

Imperialism and War

Capitalist imperialism produces 3 kinds of wars:

1. War of conquest to establish imperialist relations.
2. War of national liberation to force out the imperial master.
3. War of inter-imperial rivalry among powerful imperialist states.

Topics Covered on Imperialism

1. What is imperialism?
2. Why does imperialism arise in the capitalist era?
- [3. The historical evolution of capitalist imperialism.]
4. Is the Marxist theory of imperialism relevant to the global system of contemporary capitalism?

Imperialism and Capitalism

Imperialism: The economic and political domination of one region by the ruling class of another.

Imperialism predates capitalism but capitalism produces a form of imperialism that is new in certain ways.

Imperialism play a major role in the birth, development, and passing away of capitalism.

Center and Periphery

As capitalism developed, there arose two distinct parts of the capitalist world:

Center (Advanced countries, Core, Metropolis):

Parts of world where capitalism first developed.

Periphery (Underdeveloped countries, Third World):

Parts of world dominated by center and where capitalism developed later.

Literature on Imperialism

1. How/why does imperialism arise?
2. How does imperialism affect the internal relations and development of center countries?
3. How does imperialism affect the internal relations and development of periphery countries?
4. What is the character of relations between
 - a) Center and periphery countries.
 - b) Center countries and other center countries.

Driving Forces of Capitalist Imperialism

Geographic Expansion of Economic Activity:

Accumulation drive produces three forms of international economic expansion:

1. Export of commodities
2. Export of capital
 - A. Advantages of production abroad
 - B. Advantages in selling final products abroad
3. Obtain raw materials

Driving Forces of Capitalist Imperialism (con't.)

Role of Monopoly

1. Monopoly limits output in domestic market → seek to export commodities and capital
2. Large enterprises have the means to locate production abroad → growing role for capital export
3. Monopoly stage introduces production processes that require rapid increases in raw material inputs

Lenin: Imperialism defined as the monopoly stage of capitalism.

Driving Forces of Capitalist Imperialism (con't.)

Geographic Expansion Leads to Economic Domination:

1. Economically more advanced capitalist enterprises dominate economies into which they expand.
2. In monopoly stage, monopolists strive to control markets and raw material extraction.
3. Growing role of capital export relative to commodity export → increased drive for long-term economic and political control of host country.

Driving Forces of Capitalist Imperialism (con't.)

Imperialism and Political Domination:

Dominant state roles in imperial relations with dominated country:

1. Create conditions for capitalist exchange and production in dominated country
2. Limit competition from capital based in other imperialist countries
3. Protect against local threats to particular economic interests of dominant country capitalists in dominated country
4. Keep dominated country open to foreign investment

Evolution of Imperialism

A. Commercial Imperialism: Late 15th Century to mid 18th Century

- Period of primitive accumulation in Europe.
- European merchants finance exploration, creation of settler colonies.
- Economic aims:
 1. Develop profitable trade
 2. Obtain loot

Note: Trade was based mainly on products of pre-capitalist production.

Evolution of Imperialism (con't.)

B. Competitive Capitalist Imperialism: 1750–1870

- Period of modern industry.
- Economic aims:
 1. Export commodities
 2. Obtain raw materials
- Features:
 1. International division of labor arises.
 2. Loose colonialism.

Evolution of Imperialism (con't.)

C. Monopoly Capitalist Imperialism: 1870-1945

- Period of monopoly capitalism
- Economic aims: All 3 (export commodities, export capital, obtain raw materials)
- Features:
 1. Capital export becomes more important than commodity export.
 2. New colonialism: tight control by dominant state, extension to nearly all remaining undominated regions/countries.
 3. World-wide wars of division and redivision.

Evolution of Imperialism (con't.)

C. Monopoly Capitalist Imperialism 1870-1945 (con't.)

Law of uneven development: Uneven rates of development among imperial powers tends to change the relative economic status among them over time.

Leads to periodic wars of redivision.

Decline of Modern Colonialism (1914-45):

1. Effects of 2 world wars.
 - a. Weakened colonial powers.
 - b. Spurred demands for independence.
2. Growing strength of socialist movements and USSR
 - a. Provided aid, ideas
 - b. Fear of colonies "going Communist"

Evolution of Imperialism (con't.)

D. Post-Colonial Cold War Imperialism: 1945–1990

Features:

1. Two camps, capitalist and state socialist, with rivalry between them.
2. US/Europe dominate Third World (Asia, Africa, Middle East, Latin America), but not through overt political rule (“neocolonialism”).
3. US replaces Britain as dominant imperial power.
4. Uneven development in Third World: Rapid development in some parts of Asia and Middle East, Africa declines, Latin America mixed outcomes.
5. Increasingly integrated world capitalist economy.
6. Many wars and military interventions:
 - a) Inter-camp wars
 - b) National liberation wars
 - c) US military interventions

Note: No wars of inter-imperial rivalry.

The Contemporary World System: 1990 to present

1. Demise of state socialist alternative system

USSR disintegrates, European members of Warsaw Pact dismantle state socialism and Warsaw Pact, China heads toward capitalism

Results:

- A) End of two-camp rivalry which had structured world system since 1945
- B) US becomes sole military superpower

2. Collapse of main state-directed capitalist models

Japan's rapid growth ends in 1989-90, Asian Financial Crisis 1997 (exception: China)

Neoliberalism becomes fully dominant.

The Contemporary World System: 1990 to Present (con't.)

3. Global economic integration proceeds further

Financial integration in particular increases.

4. Growing protest against neoliberal global order

Attempts to reform or overthrow dominant system.

5. Increasingly aggressive US imperial policy

A) Frequent military interventions

B) New “National Security Strategy” of right to intervene, pre-emptive war, immunity from international treaties.

Harvey: The New Imperialism

Overaccumulation: Creation of surplus capital
(including labor-power).

Leads to “spatio-temporal fix”: Geographical expansion
and spatial reorganization.

Since 1970s severe overaccumulation tendency has
been an obstacle to extended reproduction.

Result is “accumulation by dispossession.”

That is the “new imperialism” of today.

Accumulation by dispossession: Primitive
accumulation after the initial rise of capitalism

Harvey: The New Imperialism (cont)

Accumulation by dispossession:

- 1) Commodification and privatization of land
- 2) Commodification of labor-power and suppression of indigenous forms of production
- 3) Appropriation of natural resources by force

State plays a key role in this process.

US aggressive military stance: explained by declining US economic strength.

US uses its strength to try to maintain dominance through seizing control of key raw materials.

Ideology and Imperialism

Pre-Capitalist Imperialism: Right of strong to rule the weak.

Capitalist epoch: Nation state arises, ideas of right to self-rule and equality among peoples become powerful.

Ideology and Imperialism (con't.)

Ideological justifications of imperialist domination/intervention in the capitalist epoch:

1. Racial superiority
2. National superiority
3. Bring civilization to the uncivilized
4. Bring Christianity to the heathens (non-Christians)
5. Preserve order
6. Prevent Communist takeover
7. Prevent aggression
8. Preserve or bring democracy or freedom
9. Safeguard national security
10. Stop human rights violations
11. Defeat terrorism
12. Defeat evil
13. Disarm other nations that are not entitled to be armed