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A sovietification of capitalism: A violent reading of state capitalism, the history of USSR, and our current unipolar global country

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Abstract

In this unorthodox literature review, I perform a 'violent reading' between the abstracted spacetime of the USSR (a regional level in the past) and that of today's unipolar capitalist world system (a global level in the present). Siding with the Marxist school claiming that the Soviet Union ultimately was an example of state capitalism, the aim of this violent reading is to identify tendencies within our latest global capitalism towards a gradual 'sovietification' of our common world. Three excursions into the sovietification of capitalism are conducted in the fields of economy (secular stagnation), governance (bureaucratisation and the merger of political and economic spheres), and ideology (structures of feelings of cynicism and fear). The analysis identifies five signs of a 'sovietification' of capitalism. First, today's global capitalism mirrors the USSR's late-stage productivity crisis, marked by stagnation and blocked creative destruction due to state dependency and unproductive capital accumulation. Second, financialisation has produced a ruling coalition of capitalists, politicians, and communicators that merges political and economic power, resembling Soviet bureaucratic control. Third, pervasive bureaucracy and surveillance now manage economic life and suppress dissent, echoing Soviet experiences. Fourth, ideological hypocrisy and disillusionment weaken democratic legitimacy, paving the way for authoritarian and nationalist tendencies. Finally, intensified

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geopolitical rivalries and rearmament revive state-led accumulation through military-industrial competition, paralleling Soviet-style state capitalism.

Keywords
bureaucratisation, ideology, Marxism, state capitalism, sovietification, secular stagnation, USSR, violent reading

Introduction

Thrown together by the ongoing catastrophe of global warming and the geopolitical tensions surrounding it, never before has humanity as a whole been so interconnected. With the more-or-less globally shared emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic, for the first moment in human history, someone observed, practically 'everyone' was facing the same problem at the same time and was aware of it. Meanwhile, reflecting on the international success of the black satire *Parasite*, despite its setting in South Korean society and language, director Bong Joon-ho said, 'I think maybe there is no borderline between countries now because we all live in the same country, it's called capitalism' (Hagen, 2019). This insight should not be treated as a mere allegory. With the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, no one could longer deny capitalism's power as a more-or-less total world market reaching across most territorial borders (cf. Sanchez-Sibony, 2014). Regardless of the degree of authoritarianism and/or protectionism of the particular state and social formation – while we might live in different political units – in the realm of the economy we indeed live in 'the same country' of a unipolar capitalist reality. The breakup of *Pax Americana* into a 'multipolar' political world order would most likely not change this economic unipolarity.

Nonetheless, this country is ripe for full-blown civil war between its internal state formations; indeed, some are already at war with each other. Within our country, there is the continuation of the 'same old' world interstate system that capitalism has always needed (Davidson, 2012). Today, few can fool themselves that the neoliberal project ever was aimed towards dismantling state power (Harvey, 2007). As the current juncture of the global rise of fascism, rollback of civil, political and social rights, belligerence and rearmament, and increased securitisation of everyday life shows, *the state and state power* are omnipresent in contemporary social and economic struggles.

In face of this conjuncture, many scholars agree that the global regime of capitalist accumulation is transforming, or has already transformed, into something new. While they share the analysis that this change has come due to the continued secular stagnation of capitalist productivity over the last decades (Brenner, 2006), they do, however, disagree on how to conceptualise this supposedly epochal change. While some argue that the unsurpassed concentration of economic wealth and social power into the hands of a few means that we are entering a situation of 'neo-feudalism' with tech characteristics (cf. Dean, 2022), others claim that 'political capitalism' better describes how contemporary capitalist accumulation is based upon 'raw political power' rather than productive investment. According to Riley and Brenner (2022: 6–7), 'this new form of accumulation is associated with a series of novel mechanisms of "politically constituted rip-off"',

including 'massive state spending aimed directly at private industry, with trickle-down effects for the broader population'. Agreeing with both these theories' emphasis on 'a cronyist fusion between capital and the state' (Seaton, 2023), a third strand of scholars instead speaks of a 'new state capitalism' in order to explicate states' accelerated role as promoters, supervisors, and owners of capital across the globe. Not only do we have new economic nationalism and trade wars, but state-owned investment funds' contemporary value exceeds that of all hedge funds and private equity firms combined (Alami and Dixon, 2024: 7).

Whereas it seems counter-intuitive to talk of 'feudalism' within perfectly working capitalist social relations, both the labels of 'political capitalism' and 'state capitalism' appear too tautological since the role of the state (and thus effectively of politics) has been integral to the emergence and reproduction of capitalism itself. Moreover, while these theories to different degrees highlight the dominance of state power in running contemporary capitalism, they lack the sociocultural dimensions of Joon-ho's insight: the embodied sensation of the absence of any other geographical option to the omnipresent system, of effectively *no way out* of the global country. From this position, it is easy to see how international 'structures of feeling' (Williams, 1977) of cynicism and fear are embedded within contemporary global capitalist social relations, influencing the actions of both the powerful and the powerless in political and economic life.

The aforementioned theories all point towards the ongoing, more-or-less explicit blurring of the border between the economic and political spheres in capitalism, which at least the school of 'political Marxism' has considered a non-negotiable criterion for this mode of production (Meiksins Wood, 1981). Indeed, the formal abolition of this separation is the legacy of the supposedly non-capitalist social formation of the Soviet Union. There is, however, one largely neglected Marxist economic tradition which claims that the political economy of the USSR was actually *capitalist* – a brand of state capitalism consolidated by Stalin's regime in the late 1920s (Cliff, 2022 [1955]; Harman, 1983, 2022 [1988]; Haynes, 2002, 2023; Howl, 1990; Miller and Dale, 2023; Resnick and Wolff, 2015 [2002]; Van der Linden, 2007). In this article, I argue that if we side with this interpretation, we also realise how our current global country of contemporary capitalism shares remarkable tendencies with the legacy of the USSR's economic, political, and social spacetime. Just as capitalism was thoroughly 'Americanised' through US political hegemony in the 20th century (Omstedt, 2021), I mean that we are now witnessing an overarching tendency of a *sovietification* of capitalist social relations. In this way, I partly side with the theories of 'new state capitalism', with some precautions. I side with Miller and Dale's (2023: 42) position that state capitalism theory ought not 'to be part of a typology of capitalisms', since the theory 'describes a tendency inherent to the capitalist mode of production itself'. Instead, I claim that a variant of 'old' state capitalism has become a more dominant influence over the world economy than other configurations. Furthermore, I refrain from speaking of a new type of capitalism overall, as the term indicates an ongoing process – a sovietification does not have to mean a complete transformation but rather a degree of change in a certain direction that rehearses a historical tendency within capitalism as a social totality. This theory, moreover, puts greater emphasis on the 'sociological' aspects of state-capitalist relations.

The aim of this article is, through a literature study, to uncover this potential sovietification of capitalism. The method is inspired by Slavoj Žižek's hermeneutics of 'violent reading' – a reading that aims to discover unexpected links between fragments taken out of their contexts:

> These links do not operate at the level of continuous linear historical progress: they rather emerge at points of 'dialectics at a standstill' (Walter Benjamin), in which a present moment, in a kind of trans-historical short-circuit, directly echoes homologous moments in the past. (Žižek, 2022: 153)

My way of violent reading is furthermore influenced by Ollman's (1993) approach to Marxian dialectics, wherein reality is an ever-changing totality of relations and processes in mutual support and contradiction; every identity is contingent upon, and relational to, its difference(s). An identity receives its existence from what it is not, since it is in this relation to something *different* that it finds its own demarcation – however, this effectively, in a Möbius-strip kind of way, makes the identity's difference inherently part of the identity itself. Regardless of its form of appearance, capitalism forces its Other into a relation of mutual, however unequal, influence. The Marxist emblematic example would be how 'capital' includes 'labour' as part of what 'capital' is, while 'labour' simultaneously constitutes something to which 'capital' relates as both its enabler and potential subverter (Marx, 1971 [1863]: 491). As an abstracted identity, 'the Soviet situation' can be summarised as a sluggish economy haunted by stagnation and overproduction, with a class formation that governed both the political and economic spheres, and a social ideology permeated by cynicism and fear. Of course, this identity is a *stereotype*, based on the popular geographical (and geopolitical) imagination of the Soviet Union as a singular type of 'place' – a *place identity* which is the result of turning time into space through a geographical binary thinking (Agnew, 2003). This abstraction does disavow, for example, the tremendous high growth levels of Soviet economies during the 1930s and 1950s (Allen, 2003), the social, economic and political variations between state formations, territories, regions, and places of the 'Eastern bloc' (Mikanowski, 2024), and the conjunctures between different modes of political governmentality from the Kremlin (Fitzpatrick, 2023), in favour of a static counter-image against popular conceptions of 20th-century Western and contemporary global capitalism. It is this identity that I put into dialogue with its supposed 'difference' of our contemporary neoliberalised global capitalism. There are three overarching phenomena of homology I want to explore: economy (chronic stagnation, overcapacity, state capitalism), governance (the consolidation of a political and economic sphere and swell of bureaucracy), and ideology (cynicism, fear, and nationalism). Before I go through these three excursions, I present the theory on state capitalism in general and the argument on why it is possible to understand the USSR as a prominent example.

Interpreting USSR's political economy as capitalism

The concept of state capitalism

To define what state capitalism is, we must first define 'capitalism'. I rely on Miller and Dale's (2023: 8) definition of capitalism as 'a system of value' (i.e. 'the alienated form of

wealth in commodity-producing societies') 'in expansionary motion', where independent economic entities must exchange to survive. Regarding this production system's social relations, capitalism can ultimately be summarised as a system where one class, through the wage relation, produces surplus value that is appropriated by another class. This system creates a society of separate yet interdependent producers, appearing as isolated units in competitive conflict. Thus, *competition* is inherent to the concept of value (Haynes, 2002; Howl, 1990; Miller and Dale, 2023). This brings us to the role of the capitalist state, as capitalists need some instance that upholds the rules of the game. Davidson (2012) names three crucial functions of the state under capitalism, which might be termed the systemic, national, and international functions. The systemic function is its maintenance of a dual social order: 'horizontally over competing capitals so that market relations do not collapse into "the war of all against all," and vertically over the conflict between capital and labour so that it continues to be resolved in the interest of the former' (Davidson, 2012: 27). The national function is to establish the 'general conditions of production', that is, a basic level of physical and social infrastructure that secures ongoing capital valorisation. The international function is to 'represent the collective interests of the "internal" capitalist class "externally", in relation to other capitalist states and classes', including the realm of 'international relations'. In managing transnational and international capitalist competition, states therefore become active participants in global capitalism. This role of states obviously affects their geopolitics. Through geopolitical rivalry, states are forced to ensure that their systems and institutions are economically and militarily competitive. It is especially this international function of the state in capitalism that theories of the USSR state capitalism develop.

In his review of the genealogy of 'state capitalism' as a theoretical concept, Sperber (2019: 101–102) argues that, since its coinage during the Second International (1889–1916), the term has foremost functioned 'as a terrain for interrogating the system-wide implications of concrete entanglements between the state and economic life', aiming to explain 'circumstances in which the economic prerogatives of the state exceed those that are merely expected from capitalism's intrinsic properties'. Marx himself did not live long enough to witness the tremendous augmentation of state involvement in building, investing, and directly commanding capitalist markets that became obvious by the dawn of the Great War (Bukharin, 1929 [1917]; Lenin 2010[1917]). However, he did write of how state governments 'function as industrial capitalists' when they employ 'state capital' in infrastructure (Marx, 1992 [1867]: 177), and positioned himself against Lassalle's idea of the state as a neutral instrument for building socialism. Engels, on the other hand, wrote that

> [t]he modern state, whatever its form, is an essentially capitalist machine, the state of capitalists, the ideal collective capitalist [as] the workers remain wage workers, proletarians; the capital relation is not *aufgehoben*; rather, it is intensified. (Engels, 1894, quoted in Miller and Dale, 2023: 5–6)

After the October Revolution, 'state capitalism' gained prominence as a term describing the emergent, contradicting political-economic system of the Soviet Union by its critics from different political-theoretical positions: from Bolshevik dissidents such as Gavril

Myasnikov, council communists such as Anton Pannekoek, and the Frankfurt School's Friedrich Pollock, to the different Trotskyist schools surrounding C.L.R. James, Raya Dunayevskaya, and Tony Cliff, and Maoists such as Charles Bettelheim (Van der Linden, 2007). To a lesser extent, after World War II, it was also applied to both 'First' and 'Third World' capital accumulation configurations in favour of state governments. Eventually, however, the concept of the 'developmental state' (Johnson, 1999) succeeded in achieving mainstream status as describing (predominantly East Asian) state-led macroeconomic planning. With the USSR's downfall, 'state capitalism' vanished from academic usage until it was revived by mainstream economics in the late 2000s to describe China's blend of state authoritarianism and free-market policy (Bremmer, 2009). However, the term eventually found its way back into critical theoretical research in the social sciences. 'New state capitalism' became applicable to contemporary states worldwide – notwithstanding their geopolitical or constitutional particularities.

Sperber (2019: 112–113) suggests treating state capitalism as a dynamic designator encompassing, on the one hand, variants of *state capital* ('ownership of the means of production by the state, usually entailing its direct participation in production and accumulation') and, on the other, *statism* ('state influence over non-state economic actors and entities, which can be actuated by a variety of interrelated instruments that include extraction, transfers, and other forms of interventionism'). Alami and Dixon (2024: 14) use this model to argue that *new* state capitalism is characterised by a combination of 'multiplication of state-capital hybrids' and 'development of muscular forms of statism'. To them, the value of talking of new state capitalism as an emerging new global configuration of capitalism resides in

> that it calls for an understanding of the recent upward trajectory of these various political and institutional forms (including sovereign wealth funds, policy and development banks, state enterprises, techno-industrial policy, spatial development strategies, and economic nationalism) *together* and in *relation* to each other in a *co-constitutive* movement. Thus, in our conceptualization, state capitalism concerns the *aggregate* expansion of these political and institutional forms as a *world-historical totality*. . . . [W]hat is both new and significant [is] their *joint* and *concurrent expansion* at the current historical juncture. (Alami and Dixon, 2024: 13, original emphasis)

My argument is that we could just as well rebrand this tendency as the sovietification of capitalism, since the Soviet Union was indeed a 'muscular form of statism' that included a 'multiplication of state-capital hybrids', which also encompassed 'policy and development banks, state enterprises, techno-industrial policy, spatial development strategies, and economic nationalism'. What needs to be proved is that the USSR can actually be understood as a capitalist social formation.

The Russian question

According to Sperber's (2019: 115) schema, the Marxist diagnoses of the USSR as 'state capitalism' implied 'a political-economic configuration of state capital generalized, since statism – as a constitutive instantiation of state capitalism – had been effectively

swallowed up by state capital as a result of collectivisation'. Meanwhile, probably the first to articulate the compatibility between the USSR project and state capitalism was none other than Lenin. As early as 1918, he clarified his vision of the transition to socialism (then communism) after the revolution as precisely

> state capitalism[, which] would be our salvation; if we had it in Russia, the transition to full socialism would be easy, would be within our grasp, because state capitalism is something centralised, calculated, controlled and socialised, and that is exactly what we lack. (Lenin, 1983 [1918]: 24)

This vision was put into practice in 1921 with the New Economic Policy in order to secure the economic growth and political stability needed for the transition. However, with Stalin's rise to power, Leninist visions of state capitalism were closed off in Soviet discourse (Sperber, 2019: 106). According to Jewish-Palestinian activist Tony Cliff (2022 [1955]) and others (Harman, 1983, 2022 [1988]; Haynes, 2002, 2023; Howl, 1990; Miller and Dale, 2023), ironically, it was Stalin's 'Great Break' (1928–1929) that effectively transformed the USSR into a state-capitalist project. With Stalin, geopolitical and geo-economic competition became the dominant focus of the entire Soviet formation, marked by intense (and forced) industrialisation and accumulation of surplus value. Stalin's state 'inserted itself between the means of production and the agricultural labour force, assuming coercive command of the former as well as direct control over the labour process', which secured 'an unparalleled ability to appropriate agricultural surplus and to funnel it directly into industry and the military' (Miller and Dale, 2023: 18). In this way, Stalinism accelerated the several-100-years' bloody history of Western European capitalism into only 20 years within Russia:

> What British capitalism had been able to achieve on the basis of enclosures and land clearances, the commination acts and the poor law, the slave trade and the plantations systems, Stalin set out to copy through collectivisations at gunpoint, the imposition of the labour book and the anti-strike laws, the massive growth of the gulag labour camps. [. . .] Condensed into this much shorter historical period the horror seemed much worse. (Harman, 2022 [1988]: 41)

This interpretation of Stalinism (and post-Stalinism up until 1991) is, however, anything but widely shared among the Marxist Left. Put simply, the multitude of anti-USSR Marxist interpretations of the Soviet Union's political economy throughout the century can effectively be grouped into three different camps: besides the state-capitalist (or simply capitalist) approach, there is the tradition of viewing the USSR as a 'degenerate workers' state' (i.e. as some kind of arrested socialism), and the plural claims that it was neither capitalist nor socialist but a unique kind of new (or non-) mode of production (Haynes, 2002; Van der Linden, 2007).

Those who defend Soviet Russia as nevertheless a workers' state often derive their position from Leon Trotsky's (1972) argument that, although the state was under the political control of the 'bureaucracy', the October Revolution had nonetheless secured a socialist mode of production through the nationalisation of property relations. At least, capitalist private property had become transformed into (*worker-*)state property, which

meant that the means of production were socialised; what was needed was a new political leadership rather than another mode of production. This argument is relatively easy to puncture: nothing in reality supports 'the view that state property as a legal form precludes effective private ownership in terms of effective disposition' (Haynes, 2002: 338); rephrased, those in effective power over the state also had effectively *private* power over the means of production. Resnick and Wolff (2015 [2002]) claim that, because the 'degenerate' position stares itself blind on which *social agent* (or entity) occupies the roles of producers and appropriators, instead of identifying how their economic relation is organised, it effectively confuses *power* relations with *economic* relations.[1] In other words, if capitalist production and accumulation continue regardless of changes in power relations between different social groups, then it does not matter whether it is the *group identity* of 'the bourgeoisie', 'workers', 'the state', or 'bureaucracy' that constitutes the appropriating class in practice. A case in point is Marx's (1968 [1863]: 44, my emphasis) own statement: 'Assuming the capitalist mode of production, [its] *only* requirement is that land should not be common property', that is,

> that it should confront the working class as a condition of production, *not belonging to* it, and the purpose is completely fulfilled if it becomes state-property, i.e., if the state draws the rent. . . . The radical bourgeois [therefore] goes forward theoretically to a refutation of the private ownership of the land, which, in the form of state property, he would like to turn into the common property of the bourgeois class, of capital. (Marx, 1968 [1863]: 44–45, original emphasis)

Capitalism's *fundamental* requirement is the separation of the worker from their means of production – a *concrete* separation that persists regardless of the content of ideology, law, or language – whether or not the appropriators are called, or call themselves, capitalist or the representatives of the working class.

The neither-nor camp, meanwhile, forms the least cohesive 'approach', since there are so many different theoretical positions within it. Suffice to say that they all agree that the USSR could not be capitalist, since its actual mode of production deviated in too many different aspects from what capitalism is *supposed* to be. They are also critical of the workers-state theory, since it also deviated too much from Marx's (and Lenin's) teachings. Instead, the USSR's political economy must have been something genuinely unique and new. In this article, I will (violently) abstract all the different positions within this tradition into the position of Simon Clarke (1996, 2003), who I believe presents, for our purposes, perhaps the strongest and most pedagogical argument.

At the end of the day, the crucial question is whether or not *the law of value* dominated the Soviet economy. The law of value under capitalism is 'those forces at work in commodity-producing society which regulate (a) the exchange ratios among commodities, (b) the quantity of each produced, and (c) the allocation of the labour force to various branches of production' (Sweezy, 1942: 52). It operates through the 'external' (non-positional) coercive demand upon capital holders to engage in competitive accumulation in order to secure and expand their capital's value. States themselves have become holders of capital and are simultaneously responsible for the infrastructural setting of competitive accumulation of 'their' national capitalists. Thus, the

'really existing' capital relation is always mediated through states (Miller and Dale, 2023: 10). Since the transition into the imperialist stage of capitalism, all states intervene in 'their' economies in different ways and degrees in order to affect the law of value to their benefit, which simply distorts this law in its 'pure' sense (Howl, 1990). The USSR was no exception in manipulating this law; indeed, the law of value was formally recognised in the USSR in the 1940s, if only to prove that socialism could appropriate it (Leontiev et al., 1944). But the state-capitalist argument is that this appropriation nonetheless confirmed Russia's capitalist character. Given that the goal of production in capitalism is value accumulation for value accumulation's sake, the fact that the overarching goal of production in the USSR was *to compete with the West* in terms of military might (and material wealth) shows that its whole national economy was indeed geared towards this same end.

This is, however, where Clarke (2003) begs to differ. According to him, this competition was not about the accumulation of surplus value as abstractions of the *money commodity*. The objects for increased accumulation were weapons, resources, and industrial output. Namely, the competition revolved around (a type of) material wealth before capitalistic exchange values. Dismissing such a mode of production as capitalist, yet also not the expression of a feudal, mercantilist, or socialist kind, Clarke (2003: 189) calls 'the soviet system' an 'essentially non-monetary system of surplus appropriation subordinated to the material needs of the state and, above all, of its military apparatus'. The surplus form was physical and concerned certain use values, which implied a contradiction in 'the separation between the production and appropriation of the surplus'. The appropriators had no actual involvement in the production system, which led to an order where no actor ('neither the worker, nor the enterprise, nor even the ministry') accessed this surplus – hence why no one except the *nomenklatura* had an economic interest in increasing surplus production (Clarke 2003: 189): 'This fundamental contradiction defined the specific form in which class conflict was displaced within the system into a conflict over the distribution of resources within a hierarchical framework of patronage and dependence' (Clarke, 1996: 30).

According to the state-capitalist position, however, Clarke falls victim to what Haynes (2023: 237) calls 'the fetishism of commodity fetishism', that is, 'the approach that dwells on commodity production and exchange', as a 'Marxist version of the conventional obsession with markets'. While Clarke is right in that Russia accumulated material wealth, this wealth was nonetheless measured against that of other states, and the whole reason for this accumulation was competition between sums of values, which still were appropriated through *abstracted labour*. In capitalism, the value that matters is precisely the value generated through abstract labour – that is, the abstraction of concrete, qualitative labour into a social value that can be quantified and thus measured against other (quantified) values. According to the Marxist textbook, these values are contained in commodities (produced by labour) which are to be exchanged on the market. The absence of 'generalised commodity production' in the USSR and the lack of markets are thus the usual counter-argument against the state-capitalist theory. Nonetheless, the production of material wealth was constantly subject to improved productivity, that is, for increased exploitation of labour. In the setting of the Soviet Union's competition with the United States, Howl (1990, original emphasis) wrote, 'the question of labour

productivity is central. This necessarily means it is not the *concrete* labour of Russian workers that is being compared with that of American workers, but their labour as social labour, in other words, *abstract* labour'. Indeed, the abstracted values of Soviet wealth were always measured against the values produced under explicitly capitalist modes of production – why every change in productivity processes in the West had to be matched by changes towards higher productivity in the USSR (and vice versa). 'It is this comparison that is equivalent to value relations established in exchange' (Howl, 1990). The mission of the Soviet state's economic activity, politico-economic-military competition (Haynes, 2002: 336), meant the prioritisation of this economic accumulation over the social needs of the workers themselves. Namely, they did not get to keep the surplus value they had produced, as it was stored and hoarded to secure competitive advantages on the geopolitical stage (Harman, 1983).

What then of other formal criteria for capitalism, such as the dominance of the wage-labour relation and the existence of a capitalist class and competing private capitals? While wage labour certainly dominated the USSR economy, instances of forced labour (i.e. the Gulag) should not be dismissed as non-capitalist, since, as we know, slavery has underpinned 'really existing capitalism' from its very dawn (Haynes, 2023). Furthermore, Stalinist Russia witnessed the establishment of several features traditionally associated with capitalist wage-labour relations: the formation of a lumpenproletariat, increased exploitation of women's reproductive work, the hierarchical division of labourers into a segment resembling a 'labour aristocracy', and the implementation of piecework systems (Clarke, 1996; Cliff, 2022 [1955]). Second, given the existence of a working class exploited according to the law of value, logically there must be a class that performs the *function* of capitalists. While Clarke (2003: 189) saw no group except the *nomenklatura* to benefit from increased exploitation, for Marx, both governments and corporate management can effectively function as the system's capitalists; hence not only the *nomenklatura*, but also various state functionaries performed the role of the capitalist appropriators (Miller and Dale, 2023: 19). Third, besides the state effectively working as a 'private capital' on the world stage, there was no formal internal competition between different companies in the Soviet Union. However, there was widespread practical competition between state enterprises and local branches in attracting workers and hoarding use values – in order to comply with the centralised plan. Of course, eventual competition between workers themselves occurred in different ways: for instance, by 1934, nearly 75% of industrial workers participated in what was termed 'socialist competition' against each other (Cliff, 2022 [1955]: 55).

Notwithstanding whether the USSR's political economy was capitalist *tout court* or not, its political economy nonetheless included certain undeniably capitalistic characteristics. Indeed, those social and political-economic tendencies of sovietification, which I argue haunt contemporary global capitalism, must be understood as ultimately consequences of the capitalist mode of production.

Three excursions of sovietification

In what follows, I shall undertake a critical examination by juxtaposing the abstracted spacetime of the USSR (a regional level in the past) with the abstracted spacetime of

today's unipolar capitalist world system (a global level in the present). The first part pertains to the economy, the second to governance, and the final part to ideology.

Economy: Secular stagnation

It is common wisdom that the Soviet Union imploded due to economic problems, which surfaced in the early 1970s with the completed absorption of rural populations and natural resources into industry (Allen, 2003). Nonetheless, these problems can only be understood against, and as *part of*, the global decline in capitalist growth following the postwar boom (Harman, 1983) – a decline whose end we have not yet witnessed. In other words, today's Great Recession is just one phase of a larger situation of declining growth since the late 1960s, following the recovery of industrial capacity in (world) war-torn regions (Brenner, 2006). This decline can be periodised through three significant events: the oil crisis (1970s–1980s), the fall of the USSR (1990s–2000s), and the Great Recession (2010s–2020s). Bartel (2022), meanwhile, has interpreted this 50-year period as a protracted global energy crisis. In the 1970s, both the First and Second World leaderships faced the same problem: in order to secure continued economic growth, policies aimed at the 'pursuit of plenty' for their populations had to switch towards 'fiscal discipline'. Hence, both sides' governors had to disappoint their subjects without losing political legitimacy. Western leaders managed this through the strategy that the Easterners lacked – the democratic election of proponents of neoliberal ideology.

Nonetheless, compared to the USSR, Western capitalist power dominated the world economy and gained market access to China in 1978 (which then escaped the Soviet Union's fate). Through strategies of outsourcing, financialisation, and deregulation, the Global North and the emerging economies of East Asia and Latin America managed to adapt to the changed dominant mode of accumulation. For overdetermined reasons, the USSR did not. Overproduction of industrial output, while neglecting agriculture and actively suppressing domestic demand and wages, made Eastern major economic units 'too big to fail' (TBTF), whereas the black market economy drained the system of capital, labour power, and revenues. Of course, the whole organisational structure of Gosplan escalated these contradictions, alongside the widespread corruption (Curtis, 2022). When Western capital compensated for stagnated industrial productivity with increased exploitation of the service sector (Benanav, 2020), what the USSR effectively needed was a successful policy of Schumpeterian 'creative destruction'. However, 'separated to a greater degree from the world market and dominated by the military-industrial sector, creative destruction was an enormous problem. It was simply not possible to reallocate capital easily between sectors' (Haynes, 2002: 352–353). Allen (2003: 211) shows that the ruling class nonetheless tried to appropriate new energy resources through (poor) investment decisions, at the same time as the recharge of the Cold War effectively 'diverted substantial R&D resources from civilian innovation to the military'. In effect, the Eastern states were caught in massive overinvestments to save industries and factories, which only turned into new cycles of overinvestment (Harman, 1983). With perestroika, the USSR furthermore underwent its own (unintentional) 'neoliberal' transfer of state capital into the private (although illegal) sector, which only hastened the collapse (Curtis, 2022).

Just as the USSR continued prioritising manufacturing for too long, so too did capitalist conglomerations in the West and elsewhere. If it were not for the massive growth of state borrowing from the 1970s onwards, which effectively necessitated the reintroduction of finance capital's power, a global depression would have kicked in. Initially, this did, however, prolong the downturn as it 'prevented that shakeout of high-cost, low-profit firms, especially in manufacturing, that was requisite to the recovery of aggregate profitability' (Brenner, 2006: 39). With the neoliberal switch from Keynesian debt creation to monetarist credit restriction, the austerity strategies did help overcome superfluous manufacturing capital, but also 'made more difficult the necessary allocation of investment funds into new lines' (Brenner, 2006: 39). With the Chinese markets and the expropriation of the USSR's corpse through the shock doctrine (Klein, 2007), however, Western capitalism managed to get a boost injection. Now, capitalism became truly transnational, and in the period between 1980 and 2018, 1.5 billion people became subsumed into the globalised world's labour power stock: an expansion of the latter by 75% (Benanav, 2020). The Global North economies' strategy of creating growth through manufactured exports further internationalised commodity chains, which enabled 'the commodity super cycle' (2000–2014) (Alami and Dixon, 2024) – inducing the hope of reversing the trend of the falling rate of profit. Alongside the Russian shock doctrine, the neocolonisation of the Global South via the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group, the Bush presidents' Iraqi wars, and the extraction of value from privatised public institutions were all different tactics of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey, 2007), the same strategy Stalinist collectivisation meant (Harman, 1983). With the drying up of these resources, as shown by the Great Recession, we are 'back' to the Soviet 1970s–1980s yet again.

Let us state five similarities between the political-economic situation of the USSR and contemporary unipolar capitalism. First, the long downturn was never overcome – overproduction continues. Capitalism has witnessed its greatest increase in productivity through the development of industrial means of production, and the long downturn accompanies the slowdown of this sector's surplus-value production (Benanav, 2020; Brenner, 2006). Meanwhile, the lowered degree of labour power in the total organic composition of capital (Marx, 1992 [1867]: 783), together with population growth, encourages the expansion of the service sector.[2] The exploitation of this sector has not, however, managed to compensate for the industrial sector's failure, which is why the restraint of working-class consumers' wages remains imperative, alongside increased financialisation to fund labourers' reproduction. The neoliberal weakening of union power worldwide brings us to the second similarity, as this militancy against workers' organisation was also the legacy of Stalinism and Maoism. Indeed, merely submitting to the same economic logic, both regimes forbade strikes, dismantled unions, and punished organised labourers who demanded better salaries and working conditions (Cliff, 2022 [1955]; Yong-uk, 2023). Echoing Thatcher's sentiments, Stalin (2005 [1951]) explained, 'the laws of economic development, as in the case of natural science, are objective laws, [taking] place independently of the will of man'. That is, in both cases, conforming to the law of value stands at odds with the economic interests of the working class.

The third similarity concerns the over-accumulation of values into institutions that become TBTF. In the Second World, this value was contained in industrial output. In

the unipolar world, this value is found in the abundance of finance capital in circulation after the collapse of the Bretton Woods system. As circulating capital necessitates the allocation of surpluses into spatial fixes (Harvey, 2018), capitalist production turned towards increased capitalisation of the built environment in order to absorb these surpluses. With the US housing bubble and financial crash of 2007–2008, the concentration of finance capital in the banking sector made big banks TBTF – similar to the USSR's problem of the centralisation of manufacturing and industry units. The intervening state measures to bail out these capitalists prompt us to consider a fourth homology between the USSR and contemporary capitalism, regarding how the appropriating classes benefit from corporatism and/or outright corruption (cf. Graeber, 2015: 23–29). Namely, the ongoing recession has encouraged capitalists to use the state itself as a machine to distribute wealth and revenues from workers to themselves, leading the capitalist class to face internal competition over which sector receives hand-outs (or subsidies) from the state (Riley and Brenner, 2022). Perhaps the most striking homology, however, concerns the effective separation between the dominating appropriating class and the actual production system, identified by Clarke (1996) as one of the characteristics of the Soviet mode of production. If that class was the *nomenklatura* in the USSR, in today's unipolar world, that global class comprises finance, tech, and rentier capitalists, exemplified by the recent decades' focus on extracting profit from intellectual and land property rights, and from infrastructure such as electricity, housing, and communication (Christophers, 2024; Schwartz, 2021).

Alongside this capitalist class character, we should consider the rise of what Gilbert and Williams (2022: Chapter 1) term 'the professional political class' all over the world: 'a defined network of individuals, of the general class of senior managers, and ideological professionals' acting as 'an explicitly technocratic elite' that manages 'the general implementation of the neoliberal programme, while interfacing between the wider population and the interests that they ultimately serve'. This professionalisation of politics reflects the institutionalisation of political parties within the state apparatus – in effect, politicians' alignment with the state's interests before those they are supposed to represent. This development is another symptom of the convergence of finance and governance, through the emergence of 'think tanks' to assist political lobbyists, the corporatisation of mass media outlets, and increasing reliance on finance capital to fund social reproduction. Namely, since the 1980s, a web has emerged of interconnected institutions constituting 'a growing employment sector for affluent professionals whose job [is] either to govern, to influence governments, or to manage information flows between governments, corporations and the wider public' (Gilbert and Williams, 2022: Chapter 3). Politics, capital, and media have consolidated into a social elite population with similar upbringings, education, and geographical backgrounds. This raises the question of when democracy turns into oligarchy – especially when the leaderships of major Left parties start to belong to the same class faction as the Right. In other words, do we not witness a synchronisation of the political and economic spheres, not only regarding the dominance of finance capital interests over political governance, but even at the level of the social composition of the hegemonic class coalitions in capitalism? Isn't this merger somewhat similar to the emergence of the bureaucratic class and the *apparatchiks* in the USSR from the 1950s onwards? Indeed, in Soviet Russia, labourers could advance to the

higher segments of the bureaucratic hierarchy – if only they managed to become part of the shop-floor 'labour aristocracy' (Clarke, 1996).

Maybe the most alarming aspect of this analogy, however, is the so-called 'neo-mercantilism' of enhanced militarisation of states and their economies. In the face of the scramble for energy resources, the US–Sino power struggle, Russia's invasion of Europe, and the NATO-sanctioned genocide of Palestine, war is indeed an effective way to generate 'creative destruction' (Harvey, 2018). Sometimes it is enough to have the threat of war. In the case of the USSR, the war scare of 1927 was the key to legitimising the creative destruction of Stalin's political-economic policy (Miller and Dale, 2023: 17–18). Rearmament equals increased manufacturing, which means (hoped) increased surplus-value accumulation. Crucially, this political development is driven by the external pressure of state competition. The political-economic value that matters is the estimated (abstracted) value of others' output – whether contained in money capital or nuclear arms.

Governance: Bureaucratisation and the merger of political and economic spheres

Stalin legitimated enforced industrialisation in this way: 'To slacken the pace of industrialisation would mean to lag behind; those who lag behind are beaten' (quoted in Howl, 1990). Only months later, Stalin (2008 [1928]) proclaimed, 'Bureaucracy is one of the worst enemies of our progress'. Indeed, in times of war and emergency, what is (claimed to be) needed is strong and effective leadership. What then stands in the way is the legal bureaucratic system of governance – epitomised by Trump's ongoing overtaking of the US state and neglect of international conventions. Contemporary fascism legitimises its attacks on national and international civil rights laws (and their implementation in state bodies) as the war on 'the deep state' which hinders the execution of the will of 'the people' – embodied in the omnipotent leader. In practice, through the authoritarian demagogue, one faction of the capitalist class takes command over the state apparatus for its own economic interests. Hanson and Kopstein (2024) identify the origins of this return of governmental patrimonialism (the consolidation of the monarch with the state) in post-Soviet Russia. After the shock doctrine, Putin built his power base upon personal loyalties among former KGB officers and oligarchs. This amalgamation, which effectively restored social order and a form of authoritarianism strikingly similar to the Soviet legacy, has eventually been exported to the rest of the world through leaders such as Orbán, Erdoğan, and Netanyahu. While the ideology of this patrimonialism declares the effective execution of power against 'bureaucracy', most likely it will not do away with *civilians'* everyday interactions with bureaucracy. Indeed, in spite of the autocratic power at the top, the USSR was famous for its bureaucratisation of everyday life. Moreover, contemporary far-right crusades against 'bureaucracy' has already been rehearsed for decades through the ideological legitimation of neoliberal deregulation.

In *The Utopia of Rules*, David Graeber (2015) argues that if we expand 'bureaucracy' beyond the realm of government offices, neoliberalism designates an era of 'total bureaucratisation'. This is due to the paradox that, for the liberal free-market economy to

function according to theory, it must be impersonally administered and monitored. A case in point is how the number of Russian civil servants continued to swell *after* the shock doctrine (Graeber, 2015: 46). According to Graeber (2015: 6), people all over the world spend more time 'struggling with phone trees and web interfaces, while the less fortunate spend ever more hours of their day trying to navigate the increasingly elaborate hoops required to access dwindling social services'. This trend should be seen as a consequence of chronic underemployment overall (Benanav, 2020), as 'credentialisation' measures are applied to organise competition among too many applicants for too few positions. People are compelled to pursue higher education to obtain degrees for jobs that previously did not require academic training, but now necessitate the efficient assessment of competitive skills. This, in turn, increases demands to make education more instrumental in producing 'employability', which legitimises further surveillance and evaluation of education itself. Today, it is widely accepted that the New Public Management doctrine, contrary to its ideological aims, has led to even more bureaucracy to monitor expenditure and performance in order to enhance profitability (Hibou, 2015). Taken together, Cliff's (2022[1955]) description of the USSR as a 'bureaucratically directed economy' eerily applies to this situation.

Graeber traces the ontogenesis of this 'total bureaucratisation' from the evolution of the organisational structure of the modern private corporation to the corporatisation of the financial sector. With the ascending power of finance capital over governments and the private sector, the subsequent merger of the executive and investor capitalist class has facilitated 'the gradual fusion of public and private power into a single entity, rife with rules and regulations whose ultimate purpose is to extract wealth in the form of profits' (Graeber, 2015: 19–20). Echoing the theory of accumulation by dispossession (as this ultimately concerns reification of social activities into quantitative exchange values), Graeber declares, 'The final victory over the Soviet Union did not really lead to the domination of "the market"' (p. 149) since 'this alliance of government and finance often produces results that bear a striking resemblance to the worst excesses of bureaucratisation in the former Soviet Union' (p. 25). Fisher (2009) has taken this similarity even further, suggesting that neoliberal bureaucracy could be understood as 'market Stalinism'. What resembles Stalinism is the neglect of comparison between work performance and output, in favour of 'a comparison between the audited representation of that performance and output, [so that work] becomes geared towards the generation and massaging of representations rather than to the official goals of the work itself' (Fisher, 2009: 42). In Soviet Russia, conforming to the plan meant that 'administrative "anti-production"' triumphed over effective demand and supply. In latest capitalism, meanwhile, 'the way value is generated on the stock exchange depends [foremost] on perceptions of, and beliefs about, its (future) performance' (Fisher, 2009: 44).

One capitalist rationale for contemporary bureaucratisation is then to secure the intensified exploitation of the service sector. In the USSR, meanwhile, the bureaucratisation's raison d'être was ultimately to make the whole command mode of production work at all – since it was based on the *formal* merger of the political and economic spheres. In our unipolar capitalism, this merger appears effectively to take place 'through the back door' for a similar interest in the control and exchangeability of information. As this merger is often presented as the reason for the Soviet command

economy's irrationalities and wastages, so too do we witness widespread 'structural stupidity' (Graeber, 2015) and colossal superstructures of management. Indeed, global capitalism's contemporary bureaucracy is similarly inherently destructive in nature as that of the USSR – supposedly enhancing the circulation of capital, it simultaneously hampers this very circulation.

Ideology: Structure of feelings of cynicism and fear

Bureaucracy implies the gathering and evaluation of information and data. One industry wherein the distinction between the economic and political sphere is murky, and where this practice is today extremely profitable, is, of course, the surveillance industry. As part of a larger securitisation sector, it has boomed in recent decades – through the sprawl of CCTV, security guard companies, police officer numbers, and board controls (Graeber, 2015: 36–37), alongside the logging of all social activities through digital platforms. Here we stumble upon yet another similarity between the commonsensical picture of life in the USSR and life in contemporary capitalism: the surveillance of people's everyday lives. While the KGB and state censorship operated through management of fear, we see another type of fear-based governance in 'general neoliberalism' through more discreet techniques of securitisation. Instead of 'the state', the universal objects of fear today seem to be 'crime', 'the other', or the loss of one's social security or status (Petit, 2020). Furthermore, contemporary prominence on surveillance dovetails with bureaucratisation regarding the expansion of managerial interference in neoliberalised workplaces – as, we know, service workers have gradually become their own bureaucrats (Fisher, 2009).

In the USSR, the structure of feeling (Williams, 1977) of personal insecurity could be attributed to explicit totalitarian surveillance by the state and the KGB. In contemporary 'non-totalitarian' capitalist societies, this abstract feeling structure appears to lack a tangible 'big Other' that monitors individuals and threatens their bodily and mental integrity outside of the workplace. Žižek (2009), however, argues that the absence of this actual 'big Other' was also the case in 'really existing socialism's' everyday life and bureaucracy, since the command economy's numerous contradictions fragmented chains of responsibility and information. Fisher (2009: 50) describes this Kafkaesque structure of command and division of labour, where both rulers and the ruled are somewhat lost in the distinction between what is being said and what is actually meant: 'No-one [not even the *nomenklatura* itself] knew what was required; instead, individuals could only guess what particular gestures or directives meant'. Such a social fabric provides collective feelings of not only insecurity but also cynicism towards society's political project overall (Žižek, 2008 [1989]). 'Actually existing neoliberalism' shares

> the same division which characterized ['really existing socialism'], between, on the one hand, an official culture in which capitalist enterprises are presented as socially responsible and caring, and, on the other, a widespread awareness that companies are actually corrupt, ruthless, etc. (Fisher, 2009: 46)

One could argue similarly about neoliberal ideology's promises of increased individual freedom, agency, truly free markets, the reduced role of the state in social life, and less

social conformity. If the hallmark of socialism is 'equality', while its counterpart in liberalism is 'liberty', there is an intriguing parallel between the USSR's proclaimed abolition of classes and neoliberalism's professed equal opportunities and equality before the law.

Žižek (2008 [1989]) argues that the power of ideology derives not from what people actually believe, but from their social practices *as if* they believed in the ideology. This suggests that cynicism is a crucial undercurrent of the effectiveness of a dominant ideology – whether we are discussing the ideology of the Eastern Bloc, or our contemporary neoliberalism, multiculturalism, or authoritarian populism. Those in power still need assurance that people will continue to perform the practices that ideologically justify their power. However, contemporary political classes in liberal democracies face challenges with the diminishing political and civic engagement of citizens; indeed, there is a global haemorrhage of voting numbers and political party memberships (Kostelka and Blais, 2021). This erosion of popular legitimacy for parliamentary democracy has followed the active weakening of unions and other social movements, among the aforementioned professionalisation and institutionalisation of party politics. These forms of association not only historically fostered popular democracy and political representation but also functioned as an intermediary link between individuals and the state (Pahl, 1991). In the USSR, the one-party system was supposed to account for this link. Maybe we will see an export of what Gueorguiev (2021) calls an 'inclusive authoritarianism' crafted in China: drawing on Leninist vanguardism but employing information technology for surveillance and communication, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) promotes popular participation through the Internet in planning and policy issues. In the meantime, what has instead become normalised in the West since 9/11 is 'the idea of a duty to denounce' societal enemies to the state (Fitzpatrick, 2025). Prominent Sovietologist and social historian Sheila Fitzpatrick reflects on how a system of state reporting prevails in Putin's Russia, whereas today's 'class enemies' are anti-war and LGBTQ activists. This culture of denunciation also takes place through the university system – just like the Trump administration's campaign against 'anti-Semitism' in American universities. To be sure, denunciation cultures have occasionally flared up throughout history and across different societies, and for the last decades, 'sex and gender offences became prime causes of denunciation' from a US-liberal standpoint (and indeed many liken 'cancel culture' to 'purges') (Fitzpatrick, 2025). With Trumpism, however,

> Calling for denunciations is one way of mobilising ordinary Americans to challenge the power of the 'deep state' and the liberal elites who despise them. Back in the day, when Stalin was presiding over his Cultural Revolution, this was called 'mobilising the masses' against 'bourgeois liberal' elites, and denunciation played exactly the same role in identifying offenders for the authorities to prosecute or fire. MAGA is Trump's Cultural Revolution. (Fitzpatrick, 2025)

This takes us back to the notion of patrimonialism: the resurgent 'absolutism' is, just as Stalin's autocracy was, dependent upon a coalition of interests and ideologies among a significant group of people (Hanson and Kopstein, 2024) – indeed, the Great Purges relied upon both zealots and opportunists, at both the top and the bottom (Fitzpatrick, 2023). What is needed is a combination of a loyal movement and fearful masses. The

Bolsheviks and Stalin secured the latter's discipline not only through the secret police, but through a more-or-less constant 'state of emergency' for half a century. The long-term maintenance of this command could not have been held if it had not relied partly on a significant degree of consent among the population (Fitzpatrick, 2023). Following the Civil War (1917–1922), the Great Break (1928–1934), the Great Purge (1936–1938), the World War (1939, 1941–1945), the Cold War (1947–1969, 1979–1991), and the Afghan War (1979–1989), there persisted a continuous 'exceptional' situation that postponed the formal realisation of communism to an unspecified future. While it should be noted that throughout the USSR's history, 'multiculturalism (to use an anachronistic term) was a basic societal commitment' (Fitzpatrick, 2023: 210), with Stalinism, nationalism arguably took precedence over socialism as the mobilising ideology for the state-capitalist project (cf. Nairn, 1981 [1975]). Fear and cynicism do not suppress but rather foster nationalist and xenophobic sentiments, as these emotions readily turn anxieties into collective forces and targeted projections. Finalising our violent reading, one could juxtapose the USSR's constant 'state of exception' with the seriality of global economic, geopolitical, and pandemic crises in recent decades (Holgersen, 2024). These crises have legitimated 'emergency governance' (Anderson et al., 2019), alongside fear mongering and rearmament against both external and internal enemies of 'the people'.

Conclusion

The aphorism that one cannot step into the same river twice is attributed to Heraclitus, who probably expressed himself rather this way: 'On those stepping into rivers staying the same other and other waters flow' (Graham, 2023). This wording indicates that, nonetheless, despite the change of water, the river remains the same. Even though capitalism varies across spacetime and eventually changes in its internal composition, it is still capitalism. The gradual sovietification of capitalist social relations is thus due to capitalism's very constitution, since the Soviet Union ultimately based itself upon the law of value through bureaucratic state-capitalist competition.

To summarise the analysis, I propose five major indications of an ongoing sovietification of capitalism.

1. There are striking similarities between the productivity crisis of the USSR in the 1970s–1980s and global capitalism of the 2000s–2020s. Both regimes struggled with redundant industrial capital, arrested wage development, increased foreign debt, and the need to forestall structural stagnation through state–political means. In both instances, there came a moment when access to surplus population and resources came to a halt, and policy for creative destruction became effectively blocked for two main reasons: overinvestment in institutions considered TBTF, and powerful class segments that appropriate capital without investing it in productivity-based innovations. In both cases, secular stagnation continues through cycles of crisis, state bailout, and new crisis under increased competition for accumulation.
2. The financialisation of capitalist social relations has generated the emergence of a class coalition of capitalists, politicians, and professional communicators that

effectively transcends the separation between the political and economic spheres in capitalism – efficiently ruling and exploiting the masses in a way similar to the appropriating bureaucrats and managers of the Soviet Union.

3. The same financialisation has also spawned the total bureaucratisation and surveillance of everyday life for billions of people, which functions in similar ways as bureaucracy and surveillance did in the USSR: to command the economy, ensure increased accumulation through exploitation of labour and use values, and demoralise opposition through personal and collective fears.
4. Just as the proclaimed working-class power in the Eastern Bloc was an obvious charade, the hypocrisy of the global ruling class' ideology fosters collective senses of cynicism and powerlessness, leading to civilian withdrawal from political participation – implying the gradual undermining of the legitimacy of parliamentary democracy. Ironically, this loss of legitimacy has led to the legitimisation of authoritarianism and patrimonialism, introducing the seeds for pseudo-Stalinist dictatorships (including mobilisation of nationalist sentiments) in a temporally 'backward' direction.
5. The global geopolitical situation has fostered rearmament and increased geo-economic state rivalry. Capitalist accumulation through the state is articulated through catch-up industrialisation and the competition between military and strategic use values, just as was the case with the Soviet variant of state capitalism.

In Curtis' (2022) breath-taking expose of the collapse of the Soviet Union, it becomes obvious that the economic situation triggered the conditions for its fall. What is also shown, however, is that what made the political transition take place was the parallel uprisings of people throughout the federation, both in the satellite states and in the 'motherland' – of workers, intellectuals, religious groups, nationalists, and others. To reconnect with Joon-ho's argument, the USSR's subjects lived in the same enormous country, and many did rise up against its ruling class and its oppressive system in solidarity from different ends of this country. It was this widespread dissensus across regions that enabled its fall. Meanwhile, today's globally encompassing country 'called capitalism' has become more and more enclosed in the same direction as the Soviet Union, but all the while out of the inherent logics of the capitalist system – by the continuing dominance of the law of value. An upheaval of this country's ruling class, its power, and its political-economic project will demand the same multipolar geographical uprising to that within the USSR – but this time, within the unit of the globe itself. To conclude, against opponents' claims that anti-capitalist visions will inescapably lead to Soviet Russia once more, this article aims to show that we are already on our way there.

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Notes

1. This also applies for similar discussions on other 'socialist' regimes. Indeed, a new wave of scholars has argued that not only the USSR, but also Maoist China, North Korea, and even the Khmer Rouge's Cambodia were indeed capitalist social formations (Miller, 2023; Tyner and Rice, 2016; Yong-uk, 2023).
2. Ten years ago, the service sector hosted 74% of labourers in high-income countries and 52% worldwide (Benanav, 2020).

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