaining power with the USA. However, they ignore facts like Putin's recent speech about annexing Ukraine's territories. He sees multipolarity as a way to strengthen his sovereignty against the USA's unipolarity and imperialism. At the same time, he said that inside Europe and the USA, many like-minded people are fighting in an anti-colonial movement against unipolar hegemony. You must look at this carefully and read between the lines.

"Now Putin is threatening Ukraine with a nuclear attack, killing civilians, and somehow we are all silent about this and his ideology's danger"

Putin says that in countries where multiculturalism is taken for granted, people are fighting for a white supremacist version of these countries. One has to make the connection between his words and the words of Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen... When he talks about multipolarity, he says that most countries want to be free from Western human rights standards. Suppose you say one can't invade a country, massacre civilians, or put minorities into concentration camps (like in China). In that case [according to Putin's argument], you impose a Western hegemonic worldview on most countries. In a [joint statement](#) of February 4, Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin said there is no "one size fits all" template in establishing democracy, and each country is free to interpret democracy in its terms. Democracy and human rights are not universal values, so they assert their right to interpret them through the prism of their countries' histories. So as long as you claim that you have popular support, whatever you do should be considered democratic, and there is no need to adhere to international standards.

We can compare these statements to those of Modi's government, for example, Amit Shah's [Minister of Home Affairs, former President of BJP], who is Modi's right hand and was accused of custodial killings and other things. He says that Western standards do not apply to India; human rights must have an Indian outlook. So they share this idea that the countries that are historical civilizational empires need reordering of the world so that they can have control and rule the way they like. When one talks against human rights violations in India, custodian violence, and the maltreatment of national minorities in Kashmir or the North East, it is immediately said that this person is an agent of the West. This is why human rights defenders have been arrested in India under antiterrorism laws and imprisoned indefinitely.

There is also an ideological relationship between Dugin and Indian fascists. Dugin has visited India many times. Dugin's publisher Arktos Media has also published Sri Dharma Pravartaka Acharya, who claims to be a Hindu godman. That guy writes that Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), to which the prime minister belongs, needs to be further to the right than they already are. He wrote [The Dharma Manifesto](#), and "dharma" is a word that has been cheated in meaning to have a Hindu supremacist connotation. In the first sentence, he calls to annihilate various people based on identity and ideology.

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In 2012, even before Modi came to power, Dugin visited Delhi. He said we must create strategic alliances to overthrow the present order of things that is based on human rights, anti-hierarchy, and political correctness (in India this means any opposition to the caste system). These are, as he says, the face of the beast, the Antichrist, or the Kali Yuga. The latter in mythology is an imagined era in which all hierarchies will be turned upside down. The Kali Yuga is described in the Mahabharata as a situation when the castes that should be ruling become servile castes and vice versa. You can compare this to Putin's saying that Western liberals and Ukrainians are Satanists because they support LGBTQ+ rights. This talk is fascist.

In another [quotation](#), from 2019, after Modi's second victory, Dugin says: "In the last couple of decades, we observed a spectacular growth around the question of identity, with insistent claims of restoring Indian cultural, religious and geopolitical greatness. This translated into the electoral success of Narendra Modi." He keeps referencing Indian identity, by which he means Hindu supremacist identity: "The spectacularly growing Indian identity, based on a system of values, is totally incompatible with western liberalism <...> The multipolar world order, based on the principle of plurality of civilizations against the false pretensions of so-called 'universality' of 'western values' and 'inevitability' of the western way of progress and development, fits much better the Indian view

of a rebirth of the country on the foundations of tradition. <...> Multipolarity thus advocates a return to the civilizational foundations of each non-western civilization...and rejection of liberal democracy and human rights ideology.” This is an article written about Modi. My question is: Why would you turn your head to this? The Indian left had no problem realizing that [the \[Norwegian\] terrorist Breivik was linked to Hindu supremacism](#), so why is that difficult to see that Dugin, Putin, Modi, Bolsanaro, and others use the same language? Modi has repeatedly said that human rights are a Western idea; in traditional Indian culture, the meaning of human rights is supposedly different.

This is a mistake: to ignore the whole meaning of Modi’s abstaining from resolutions [at the UN], not only on Russia’s invasion of Ukraine but also on China’s violation of the rights of the Uyghurs. He is doing that because he wants to do the same thing to Muslims in India, making the same argument China makes. He knows that China funds Myanmar’s genocidal military regime, and he feels comfortable with all of that. The ability to hold two ideas in your head simultaneously is essential, so you should try to understand that while the Modi regime has common interests with the USA, it also has common interests with global fascists.

You have described how Putin is trying to portray himself as a leader of the oppressed nations, he’s talked about the “golden billion” and oppressive western liberal ideology. Why do people in India trust this discourse, regardless of the apparent contradictions (Putin is a leader of a former empire, and it was he who started the war against the former USSR republic)? What could change their attitude?

One big reason is that Russia is not seen as an empire in India, even among the left. I understood this only five or six years ago. I may have understood that tsarist Russia was an empire, but not the Soviet Union. The fact that Russia has had colonial relationships with other nationalities, and still does, is not apparent.

The second reason is that India had a close material and emotional relationship with the Soviet Union. In India we used “Soviet Sangh” (Soviet Union) and “Soviet Rus” (Soviet Russia) interchangeably. Thus the USSR is seen as Russia, and Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, etc., are seen as some satellites or accessories to the real country. The place I am talking to you from, my hometown, Bhilai, is a steel plant township. The plant was set up in collaboration with the USSR. When I was a child, there was an entire colony called “the Russian colony”. In the town there was a tin dome used for various passing exhibitions. Every few months, a Soviet book fair took place there. There were lovely and affordable books, and I still have some. I returned after the invasion and tried to find how these publications portrayed Ukraine. It was portrayed as a land with colorful ethnic costumes. Most Indians have nostalgic memories of these book fairs. So I am not surprised that in the Indian imagination, Russia is a country with a friendly presence. There were films made with Russian collaboration, and they had songs mentioning Russia with great affection. There is something my friend calls “Russian romance” in India.

“To change their mind, Indians must realize that Ukraine was a colony, just as India was a colony of Britain”

That makes it difficult to see Russia as a historically changing political entity with different rules, ideologies, and priorities. Due to all the Soviet aid for India, it is difficult to see that it had many oppressive elements besides a benign presence. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, one should not be romantic about Russia even by mistake, yet many Indians could not see what Putin stands for. Those who want to see Modi restore the mythical “Greater (Unbroken) India” might also want to see Putin restore “the Greater Russia.” Soon after the invasion, you could see posters saying “Hail Putin! He is going to restore Greater Russia,” put up by the same organization cutting cakes for Donald Trump’s birthday.

To change their mind, Indians must realize that Ukraine was a colony, just as India was a colony of Britain. Russia continued to have a substantial military presence and has been “a big brother” in the Hindi sense, which means “a bully.” [Note. “Dada” means “big brother” in Hindi, and the big brother type of bullying is “dadagiri”]. Russia has terrorized its neighbors, the former Soviet Republics. It has either installed client regimes or would try to invade at some point, especially under Putin. Ukraine has historical importance to Russia as an empire, and it is now the biggest hurdle for Putin’s fascist plans. If he wins this war, it will be a win for fascists everywhere. We must stop looking at the world through the division of who is with the USA and who is against it. You can’t just assume that everyone who is against the USA is your friend or the lesser evil. These fascist forces in different countries are connected, and a single victory is a victory for all of them. It is frustrating that the group that could make this considerable effort to explain this, the better part of the left in India, holds on to comforting, mythical, and deeply harmful narratives.

You’ve been a prominent fighter for women’s rights. Why is a stance against Russian aggression essential for women’s struggles?

I keep trying to alert my feminist friends in India and other countries about this issue. Unfortunately, most of them seem to have various illusions about the war. Very few of them understood what Putin’s fascism represents, so their position is still about war being a bad thing and opposing giving Western arms to Ukraine. They say, “Ukraine has a right to sovereignty and to defend itself, but we shouldn’t allow the USA to benefit from it.” There was a feminist antiwar statement with a similar argument, which I refused to sign, and I lost several friends because of it. So it had a position of formal support to Ukraine — but there were no mentions of Putin’s brand of fascism and its meaning for the feminist movement in Russia, Ukraine, and internationally.

I ask my friends to make a casual visit to RT [Russia Today, the state-supported TV station] and search for feminist, LGBTQ, or women’s rights. This should be eye-opening. There are hundreds of news items where they tell you that “being gay or trans is satanism,” corrupting family values, “gender does not exist”, etc. Fighting against patriarchy or homophobia makes you a Satanist in Putin’s Russia.

“I watched bits of Russian TV, and I was horror-struck that it is neither a parody nor satire, that this genocidal fascist talk is done so openly on primetime”

Indian TV is a complete nightmare, as fascist as it can be. Americans always cry about Fox News, but it is a joke compared to what we have to put up with. I stopped going on Indian TV because they use me as a villain. I wouldn’t believe you if you told me that any TV could be worse. But then I watched bits of Russian TV, and I was horror-struck that it is neither a parody nor satire, that this genocidal fascist talk is done so openly on primetime. A backbone of fascist ideology in Russia is an appeal to homophobic and patriarchal values, telling that it is the Kali Yuga or the coming of the Antichrist era. It says that there is a natural way relationships between men and women are supposed to be, and we must go back to this time. In India, there is a subtler version of this narrative because Indian fascism is experienced and has learned to hide behind rhetoric.

Hindu supremacists, however, say that according to Hindu scripture, women can not be allowed to be free. Women have great power in motherhood, and it becomes destructive if it is not controlled. So women must be controlled by their husbands, sons and fathers. If they do men’s jobs, they become demonic, so they should do what is in their nature as women. It is a part of the caste ideology with a description of hierarchies. These leaders reference the Manusmriti and want the constitution to be based on this text. This text has acquired much more importance in its ideological and political use, but it is not a text many Hindus consider a part of everyday usage. According to it, caste determines nature, and one’s duty is to act in accordance with caste and gender. It is deeply

antifeminist, because the caste system is maintained through endogamy [marrying only within the caste] and strict rules. If a woman of the upper caste marries a man from the untouchables or a lower caste, it is considered a wound on the social body. The Manusmṛiti prescribes punishment for this act, and it is death. Sometimes even those who haven't read this text do this kind of killing to maintain the caste system. When the influential Russian fascist Alexander Dugin says we must fight the "Kali Yuga" (the Hindu term signifying the overturning of caste and gender hierarchies) and fight all "anti-hierarchy" ideologies, he is taking a key tenet of Hindu-supremacist fascism and incorporating it in global fascism.

Feminists in India are challenging caste patriarchy. Along with anti-caste activists, they hold protests, symbolically burning the Manusmṛiti and calling for protection for the interfaith and intercaste couples. This kind of activism is also seen as anti-Indian now. The Hindu supremacists are fighting this kind of activism in other parts of the world, in the UK, for example. They try to prevent any legislation that will outlaw caste discrimination. When people from India go to other countries, they take their caste with them, which is reproduced there. There are many examples of caste discrimination, like doctors of Indian origin who refused to treat someone from the untouchable caste. Hindu supremacists say that anti-discrimination activism is "hinduphobic." But they are smarter than other fascists because they imply they it is they who is actually feminist, while the real antifeminists are the Muslims. Many Hindu women fall for this trap because no one likes looking closely at patriarchy in their communities. When Shah said that the Western standards don't apply in India, he also claimed that Indian families operate on an inbuilt human rights framework. Indian rights ensure the protection of women and children. This is all bullshit. You can not find a single Indian village where spaces are not divided in the form of apartheid based on castes. Indian families are also full of violence.

"Any country fighting against occupation should be supported, irrespective of what kind of government there is and what it can be criticized for"

Fascism has a robust antifeminist agenda. Russian fascism has to be taken seriously because of the enormous sums of money it commands. India also has some of the world's wealthiest capitalists, personal bankers, and funders of Modi. However, they fall short compared to Putin's abilities in money and propaganda. Someone says that there are extremely powerful oligarchs in the USA as well, but it is a bit different because they are not the direct instruments of the state. Take RT as an example; it is an official Russian channel that caters to the far right around the globe. Putin's regime also funds some far-right organizations in Europe and the USA. They might be doing it in India as well.

Post-colonial theory spared no effort in decrying western logocentric discourse with its exclusion of the other (be it natives, women, LGBTQ, illiterate, etc.). At the same time, claiming that universal values are necessarily western, those influential left theorists seem to have discarded any universalism. And the only thing that remains is the idea of multipolarity... Do you think there is a need for some kind of universalism in struggles against oppression?

Yes, very much. There is a difference between discarding universalism and continuously interrogating universalism. You can check whether one's account of universalism omits a portion of the population or is blind to particular relationships. Universalism can be blind to the history of colonialism, and you can see this very often in France, for example.

In the name of universal theories, they insist that French definitions of liberty, equality, and fraternity have nothing to do with colonialism. If you even suggest that the hijab ban in France is racist, they immediately call this nonsense, and insist that French values are universal. It would help

if you interrogated universalism which is Eurocentric, Americacentric, or blind to structural forms of oppression and exploitation. However, those who have been on the receiving end of colonialism, patriarchy, and racism are just now coming to the table and saying that they have to be included in the universal values. And if someone says that universalism is bad in this context, then there is a huge problem. Those values are not bad; the whole point is that they were said to be universal when they were not universal enough.

You can not say: "There should not be universal adult suffrage because it was never universal", you need to say the opposite: "We need to fight for suffrage to make sure everyone gets to vote." Criticizing something for having colonial and oppressive origins doesn't mean you can just throw it out the window. Of course, you should be alarmed by anyone who says that we don't have to be bound by democracy or believe that all human beings are equal, or who says that social hierarchies are a good thing, as Dugin, Putin, Modi, and others are saying. Xi also makes a lot of speeches against universalism, arguing that universal values were used to cause the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the drastic changes in Eastern Europe, the color revolutions, and the Arab Spring. Then he claims there are some universal values for humanity, but they can be interpreted differently by every civilization.

Suppose you are a Muslim in India, whose life is in danger because of Hindu supremacists rapidly turning the constitutional democracy into an authoritarian regime. Aren't you going to hope that someone in the world will come to rescue you? Whatever is needed to be done to save your life from genocide, you will be welcoming it. How can the left, of all people, speak about national sovereignty and interpret it as a right to repress people within the border without international interference? It is one thing to criticize international institutions like the UN because they have double standards (for the USA, Israel, etc.), but quite another to say that all universal standards and institutions like the UN are illegitimate.

"Lenin didn't favor any imperialism over the other"

With postmodernism comes the denial of the existence of any verifiable facts. And this is beneficial to fascists and authoritarian leaders. At this point, Hindu supremacists are using decolonial theory as an appeal to re-legitimize themselves, and say that their politics is anti-imperialist. The biggest problem with colonialism discourse is that it always refers to a particular nation as a victim. However, there are multiple struggles within those nations. Marxism was clear about its internationalism and belief in working classes of different countries uniting against oppressive rulers. We, as a left movement, have to adhere to these basics. Any country fighting against occupation should be supported, irrespective of what kind of government there is and what it can be criticized for. This is a good reminder for the left, especially because they like saying that [Ukrainian president Volodymyr] Zelensky is a neoliberal president dismantling labor rights. That is true, but that is for the Ukrainian leftists to fight against. But this is all after, and only if, they survive — because Ukrainians can be just wiped out of the Earth; look at what Ramzan Kadyrov [head of the Chechen republic and leader of Russian militia in Ukraine] and other propagandists are saying. There are priorities.

The general secretary of our party wrote in an article an answer to the questions I was raising: "Regardless of the internal character of the competing global powers, a multipolar world is certainly more advantageous to progressive forces and movements worldwide in their quest for reversal of the new neoliberal policies, social transformation, and political advance." He is saying that it does not matter whether these powers are democratic or fascist. China may be authoritarian, and Russia may be fascist, but their existence as a multipolar challenge to the USA is good. Therefore, any support we give against these multipolar powers can disturb the balance and benefit the USA. So our solidarity with Ukraine should not be too eager because it is on the USA's or the Western side. It is a

very dangerous argument, because it overlaps with the appeal to a world order based on anti-democratic multipolarity by authoritarian leaders like Putin and Xi. The left should realize that the language of multipolarity can no longer be used in this manner.

The language of polarity, in general, belongs to the realist school, and it is a capitalist school of understanding the world order. According to it, countries have national interests and compete based on these interests. This means that the history of the world is just a story of the big powers and their competition. It is not a Leninist idea. When people tell me: "Haven't you read Lenin's theory of imperialism?" I don't think they have read it. Lenin didn't favor any imperialism over the other. Today, the dominant definition of multipolarity is not just non-Marxist and non-Leninist, it is outright fascist.

Even if you don't like some leaders, the moment forces us to value those of them who are not fascist. In India, we have to align with parties we have never thought of supporting because unity is needed in the face of enormous danger. The left had been critical of India's democracy before 2014, but at least those leaders could have been shamed for human rights violations. If one can understand that approach in the context of India, it should also be recognized for global affairs.

Posle
Kavita Krishnan

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