

Economic Democracy and the Law of Anticapital

The Material Form of Proletarian Legitimacy

Vilen Isteni
vilen@polarmarxism.com
polarmarxism.com

May 2026



Abstract

This paper develops the concept of economic democracy as the material form of proletarian legitimacy. It proceeds from the law of anticapital, according to which the aggregate proletariat of the polar periphery expresses its class interest through catching-up development. The paper argues that this developmental demand becomes an imperative mandate addressed to nomenklatura as the representative class of the Anticenter. Nomenklatura remains legitimate while it fulfills this mandate through the expansion of the material power of the system. Economic democracy is therefore the form in which proletarian power is legitimized through development.

Keywords: economic democracy; imperative mandate; anticapital; law of anticapital; catching-up development; aggregate proletariat; nomenklatura; Command Core; Revolutionary Dictatorship of the Proletariat; RDP; real socialism; proletarian legitimacy; material legitimacy; anticapitalist reproduction; liberal democracy; representative mandate; Marxism; Polar Marxism

JEL Codes: B51, P16, P21, P26, P27, P51, H11, O25

1 Introduction

The previous work reconstructed the architecture of the Plan as the architecture of the Anticenter (Isteni 2026). It showed that anticapital reproduces itself through catching-up development. The present work develops the political meaning of this result.

If catching-up development is the law of anticapital, then it is also the material mandate of the aggregate proletariat. This mandate gives the Anticenter its form of legitimacy. The question is how this legitimacy differs from liberal-democratic legitimacy and how it appears inside the Revolutionary Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

This work answers that question through the concept of economic democracy. Economic democracy is the form in which the aggregate proletariat gives an imperative material mandate to the Command Core. The content of this mandate is catching-up development. The fulfillment of this mandate is the basis of proletarian legitimacy.

2 The Law of Anticapital

In *The Architecture of the Plan*, the law of anticapital was derived from the internal structure of the Anticenter. The argument moved through nomenklatura, self-sponsorship, Contour A, Contour B, and the architecture of the Plan. It showed that the Anticenter reproduces itself through the maximization of catching-up development (Isteni 2026).

That derivation remains correct. It shows how the law of anticapital appears on the side of the system itself. The structure of the RDP is arranged in such a way that nomenklatura must reproduce its power through development, and because the Anticenter arises on the polar periphery, this development takes the form of catching-up development.

This law appears because the material structure of the capitalist world already contains the conditions for its opposite. Capital produces anticapital as its own historical opposite. The capitalist world contains the law of capital and the conditions under which the law of anticapital can be organized.

The previous derivation showed the right side of the relation: the Anticenter, once formed, returns to catching-up development as its result. The present argument turns to the left side of the relation: the class source from which this movement begins.

Capital can be understood through a circular form. It begins from profit and returns to profit. Profit is the motive, the measure, and the result of the capitalist movement. The whole movement of the capitalist system begins from profit and ends in profit.

Anticapital has the same circular form with different content. It begins from catching-up development and returns to catching-up development. Catching-up development is the initial class need of the aggregate proletariat of the polar periphery, and it becomes the final result of the institutional movement of the Anticenter.

The aggregate proletariat of the polar periphery stands in a different position from the proletariat of the Center. The imperialist proletariat is subordinated to capital, but its material life is partly carried by the development of the imperialist system. Its interests can therefore remain partially aligned with the movement of capital.

The peripheral proletariat stands inside a broken relation to capital. Capital incorporates the periphery, extracts from it, subordinates it, and blocks its stable development. The material interest of the peripheral proletariat therefore becomes the overcoming of backwardness, dependency, and underdevelopment.

This interest has a definite form: catching-up development. The question appears materially as the need to develop, industrialize, build capacity, raise social power, and overcome the historical gap imposed by the Center.

When the aggregate proletariat of the polar periphery takes power, this class need becomes a class law. Proletarian power on the polar periphery means the organization of society around catching-up development. The dictatorship of the proletariat is command over property and command over development.

Nomenklatura expresses this same law from the side of representation. The proletariat structurally requires catching-up development. Nomenklatura functionally requires catching-up development, because its own self-sponsorship and survival depend on the expansion of the material power of the Anticenter.

The two sides therefore coincide. The owning class and the representative class move toward the same object. The aggregate proletariat requires catching-up development as its material class interest. Nomenklatura requires catching-up development as the condition of its own reproduction. The RDP institutionalizes this coincidence.

The Plan is the architecture through which this coincidence becomes a system. It transforms the class need of the peripheral proletariat into command, direction, execution, and reproduction. In this sense, the Plan is the organized form of the law of anticapital.

The law of anticapital can therefore be stated from three sides. From the side of the proletariat, it is the structural demand for catching-up development. From the side of nomenklatura, it is the functional need for self-sponsorship through development. From the side of the Plan, it is the architecture that turns this demand and this need into the movement of the Anticenter.

The final formula is simple: anticapital begins with catching-up development and returns to catching-up development. Catching-up development is the law of the peripheral proletariat, the law of nomenklatura, the law of the Plan, and therefore the law of anticapital.

This circular form can be checked historically. The main organized forms of anticapital present themselves through the language of development, backwardness, acceleration, modernization, and catching up. Their political speech repeatedly returns to the same object: the need to overcome the gap with the advanced capitalist world.

In the Soviet case, this appeared directly in the language of industrialization. Stalin formulated the task as the need to overtake and outstrip the developed capitalist countries technically and economically (Stalin 1928). In 1931, the same logic appeared as a question of survival: the USSR was described as decades behind the advanced countries and forced to make up that distance within a short historical period (Stalin 1931). Later Soviet reflection also described the modernization of Russia during the Soviet period as catching-up modernization, organized through the slogan of overtaking and surpassing the West (Gorbachev 2000).

In the Chinese case, the same logic appears in another historical form. Maoist China used the language of catching up with and surpassing advanced capitalist countries during the Great Leap period (Foreign Languages Press 1958). Dengist China reformulated the same law in the language of development itself: development became the absolute principle of the system (Deng 1992). Contemporary Chinese modernization continues the same line through high-quality development, technological self-reliance, common prosperity, and national rejuvenation (Xi 2022).

These examples show that the theory names the real object around which these systems organize themselves. The Soviet and Chinese forms differ, but both return to the same axis: the overcoming of backwardness and the expansion of material power against the Center.

This also confirms the class side of the argument. The peripheral proletariat appears historically inside a world where development is blocked, delayed, or subordinated by the Center. Its structural interest therefore takes the form of development against the historical gap. When this class interest becomes organized through the Anticenter, it appears as catching-up development.

The same relation appears at the level of material legitimacy. In the Chinese case, long-term survey research links public evaluation of government performance with concrete changes in material well-being (Cunningham et al. 2020). More generally, recent political theory treats sustained economic development as a source of political legitimacy in poor states, because economic growth and state capacity appear as valuable outcomes of rule (Brinkmann and Ó Laoghaire 2026). The law of anticapital is therefore visible from both sides: it is derived logically from the structure of the Anticenter, and it appears historically in the language, practice, and material legitimacy of the main anticapitalist formations.

3 Economic Democracy

The law of anticapital gives the material basis for economic democracy. If catching-up development is the law of the peripheral proletariat, then the legitimacy of the Anticenter must also be understood through this law.

Economic democracy is the political form of this material relation. It is the form in which the aggregate proletariat gives its mandate to the Command Core through the demand for catching-up development.

This mandate has an imperative character. In its classical political meaning, an imperative mandate binds representatives to the instructions of those who elect them and connects representation with accountability and possible recall (European Commission for Democracy through Law 2009; Tomba 2018).

Liberal democracy is built around another form. Its representative is formally independent. The German Basic Law states this through the formula that members of parliament represent the whole people and act according to conscience; the French Constitution expresses the same principle by making binding instructions void (Federal Republic of Germany 1949; French Republic 1958).

This is the free mandate. It fits the political form of capital. The voter gives political authorization, while the representative acts inside a field of parties, factions, interests, institutions, donors, media, and state procedures. The representative remains politically free because the real movement of the system is already organized by capital.

Economic democracy has another form. Its mandate is imperative because the Command Core receives a material task from the aggregate proletariat. This task is catching-up development. The Command Core remains legitimate while it fulfills this task.

The socialist constitutional tradition preserved the juridical image of this logic. The 1936 Soviet Constitution made deputies accountable to electors and liable to recall. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China states that deputies are subject to the oversight of the electoral units that elected them and that these units have the power to remove them according to law (People's Republic of China 1982; Union of Soviet Socialist Republics 1936).

These juridical forms express only the surface of the deeper relation. In the RDP, the imperative mandate is not exhausted by the recall of an individual deputy. Its deeper form is the material mandate of the aggregate proletariat over the whole Command Core.

The aggregate proletariat does not appear as millions of separate shareholders issuing separate instructions. It appears as one class-owner whose common material demand is development against backwardness, dependency, and peripheral degradation.

The Command Core receives this mandate through the structure of the Anticenter. It must hold Contour A, direct Contour B, reproduce the material power of the system, and fulfill the law of anticapital.

The "vote" of the aggregate proletariat therefore has a material form. It appears in the continuation of catching-up development. When development continues, the mandate is fulfilled. When development falls to zero, the mandate is withdrawn by the movement of the system itself.

This is the meaning of material legitimacy. The legitimacy of nomenklatura does not rest on liberal procedure. It rests on the successful execution of the imperative mandate of development.

Liberal democracy and economic democracy therefore express two different modes of legitimacy. Liberal democracy gives legitimacy through the free political mandate. Economic democracy gives legitimacy through the imperative material mandate.

In liberal democracy, the representative is free because capital already commands the material movement of society. In economic democracy, the representative is bound because proletarian power must be continuously realized through development.

Economic democracy is therefore the material form of proletarian legitimacy. It is democracy in the sense that the aggregate proletariat gives the decisive mandate; it is economic because this mandate is expressed through the development of the whole social body.

The final formula is direct: catching-up development is the imperative mandate of the aggregate proletariat. Nomenklatura is legitimate while it fulfills this mandate. The Anticenter exists as economic democracy while the law of anticapital remains active through its command, direction, and execution.

4 Conclusion

Economic democracy is the material form of proletarian legitimacy. Its basis is the law of anticapital: catching-up development.

The aggregate proletariat of the polar periphery gives its mandate through the demand for development. Nomenklatura receives this mandate as the representative class of the Anticenter. The Command Core remains legitimate while it expands the material power of the system and fulfills the law of anticapital.

This gives the final formula of the work: catching-up development is the imperative mandate of the aggregate proletariat, and economic democracy is the political form of this mandate.

References

- Brinkmann, M. and T. Ó Laoghaire (Mar. 17, 2026). "The Significance of Success: Economic Development as a Source of Political Legitimacy". In: *European Journal of Political Theory*. DOI: 10.1177/14748851261429912. URL: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/14748851261429912> (visited on 05/12/2026).
- Cunningham, E., T. Saich, and J. Turiel (July 2020). *Understanding CCP Resilience: Surveying Chinese Public Opinion Through Time*. Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, Harvard Kennedy School. URL: <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/publications/understanding-ccp-resilience-surveying-chinese-public-opinion-through-time> (visited on 05/12/2026).
- Deng, X. (1992). *Excerpts From Talks Given in Wuchang, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Shanghai*. Marxists Internet Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/deng-xiaoping/1992/179.htm> (visited on 05/12/2026).
- European Commission for Democracy through Law (June 16, 2009). *Report on the Imperative Mandate and Similar Practices*. CDL-AD(2009)027. Council of Europe, Venice Commission. URL: [https://www.coe.int/t/e/venice/CDL-AD\(2009\)027.aspx](https://www.coe.int/t/e/venice/CDL-AD(2009)027.aspx)

- [/www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/CDL-AD\(2009\)027.aspx](http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/CDL-AD(2009)027.aspx)
(visited on 05/12/2026).
- Federal Republic of Germany (1949). *Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany*. Federal Ministry of Justice. URL: https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_gg/englisch_gg.html (visited on 05/12/2026).
- Foreign Languages Press (1958). *China Will Overtake Britain*. Foreign Languages Press. URL: <https://www.bannedthought.net/China/MaoEra/Socialism/ChinaWillOvertakeBritain-1958.pdf> (visited on 05/12/2026).
- French Republic (1958). *Constitution of 4 October 1958*. Constitute Project. URL: https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/France_2008
(visited on 05/12/2026).
- Gorbachev, M. (2000). "Let's Not Oversimplify! A Balance Sheet of the Soviet Years". In: *The Gorbachev Factor*. URL: <https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/book/gorbachev/03ch-25-37.pdf> (visited on 05/12/2026).
- Isteni, V. (May 2026). "The Architecture of the Plan: The Architecture of Anticapitalist Reproduction". Manuscript.
- People's Republic of China (1982). *Constitution of the People's Republic of China*. The State Council of the People's Republic of China. URL: https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/laws-regulations/201911/20/content_WS5ed8856ec6d0b3f0e9499913.html
(visited on 05/12/2026).
- Stalin, J. V. (Nov. 19, 1928). *Industrialisation of the Country and the Right Deviation in the C.P.S.U.(B.)* Marxists Internet Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1928/11/19.htm> (visited on 05/12/2026).
- (Feb. 4, 1931). *The Tasks of Business Executives*. Marxists Internet Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1931/02/04.htm> (visited on 05/12/2026).
- Tomba, M. (2018). "Who's Afraid of the Imperative Mandate?" In: *Critical Times* 1.1, pp. 108–119. DOI: 10.1215/26410478-1.1.108. URL: <https://read.dukeupress.edu/critical-times/article/1/1/108/139309/Who-s-Afraid-of-the-Imperative-Mandate> (visited on 05/12/2026).
- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (1936). *Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*. Bucknell University. URL: <https://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/36cons04.html> (visited on 05/12/2026).
- Xi, J. (Oct. 16, 2022). *Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive in Unity to Build a Modern Socialist Country in All Respects: Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China*. International Department, Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. URL: <https://www.idcpc.org.cn/english2023/tjz1/cpcjj/20thPartyCongrressReport/> (visited on 05/12/2026).