Rubio Says the Spirit of Marx Lives On



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Marco Rubio claims the “spirit of Marx [...] lives on” in international law and institutions, as he defends the US’s imperialist ambitions and its right to impose itself upon the world.

On 13 November, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio addressed the Federalist Society, a conservative legal organisation. In his speech, he claimed international institutions restrain US ambitions and intervene in domestic policy, complaining that international judges insist the US stop “imposing [itself] upon the world” and linking this to “Marxism”.

Quote: “Even as we defeated the institution of Soviet communism, we did not triumph over the spirit of Marx. That spirit of Marx [...] it lives on in these new forms and doctrines which subordinate the national will to the menial consensus of the world. Marxism sought to abolish the distinction between men, the radicals of our time, seek to abolish the distinction between nations themselves.”

Context. As US hegemony comes under threat from rival powers, Washington has adopted a more hawkish foreign policy to preserve its dominance, increasingly dropping its “democratic” rhetoric. The US has launched military campaigns in Venezuela and Iran, carried out decapitation strikes, captured oil tankers, signed nuclear energy pacts bypassing international standards and tightened the blockade on Cuba.

► Despite serving as a platform for capitalist states to facilitate relations and imperialists to pursue their interests, international institutions are clashing with Trump’s hawkish tactics. Trump lashed out over Netanyahu’s arrest warrant and investigations into US war crimes in Iran. His pro-oil agenda has also clashed with UN climate policies, succeeding in scrapping the world’s first carbon tax.

► The Republicans are reinforcing their anti-communist agenda, weaponising accusations of communism against opponents. Trump used these tactics during the 2024 presidential and recent midterm elections, warning of an alleged “spread of communism” and launching a propaganda-driven “Anti-Communist Week”. He also accused the UN of promoting a “far-left agenda”.

In reality, existing international institutions are not designed to abolish national distinctions, nor are they Marxist. Operating within the global capitalist mode of production, these institutions mediate imperialist interests, but during periods of crisis, their established norms are seen as restrictive.

► The US has historically disproportionally benefited from international institutions. The US holds 16.49 % of total voting power within the International Monetary Fund. The UN was repeatedly used to target US opponents, like authorising “any measures” except occupation, to fulfil their imperialist interests in Libya and Iraq, whilst not opposing NATO interventions in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq.

► International institutions have established a range of norms aimed at preventing wars and conflicts, including rules of warfare, crimes against humanity and international arrest warrants. But when these inevitably fail, international institutions invariably blame “rogue actors” for violating international norms, hiding the true cause of international disorder – the global capitalist system.

► Capitalists achieve higher profits through intensifying competition, with war representing its highest form, where one bourgeois country conquers more markets and destroys its competition through force of arms. Wars also generate demand for the arms industry, further driving capitalists to accelerate militarisation.

► Marxism, in reality, seeks not to “abolish the distinction between men”, but to dismantle exploitation and class divisions, through the social ownership of the means of production, reshaping economic life from a competitive and violent pursuit of profit to the socially planned development of society for human needs. The true spirit of Marxism lives on – not in international institutions, but in the class consciousness of the proletariat.

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