

LINKAGES BETWEEN ECONOMIC AND MILITARY IMPERIALISM

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Abstract: Much has been written both about economic and military manifestations of empire, but there are fewer examinations of how the two are interconnected. This article explores five forms of linking motivations by which economic imperialism escalates into military interventions: resource covetous, enterprise-specific, system protective, empire share, and military-industrialist linkages. The first three types describe how imperial relations between empires and client states may lead military interventions in the latter by the former to ensure control of critical resources, corporate dominance of a client state's land or industry, or to safeguard global capitalism itself. Empire share linkages are reflected when conflict among imperialist countries themselves develops into wars among core countries, while military-industrial linkages are when the interests of the arms and related industries themselves become a motivation for military interventions. These connections are not mutually exclusive, and each may be manifested to a lesser or greater degree in various imperialist interventions simultaneously.

Keywords: economic imperialism; military imperialism; military spending

Much work has been done recently examining the economic underpinnings of imperialism, particularly examining the capturing of value from exploited populations in the Global South by Northern-based multinational corporations through foreign direct investment and arms-length production (Suwandi 2019; Smith 2016). These current explorations of economic imperialism build upon and update the classical and historical examinations of the subject matter by Lenin ([1917] 2018) and Magdoff (1969). Meanwhile, other analyses (Chomsky 2016; Parenti 2011; Blum 2004) examine the history of US military interventions. In this article,

I seek to contribute to the discussion by classifying potential connections between economic and military aspects of empire.

This article begins with a brief review of the economic impetus for imperialism and some of its salient characteristics, including the astronomical levels of global inequality, followed by a brief discussion of within-core country class dynamics, an exploration of five different types of linkages between the economic and military manifestations of imperialism, and closes with a discussion of socialist internationalism as an alternative to modern imperialism. I focus on the role of the US empire due to its continued desire to exert global hegemony through a global network of military bases, domination of the world arms market, and disproportionate share of global military spending (explored below). Further, the USA has a long history of military interventions, coups, interference in other countries' elections, a role holding the world's reserve currency, prominent positions in the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and is the headquarters for many of the world's largest multinational corporations.

Imperialism can be conceived of as a nationalistic geopolitical expression of capital. It is the *process* by which capital from core countries appropriates the land, labor, and resources necessary to produce commodities and subjugates the interests of peripheral client states to those of capitalists in the metropolis. This requires vanquishing competing imperialists in the field when possible, gaining access to critical mineral resources around the globe, obtaining a share of other empires' value flows through subsidiary corporations that purchase interests in foreign banks, establishing currency dominance, and establishing a global network of military bases that serves as a further source of political influence (Magdoff 1969). The conditions to facilitate the international domination of capital dovetail with globalization, and with the power exerted by international financial institutions to force states to cede greater rights and space to capital accumulation through processes of austerity, structural adjustment, and privatization of state assets (Harvey 2005).

Classical imperialism involved direct colonization to extract vast amounts of raw materials from colonies, contributing to the underdevelopment and political subjugation of the colonies while the exploitative dependent relationships enhanced the development of the core colonizing countries (Rodney 1972; Galeano [1971] 2003). Modern imperialism is typically not characterized by direct colonization, but allows the semblance of independence, provided that these states subject themselves to the needs of capital accumulation. Imperialism is a political and economic phenomenon. To achieve the goals of empire, political power in the peripheral countries (or client states) must be subjugated to the interests of foreign capital, either by convincing a large enough sector of the population of the client states and their governing apparatus that they share the same interests as capital (this is the

function of neoliberal ideology), or through other means of subverting popular power in client states (this is the function of the Central Intelligence Agency, National Endowment for Democracy, and the military, if needed). As Ellen Meiksins Wood (2003, 153–154) argues, while modern imperialism “can rely on the economic imperatives of ‘the market’ to do much of its imperial work . . . these imperatives themselves must be enforced by extra-economic power.”

Economic imperialism takes place in a context of capitalist overproduction on a massive scale. For capital to pass through its circuit without interruption it is essential for it to bring together the materials and means of production in the appropriate quantities and qualities, with labor power purchased at a price that allows for maximize surplus value extraction and appropriation. Capital must have a market for these commodities; often in a part of the world far away from the point of production.

Unfortunately for capital, the market for these commodities is not always forthcoming. Large monopoly capital produces large surpluses of capital, which Yanis Varoufakis (2019) describes as the savings–investment gap, and Marxist thinkers such as John Bellamy Foster describe as the surplus absorption problem. This results from the tendency described by Marx of capital towards overproduction. Capital cannot find profitable investment at prices that permit capturing the reflux of all the invested aliquot components of capital. Eventually, markets are flooded and we have an interruption in capital’s industrial circuit. Yanis Varoufakis (2019) in a Ted Talk recently indicated that there was a savings investment gap of 5.1 trillion dollars in the US, UK, and the Eurozone. The excess of capital floating in money markets is accompanied by the well-documented recent trend of stock buy-backs as opposed to investment in the real sector. The drop in global effective demand as a result of the current pandemic of COVID-19 seems to be exacerbating this trend (Mazzucato 2020).

As the tendency towards overproduction progresses, capitalists take advantage of the drop in demand to “streamline” their enterprises, and often downsize their workforce. There is little point, from their perspective, in continuing to produce goods that have stagnated in the market due to a lack of effective demand. Thus, as employers send workers home, the reserve army of labor swells and demand is further undermined. This puts the remaining workers under further pressure to put in longer hours for low pay. Those who form part of what Foster and McChesney (2012) identify as the global reserve army of labor find themselves vulnerable to super-exploitation, i.e. to sell their labor power below its value.

Capital always seeks to maximize investment returns. It does this not only by increasing artificial desire for its products, although with the aforementioned tendency towards gluts this is an essential component of the process, but also by placing all of factors of production in its favor. This means that capital will use

global labor arbitrage to ensure access to the cheapest possible labor to maximize the rate of exploitation, pressure governments to relax their labor and environmental laws, strengthen intellectual property rights, and provide tax havens. It also means that capital will do whatever is possible to gain access to foreign markets to facilitate realization of critical precious resources that are essential to produce its commodities, such as the cobalt and coltan from the Eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for iPhones, irrespective of the conditions of the children in the mines.

John Smith's (2016) *Imperialism in the 21st Century: Globalization, Super-Exploitation and Capitalism's Final Crisis*, argues that to analyze empire we must examine super-exploitation in the Global South utilized by multinationals based in core countries that ultimately appropriate this value. Populations made desperate by multiple social-economic and political forces such as the destruction of traditional agriculture, and insufficient economic opportunities in urban areas, find themselves susceptible to the demands of local employers in places such as Dhaka Bangladesh to work endlessly long hours for notoriously low wages. Local employers often complain that they have little room to raise wages if they are to fill orders for large firms, as large commercial buyers (such as Wal-Mart) play firms off of each other, just as multinationals force working populations in different countries to compete with one another. Meanwhile, much of foreign investment is through arms-length production so that multinational corporations expropriating the majority of surplus value produced by hyper-exploited labor in the periphery remain largely invisible to any who examine the origin of the products they consume.

Economic imperialism and the role of capital can be expected to lead to very high levels of global inequality. In this regard, convergence theorists such as David Dollar and Aart Kraay (2004) and Michael Marquart (2009) tend to minimize the consequences of global capitalism and imperialism. Methodological maneuvering, such as the historic shift from GNP to GDP, tends to overestimate the so-called convergence (Smith 2016; Cobb, Halstead, and Rowe 1995).¹ The astronomically absurd and immoral extremes of global income and wealth inequality speak volumes in contradicting the sophistry of convergence theorists. According to Oxfam's findings in 2018, "[t]he wealth of the world's billionaires increased by \$900 billion in the last year alone, or \$2.5 billion a day. Meanwhile the wealth of the poorest half of humanity, 3.8 billion people, fell by 11%" (Oxfam 2019, 12). The poverty of the poorest half of humanity has been made more difficult by the destruction of minimal state protections with the advent of austerity programs in the 1980s imposed by international financial institutions (IFIs) that prioritize debt repayment over a host of population needs. In this regard, a recent rigorous panel study demonstrated that IFI loan conditionalities

significantly exacerbated health access and neonatal mortality in developing countries (Forster et al. 2020).

These frightful levels of inequality result from processes of dispossession, exploitation, centralization of capital, and appropriation (so-called primitive accumulation). Monopoly-finance capitalism drives global inequality to these pathological extremes.

In this most integrated imperialist system, five hundred corporations account for nearly 40 percent of world revenue while most other firms in the world economy are entangled in the webs of these giant firms and exist as mere subcontractors. (Foster 2019, 12)

Thus, value produced by workers worldwide finds its way to the pockets of the major shareholders of the multinationals at the end of the value chains.

Clearly, the high levels of inequality produced by global capitalism and imperialism lead to widespread discontent and potentially to mass movements that may seek to threaten capital's domination. In this regard, it is relevant that the astronomical wealth of multinational corporations facilitates their domination over the political system, particularly in the United States. With corporate interests threatened, corporate state capture may lead to imperial interventions to safeguard interests threatened by anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist movements.

Within-Core Country Class Dynamics and the Spoils of Empire

When we look at the high level of US income and wealth inequality, it is clear that some benefit far more from US imperialism than others. The portion of the pie of which the working class partakes within a given set of national boundaries depends upon the class dynamics within any given country. A portion of the value produced globally and captured by multinationals goes to capturing the state through lobbying and other means with the purpose of ensuring that (1) a greater portion remains in private shareholder hands through lower taxes with greater potential to exploit loopholes, weaken worker and environmental regulations within the state, and (2) that the greater portion of state spending is utilized to protect the interests of the capitalist class more generally, with an enormous chunk going to the military-industrial complex, which Hossein-Zadeh (2006, 226) identifies as yet another “redistributive mechanism of national resources in favor of the wealthy.”

It is imperative to be aware of the political implications of our analysis. As Marxists, we must promote an anti-imperialist awareness that builds solidarity among the world's working classes. Thus, we must take advantage of every opportunity to show workers in core countries how empire is destructive to both those in

the Global South and to them. It is true that cheap goods obtained through economic imperialism have helped offset some of the havoc wreaked upon working classes in core countries by the same processes of global labor arbitrage, and to this extent one may argue that imperialism underwrites to a degree the working classes' standard of living in core countries. Nevertheless, imperialism also undermines this same standard by shifting so much of the wealth and resources upward, and by allocating exorbitant quantities of taxes, labor and materials to war and military spending.

Due to commodity fetishism and the nature of consumer markets, the labor process, levels of exploitation, the living conditions of those who produce the very products that we in the Global North consume remain largely invisible. Too many people remain oblivious to the portions of value that accumulate to Foxconn and Apple extracted from Chinese workers, and even more are oblivious to the relations between the consumption of their iPhones and the miners in Eastern Congo going after the cobalt and coltan.

Although there are those who may deny the reality of either economic or military manifestations of imperialism, reality is stubborn. Both economic and military imperialism are real, as are their interconnections. We must theorize, investigate, and make explicit the linkages between economic imperialism and the massive array of US military bases around the world, the imposed sanction regimes against countries that attempt to break with US domination, the absolute disregard for international law and the brutal histories of invasions, and the dirty wars that characterize the military manifestations of imperialism.

Connections between Military and Economic Manifestations of Imperialism

One difficulty in approaching this question is the plethora of potential explanations surrounding military interventions. I would argue that five types of linkages between military and economic imperialism appear salient from an overview of recent history. I describe these linkages by their core motivations as resource covetous/extraction, enterprise-specific, system protective, empire share, and military-industrialist. In the first three linkages, we are generally dealing with imperial relations between empires and client states, in the fourth form among imperialist countries themselves, and in the fifth, the military-industrial linkage is when a parasitic outgrowth of a particular branch of capital with its own perverse political economy becomes itself an impetus for war. These connections are not mutually exclusive, and each may be manifested to a lesser or greater degree in various imperialist interventions simultaneously.

Resource covetous or extractive linkages tend to factor into virtually all motivations for manifestations of military imperialism. Certainly, direct control of global resources (both land and minerals) motivates modern imperial, classical, and settler forms of colonialism. Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz (2014) accurately describes the expulsion and genocide of Native Americans as settler colonialism and motivated by the desire for land. Eduardo Galeano ([1971] 2003) identifies how the desire for gold, silver and sugar motivated Spain and Portugal to colonize much of the Americas. Although we may tend to think of settler-colonialism as relegated to the past, it nevertheless persists into the present (the ongoing settler-colonial expansion by Israel of Palestinian land is a quintessential case).

Broadly conceived, however, resource covetous linkages ultimately play an important role in modern forms of imperialism to ensure access and control of actual or potential key land and mineral resources that may be threatened by political-economic shifts in the periphery or by competing powers. The invasion of Afghanistan provides a modern-day example of this linkage, with US frustration with the Taliban when the Unocal-Taliban talks stalled relating to the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline.

When these talks stalled in July, 2001 the Bush administration threatened the Taliban with military reprisals if the government did not go along with American demands. The talks finally broke down for good the following month, a month before 9.11. (Blum 2014, 81)

Finally, while many interventions contain some resource covetous motivations, this is not by any means true in all cases. For example, one would be hard-pressed to see what critical material resource (nutmeg?) was held by Grenada when the US invaded in October of 1983.

I describe enterprise-specific linkages as those where an imperialist country intervenes militarily to benefit a particularly powerful multinational corporation or group of capitalists whose interests in exploiting another country's natural resources and powerful influence over the peripheral country's political system has been threatened by a popular movement from below. One classic example of an enterprise-specific linkages is when the US overthrew Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954 in the interest of United Fruit Company. Expropriated land distributed to peasants by Arbenz was returned to United Fruit Company immediately following the US overthrow and installation of Castillo Armas. This was followed by the most brutal repression of union leaders, left-wing political activists, and a genocide of Guatemala's indigenous Mayan population by a series of brutal US installed, supported, and trained dictatorships (Blum 2004). Another

example of an enterprise-specific linkage would be the US overthrow of Mossadegh in Iran at the behest of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company that propped up the Shah.

A salient feature of enterprise-specific linkages is a rejection by the imperial power of any move by the satellite country towards any form of genuine political-economic independence. The countries in question may have no desire or objective to move beyond capitalism per se, but they resent and reject being forcefully placed in the position of economic dependency by the imperial power. Identifying direct connections of particular firms that benefit from military interventions provides a fruitful starting point of analyses for inter or intrastate conflict.

Third is the system protective linkage; it is similar to the enterprise-specific linkage, but this time the imperial aggression is focused on protecting the prerogatives of capital *in general* to dominate a client state in the periphery and to *protect the overall system* of capitalism rather than the interests of any firm in particular. Since any economic transition away from capitalism would adversely impact the interests of particular corporations, it is clear that historic cases that manifest system protective linkages between economic and military imperialism will contain elements of the enterprise-specific linkages. Thus, in enterprise-specific linkages, only particular capitalist interests are threatened or affected by the policies pursued by the government, in the second, the threats to capitalism are more systemic and profound.

In this linkage the most brutal forms of anti-communism are unleashed. System protective linkages between economic and military imperialism are exemplified most clearly by the cold war, and are reflected in the virulent anti-communist ideology that characterized US foreign and domestic politics ever since WWII (Blum 2014, 2004). The utter brutality, cruelty and often genocidal nature of these linkages can be seen by the sheer destruction that the United States unleashed on the populations of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and North Korea.²

The US implacable determination to destroy the Cuban revolution is a quintessential reflection of this linkage. Although particularly powerful and influential corporations (such as United Fruit Company and International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation) lost land, influence, and wealth with the Cuban revolution's nationalizations and reforms, and the refusal of these multinationals to accept the compensation offered by the Cuban government give it elements of enterprise-specific linkage, I argue that the Cuban case primarily reflects the system protective linkage. Cuba was developing (and continues to develop) a radical alternative to capitalism that rapidly wiped out illiteracy, diseases of poverty, reduced economic inequality, and addressed rural poverty and underdevelopment that could become an attractive model to other countries. This example of a socialist path to balanced and independent development could not be tolerated and had to be destroyed at any cost. This is made explicit in the infamous Lester Mallory memorandum that openly promotes creating an "inconspicuous" and "adroit"

method to “deny money and supplies to Cuba” to “decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and the overthrow of government” (Office of the Historian 1960). It certainly appears that, even as the US blockade of the Cuban economy has failed to achieve the objectives of destroying the Cuban government, it has succeeded in making life harder for Cubans, which becomes a useful propaganda tool to undermine the appeal of the Cuban example to other countries that may wish to free themselves from US imperial domination.

US policy towards Cuba since the revolution has been crafted with the goal of destroying the threat posed to capitalism by the example of successful socialist policies in overcoming underdevelopment and social inequities. One need only look at the brutal 60-year-old economic aggression, the dirty war against Cuba through the 1960s and 1970s, the failed 1961 invasion of Playa Girón, and the complete disregard for three decades of UN General Assembly resolutions that consistently demand an end to the economic blockade (Lamrani 2014; Parenti 2011). The logic is clear, if the US is unable to force Cuba to return to being a subservient capitalist client state, *than its economy must be so badly damaged and its reality so callously misrepresented that other populations who would like to be free from the yoke of capitalist imperialism dare not follow*. The US corporate media’s continual exaggeration (and sometimes fabrication) of Cuban problems and tendency to ignore or downgrade Cuba’s achievements, coupled with a decontextualization of the country’s challenges, works hand in hand with the goal of undermining Cuba’s status as an alternative development model (Bolender 2019). Certainly, if socialism by nature were prone to self-destruct as is so often argued in the corporate press due to alleged insuperable inefficiencies, *then all forms of sanctions and aggression would be superfluous*.

The aggression against Venezuela also follows a similar logic, although the direct interests of Exxon Mobile in Venezuela’s oil also could place it in the first category. The recent coup in Bolivia, the abominable and murderous US aggressions against Vietnam and Korea, along with support for the fascist and blood-thirsty regimes of Suharto in Indonesia, Syngman Rhee in South Korea, Pinochet in Chile, and the support for death squads and right-wing dictatorships in Central America all exhibit the system-protective linkage to a degree. Magdoff (1969, 40) identified “the struggle against the contraction of the imperialist system” as a characteristic feature of the new imperialism. Here, imperialism wishes to save “as much as possible of the imperialist network and reconquering lost territories.”

The empire share linkage refers to conflict among imperialist states themselves for control of colonies (or neo-colonies) as outlined by Lenin ([1917] 2018). Here, the interests of both monopoly finance capital and industrial capital lead to a need to guarantee access to resources in the periphery and access to markets in the core and semi-periphery. Various imperial powers in service of monopolies tied to different

nation states vie for the right to control the resources necessary to supply industrial monopolies, and war erupts over which country or set of countries will constitute the core position in a post-war world order. This applies to World War I, when imperial powers went to war with each other over control of colonies. This type of connection may also be reflected in the war in Syria as the USA and Russia vie for control over Syria's resources. While in the present moment the configuration of global power is certainly different than at the time of Lenin's writing, it is not unfathomable that with the weakening of the US empire that violent inter-state conflict could reemerge between competing powers with disastrous consequences for the already vulnerable planet.

The military-industrial or "parasitic" linkage between economic and military dimensions of imperialism lies in the "parasitic imperialism" of defense contracting corporate interests. The arms industry is a separate branch of capital that has an extremely lucrative relationship with the US government. Hossein-Zadeh (2006) argues that the development of the military-industrial complex led to a qualitative transformation in the traditional relationship between the private sector and imperial ventures. In the past, the traditional role of the military was either "to maintain national security or to gain economic, territorial, or geopolitical advantages" (Hossein-Zadeh 2006, 27). Now, due to an extended period of dependence on military Keynesian countercyclical strategies and 70 years of non-stop US foreign military interventions, a powerful confluence of interests emerged among a powerful group of thousands of defense contractors, civilian structures which influence military spending levels such as the congressional armed service committees, Office of the President, the CIA, and the National Security Council, and finally the head generals of the Army, Navy, Airforce, and Marines. This pernicious confluence of interests is parasitical in nature, and is dedicated to enriching the interests of the defense contractors themselves.

When an inordinately large military establishment of a world power reaches such high levels of influence that it can manipulate the foreign policy of that superpower for its own ends, militarism can be called military imperialism—or parasitic imperialism. Under the sway of military imperialism, instigation of international conflicts and military adventures abroad are often prompted not so much by territorial or economic gains for the empire or the nation as a whole—that is, not by a desire to expand the empire's wealth beyond existing levels—but by a desire to appropriate the lion's share of the existing wealth and treasure for the military establishment. (Hossein-Zadeh 2006, 28)

Interesting potentials for analysis here can be further explored. Mandel ([1978] 2006) suggested in his introduction to Volume II of *Capital* that the arms industry plays a special role in expanded reproduction and could be conceptualized as

part of department III along with luxury goods. Looking at the scale of the surplus absorption problem alluded to above by Varoufakis (2019), it would appear that the arms industry provides a profitable outlet for capital, with fewer risks to capital as government contracts provide an easy path towards realization. This comes with several important political implications. The arms industry benefits directly from a culture of militarism, the perception by a critical threshold of the population of external threat, actual military conflict, and an expansive network of bases around the world. Any economic system that requires that vast quantities of material resources and mental and physical labor be diverted away from fulfilling humanity’s needs to the better designing of instruments of terror and destruction that endangers survival has long outlived its social utility.

In 2018, according to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) data, the US Defense Department budget spent \$648,798,273,000 (SIPRI 2020). China comes in a distant second, with just under \$250 billion. Figure 1 displays SIPRI data contrasting trend lines of US military spending with that of Russia and China. Although, the trend in Figure 1 shows that both China and Russia have increased their

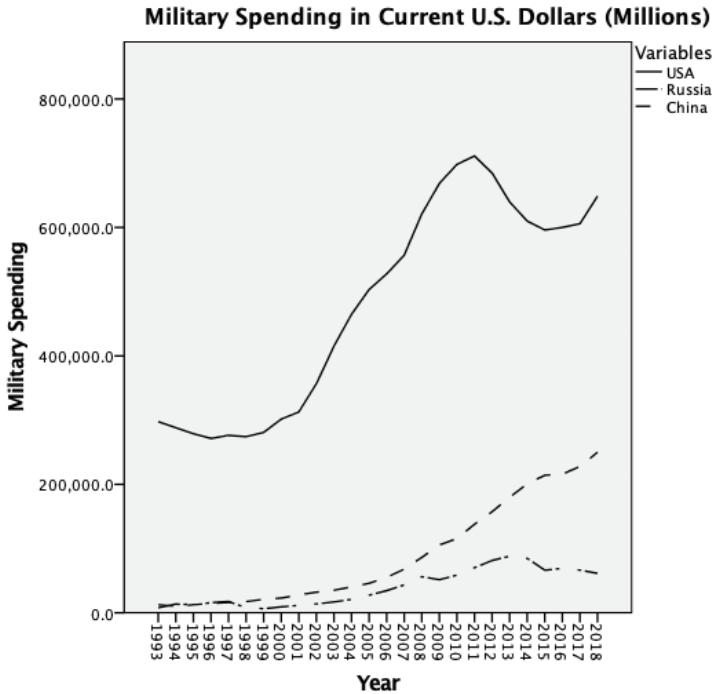


Figure 1 Comparison of US, Russian and Chinese Military Spending from 1993 to 2018

Source: Data come from SIPRI Military Expenditure Database (SIPRI 2018, 2020). Graph is produced with SPSS.

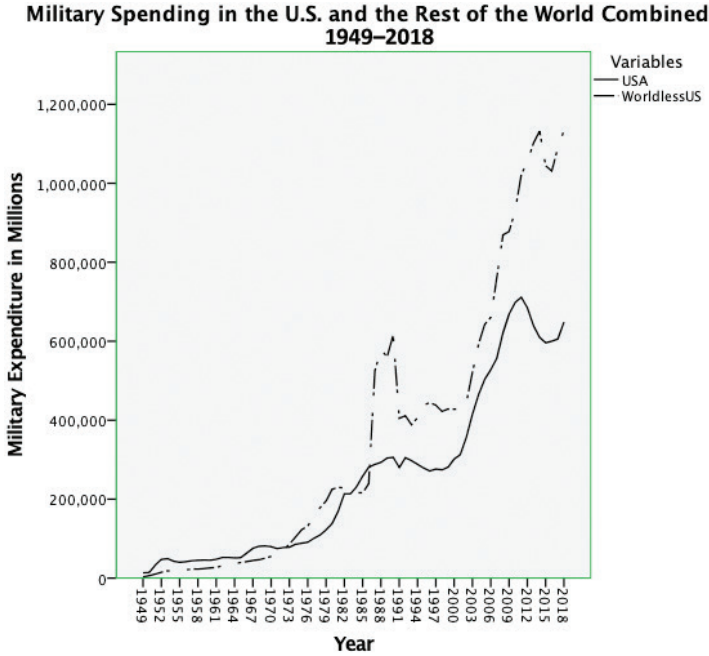


Figure 2 Comparison of US and the Resto of the World’s Combined Military Spending from 1949 to 2018

Source: Data come from SIPRI Military Expenditure Database (SIPRI 2018, 2020). Graph is produced with SPSS.

military expenditure, the US figure remains greater than what the next seven highest spending countries their respective militaries (China, Saudi Arabia, India, France, Russia, UK, Germany, and Japan) spent combined in 2018 (Figure 2). Recently released SIPRI (2020) data show now that US spending (\$731.751 billion) is greater than the next nine countries that spend most on their militaries combined (China, India, Russia, Saudi Arabia, France, Germany, UK, Japan, South Korea, and Brazil at \$725.668 billion). We should remember that this figure alone is more than half of the 1.133 trillion dollars that SIPRI reported as the rest of the world’s combined military expenditure. However, this is not the end of the story. A lot of military spending is hidden in other budgets, and thus the gargantuan 650-billion-dollar defense budget grossly underestimates the size of US military spending.

The reason for this understatement is that the official Department of Defense (DoD) budget excludes not only the cost of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan but also a number of other major cost items: the Coast Guard and the Department of Homeland Security; nuclear weapons research and development, testing and

storage (in the energy budget); veterans programs (in Veteran's Administration budget); most military retiree payments (in treasury budget); foreign military aid in the form of weapons grants for allies (in the State Department budget); interest payments on money borrowed to fund military programs in past years (in the Treasury budget); sales and property taxes at military bases (in local government budgets), and the hidden expenses of tax free food, housing and combat pay allowances. (Hossein-Zadeh 2006, 205)

Hartung and Smithberger (2019) go further when calculating US military spending and estimated \$1.2542 trillion and along with the aforementioned items include the war budget. Taken inclusively, this US figure for direct and indirect military expenditures is greater than the quantity that SIPRI reported for the entire rest of the world and five times greater than that of China. Further, while we see that the DoD budget peaked around 2011 according to SIPRI data, the 2019 budget allocated over \$731 billion dollars to the Department of Defense alone. This massive military spending serves both to enrich defense contractors and as an impetus for the creation of enemies to rationalize the astronomical spending to the public. This massive investment in weaponry, along with the long list of US covert and overt interventions, serves to intimidate any who may dare try to carve out an independent path of development.

Hossein-Zadeh analyzed the revolving door between military contractors and key positions within the US government that influence spending. He observed that many of the largest defense contractors (especially Lockheed Martin) had several former employees of high rank, including a former Chief Operating Officer that was "an Undersecretary of the Air Force and Director of the National Reconnaissance Office, a post that includes making decisions on the acquisition of everything from reconnaissance satellites to space-based elements of missile defense" (Hossein-Zadeh 2006,188). Even Dick Cheney's wife served for over six years on Lockheed Martin's board of directors.

Taking note of the central importance of economic concentration and monopoly formation in regard to imperialism, it is noteworthy that in 2017, according to SIPRI data, the world's top ten arms selling companies brought in 48% of the total sales of the top 100 arms companies. Of the top 10 ranking defense contractors, 69.4% of weapons sales came from US-based companies, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman Corporation, and General Dynamics. Of the top 100 companies, 47 were based in the United States, and the US-based military-industrial corporations accounted for 57.89% of the top 100 arms sales in the world, or a total of \$238.8 billion (SIPRI 2018).

Although the military-industrial linkage likely plays a role in many conflicts, a few recent ones are worthy of mention. In *Killing Hope*, Blum (2004, 320–321)

argues that, since the demand for a peace dividend after the fall of the USSR threatened to reduce military spending levels, a war with Iraq was needed to convince congress and the public of the need to keep spending levels high. Similarly, Hossein-Zadeh (2006, 2007) argues that the interests of military contractors played a role in promoting the war in Iraq and in creating an obstacle for US withdrawal.

Powerful beneficiaries of war dividends, who are often indistinguishable from the policy makers who pushed for the invasion of Iraq, have been pocketing hundreds of billions of dollars by virtue of war. More than anything else, it is the pursuit and the safeguarding of those plentiful spoils of war that are keeping US troops in Iraq. (Hossein-Zadeh 2007)

A final example of this is the role of defense contractors in war and attempted coups. The use of Blackwater mercenaries (now Academi under Constellis Holdings) in Iraq is well known; the recent coup attempt by self-proclaimed Venezuela “president” Juan Guaidó is another. Here payment was made to Silvercorp to help achieve the US objective of overthrowing the elected government of Nicolas Maduro. Koerner and Vaz (2020) reported that Silvercorp demanded that Juan Guaidó pay 213 million dollars to overthrow Maduro, with 1.5 million dollars paid up front. The contract between Guaidó and Silvercorp was a sort of “statement of purpose” that outlined the mercenary company’s role (and payment) for overthrowing Maduro’s government, their future relationship with a Venezuela ruled by Juan Guaidó, and policing the state for him. According to Misión Verdad, the contract outlined Silvercorp’s role as a potential mediator between Venezuela’s oil wealth and private investors, the intention to privatize state assets, and the goal of killing or arresting Chavista leaders, including President Maduro, and others who may oppose the new puppet government (MR Online 2020).

Resource covetous, enterprise-specific, and empire share linkages reflect the folly of Kautsky’s (1914) hopes of peace arising with an alliance of imperialist powers; in the first two of these cases massive violence is unleashed against populations unwilling to live in situations of dependency and in the latter inter-imperialist conflict tends to break out. The yoke of dependency has become more unbearable in the current growth of anti-immigrant hostility and neo-fascism. This is manifested not only in the United States under Trump, Bolsonaro in Brazil, Modi in India, but also recently with a wave of violence against Nigerian, Zimbabwean, and other African migrants in South Africa (Al Jazeera 2019). Trump’s threats to impose tariffs against Mexico to prevent Central American migrants from migrating to the USA and Canada would impact negatively on remittances, one of the few lifelines to vulnerable populations in countries devastated by neoliberal policies

and decades of brutal US intervention in Central America, exemplified recently with the 2009 overthrow of Manuel Zelaya in Honduras.

It is important to emphasize that both workers in imperialist countries and workers in client states are exploited and disadvantaged by imperialism, albeit to different degrees. US workers remain exploited and subject to being thrown into the reserve army of labor by the same corporations that seek super-profits in the Global South. It is the working classes in rich countries that are sent to kill and die in wars, whether they are driven by resource covetous, enterprise-specific, system protective, imperial expansion, or military-industrial linkages and it is their public funds that are diverted to bail out capitalists when they crash, and their taxes that are diverted into the military-industrial complex. Meanwhile, those populations who suffer the absolute destruction of their societies—the murderous fruit of empire—are often simply resisting an unjust and inhumane imperialism that hyper-exploited their labor and resources.

Internationalism: A Non-Exploitative Model of International Economic Relations

A key question remains. As the imminent climate catastrophe and the threat of endless wars with perpetually greater destructive capacity threaten our long-term survival as a species, it is imperative to envision equitable and environmentally sustainable alternative structures to the current global economic order. The planet desperately requires the implementation of a non-exploitative model of global economy based on the principles of international solidarity and environmental sustainability.

It has always been the principle of internationalism that those in more developed countries should assist rather than impede the development of the underdeveloped nations, with the aim of reducing global inequality, enhancing food sovereignty, strengthening public health and education, reducing gender inequality, and assisting with appropriate technology transfer. What distinguishes internationalism from a deceptive neoliberal discourse that may use similar terminology is that internationalism must be characterized by a net flow of value from wealthy regions of the globe to poorer regions to address global inequality. With all of the imperfections of the former Soviet Union, value flowed from the USSR and the COMECON (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) countries of Eastern Europe to countries such as Cuba, as exemplified by the purchase of Cuban sugar above (the depressed) market value prices. In this regard Amin comments:

The relationship between Russia—the dominant nation both numerically and historically—and other nations was not a colonial one. The redistribution of

investment and social benefits that operated to the detriment of Russians and to the benefit of the peripheral regions is evidence of this. In this regard, comparing the USSR to an “imperial” system dominating its “internal colonies” in spite of the impression of the “dominance” of the Russian nation (and even the arrogance of some of its expressions) is nonsense. Perhaps the Baltic states will learn that they have exchanged an advantageous position from which they benefited as part of the USSR for a subjugated position within the European Union! (Amin 2016, 83)

Of course, the initial hope of the Russian revolution was that there would be a successful revolution in Europe to help assist Russia overcome its own underdevelopment. Certainly, internal class divisions and antagonisms must be resolved by moving towards socialist economic models that provide both sufficient control of a revolutionary state over the major means of production, but also enhance direct worker control and participation in these enterprises, along with adequate space for what Richard Wolff describes as Worker Self-Directed Enterprises (Wolff 2012). However, to expect this to be done in the periphery without addressing the power of empire is to subject the brave revolutionary nations of the Global South to confront the full economic and military aggression of imperialism by themselves. Thus, however unlikely, a major anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist political, social, and economic transformation in the United States may be, it is absolutely essential for the health and peace of the planet.

The Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas (ALBA), prior to Venezuela’s crisis, also provided another example of non-exploitative economic relations among nation-states. For example, one reasons that Venezuela lacked a rainy-day fund was that, prior to the present crisis, they provided low price oil to Haiti, purchased Argentinian debt, and helped poor families in the Bronx with gas in the winter (Democracy Now! 2019; Venezuelanalysis.com 2006).³ Cuba remains one of the most steadfast and salient examples of internationalism, most notably by providing direct access to medical care to the most vulnerable populations around the globe and by training medical personnel from impoverished areas around the globe in the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) on full scholarships, with the condition that they will serve disadvantaged communities, including disadvantaged communities in the United States (Feinsilver 2009, 216–239). On October 12, 1979, Fidel Castro addressed the United Nations, and his words remain the best way to close this discussion:

The exploitation of the poor countries by the rich must cease.

I know that there are exploiters and those who are exploited in many poor countries as well.

I address myself to the rich nations, asking them to contribute. And I address myself to the poor nations asking them to distribute.

Enough of words! We need deeds!

Enough of abstractions. We want concrete action! Enough of speaking about a speculative new international order, which no one understands. We must now speak of a real, objective order which everybody understands!

I have not come here as a prophet of the revolution. I have not come here to ask or to wish that the world be violently convulsed. I have come to speak of peace and cooperation among the peoples. And I have come to warn that if we do not peacefully and wisely solve and eliminate the present injustices and inequalities, the future will be apocalyptic.

The noise of weapons, the threatening language, and of overbearing behavior on the international arena must cease.

Enough of the illusion that the problems of the world can be solved by nuclear weapons. Bombs may kill the hungry, the sick, and the ignorant but bombs cannot kill hunger, disease and ignorance. Nor can bombs kill the righteous rebellion of the peoples. And in the holocaust, the rich, who are the ones with the most to lose in this world, will also die.

Let us say farewell to arms, and let us in a civilized manner dedicate ourselves to the most pressing problems of our times. This is the responsibility; this is the most sacred duty of the statesmen of all the world. Moreover, this is the basic premise for human survival. (Castro [1979]1989, 71)

Notes

1. Smith cites Cobb, Halstead, and Rowe (1995) and explains the shift from Gross National Product to Gross Domestic Product caused foreign owned firms' economic activity to count on the balance-sheet of countries in which the factories are located, but not in the country where ownership is based. This shift has contributed to a manufactured illusion of convergence. As Milanovic (2005) has pointed out on various occasions, convergence theorists utilize "concept 2" inequality, which is basically a GINI coefficient of GDP per capita of all countries weighted for population. Bery and Serieux (2006) identified that all of the convergence with this method was due to income growth in the bottom deciles in China, they further demonstrated that, when China was excluded from the calculation, the global GINI index from 1980 to 2000 increased from 0.61 to 0.64. They identified other methodological problems that underestimate the degree of inequality and the so-called convergence, such as underestimation of capital income differentials and currency disparities. To these problems, we should also point out that while China went through massive privatizations under Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin, the role of the state in China's economy does not conform to the neoliberal model promoted by these theorists.

2. Herman and Chomsky (2002) give ample attention to the cruelties of the US invasion and bombing of Vietnam, the cluster-bombing of virtually all Laos, and the US bombing of Cambodia that paved the way for the rise of Pol-Pot. Cumings (2004) outlines the complete destruction of North Korea during 1950–1953, highlighting the United States’s ample use of napalm against the Korean population. The sheer violence described here speaks volumes to the depths of barbarism and inhumanity to which anti-communist motivated imperialism descends.
3. In his interview with Amy Goodman, on Democracy Now! Vijay Prashad contrasts Venezuela’s sale of cheap oil to Haiti with that of US tankers that will not unload until they receive payment.

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