

INSTITUTE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY

# JOURNALS

DECEMBER 2017

Crisis fuels rising militarism

Antonio Tujan Jr.

A century of rivalries and wars

Pio Verzola Jr.

The situation of Canadian imperialism  
and the prospects for revolutionary  
movement in Canada

Steve da Silva

Copyright © 2017  
All Rights Reserved



Institute of Political Economy

The Institute of Political Economy (IPE) undertakes research and other support activities for policy formulation and the development of alternatives for political economy issues in the Philippines and the world. In particular, the IPE shall:

- Conduct in-depth research of value to a better understanding of Marxist political economy issues and the formulation of policies and alternatives;
- Conduct policy studies and publish its findings for the formulation of alternatives and policies on political economy concerns;
- Conduct fora, public discussions and similar activities on major issues and significant socioeconomic development; and
- Conduct training on policy studies work.

Executive Editor: Antonio A. Tujan Jr.

Managing Editor: Jennifer del Rosario-Malonzo

IBON Center  
114 Timog Avenue  
Quezon City 1103  
Philippines

Telefax: +632 9276981

Email: [ipe@iboninternational.org](mailto:ipe@iboninternational.org)

Design & Layout: Ron Villegas

# Crisis fuels rising militarism

by Antonio Tujan Jr.<sup>1</sup>

The world currently confronts instability that threatens the dominant economic order and rising militarism. A major factor for both of these has been the financial crisis of 2008, which has its deeper roots in neoliberal globalization that dates back to the 1970s. Attempts to manage the crisis, rather than paving the path towards recovery, appear in some ways to have simply redirected it. Such imperialist crisis means more war. While there is not yet a third global war, all powers have been arming themselves to the teeth. Many are engaged in local wars, border wars, and civil wars (in support of client states). Thus, the imperialist neoliberal project and permanent war policy work hand in glove, which instead of staving off capitalism's decline, result in unprecedented economic, social, political and environmental crisis that could bring humanity and the earth to ruin.

## Global arms build-up

Neither military spending nor the global arms market seems to have major setbacks from the 2008/9 Great Recession. This is no surprise. Developed capitalist nations have always exhibited expansionist tendencies and been growth-oriented. Militarism pacifies people's resistance to systemic inequities, fostering conditions for extension and entrenchment of neoliberal capitalism – liberalization, deregulation and privatization. In this sense, militarism, to an extent, serves the function of countering economic stagnation in capitalist nations, while maintaining dominance in the international system.

While dampening slightly between 2010 and 2015, the United States by far remains the highest military spender: US in first place (US\$611.2 billion), China second (US\$215.7 billion), and Russia third (US\$69.2 billion). China

<sup>1</sup> Antonio Tujan Jr. is a social activist working on Philippine and international issues for more than 40 years. He is one of the founders of IBON Foundation and the current director of IBON International. He is also the executive editor of the Institute of Political Economy. He is the Vice-Chairperson for Internal Affairs of the International League of Peoples' Struggle.

and Russia, however, are striving to catch up as can be seen taking their military spending as a percentage of GDP. In these terms, China (1.9 percent) remains behind the US (3.3 percent), while Russia (5.3 percent) has in fact surpassed it.<sup>2</sup>

That the spending bears connection to economic interests is clearly seen in the regions which are of military concern. The South China Sea is of great interest due to its valuable resources – oil and gas being the most high profile – and the region features strongly into both the US Asia Pivot and the Chinese Belt and Road project as part of the Maritime Silk Road. The US ‘war on terror’, meanwhile, is also clearly tied to natural resource interests, while at the same time providing contracts and other means of profit for big business.

The US accounts for 33% of global arms exports, almost half of which goes to the Middle East and around 30% of which goes to Asia and Oceania. Arms imports to the Middle East between the periods of 2007-2011 and 2012-2016 grew by 86 percent. Behind the US in terms of military spending are Russia and China, currently with 23% and 6.2% share of global arms trade, respectively. More than half of Russian and Chinese weapons exports go to Asia and Oceania. The share of Russian arms exports that go to China peaked in 2005 at around 60%, but declined subsequently. Nevertheless, continued arms trade between the two continues to be a concern for the US, since exports of advanced Russian weapons to China could open opportunities for reverse engineering.<sup>3</sup> This eventually could threaten Taiwan and tip the balance against the US in the Asia-Pacific.

Trump remains committed to the military pivot towards the East Asia and Southwest Pacific regions. The concrete objectives are: (1) to protect current US dominance over the shipping lanes from the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea; (2) to defend the chokepoints in case they are closed by hostile states (e.g., Iran for the Strait of Hormuz); and (3) to prevent other potential threats from rival powers and hostile states from undermining US economic, political and military interests in the region.

2 SIPRI (2017 Apr.), “Trends in World Military Expenditure,” SIPRI Fact Sheet, <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/Trends-world-military-expenditure-2016.pdf>.

3 Meick, Ethan (2017), “China-Russia Military-to-Military Relations: Moving Toward a Higher Level of Cooperation,” US-China Economic and Security Review Commission Staff Research Report, [https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China-Russia Mil-Mil Relations Moving Toward Higher Level of Cooperation. pdf](https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China-Russia%20Mil-Mil%20Relations%20Moving%20Toward%20Higher%20Level%20of%20Cooperation.pdf).

---

**US basing presence:**

- The US Pacific Fleet maintains five of 11 carrier strike groups (e.g. 200 ships and close to 2,000 aircraft)
- The US also uses over 400 military facilities in the Pacific region, 220 of these are outside US territory, e.g. Japan (47,000 US troops), South Korea (90,000 US troops), the Philippines, the northern Marianas, the Marshall Islands, Diego Garcia (Indian Ocean), and elsewhere (IFG 2013)
- The function of the bases: storing weapons and war equipment, hosting troops, surveillance, launch pads for drone strikes or larger attacks, covert operations, information, cyber warfare, and other forms of foreign intervention
- Consequences: endanger the host populations, spawn social ills in the surrounding communities, damage the environment with toxics
- US 'rebalancing' in the region: expansion of basing in Australia, the Cocos Islands, the tiny island of Yoniguni (at the southern tip of the Okinawa island chain), in Micronesia, Melanesia, and the Marshall Islands — all in close proximity of China. Plans also include the expansion of US activity in Tinian, Saipan, Guam, and Vietnam
- Governments supporting the US military structure: Japan (109 US military facilities), South Korea (85 US military facilities), Australia (in 2014 signed 25-year force posture agreement), the Philippines (April 2014 EDCA permitting rotational deployment in contravention of 1987 constitution), with newly deepened alliances with other Southeast Asian countries: Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, India, Pakistan
- US military exercises normalize a state of war (175 bilateral and multilateral military exercises in the Asia Pacific in 2015, which is up from 160 in 2014)

### **China's territorial claims:**

- China claims around 85% of the South China Sea, pitting it against Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam, which claim smaller but overlapping areas of this ocean region that include the Spratly and Paracel island groups. Rationale: (1) this maritime territory has oil reserves of seven billion barrels, an estimated 900 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and vital fishing grounds; (2) these sea lanes are potential choke points between the Western Pacific and the Indian Oceans where more than half of the world's annual merchant fleet tonnage or US\$5 trillion worth of goods transit – including 80% of China's crude oil imports (Macias 2015)
- China has been building islets in this disputed territory to add to several geographic formations (islands, reefs, shoals) it has already occupied. It has built airstrips, has installed military equipment, electronic surveillance facilities, and surface-to-air missile systems (threatening freedom of navigation according to the US) (Kaplan 2015)

### **War on 'terror'**

US foreign policy has prioritized the waging of continuous and asymmetric war over matters of economics, trade, and human rights. Since the beginning of its 'War on Terror', the trend has been towards the regularization of drones and the greater pervasiveness of militarization. Drones now occupy a prominent place in US interventions in Afghanistan, Yemen and Pakistan – although it is important to note that, to a lesser extent, Chinese, Russian, Iranian and Turkish drones have also been seen operating in Syria and Iraq.<sup>4</sup>

The war against ISIS also reflects broader geopolitical tensions. There are two broad state coalitions in the war against ISIS taking place in Syria and Iraq. The first is that of Russia, Iran and Iraq, which have assisted Assad's Syria against ISIS. The second is that of the US, UK, Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Denmark, France, Jordan, Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>5</sup> Syrian Kurdish groups, meanwhile, walk on a tightrope as they attempt to advance the Rojava revolution while receiving military support from the US against ISIS, prompting condemnation from anti-Kurdish Pres. Erdogan of Turkey.

4 Gettinger, Dan (2017 Feb. 15), "Drone Spending in the Fiscal Year 2017 Defense Budget," Center for the Study of the Drone, Bard College, <http://dronecenter.bard.edu/drones-operating-in-syria-and-iraq/>.

5 US DoD, Operation Inherent Resolve: Targeted Operations to Defeat ISIS, <https://www.defense.gov/OIR/>.

‘The US bombing campaign in Iraq and Syria is now the heaviest since the bombing of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in the 1960s-1970s with 84,000 bombs and missiles dropped between 2014 and the end of May 2017. That is nearly triple the 29,200 bombs and missiles dropped on Iraq in the “Shock and Awe” campaign of 2003.’<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, Islamic State and allies have struck back at Manchester and London, occupied Marawi, Philippines (pop. 200,000), and deployed a truck bomb in the ‘Green Zone’ in Kabul, Afghanistan.

## People’s resistance

Far from going unanswered, the worsening cyclical crises in the economy, the increasingly neo-fascist character of institutions of governance, and advancements in the forms of state violence that fracture communities and obliterate lives have provoked heightened awareness of the need for systemic change. Today, as a result of the globalized nature of these circumstances, one finds examples of people’s resistance and national liberation movements in both the North and the South (see Map 1).

Particularly prominent ongoing struggles in the US include a three-day strike (led by 14 percent of the company’s workforce) protesting outsourcing at AT&T, the ‘Fight for \$15’ campaign, the protests against the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the work of Black Lives Matter activists. In Europe, there has been resistance to the negotiations of neoliberal trade agreements, and strong labor-oriented actions especially in France, Greece and Germany.

Recently, the G20 was the target of mass and openly anti-capitalist demonstration – the protesters criticized the G20 for, among other things, its role in the post-crisis big-bank bailouts that have ignored the growing impoverishment of the majority.

In Latin America and South Africa, there have recently been large-scale acts of resistance against the neoliberal agenda, particularly its regressive effect on education, its allocation of greater burden on farmers and crippling of the agricultural sector, and its exacerbation of poverty. These anti-social outcomes of neoliberal policy have been accompanied by rising militarism.

6 Davies, Nicholas J.S. (2017 Jul. 8), “The US State of War – July 2017,” *Common Dreams*, <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2017/07/08/us-state-war-july-2017>

The global South is at the forefront of the progressive resistance to militarism. This is not surprising, as it is here that militarism is most prominently mobilized for the violent repression of progressive movements. In line with this, much of the displacement resulting from US military positioning has been concentrated in Asia (see Map 2). The recent historical experiences of Bangladesh and Indonesia provide clear examples of the link between militarism and neoliberal policies in Asia (see case studies below). The US-led Transpacific Partnership (TPP), which was explicitly linked to the US military pivot in Asia, furnished another example.

Tellingly, widespread protests throughout Asia have since contributed to the demise of the TPP. Other targets of protest (mobilizing thousands) in the region include, in South Korea, the deployment of a US anti-missile system in the southeastern part of the country – for which Lockheed Martin is the primary contractor. The militarism in Bangladesh and Indonesia described in the case studies also has mobilized their share of protest.

## **Appendix**

- Impacts of militarism: (a) deaths and injury; (b) displacement; (c) destruction of homes and civilian infrastructure; (d) resource grabs and environmental destruction; (e) sexual violence; (f) misallocation of resources; (g) worsening poverty and inequality; (h) crushing dissent and democracy; (i) breeds racism, xenophobia, jingoism; (j) provokes blowback
- Forms of resistance: (a) mass campaign; (b) advocacy through state mechanisms; (c) education; (d) building mass organizations; (e) creating sectoral and non-sectoral coalitions and alliances; (f) building international solidarity movement; (g) other acts of resistance that are contingent or are discovered organically in the process of responding to particular and situated instances of oppression

### **Case 1: The Caretaker Government (CTG) in Bangladesh (2007-2008)**

- The CTG is intended to oversee the transition between administrations during election periods. During the years of 2007-2008, a CTG was established in the midst of a tense situation in which political parties vied with one another for power – prominent among these being the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) and the Bangladesh Awami League (BAL), each of

which represent different factions of the ruling classes. The disorder that ensued eventually resulted in the military assuming indefinite control

- The transition was one of the outcomes of an anti-militarization movement, which, before it entered the mainstream, was led by a democratic alliance of the all-party student organization Chandra Sangram Parishad and a worker's alliance. Among its demands was the ouster of Pres. Hussein Mohammed Ershad
- The aim of the movement against military dictatorship: comprehensive democratic transformation of the Bangladesh state and the creation of enabling conditions for people to participate in decision-making processes at various levels of state structure in order to secure their livelihood and social progress (articulated in a 10-point set of student demands and 5 points of worker demands). The movement was able to compel all major opposition alliances to accept their demands and sign a Joint Statement concerning the process of democratic transition
- Yet in the CTG that followed the reform movement was reduced to the demand of removing Pres. Ershad from office (the victory of the Ershad's successful ouster diverted attention from the fact that the debate around the structure and content of state power was silenced), and the military was able to seize power
- The military seizure of power over the CTG, 'One-Eleven' (named for its date: 11 Jan. 2007), was not a direct military coup. As political tension escalated to violence, a 'state of emergency' was declared under Article 14A of the constitution and the military-backed CTG took control as pressure from both the armed forces and the international community led to the postponement of the election and the resignation of the president from the Chief Advisor position in the CTG
- Following the resignation, the former governor of the Bangladesh Bank (the central bank of the country) and former official of the World Bank was appointed to the Chief Advisor position of the CTG to head a 10-member group of advisors comprising bureaucrats and retired military generals
- The military-backed CTG posed changes entailing: (a) judicial and legal consequences (e.g. restricting freedoms of speech and association), (b) agricultural policies, (3) health policy and increased privatization

- While many of the agricultural policies were not new, the introduction of expensive GMO seeds was more effective with coercive and autocratic methods (particularly after the natural disasters of 1998 and 2007, which provided the justification for the introduction of new seeds). Giant corporations like Monsanto and Syngenta were able to market their GMO seeds and benefit from agro-biotech projects supported by USAID and government research institutions such as the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institution (BARI), the Bangladesh Rice Research Institution (BRRI), and the Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA). The resulting increases in the price of rice caused a national crisis

### **Case 2: Militarism Protecting Profits and Violating Rights in Indonesia**

- As in the case of Bangladesh, the military in Indonesia has been utilized as a means of repressing local resistance and of imposing foreign (in this case largely American) interests
- US influence over the Indonesian military stems from its efforts (part of its post-WWII ‘containment policy’) to overthrow Pres. Sukarno (1945-1967) who espoused anti-imperialist political views. These efforts include the secret agreements that committed the US to the provision of US\$60 million to the Indonesian Police in its ‘red eradication’ campaign. Furthermore, around 1962-1965, US aid to the Indonesian Military reached US\$39.5 million (up from US\$28.3 between 1949 and 1961)
- Even in periods following the fascist ‘New Order’ of Pres. Suharto (1967-1998) who took office after the US supported removal of Pres. Sukarno, the level of militarization remained high. For example, under Pres. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004-2014): 1,379 conflicts in the plantation, mining, infrastructure and marine sectors (the conflict areas covered 5,686,322.15 Ha and involved more than 922,781 families). Approx. 1,180 peasants were displaced, 556 were injured, 65 were killed according to reports by the Aliansi Gerakan Reforma Agraria (AGRA)
- Much of the Pres. Yudhoyono’s MP3EI development plan 2006-2011 (focused on facilitating the extraction of raw materials and commodity distribution through developing and increasing connectivity between the country’s economic corridors) was incorporated into the development plan of Pres. Joko Widodo (2014-present). This plan shows influence from the World Bank’s International Finance Corporation (IFC), which asserts the need for infrastructure development for the purpose of increasing foreign

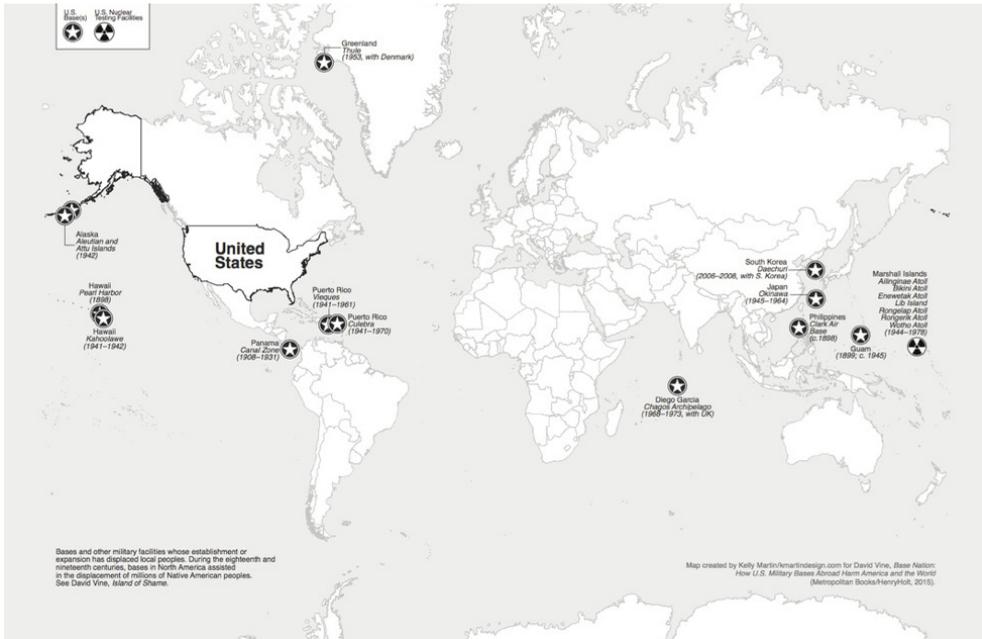
(which stands in contrast to infrastructure planning oriented around social needs)

- Examples of recent military involvement in infrastructure projects: (1) Jatigede Reservoir (mega Dam) in West Java (according to AGRA, 40,000 people evicted from 11,000 families, 4,921 Ha of land grabbed, and the submerging of 28 villages); (2) Kertajati International Airport in West Java (four villages lost due to the project; continuing the project will seize 740 Ha of people's lands; 4,000 people will be evicted, losing homes and livelihood); (3) cement industry in Rembang Central Java
- One important legacy on Pres. Suharto's 'New Order' is the military's use for the advancement of the interests of political authorities, business groups, and transnational corporations. Prominent members of the Suharto cabinet had military backgrounds and members of the military are still active politics and business today: Wiranto, Prabowo, Luhut Panjaitan (current Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs; owns Toba Sejahtera company which operates in industrial sector incl. mining, plantations, and energy; Panjaitan was Widodo's business partner when he was still mayor in Solo), Sutiyoso (appointed as the main commissioner of PT. Semen Indonesia, former governor of Jakarta, former director of the State Intelligence Agency)

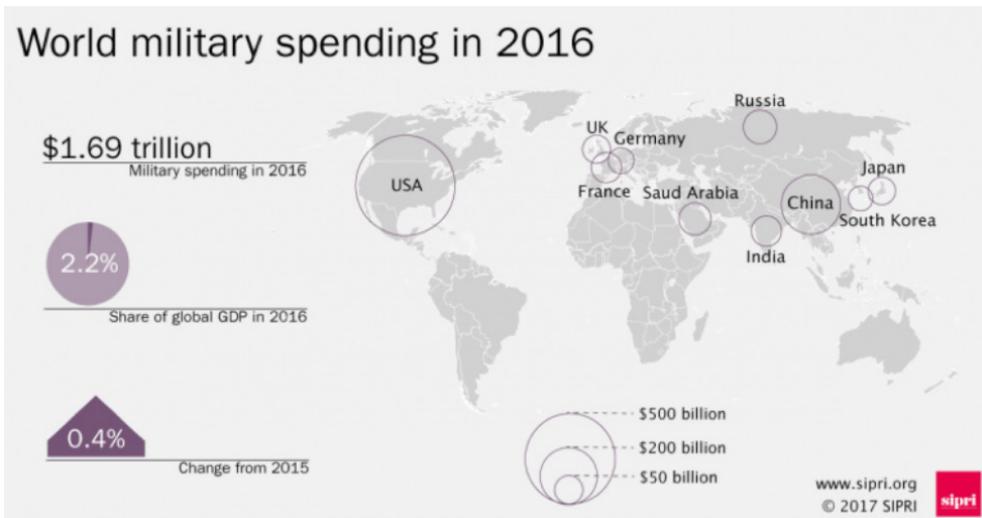
Map 1. Anti-base Protest and Opposition, 1945-2015



Map 2. The Displaced, 1898-2015



Map 3. World Military Spending in 2016



# A Century of Rivalries and Wars

*A review of international wars, superpower alliances and conflicts in the relentless struggle to redivide the world in the past 100 years validates Lenin's fifth thesis on imperialism*

by Pio Verzola Jr.<sup>1</sup>

In the spring of 1916, V.I. Lenin sat down to write one of his major works, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, with its theses about the five features of a capitalist system gone monopolistic. He asserted that the fifth feature of imperialism — the world being sliced thoroughly by the imperialist powers into their respective territorial spheres of influence — inevitably led to rivalry and war.

Most appropriately, Lenin completed writing the book in the middle of the First World War and first published it in mid-1917 as the war grew even more deadly and destructive at the front lines and intolerable on the home front. Partly conditioned by that inter-imperialist war, the Great October Socialist Revolution broke out in November. The fledgling Soviet state pulled out of the war in March 1918, and the other warring imperialist states reached a general armistice in November of the same year.

According to Lenin, modern imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism is distinguished by five key features: (1) the extreme concentration of capital such that monopolies dominate; (2) the emergence of finance capital from the merger of industrial and bank capital, leading to the rule of finance oligarchy; (3) the export of capital to other countries; (4) the formation of international cartels or economic alliances for the control of global markets; and (5) the complete division of the world among the imperialist powers.

<sup>1</sup> Pio Verzola Jr. is a Filipino researcher and writer on political and socioeconomic issues that pertain to farmers' and minority peoples' rights, and a veteran activist associated with the Cordillera Peoples Alliance. He has also worked with IBON International in various capacities: as head of its Policy and Communications Unit, as occasional editor of IPE publications, and currently as research consultant.

Some of the key economic features of imperialism were already explored earlier by such writers as J.A. Hobson (1902) and Rudolf Hilferding (1910). While Lenin quoted extensively from Hobson and Hilferding, he brought the discourse to a higher level. Among his strongest reasons for doing so was to prove beyond doubt that “the war of 1914-18 was imperialist (this is, an annexationist, predatory war of plunder) on the part of both sides.”<sup>2</sup>

Lenin asserted that imperialism's fifth feature meant, first of all, that every imperialist power strove to maintain and expand its own sphere of influence in the world by exercising control over other countries as direct colonies, semi-colonies, and other types of dependencies.

However, he also noted that due to the uneven development of capitalism, younger but fast-rising capitalist states with fewer colonies tended to be more aggressive in competing for territory.

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such aggressive competition eventually resulted in the entire world being completely divided among the imperialist powers. Given the skewed rankings among them, the final recourse would be for imperialist states to use force to extend or to defend their spheres of influence. The eventual result would be inter-imperialist wars.

The post-World War I situation would unravel anew to bring forth revived militarism and fascism among the big capitalist powers. Fueled by imperialist rapacity through the crisis years of the 1930s, the same impulse for violent redivision eventually led to the more globalized and more destructive World War II, confirming Lenin's thesis once more.

The ensuing Cold War was not a classic inter-imperialist war at first, and had its own distinctive features as a mostly non-shooting war with strongly ideological overtones. But US bellicosity and Soviet revisionism soon turned it into a test of strengths between two superpowers. It went on for four decades, at several points threatening to explode into nuclear-heated Armageddon.

Meanwhile, wars for national liberation continued to rage in Asia, Africa and Latin America, including working-class-led and peasantry-based people's wars. Certainly they are not in the same mold as Lenin's scenario of inter-imperialist wars. At the same time, they are objectively in reaction to or influenced by the imperialist drive to expand or defend territory and hegemony. In some cases, some nationalist force waging war against one

2 V.I. Lenin, “Preface to the French and German Editions” in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

imperialist power would even approach a rival power for some degree of support. They are objectively in response to imperialist hegemony, and are within the scope of this paper.

As yet there has been no third global war. All imperialist states have sworn to avoid one at all costs. Global institutions such as the UN, mandated by member-states to keep the peace, have been taking a high profile of redirecting and moderating or dampening conflicts through bilateral and multilateral diplomatic channels. They do so mostly to protect the dominant or common interests of imperialism, as seen in the composition and pro-imperialist bias of the UN Security Council.

Nevertheless, all powers have frenziedly continued to arm and deploy their strategic forces, as if a new inter-imperialist war were to erupt tomorrow. Many are engaged in local wars, border wars, and civil wars together with their client states and puppet mercenary forces.

Thus, the questions remain: Has imperialism truly and finally reached a stage where it can already avoid a destructive world war? Have imperialist powers finally learned to cooperate and moderate their rivalries, effectively reduce the potential for armed conflict among themselves? What are the dominant and long-term trends that give continuing shape to imperialism's fifth feature?

## **A restatement of Lenin's Fifth Feature of Imperialism**

We proceed by restating the main points of Lenin's explanation about imperialism's fifth feature as elaborated in Part VI of his work *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

The development of pre-monopoly capitalism reached its limit in the 1870s. This was followed by intensified expansion in colonial conquests and conflicts to partition the world. Between 1876 and 1900, the colonial powers had seized all uncolonized territories of the world. Six countries had clearly turned imperialist: the US, Germany, and Japan as young and rapidly advancing powers; France and Great Britain as old and slowly advancing powers; and backward Russia where modern capitalism was closely enmeshed in pre-capitalist relations.

By the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the final partitioning of the world had become complete. This meant that, in the next decades, only economic and political redivision was possible. Imperialist states reflected this impulse for colonial conquest by notching up the aggressive content of their foreign policies. Clearly, imperialism was borne of war from the very outset. As Lenin summarized in “Imperialism and the Split in Socialism”:<sup>3</sup>

Imperialism, as the highest stage of capitalism in America and Europe, and later in Asia, took final shape in the period 1898-1914. The Spanish-American War (1898), the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) and the economic crisis in Europe in 1900 are the chief historical landmarks in the new era of world history.

### **Modern imperialism's hunger for colonies**

Pre-monopoly capitalism practiced colonialism to acquire new sources of raw materials for its growing industries and additional markets for its finished products, and also to engage in outright plunder and other forms of primitive accumulation. This first impulse intensified under imperialism; monopoly capitalists wanted to control existing and potential sources of raw materials and new processes while blocking off any competitors.

The second impetus, the drive to export capital – a new distinctive feature under imperialism – also impelled the acquisition of more colonies and semi-colonies. When a monopoly capitalist state enjoys a wider sphere of influence outside its own homeland, it can more easily extend its monopoly methods abroad to block competitors, ensure supplies, depress wages, control trade routes and ports, and maximize profits.

Lenin noted a third impetus for acquiring colonies: the lust for colonies is used to diffuse social unrest and rechannel it into ultra-nationalist and militarist fervor, away from revolution. Monopoly capitalist politics and ideology inevitably stir up negative mass sentiment and behavior, such as racism and chauvinism, crime and hooliganism, not just among the working masses but among the middle class. The imperialist agenda redirects these trends in order to fuel both military adventures abroad and repressive homeland measures.

Given these factors, each imperialist power strives to enlarge its global sphere of influence and its actual state territory by seizing the largest possible amount of land of all kinds in all places, before its rivals get there first. The

3 V.I. Lenin. “Imperialism and the Split in Socialism.” CW. Vol. 23, p. 105.

imperialist state strives to mobilize its population and resources to develop its military might and capacity for conquest; in so doing, it also strengthens counter-revolution at home.

### **Forms of dependency under imperialism**

Under modern imperialism evolved several transitional and diverse forms of state dependence. These are countries that may or may not be formally independent but actually trapped in economic, political, military, and diplomatic dependence on capitalist powers.

Lenin classified early 20<sup>th</sup>-century countries into one or other of the following categories: First, direct colonial possessions of the six aforementioned imperialist states; and second, countries in transitional forms of state dependence, which could be semi-colonial status or other diverse forms.

Lenin explained: "Relations of this kind have always existed between big and little states, but in the epoch of capitalist imperialism they become a general system, they form part of the sum total of 'divide the world' relations and become links in the chain of operations of world finance capital."<sup>4</sup>

### **The theory of 'supra-imperialism'**

Karl Kautsky<sup>5</sup> pushed his own concept of "supra-imperialism", which was very different from Lenin's theses. Kautsky claimed that monopoly capitalists could obtain their enormous raw material needs by "simply improving agriculture" or by getting these "in the open market" instead of a "costly and dangerous colonial policy."

In his mind, "imperialism" was not an inevitable stage, not an inherent character of monopoly capitalism, but merely as a policy "preferred" by finance capital. He limited the phenomena of imperialism to "the striving" of every capitalist country to control "all large agrarian territories, irrespective of what nations inhabit it."

Kautsky envisioned capitalism evolving into "supra-imperialism" – a union of all imperialist states in which finance capital shall have become a single global monopoly exploiting the whole world. Under "supra-imperialism",

4 V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism*

5 Kautsky (1854-1938) was a contemporary of Lenin and a stalwart of German social-democracy.

the unevenness and contradictions inherent in the world economy shall have diminished. Wars, finally, shall have ceased.

### **Struggle to redivide the world inevitably leads to war**

Lenin criticized Kautsky's theory, explaining that "supra-imperialism" — while theoretically possible — exists only as "an abstract future possibility", whereas it distracted from the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century "depth of existing antagonisms."

Lenin stressed that the very uneven development of capitalism worldwide created huge differences in the rates of growth across the global economy. It's true that imperialist countries form alliances, in order to weaken their rivals. We can even grant the possibility of all imperialist countries joining a single club to peacefully redivide the world. but these would not be flawless and permanent, and the unevenness would start reasserting itself.

He thus explained: "The only conceivable basis under capitalism for the division of spheres of influence, interests, colonies, etc., is a calculation of the strength of those participating, their general economic, financial, military strength, etc." But the relative strengths of all the members of such an imperialist alliance will have changed in 10 or 20 years time, and will change in unequal degrees.

Lenin concluded: Once the balance of strength is changed, "there is no way under capitalism to resolve these contradictions but through force of arms, through war." Inter-imperialist alliances of whatever form are nothing more than a truce in periods between wars. "Peaceful alliances prepare the ground for wars, and in their turn grow out of wars," he explained, adding that "one conditions the other, producing alternating forms of peaceful and non-peaceful struggle on one and the same basis..."

### **Imperialism intensifies national oppression**

The drive for wars, conquest, and domination of other nations necessarily equates to more violations of the right of nations to self-determination. Imperialism worsens national oppression which, in turn, aggravates the unevenness inherent in capitalist development.

As Lenin said: "The policy of national oppression, inherited from the autocracy and monarchy; is maintained by the landowners, capitalists, and

petty bourgeoisie in order to protect their class privileges and to cause disunity among the workers of the various nationalities. Modern imperialism, which increases the tendency to subjugate weaker nations, is a new factor intensifying national oppression.”<sup>6</sup>

This increased national oppression is targeted not only at prospective colonies and dependent countries but rather, all potential acquisitions — including national-minority areas within domestic borders, weak neighboring states, and ultimately, the home territories of imperialist rivals.

An imperialist power might even appear to assert nations' right to self-determination (which US President Wilson declared as World War I drew to a close) and support national liberation movements among the colonies of a rival power – but only to loosen its rival's control and grab the colonies for itself.

The Third International (Comintern) further deepened Lenin's analysis of the impact of imperialism on underdeveloped countries, when more communist parties had arisen in the colonies and semicolonies and could more accurately investigate local conditions and class alignments in those countries.

In a 1928 Comintern resolution, imperialism was viewed more precisely as blocking rather than promoting national industrialization in underdeveloped countries, despite its export of capital and promotion of certain industries overseas. In short, imperialism might allow some industrial activity in its colonies and semicolonies to a degree, but only to perpetuate its wider social base of feudal, semifeudal, and other pre-capitalist forms of exploitative relations.

This is important to our discourse on inter-imperialist wars and rivalries because this means that, even in periods of "relative peace" among rival imperialist powers, their puppet states were often in a constant state of war: with rebellious peasants or national liberation movements, internally among its warlord armies, or to forcibly settle border disputes with neighboring states.

## **Militarism**

Always present in Lenin's work on imperialism, as one underlying premise, is the reality of bourgeois class dictatorship in its many forms and components. These include militarism and, as it took full shape later, fascism. These are

6 V.I. Lenin, "Resolution on the National Question", *CW* Vol. 24 p. 302

systemic institutions, ideologies, policies and mass forces adopted by the imperialist state to deal with crisis and threats of revolution at home, and to gear up for war overseas.

In his other famous work, *State and Revolution*, Lenin had reiterated the basic Marxist view that each capitalist state is, at its core, the class dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois state uses its armed forces and other coercive machineries against the proletariat and other exploited classes, both within its borders and overseas. Under certain conditions, this state took the extreme form of reactionary militarism.

The militarist state was already deeply embedded among the foremost colonial empires of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was almost standard tradition for the aristocratic classes of Europe and America to produce elite officer corps for the standing and mercenary armies and military or colonial bureaucracies of their absolute monarchies.

Their near-continuous struggle for military strength and colonial supremacy ended in 1815 with a decisive British victory over the French. The ensuing 50 years of Pax Britannica would seem to show the benevolent, civilizing side of empire. Meanwhile, feudal-colonial military traditions were often simply handed down to the succeeding bourgeois states even as democratic reforms seeped down within the army to some degree.

The militarist state again rose to prominence by the 1860s. This pattern, led by Germany under the Second Reich and Japan through the Meiji Restoration, reminded the world that militarism did not really go away. It simply became the new normal, maintained by the new impetus of emergent monopoly capitalism. All advanced capitalist countries soon embarked on a race to modernize their armed forces for the forthcoming wars of global redivision.

Even the young United States of America, steeped in democratic tradition and the citizen's right to bear arms, soon developed the taste for militarism as it expanded its frontiers against native American nations and neighboring Mexico, resolved its own internal bloody Civil War in the early 1860s, and from thereon more aggressively asserted its Monroe Doctrine throughout Latin America.

In his own writings, Lenin already saw the persistent role of autocracy and militarism as forms of governance under imperialism, replacing the decorative

bourgeois democratic processes in times of crisis and revolutionary ferment. In fact, the Russian working class had been taking on the worst exemplary case of what Lenin called "military-feudal imperialism" — the tsarist autocracy — as their direct enemy until 1917.

In *A Caricature of Marxism*, Lenin generalized this ultra-reactionary tendency of monopoly capitalism: "The political superstructure of this new economy, of monopoly capitalism (imperialism is monopoly capitalism), is the change from democracy to political reaction. Democracy corresponds to free competition. Political reaction corresponds to monopoly. ... Both in foreign and home policy imperialism strives towards violations of democracy, towards reaction."<sup>7</sup>

## **Imperialist War and Geopolitics up to 1945**

The successive periods of world history in the past 100 years essentially confirm Lenin's theses on imperialism. In this section, we focus on the continuing validation of its fifth feature and other related characteristics up to the end of World War II.

### **Post-World War I**

World War I, as Lenin had so tirelessly explained, had played itself out as a brazen inter-imperialist war between two great camps: the Triple Entente (Britain, France, and Russia) vs. the Central Powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary), plus the many other countries that were sucked into one or the other alliance. The first socialist state was borne of this war, and our narrative proceeds from there.

After the October Revolution and by consolidating socialism, the Soviet Union inspired working-class movements and parties to launch their own revolutionary struggles and to support national liberation movements worldwide. For their part, the imperialist countries founded the League of Nations in 1920, supposedly to prevent wars through cooperative action and disarmament, and to settle disputes through negotiation and arbitration. This precursor of the United Nations reached a peak of 58 member-nations by 1935. But the illusion under imperialism and among imperialists proved short-lived.

7 Lenin, *CW* Vol. 23 p. 43

A series of severe economic crises culminated in the Great Depression of the 1930s, fueling global mass discontent and class movements in the direction of revolution. On one hand, working class movements became more militant; socialism became a more viable alternative because of the Soviet Union's example. On the other hand, fascism served as the harbinger for inter-imperialist war and counter-revolution.

In countries most severely hit by the crisis, the reactionaries tried to relieve the worst symptoms by resorting to anticommunism, putting up immigrants and other minorities as scapegoats, and supporting fascist movements. Leaders of fascist parties and militarist cliques – Mussolini in Italy, Hitler in Germany, Tojo in Japan, and Franco in Spain – were soon swept into power as heads of dictatorial regimes.

In these countries, the more severe impacts of the crisis and their smaller share of colonies provided fewer options for the imperialists. These conditions paved the way for the seizure of power by a militaristic, fascist and autocrat-led party that pushed an aggressive imperialist agenda, heightened military production, and state control of the economy. In the particular case of Germany and Japan, the growing strength of the Soviet Union as a socialist bulwark near their borders loomed large as their main target because it obstructed their drive for territorial expansion.

Clarifying the underlying basis of fascism, Jose Ma. Sison explains that the monopoly capitalist class, clearly unable to rule in the old way, “sheds off the trappings of bourgeois democracy, adopts an open rule of terror and launches wars of aggression to redivide the world.”<sup>8</sup> The imperialist equilibrium, on which the League of Nations was premised, began to fail. The parties of the Comintern exposed the related trends of fascism and war preparations, and called for a united front against both.

## **World War II**

As in World War I earlier, World War II was the result of the severe 1930s global crisis, and at the same time represented a most violent and destructive attempt by the imperialist states to resolve that crisis by waging war on each other.

Nazi Germany wanted to redraw Europe's borders (the so-called *die Neuordnung Europas*) and to crush the Soviet Union, and thereby pave the

8 Sison, *Continuing the Struggle for National and Social Liberation*, pp. 151-153

way for a Germanic world empire extending eastward to Asia and southward across the Mediterranean. Fascist Italy would be its junior partner in slicing up Africa. For its part, Imperial Japan envisioned its own "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" in territories mostly occupied by the US and other Western powers. It also wanted to gobble up the whole of China, and felt restrained by the Soviet Union in its expansion drive. Hence its earliest campaign – the real start of World War II – was to invade Manchuria in 1931.

Germany, Japan and Italy formally aligned into the Axis alliance. The opposing imperialist-led alliance included France, Poland and Great Britain at first. The Allies later included the US, Soviet Union, British India, China (under Guomintang rule), and other members of the British Commonwealth.

Unlike World War I, however, World War II showed a new aspect that was not any longer inter-imperialist: patriotic and popular forces waged anti-fascist wars of resistance in the occupied or invaded countries. Many of them aligned with Allied powers through anti-fascist united fronts and tactical cooperation, but developed independent mass bases among the toiling classes.

The Soviet forces and people eventually defeated the cream of the German armies, thus turning the tide for the whole of Europe and the world. In China, communist-led forces in alliance with patriotic Guomintang tied down and defeated the bulk of the Japanese forces. In so many countries, communists joined hands with other patriots and progressives in waging guerrilla warfare against the fascist forces.

The US profited enormously during the war — at first waiting on the sidelines, then choosing the winning side at the right moment. Only in the latter half of the war (from end-1941 to mid-1945), when its Pacific bases were directly attacked by Japan, did it pour its own manpower and resources into the fray. By war's end, it had clinched the best position from which to get the bulk of the spoils.

## **Imperialist War and Geopolitics in the Cold War Period**

### **Early post-war decades (1945-1960)**

By late 1945, Red armies advanced across the territories vacated by the defeated and retreating imperialist and puppet armies in Europe and Asia-Pacific. These eventually resulted in victorious people's wars and the

emergence of several more socialist countries encompassing one-third of the world's population. Meanwhile, national liberation movements continued to fight imperialism and took big strides forward in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This meant that imperialism's total hegemony worldwide shrunk greatly during this period.

Under such conditions, the old colonial system was finally replaced by an upgraded system of neocolonialism, in which the newly independent countries (except those most assertive of their national rights) were firmly kept within the imperialist ambit as neocolonies even though they were formally independent states.

The US quickly entrenched its position as the sole superpower. It could play the role of the world's No. 1 moneybags by dominating the Bretton Woods institutions. By funding post-war reconstruction efforts, it could further its hegemony over both traditional allies (e.g. UK and France) and former enemies (e.g. Germany and Japan), including their former colonies and semicolonies.

The US could also play the role of the world's No. 1 policeman due to its nuclear monopoly (until 1949) and excessive supply of armaments. It could play the role of global overlord, intervening in all sorts of disputes due to its predominant role in the UN and its General Assembly and Security Council.

Using such military, financial and diplomatic leverage, the US built the widest ever neocolonial empire, even larger than the British empire at its peak. It was able to take over such colonies as South Vietnam (from France), and South Korea, Taiwan and numerous Pacific island territories (from Japan). The US also took over British protectorates and oil interests in several Middle East countries and the Dutch oil interests in newly independent Indonesia (which would later turn into a staunch US semicolony under the Suharto fascist dictatorship).

As of mid-1960s, the US neocolonial empire covered almost 48 million sq.km. in area with a total population of 660 million. Its empire comprised 19 countries in Latin America (all except Cuba); four countries in the Middle East; four countries in South and Southeast Asia; two countries in East Asia; two countries in Africa; Greece; and Canada, in addition to the US itself and its direct overseas possessions.<sup>9</sup>

9 Baran and Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital*, p. 183

But the US faced a twin dilemma: First, rapidly reconverting military plants into civilian ones could trigger recession. And second, its hegemony was threatened by the rise of the socialist countries and national liberation movements. The US response was to launch the Cold War, which generated an intensely militarist and anti-communist, almost paranoid-level, paradigm of imperialism.

President Harry Truman's infamous doctrine declared that the US would intervene in any country threatened by "communist aggression or subversion." This vow would be pursued, reiterated and elaborated by eight successive US presidents for the next four decades. It would morph even beyond the Cold War to its current-day equivalents.

The Truman doctrine and its successor doctrines were used to justify US imperialism's global military buildup and aggression as the defender of the "free world", and to demonize socialist states as "totalitarian regimes." Movements for national liberation and social revolution across the world were grimly painted as "falling dominoes" that must be stopped before they lead to the "free world's" total collapse.

The imperialists repeated their anti-communist mantra despite clear evidence that Soviet and Chinese foreign policies and military strategies were mostly defensive, at least up to the early 1970s. It is true that in 1949, the Soviet Union successfully tested its first atom bomb, which signaled the end of the US nuclear monopoly and the start of a strategic arms race. It is also true that the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 brought to the US front door the threat of mutual assured destruction if it was insane enough to launch a first strike against the Soviet Union. But the nuclear disparity between the US and the socialist camp, in terms of quantity, global reach, and destructive capacity, clearly showed who was the real bully.

The US ringed the Soviet Union and China with military bases, created a nuclear umbrella over its ally states and puppet regimes, and maintained other bases in all continents and on key Pacific islands. It cemented alliances through NATO (US and 12 other European member-countries, 1949); CENTO (also known as the Baghdad Pact between UK and four Mideast countries, 1955); and SEATO (nine countries, of which only the Philippines and Thailand were actually Southeast Asian countries, 1955), providing them a wide variety of military support. The US grew such an enormous military-industrial complex that even US President Dwight Eisenhower, a former five-star general and a

rabid anti-communist, warned of its dangers to civilian interests in his farewell speech to the American people in 1960.

In 1950-53, the US-led imperialist alliance launched a war of intervention to stem the tide of the final offensive in the Korean people's war. The war ended in a stalemate, and South Korea eventually turned into the third US military fortress against China (after Japan and Taiwan). The Philippines, with its chain of US military bases, would also grow in importance as the US military involvement escalated in Indochina.

Under presidents Harry Truman (1945-53) and Dwight Eisenhower (1953-1960), the US provided economic and military support to fascist dictatorial regimes throughout the world.

There is a particularly long list of US-instigated regime changes in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially under Eisenhower's "Good Partner" policy.

A US-led alliance helped install Zionist Israel to help project imperialist power throughout the Middle East and North Africa. In Asia, the US played a crucial role in defeating the armed struggle of the old PKP and Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan in the Philippines, while its close ally, Great Britain, mobilized the whole British Commonwealth to defeat the armed struggle of the MCP-led Malayan People's Liberation Army.

The militarist, fascist, and anti-communist ideology of the Cold War diffused across the various political, social, cultural constructs of the imperialists and their puppet regimes. Socialist countries and communist parties were painted as evil. Third World people's movements, states resisting imperialism and seeking full independence, and even mere progressives and civil libertarians, were branded as "communist puppets and fronts." Anti-communist witchhunts destroyed reputations and careers even of noted American authors and showbiz celebrities.

### **The Vietnam War era (1960-1975)**

Even more than their predecessors, Presidents John F. Kennedy (1960-63) and Lyndon Johnson (1963-69) pursued an extremely militarist framework in foreign policy. Heavy military spending went to beefing up overseas military bases and intensifying military production and space research (which was

linked to military technologies in many ways). Militarism was also reflected in US domestic politics, including media and culture.

The US launched a war of aggression against Vietnam, starting with military advisers in 1950, and with troop levels tripling in 1961 and again in 1962. After ousting its own puppet Diem regime in a CIA-backed coup in 1963 and setting up the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964, the US massively deployed combat forces in South Vietnam while North Vietnam was systematically carpet-bombed. The US war of aggression eventually encompassed neighboring Cambodia and Laos.

The US also installed and propped up more puppet fascist dictatorial regimes in Indonesia (under Suharto, 1966-1998), Thailand (under Thanom, 1963-1973), the Philippines (under Marcos, 1972-1986) and elsewhere, to stem the tide of anti-imperialist movements and to keep these countries tightly within the imperialist orbit.

The US stood pat on its support of Zionist Israel and South Africa's White apartheid regime as its oppressive henchmen in the Middle East and southern Africa. Japanese militarism was revived as the US junior partner in Asia especially after the extension and expansion of the US-Japan security treaty in 1959-60. In the face of the Indochina war, economic troubles, and worker and youth rebellions during the 1960s, the militarist trend began to reemerge in many imperialist countries.

This militarist framework was also reflected in US domestic politics, even in media and culture. Under Johnson and Nixon, the US imperialist state responded to a growing civil rights and anti-war protest movement by mobilizing the FBI, the National Guard and riot police to disperse protests, garrison communities and campuses, infiltrate activists' ranks, neutralize their key leaders, and further intensify anti-communist propaganda.

Nevertheless, the US continued to reel from defeats, demoralization, huge expenses, massive anti-war protests and political isolation worldwide. It had no choice but to find a graceful exit from Indochina under the 1972 Paris peace agreement. The remaining US forces and their puppet armies collapsed in a final coordinated offensive by the Indochinese peoples' liberation forces in 1975.

The Soviet Union, which turned officially revisionist in 1956, gradually evolved into a bureaucratic type of capitalism masquerading as socialism.

While it wore a cloak of "peaceful coexistence" and "peaceful competition", it actually practiced social-imperialism. It engaged the US in superpower rivalry for world hegemony, achieving nuclear parity with the US by the time the SALT-I Treaty was signed in 1979. Efforts at détente failed to stem the worsening arms race. The Soviet Union invaded neighboring countries that threatened to leave its sphere of influence, such as Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Afghanistan in 1979.

Proxy wars between the two superpowers flared here and there, especially in the Middle East throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. In October 1973 (Yom Kippur), Soviet-backed Arab states went to war against US-backed Israel to recover the Israeli-occupied Sinai and Golan Heights. This brought the world to the edge of a US-Soviet nuclear war. At the same time, the Arab-dominated Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) hit back at the West with an oil embargo. The steep oil price hikes and output cuts triggered a global crisis that rippled up to the 1980s.

The Soviet revisionist betrayal triggered a dispute with China, which had rejected revisionism and clarified its own path to socialism. Under Mao's leadership, China launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-76). The GPCR deepened socialist revolution and construction, offered lessons for other socialist states, inspired young revolutionaries to lead mass movements in their countries, and revitalized communist parties throughout the world.

China also won diplomatic victories by claiming its seat at the UN in 1971 and opening diplomatic ties with the US in 1972. On the other hand, class struggles continued inside the country. These were reflected within the Communist Party and its leadership as ideological struggles between proletarian revolutionaries and revisionists, which would come to a head in 1976.

The period ended with the Indochina peoples' victory in 1975. The successive deaths of Mao and veteran revolutionaries Zhou Enlai and Zhu De in 1976, on the other hand, would soon pave the way for the Deng revisionist clique to seize power in China, towards the country's eventual shift onto the capitalist road.

## Post-Vietnam War period (1975-1990)

US imperialism's historic defeat in Indochina resonated throughout the world and caused it to decline on a world scale. In particular, the massive costs it incurred in the Indochina war, the US-Soviet arms race and the global network of military bases created gross imbalances in the US economy.

On one hand, lucrative military industries drew resources away from civilian production. On the other hand, the 1973 oil crisis triggered by the Yom Kippur war and the 1979 oil crisis triggered by the Islamic revolution in Iran fueled worldwide inflation. As a result, the global capitalist economy was double-squeezed by a long-drawn economic malaise called "stagflation."

There were other factors for the US decline. While the US was bogged down in the Cold War and wars of aggression, the economies of Germany and Japan had fully recovered. By the 1960s and 1970s, they and other capitalist countries started to compete with the US in a shrinking world capitalist market.

The US could remain on top for a while because of its still formidable capacity to extract surplus from its working class, further squeeze its neocolonies, and tie down the whole world to a financial system pegged to US dollars. Imperialist countries as a whole continued to shift the burden of the global capitalist crisis to their neocolonies.

But more and more, Third World countries and peoples became more restive. Even the imperialists' loyal client states began to resist some of their masters' impositions. Nationalist calls for protectionism reemerged. In the UN and in other global fora, Third World states raised the demand for a New International Economic Order. (For a discussion on the rise of the Third World global bloc, see further below).

US investment banks that amassed windfall profits during the oil crises sought to invest their petro-dollars elsewhere. Third World states, urged by the IMF and World Bank to borrow heavily from these funds for infrastructure and to cover trade deficits, became heavily indebted throughout the 1970s and early 1980s.

Thus arose the debt and economic crisis of the 1980s. The formerly strong inflow of capital into Third World countries reversed into a massive problem of capital flight. They faced soaring interest rates on existing debts, lack of

access to further loans, debt defaults, and debt rescheduling troubles. Many of them (especially in Africa) continue to reel from these problems up to the present.

At the same time, the neoliberal economic policy rose to dominance in 1979-81, which US President Ronald Reagan, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, other imperialist leaders and their successors pushed. IMF-World Bank structural adjustment programs (SAPs) of the 1980s and 1990s could thus impose even worse policy conditionalities such as liberalization in trade and finance, deregulation, privatization, deindustrialization, and denationalization.

### **The political rise of the Third World states (1955-1990)**

We conclude this section with a cross-cutting view of how the former colonies and semicolonies — long humbled by imperialist oppression and ravaged by two world wars not of their making — gradually shaped a new bloc of Third World states<sup>10</sup> during the long Cold War period.

In 1914, i.e., during Lenin's time, the colonies had a total population of 568.7 million. This formed the biggest bulk both of the world's territories as a whole and of those under imperialist control. Next highest in terms of population were the metropolitan countries of the Six Great Powers, followed by the semi-colonies that included China.<sup>11</sup>

By the early 1950s, this overall situation had been changed by several global events. First, two inter-imperialist wars had overhauled the lineup of imperialist countries, with the US becoming the lone superpower. Second, the socialist camp emerged and greatly expanded. And third, almost all former colonies in the pre-World War II period had turned, or would soon turn, into formally independent states while imperialism continues all efforts to keep them as neocolonies.

The bulk of newly independent countries, now popularly known as the Third World, were categorized as "underdeveloped", or "less-developed", or

10 The term "Third World" is used here as a convenient catchall term for countries with economies and social formations in varying degrees of underdevelopment, certainly not at the same level as imperialist or advanced capitalist countries. As used here, it does not presume specific political alignments. Some Third World countries have been touted as "emerging" or "transition" economies, and certainly there is a broad range of unevenness in development in the Third World, but here we will not go into a debate on whether such countries have thus left the ranks of the Third World.

11 See table on "Colonial Possessions of the Great Powers" in Lenin's *Imperialism*, p. 85

"developing" (the currently preferred UN term). Much of Asia, Africa and Latin America fell into this category, at least up to 1990.

The rise of the Third World was described by Jose Ma. Sison as having passed through two phases. The first phase was from 1945 to 1960, and the second phase was from 1960 to the 1970s. In both phases, many countries either achieved substantial independence through armed struggle, or formal independence as a concession of the colonial power.<sup>12</sup>

Capping this phase were the victorious armed revolutions in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in 1975. These were followed by the Islamic revolution that toppled the US-Shah Reza Pahlavi regime in Iran and the Sandinista (FSLN) revolution that toppled the US-Somoza regime in Nicaragua, both in 1979. All five revolutions explicitly rejected US hegemony.<sup>13</sup>

A sixth revolution by a Soviet-backed party in Afghanistan (1978) rapidly deteriorated into factional in-fighting. This triggered a Soviet social-imperialist war of intervention (1979), which was countered in turn by a US-backed Islamic mujahedin insurgency that would later morph into the Al-Qaida. The ideology and general politics of Islamic-jihad movements would grow into a huge factor in great-power rivalries especially after the end of the Cold War.

Sison's article, written in 1988, did not identify and describe subsequent phases in the political and economic reconfiguration of the Third World. These will further be discussed in the following sections.

The Third World countries have also raised their level of coordinated action against foreign domination at the global level, starting in 1955 when 29 Afro-Asian states held the Bandung Conference.<sup>14</sup> In 1961, the more nationalistic Third World states (including Cuba) helped found the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The NAM proved so effective that it reached 101 member-countries by March 1983. This number, representing an automatic majority for Third World positions in UN deliberations, signified a clear challenge to US hegemony in the UN and other multilateral bodies.

12 Sison, "The United States and the Third World", *CSNSL*, pp.314-315.

13 A sixth revolution in Afghanistan (1978) rapidly deteriorated into factional in-fighting, triggering a Soviet war of intervention (1979), which in turn was countered by a US-backed Islamic insurgency. Islamic-jihad movements would increasingly figure in great-power rivalries after the end of the Cold War.

14 The leadership of the conference was a powerhouse of Third World states strongly assertive of their independence, such as Indonesia (represented by Sukarno), India (represented by Nehru), China (represented by Zhou), and Egypt (represented by Nasser).

The Third World bloc inside the UN also consolidated itself as the Group of 77. In embryo form, it catalyzed the convening of the UN Conference on Trade and Development or UNCTAD I (Geneva, 1964). The G-77 itself, starting in Algiers in 1967, further expanded to 126 member-countries in 1984, and to its current 134 member-countries.<sup>15</sup>

## **Post-Cold War Period (1990-Present)**

Sison summarized the particular state of inter-imperialist rivalries in the post-Cold War period in this manner: “After the end of the Cold War, the imperialist powers have so far avoided direct military confrontation with each other. They have preferred to use proxy wars by backing different sides in local and regional wars. They have taken different positions on whether or not to take unilateral or joint military actions within or outside the purview of the UN Security Council. So far, no rival imperialist powers or blocs of imperialist powers have threatened to use hightech weapons of mass destruction against one another.”<sup>16</sup>

Nonetheless, this situation is a dynamic one. The post-Cold War period has been long enough to subdivide further into at least three phases: 1990-2001; 2001-2008; and from 2009 to the present.

### **Unipolar imperialism (1990-2001)**

The first phase started with the collapse of the Soviet bloc, which was officialized in December 1991. In China, the bureaucrat-capitalist state hastened capitalist reforms and heightened fascist methods to curb social unrest. Meanwhile, the US ruling clique laid down the foundations for the neoconservative paradigm, which called for extending the US' unipolar hegemony and full-spectrum dominance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the US dominated the entire imperialist camp and practically ruled the world as the sole superpower during this phase, with no strong counter-pole to oppose it. Even the Third World bloc was losing steam in the narrow

15 Third World unity against imperialist impositions have been dramatically demonstrated in the UN, such as in 1972 when it gave an overwhelming vote for the restoration of the legitimate right of China to its UN seat, and in 1974 when it granted permanent observer status to the Palestine Liberation Organization.

16 Sison, *BPP*, p. 455

17 The most influential designers of this platform were in the think tank “Project for a New American Century” (1997-2006). Ten PNAC members would go on to become top US officials under Bush II’s presidency and play key roles in its foreign policy, including the blueprint for regime change in selected countries and “rebuilding America’s defenses.”

confines of UN processes and in its own contradictions amid the worsening economic crises.

At the same time, the US had to project new bogeymen—the so-called rogue states—to replace the "specter of communism". Some were Cold War leftovers, such as North Korea and Serbia. Others, such as Iran, Iraq, Libya, and Syria, represented a new theme that the imperialists had begun to elaborate: the specter of "Islamic terrorism."

Modern Islamic militancy (not necessarily terrorist) and pan-Arabic nationalism are super-nationalist reactions that reach as far back as the Ottoman empire, which broke up in 1924. Subsequent imperialist impositions in the Middle East and the forcible entry of Zionist Israel further fueled Islamic militancy.

A number of Islam-based republics had long been hostile to the US and Zionist Israel. But it was the US-backed insurgency in Afghanistan in the 1980s that created a new kind of Islamic force: jihadist groups that the US could use as attack dogs on a long leash to destabilize and eventually control other countries. From the 1990s onward, these groups began to spread out and further proliferate — some even to the point of escaping from their long US leash and turning against their former master.

Meanwhile, the EU consolidated itself while remaining as US ally and backbone of NATO. Japan was weakened by a decade-long recession but likewise remained as the main US ally in East Asia. We can thus speak of the US-EU-Japan as a "Triad Imperialism", in this particular sense and period.

The G-7, as the alliance of the most advanced capitalist powers, became a more fully global body for imperialist consensus. Its annual summits started to invite top officials of multilateral bodies such as the UN, IMF, World Bank, and WTO, as well as accepting Russia into the expanded group G-8. The WTO in turn served as instrument of neocolonial economic control in joint imperialist hands under US leadership.

Several large Third World countries, including China and India, experienced rapid capitalist growth and, together with the former Soviet-bloc countries and the so-called Asian Tigers, were viewed as "emerging" or "transitional" economies. But as yet they were not moving as geopolitical blocs. Towards the end of the first phase, they suffered a severe economic crisis. This further enhanced the unipolar advantages of US imperialism.

## **Global "war on terror" (2001-2008)**

The second phase began with the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, which signaled a major foreign policy shift of US imperialism and its allies to a global "war on terror". The new "Islamic terrorist" bogeyman replaced the "communist threat" in justifying US military presence and buildup, overt wars and covert operations, and support for puppet regimes throughout the world.

In the first place, the US had been using the most rabid forms of Islamic fundamentalism as a weapon and crutch especially in the Middle East; it was keeping its favorite Islamic-jihad groups on a long leash and unleashing them as needed to redirect insurgencies and foment covert action, including false-flag operations. After the Cold War, jihadist forces began to spread out and play that role to the hilt.

Taking advantage of the global outrage at the 9/11 attacks, the US expanded its "war on terror" to include anti-US Islamic states and a broad range of jihadist groups supposedly coddled by such states. It maximized the Bush doctrine of changing any regime that resists US dictates. It also abused the UN's "responsibility to protect" principle to justify preemptive military action, loosely interpreting the principle thus: "Attack them before they attack us."

Under such doctrine and pretext, the US-led imperialist camp waged wars of aggression and extended occupation in Afghanistan and Iraq. In both cases, the supposed withdrawal of US troops has been repeatedly postponed, reduced to euphemistic "drawdowns", and reversed again and again. The US war in Afghanistan is by now officially the second longest US overseas war in history after Vietnam. The US also waged other proxy wars and covert campaigns in support of its junior partners in the Middle East and to effect regime change in selected "rogue states" elsewhere.

As a result, the world has been afflicted by the growth of jihadi groups, which are partly the fifth column and partly the blowback of the US-led wars of aggression and other forms of meddling in the Middle East and elsewhere. The global "war on terror", the Bush doctrine, the intensified bigotry against Islam, and continued racism against colored peoples, represented in fact a clever strategic maneuver of US imperialism in the transition from the Cold War onto its next geopolitical and military crusades in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The EU experienced a strong boom (2002-2007) after recovering from the impacts of the earlier crises that hit the "emerging economies" of East

Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. The "emerging economies" likewise recovered quickly. The US-led imperialist camp remained united in general terms despite cracks appearing here and there. Russia and China confidently flexed their new big-capitalist muscles but could not yet provide an effective counter-pole. The BRICS was more of an idea than a reality.

This phase ended with a shattering eye-opener: the 2007-2008 financial meltdown that signaled the Great Recession, with impacts on a global scale and with aftershocks that continue until now.

### **Multipolar world and big-power rivalries (2009-present)**

We conclude with the current period, which may be characterized as one of a multipolar world and rising imperialist rivalries amid a protracted global economic crisis. The Greater Recession continues to ravage the global capitalist system. Displaying once more the law of uneven development, the crisis has differentially affected the various imperialist centers, geopolitical regions, and individual countries. One clear result, as Lenin had generalized for the whole epoch of imperialism, is the intensification of inter-imperialist rivalries and factors for war.

Summarizing the current multipolar world, Sison describes the present inter-imperialist rivalries thus: "There are growing contradictions among imperialist powers on economic, financial, trade, and security policies. Most conspicuous issues have involved energy and other raw material sources, investment areas, markets, and spheres of influence. The worst impacts of US military intervention and aggression are also creating resentment."<sup>18</sup>

**US, EU and Japan.** The US continues on the strategic path of decline even as it is still the biggest economic and military power. Its economy took big hits since 2008; it also faces shifting loyalties and growing challenges by other powers. The Trump presidency reflects an intense political crisis within the US ruling class and a huge potential for the US to further weaken.

The European Union is tossed by an unprecedented storm of political and economic problems, and is struggling to stay afloat. Growing discontent among member-states and a massive influx of migrants and refugees have pushed ultra-Rightist movements to ride on populist sentiments and towards a rethinking of the entire EU project.

18 Sison, *BPP*, pp.122-123

The US and EU have so far maintained the largest economic partnership in the world, and continue to share a wide range of common interests. NATO is focused on a massive military buildup to prevent Russia from extending its own sphere of influence westward. But there are growing US-EU policy differences which could worsen under Trump.

Since 1990, Japan suffered two decades of stagnation from which it has barely recovered. It remains the world's third largest economy and the main US ally in the Asia-Pacific region despite some irritants. The US-Japan tandem plays up the China-Russia threat to justify the US pivot to Asia and Japan's own militarist revival and rearmament.

**US attempts to prolong world hegemony.** The US and its allies continuously carry out hostile acts against perceived enemy states and other adversaries, using a wide spectrum of economic, political, and military options. Apart from their on-and-off wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, they take advantage of social turmoil everywhere to reassert their presence and power in all corners of the world. In the process, US-led forces have been committing war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity, and other violations of UN-recognized rights of nations and peoples.

At least three distinct trends have emerged in US political-military strategy after the Cold War. First is the shift to the more flexible "rotational presence" of mostly US-based forces in a bigger number of ground facilities across the globe. Second is the increasing use of "soft coup" or "slow-motion coup" (aka "color revolutions") as alternate modes of regime change, as in the case of "Arab-Spring" uprisings, the Euromaidan uprising in the Ukraine, and attempts against Bolivarian regimes in Latin America.

The third is the tightening deadly embrace between US-led military intervention on one hand and jihadi-type terrorism on the other hand, which continue to feed on the other in an escalating and vicious circle of violence. The spread of jihad movements, in particular, are used by the big powers to divide, confuse and subvert Third World unity against imperialism, as well as to weaken their rivals' control over their respective spheres of influence. Daesh (ISIS) and other jihadi groups have been pushing hard to expand their presence and operations to other global regions. In their wake typically follows US intervention using special forces and operations.

**Russia and China.** Russia, belittled earlier as an unstable regional power, has successfully reinserted itself to the big-power ranks. Despite economic

troubles, the resilient Putin regime has embarked on military reforms and a successful military buildup.

The Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) now serves as NATO's rival in the Central Eurasian belt. The Eurasian Economic Community has further evolved into the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU, from 2014 onward). Both the CSTO and EAEU project Russian power westward and southward by offering direct membership, and to East Asia through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Russia's biggest partner, China, has suffered economic crises in the past decade but its substantial financial clout is funding ambitious global projects such as the Silk Belt and Road Initiative, the AIIB, and the New Development Bank (BRICS bank), in addition to bilateral aid to partner countries. China continues to woo ASEAN, which is collectively one of its largest trading partners.

China's own rapid military buildup is seen in its reorganized military structure; creation of a Rocket Force as the PLA's fourth branch; a massive naval buildup worthy of a rising maritime power; new military bases on artificial islands in disputed South China Sea territory; and upgraded military doctrine. In the rest of the world, especially in Asia, Russia and China have scaled up cooperation with their allies in BRICS and the SCO.

**BRICS.** The BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) is now a formal alliance, with Russia and China at the core. BRICS aims to contend with the G-7 in terms of economic and geopolitical clout although it is still comparably weaker. All five BRICS states have been amplifying their individual strengths in their respective regions through such formations as Mercosur, SCO, the Caspian Sea Alliance, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, and the South African Development Community.

The US sees the BRICS alliance as a threat to its world hegemony. In an effort to break the BRICS, US foreign policy has stepped up its antagonism with Russia and China while trying to woo back Brazil, India, and South Africa into the Western imperialist fold.

**Big-power rivalries and flashpoints.** Since 2012, the US (with EU and Japan to some extent) and Russia (with China to some extent) have reverted back to Cold War-level superpower tensions. There have been repeated diplomatic and proxy-war clashes in the Middle East, on the buildup of US

and NATO troops and missile defense systems in Europe and the Pacific, on the Russia-China buildup in East and Central Asia, and in the increasingly important realm of global cyberwarfare.

In all global regions, all the big powers are scrambling to strengthen their respective positions, especially in terms of investments, access to markets, natural resources, shipping, military bases, and territorial claims. The saber-rattling between the US and Russia has been most prominent in areas that are already flashpoints of previous, actual, and high-potential armed conflict, such as in the Russia-Europe border regions, in the Middle East and North Africa, in Central and South Asia, and (with Russia taking China's side) in East Asia.

In East Asia, there are simmering cauldrons in the Korean peninsula, East China Sea, and South China Sea, while the Taiwan and Hong Kong SAR sovereignty questions are sleeping dragons that may waken anew. The US strategic approach called “pivot to Asia” (with a 2011-2020 timetable) continues its long-term transfer of air, naval and ground forces to Asia-Pacific destinations. It has laid out detailed plans for the Pentagon’s preparations for war in Asia, particularly in the context of a US-led conflict against China.<sup>19</sup>

Central Asia and South Asia are now key arenas of big-power rivalry after the US-backed mujahedin insurgency in the 1980s, the collapse of the USSR in 1991, and the ensuing US-NATO military intervention. Both US-NATO and Russia-CSTO camps have been wooing countries in the region while invoking “terrorist threats” to justify their continuing political and military presence.

The Middle East (southwest Asia, including Turkey) and North Africa — traditionally considered as one global region (MENA) — is arguably the region most wracked in the post-World War II period by repeating cycles of wars and other forms of socio-political turmoil with religious and ethnic overtones, and which have directly or indirectly involved the big powers. The US and its allies are reasserting their hegemony by systematically dismantling all kinds of anti-US and anti-Zionist opposition in the region.

Fueled by big-power and regional rivalries and other factors, repeated realignments are generating and worsening armed conflicts and civil strife such as in Syria, Iraq and Libya. The Russia-backed alliance of Iran, Iraq and Syria is increasingly on the sunsights of the US-Israel-Saudi alliance. Turkey

19 “Asia-Pacific Rebalance 2025: Capabilities, Presence, and Partnerships”. [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/160119\\_Green\\_AsiaPacificRebalance2025\\_Web\\_0.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/160119_Green_AsiaPacificRebalance2025_Web_0.pdf)

has become a big bone of contention, while more cracks have appeared among the US-backed Gulf states. Deeply problematic issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remain unresolved.

In sub-Saharan Africa, economic troubles and social unrest since 1980 led to the toppling of more than 30 African regimes in 1990-1994. A minor uptick (2000-2007, aka "Africa rising") was stopped short by the global recession. Localized but persistent armed conflicts (domestic or cross-border), made more complicated by tribal rivalries and foreign meddling, affect at least a dozen countries. The US-EU alliance is riding on these conflicts to tighten control, particularly as China's presence increases in the region. South Africa, meanwhile, is flexing its new-found muscles and is growing tighter ties with Russia and China.

The US historically treated Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) as its "backyard" and jealously protects its hegemony in the region. On the other hand, many LAC countries are now active in alliances that resist US meddling and are more open to the multipolar world. These include CELAC, UNASUR, and ALBA. Meanwhile, the long-standing US control of the Organization of American States (OAS) has declined. Cuba remains anti-imperialist and pro-socialist, while Bolivarian (left-leaning populist and generally anti-US) regimes continue to offer alternative paths. Underlying these, however, are seething social conflicts and continuing US intervention.

## **Projecting the Future of Inter-Imperialist Rivalries**

In conclusion, this paper reiterates the continuing validity of the fifth feature of imperialism in the current era. Big-power rivalry as a constant generator of militarism and wars remains as wired as ever to the existence and operations of actual imperialist states, as shown by the experience of the past 100 years.

At this point, we reiterate the most prominent currents that persisted across the decades — through periods of global war and periods of uneasy "peace"; through periods of highly polarized and violent rivalries among imperialists and periods of unipolar hegemony; through a period when a strong socialist camp rallied the various anti-imperialist struggles of the peoples of the world, and through the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when that camp gradually dissolved. We now consider the roles of these main currents in shaping and resolving such rivalries, on top of the fundamental social contradictions within monopoly capitalism itself.

## Militarism and fascism

Militarism and fascism are twin ideologies, sets of institutions and policies adopted by the imperialist state to deal with crisis and threats of revolution at home, and to gear up for war overseas. While militarism accompanied class society (and especially empires) throughout the many armed conflicts in human history, modern imperialist militarism is qualitatively different and on a much higher level.

Throughout the past century, militarism has generally risen worldwide, with the imperialist powers as the main wellspring. It is tightly intertwined with the relentless trend of fascism and systematic attacks on people's rights, both within the imperialist heartland and in the vast territories of the Third World.

During Lenin's time, other Marxist leaders such as Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht had given additional emphasis to the phenomenon of militarism. The topic was explored extensively in Liebknecht's *Militarism and Anti-Militarism* (1907).<sup>20</sup> Many anti-imperialist writers have explored this feature of imperialism beyond the particularities of Lenin's time.

Half a century later, Baran and Sweezy, in *Monopoly Capital*, devoted an entire chapter on precisely this question.<sup>21</sup> The workings of an imperialist state greatly dependent on military power is further explored in Alfred Szymanski's *The Logic of Imperialism*.<sup>22</sup> It is best for the reader to go through the cited chapters.

**The military industrial complex, arms trade and arms race.** The military-industrial complex has its roots in the early years of monopoly capitalism, when the most advanced capitalist states modernized their armies and navies (and a few decades later, their fledgling air forces) with the help of armaments companies. This was famously exemplified by the close ties of the giant Krupp arms company with the Prussian military-bureaucratic state — a fete duplicated by Schneider-Creusot in France and Armstrong Whitworth in Britain.

At the end of World War I, every imperialist power had its own lucrative armaments industry and military-industrial complex (MIC), and competed

20 The topic was explored extensively in K. Liebknecht's *Militarism and Anti-Militarism* (1907), <http://www.marxistsfr.org/archive/liebknecht-k/works/1907/militarism-antimilitarism/index.htm>

21 Baran and Sweezy, "The Absorption of Surplus: Militarism and Imperialism" in *Monopoly Capital*, pp.178-214.

22 Szymanski, *The Logic of Imperialism*, pp.177-216

for bigger shares in the global arms trade. After World War II, the US MIC benefited the most although the industry as a whole recovered and rapidly expanded worldwide. The MICs of the top capitalist powers continued to expand in the past 50 years since then, even way beyond the Cold War, attesting to its being deeply embedded into the very core architecture of imperialism.

Military spending by the top capitalist powers has continued to bloat up.<sup>23</sup> The US and other developed countries, which are mostly the biggest military spenders, are also the biggest arms traders, suppliers, and military aid givers to armies worldwide.<sup>24</sup>

The post-Cold War era was supposed to relieve the whole world of the military madness that was the US-Soviet strategic arms race. But it has continued and even speeded up, and now involves more big powers. The race is not merely in the quantity of nuclear and non-nuclear arms, but more importantly, in their destructive power and capacity for quick deployment and use.

The US-NATO and Russia-CSTO have turned Europe anew into a giant chess game of strategic military forces and weaponry. Similar strategic standoffs are building up in the Middle East (Turkey-Syria-Iraq-Iran) and parts of South Asia (Afghanistan-Pakistan). The US-led pivot to East Asia and the Pacific continues, and is being countered by China and its own "String of Pearls" strategy, with the support of Russia and the SCO.

Of particular and growing concern are the so-called tactical nukes, i.e., nuclear weapons with shorter ranges and lower yields and thus most expedient in various battlefield situations. The big powers are also opening up new arenas for the arms race, such as cyberwarfare, robot weapon systems, and militarizing outer space through military-grade satellite systems.

**'National security state' and 'deep state'.** The fascist state that showed its ugliest forms in the 1930s and World War II further evolved throughout the entire Cold War. Since then, ultra-Rightist governments and elitist

23 The world's total military expenditures in 2016 are estimated to have reached USD 1,686 billion. The US share was 36% – higher than the military spending of the eight next top-ranked countries combined. ("World military spending: Increases in the USA and Europe, decreases in oil-exporting countries". SIPRI. Stockholm, 24 April 2017. <https://www.sipri.org/research/armament-and-disarmament/arms-transfers-and-military-spending/military-expenditure>)

24 In the most recent period analyzed by SIPRI (2012-2016), the US remains the world's top arms exporter (as it has been since 1990) with 33% share. Russia is in No. 2, with 23% share. China, France, Germany, and the UK each recorded about 5% of global exports, rounding out the top six of 57 exporter countries. ("U.S. Leads Rising Global Arms Trade". Arms Control Association. 1 March 2017. <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2017-03/news/us-leads-rising-global-arms-trade>)

military dictatorships have risen to power while fascist political movements and parties with Nazi affinities have brazenly gone mainstream. These fascist forces undertake systematic campaigns to attack human rights and democratic gains, reinstitute police-state schemes, and whip up various ultra-reactionary thinking through mass media, the Internet, schools and other cultural vehicles.

Some of the worst features of fascism are now seen in the US and Europe, especially as part of the "war on terror." The US and EU increasingly show these peculiar forms of fascism through the so-called "national security state." Their ruling classes have allowed neo-conservative, militarist and fascist cliques intimately tied with the financial oligarchic elite to further centralize and camouflage (in some cases even exclusively privatize) key state machineries.

These super-elites extend their tentacles across the diplomatic, scientific, academic-intellectual, and media-cultural worlds. Thus the US (with other imperialist states not far behind) is not simply a national security state, but has turned into so-called the Deep State especially under the Bush and Obama presidencies; it promises to do even worse under Trump's presidency.

### **Inter-imperialist rivalries impacted by other global contradictions**

After the October Revolution, it soon became evident that the world proletarian revolution would take an entire historical epoch during which socialist states would exist side by side with hostile imperialist states, while supporting liberation wars and mass movements in the colonies and semicolonies became a basic task of socialists worldwide.

As these new contradictions (imperialist camp vs. socialist camp, imperialism vs. national liberation movements and a growing bloc of independent states) unfolded, their complex interactions with inter-imperialist rivalries and wars had to be thoroughly analyzed. Clarity in theory, strategy and tactics on these questions was achieved by the next generations of Marxist-Leninists. Lenin's five features of imperialism were confirmed anew — in the case of the fifth feature, most thoroughly by the horrific experience of World War II.

The Cold War, which went on for more than five decades and lasted somewhat longer than the previous period marked by two world wars. The absence of inter-imperialist wars during this period did not invalidate Lenin's fifth feature. Rather, the intense superpower rivalry further proved it correct.

But the Cold War did exhibit a feature that did not exactly hew to Lenin's scenario of inter-imperialist wars: the major shooting wars during this period were not between imperialist rivals, but occurred in countries such as Korea and in Indochina, where the imperialist alliance fought national liberation movements supported by the socialist camp. The complex situation was further complicated by Soviet revisionism and the ensuing split in the socialist camp.

Thus, the Cold War morphed from its original character as an historic struggle between imperialism and socialism into a global rivalry between two imperialist superpowers. While the US-Soviet rivalry did not erupt into a World War III, its relentless arms race and proxy wars served to revalidate Lenin's thesis about imperialism and war. Such rivalry and proxy wars proceeded amid the continuing anti-imperialist liberation movements and revolutionary struggles of Third World peoples

Again, after the Cold War, US imperialism seemed to dominate a unipolar world with no effective counter-pole apart from the said revolutionary and liberation movements. However, the laws of capitalist crisis and uneven development continue to generate inter-imperialist rivalries. Now the unipolar world has given way to growing polarization and bigger factors for war among the big powers.

**Amin's thesis of 'collective imperialism'.** Samir Amin has his own 12 theses on what happened to imperialism since Lenin wrote his work.<sup>25</sup> This paper has not attempted to critique Amin's "update on Lenin," but his 10<sup>th</sup> thesis needs to be addressed here. The said thesis asserts that there has occurred a "shift from the period of inter-imperialist conflict depicted by Lenin, to the period of U.S. hegemony during the Cold War, to the collective imperialism" by the US-led Triad (with EU and Japan) by end-20<sup>th</sup> century.

Amin expounds on this Triad by claiming that "collective imperialism finds its *raison d'être* in the awareness by the bourgeoisies in the triad nations of the necessity for their joint management of the world..." He asserts that the enmity between the Triad, on one hand, and China and Russia, on the other hand, are not inter-imperialist rivalries but conflicts between the imperialist centers, on one hand, and two states in the "peripheries" which have so far refused to become mere "neo-comprador bourgeoisies" like the rest of the Third World on the other hand.<sup>26</sup>

25 Samir Amin is aligned with the Marxian-dependency theorists clustering around the Monthly Review together with Paul Baran, Paul Sweezy, Harry Magdoff, and Andre Gunder Frank. His 12 theses on imperialism were presented in a *Monthly Review* article in 2011 article by John Bellamy Foster (MR vol. 63 no. 5, October 2011)

26 Amin, *MR* vol. 67 no. 3, Jul-Aug 2015

This thesis, however valid for a very specific period of imperialism, is now evidently passé. Any full analysis of imperialism in the past 30 years cannot disregard the continuing fundamental basis for inter-imperialist conflicts, from which Lenin derived the fifth feature. Amin's "period of U.S. hegemony during the Cold War" (1947-1990) and the "period of collective imperialism" by the US-led triad (1990-present) merely represent new or transitional forms of such conflicts. The fifth feature of imperialism remains as valid as ever.

### Continuing era of imperialism and socialist revolutions

The future of imperialism and inter-imperialist rivalries cannot be projected separately from the future of socialist revolutions. As Lenin stated, the era of imperialism is also the era of the proletarian revolution. Generations of Marxist-Leninists have always asserted that the world capitalist crisis will recur repeatedly and more seriously. Each crisis generates favorable conditions upon which new revolutions, both people's democratic and socialist, will break out and win victories.

While no major socialist revolution is in the horizon at the moment, the recurring crises of the capitalist system, sharpened big-power rivalries, and a reemergent Third World will further increase the objective and subjective factors for revolution. Nations will continue to assert independence and the people to wage revolution.

As the crises of global capitalism continues, the interest and demand for socialism is gaining renewed strength, both among the old generation of working people who can still recall the benefits of socialism and among the younger generations who are seeking social alternatives and rediscovering lessons from past struggles. In the process, more proletarian revolutionaries will arise, draw the correct lessons from past victories and failures, and lead the masses by the millions in their respective countries but with an internationalist framework, in order to reassert socialism.

As Lenin reminded us all: "Only a proletarian socialist revolution can lead humanity out of the impasse which imperialism and imperialist wars have created. Whatever difficulties the revolution may have to encounter, whatever possible temporary setbacks or waves of counter-revolution it may have to contend with, the final victory of the proletariat is inevitable."<sup>27</sup>

## Main References

- Baran, Paul A. and Paul M. Sweezy. 1966. *Monopoly Capital: An Essay on the American Economic and Social Order*. Monthly Review Press (as reprinted in England: Pelican Books 1968). 390pp.
- Brewer, Anthony. 1990. *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London and New York: Routledge. 300pp. PDF file downloaded 20 March 2017 from [http://psi424.cankaya.edu.tr/uploads/files/Brewer,%20Marxist\\_Theories\\_of\\_Imperialism.pdf](http://psi424.cankaya.edu.tr/uploads/files/Brewer,%20Marxist_Theories_of_Imperialism.pdf)
- Chibber, Vivek. 2009. *American Militarism and the US Political Establishment: The Real Lessons of the Invasion of Iraq*. In *Socialist Register*. PDF file download 7 April 2017 from <http://sociology.fas.nyu.edu/docs/IO/225/AmericanMilitarismandtheUSPoliticalEstablishment.pdf>
- Greene, Felix. 1970. *The Enemy: Notes on Imperialism and Revolution*. London: Jonathan Cape (as reprinted in Quezon City: Malaya Books). 341pp.
- Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich (Ulyanov). 1917. *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism (A Popular Outline)*. In *V.I. Lenin Selected Works in One Volume*. 1968. Moscow: Progress Publishers. Pp.169-263.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1920. "Preface to the French and German Editions" in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.
- Magdoff, Harry. 2003. *Imperialism without Colonies*. New York: Monthly Review Press. PDF file download 25 March 2017 from <http://www.kropfpolisci.com/class.system.theory.magdoff.pdf>
- Munday, Lisa. 2012. *American Militarism and Anti-Militarism in Popular Media, 1945-1970*. McFarland.
- Sison, Jose Maria. 2015a. *Continuing the Struggle for National and Social Liberation (Selected Writings, 1986-1991)*. The Netherlands: INPS and Manila: Aklat ng Bayan. 458pp.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2015b. *Crisis Generates Resistance (vol. 1 of Selected Writings, 2009-2015)*. The Netherlands: INPS. 392pp.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2016. *Building People's Power (vol. 2 of Selected Writings, 2009-2015)*. The Netherlands: INPS. 474pp.

Szymanski, Albert. 1981. *The Logic of Imperialism*. New York: Praeger Publishers. 598pp.

# The situation of Canadian imperialism and the prospects for revolutionary movement in Canada

by Steve da Silva<sup>1</sup>

I'd like to begin first by addressing some of the main features of the developing global conjuncture so that we situate the conditions for struggle in this country in relation to where things are trending in the world and what array of the popular classes may be assembled to actually fight and overthrow imperialism.

\* \* \*

First, there is the global ecological crisis. There exists now virtually universal consensus in the scientific community that catastrophic ecological changes are inevitable and are already well underway; it's only a matter of how fast and how far over the cliff we will go. Yet, we should not think that any of this implies an automatic collapse of capitalism. Refugee flows will surge as we've never seen before, land-grabbing will become ever more brutal, real estate speculation will run rampant, and tensions between core and periphery and among the imperialist powers will certainly sharpen to the point of war.

Which brings me to the second point of the developing global conjuncture: we are in the midst of a transition from a unipolar world centred around U.S. imperialism to a multipolar world shifting in the direction of a new world power. The last time capitalist civilization underwent a shift in global hegemony – away from Britain, in the second half of the 19 century – it would take two world wars for a re-division of the world to be arrived at, leaving 100

1 Steve da Silva is from People's Defence in Canada. He delivered this speech in a panel on "Geography of Struggle: Wars of Aggression and People's Resistance" during the international conference on "Solidarity and Fight Back: Building Resistance to US-Led War, Militarism and Neofascism" held in Toronto, Canada, 5-7 August 2017, convened by the International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS) and the International Women's Alliance (IWA).

million dead, not to mention the proxy and regionals that both preceded and followed these two world wars which killed millions more.

The third feature I want to identify is this: global capitalism is on the cusp of massive technological revolution in the form of *automation*. *Automation* will completely revolutionize production, distribution, communications, and war as we know it. The series *Black Mirror* has given us a terrifying glimpse of what some of these changes may entail in our everyday life. While some naively see in this the possibility of a world of plenty and a world without work, fantasies aside, the laws of capitalist accumulation can only guarantee a mass exodus of humanity from the formal labour force into the ranks of the 'surplussed' populations that are swelling the global slums. I don't think *Black Mirror* hasn't made that particular episode yet.

Now, the global economy is fundamentally stagnant. This means the productive capacity of the global capitalist system far exceeds the capacity of the global market to absorb the product it is capable of putting out. Automation within *the capitalist mode of production* will only exacerbate this problem by intensifying productivity and send unemployment surging. The super-exploitation of workers of the South, the bottomless investment pit of constantly expanding militarism, and the plunder of the colonies and semi-colonies have not been able to stave off this crisis. And in the past, the imperialists have resolved this endemic problem of *overaccumulation*, *when all else fails*, with world war: the destruction of war provides the opportunity to wipe out a certain stock of fixed capital on a global scale, while the frenzied pace of wartime production allows for a new productive base with the new technologies at hand.

It would be an understatement to say that this is a dangerous conjuncture, comrades. It is the *ultimate* conjuncture. A conjuncture within which a fourth major problem is rapidly emerging: the political threat to our class posed by fascism.

So how does Canada fit into this? Let me begin with some fundamental features of this country that we should all understand...

First of all, let's make no mistake about the fact that Canada is a thoroughly reactionary and parasitic force in the world today, as it has always been. Canada has had a hand in nearly every single major imperialist aggression of the last quarter century: from the onset of the genocide in Central Africa that started with the civil war in Rwanda and extended into the Congo, killing

upwards of 10 million people; to the smashing of Yugoslavia, the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, the annihilation of Libya and the war in Iraq and Syria today: Canada has blood and dirt on its hands in each and every one of these imperialist massacres. In the last 15 years, Canada has supported coups-d'etat in Haiti, Honduras and the Ukraine. Canada has been and remains one of Israel's staunchest defenders in the world; and it is an unabashed ally to the Gulf state monarchies, as Canada's \$15 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia signifies. A friend to the end to the world's biggest reactionaries.

Now, these are all relatively *recent* examples of Canadian militarism, and they may lead some to view "Canadian imperialism" as a relatively new phenomenon. Is this just a new policy turn? We must recall what Lenin said over a century ago in his book *Imperialism* and in his polemics with the social democrats of the time: that imperialism is not a mere *policy*. The significance of Lenin's analysis of imperialism is how it revealed it to be capitalism at a certain stage of its development.

Canadian imperialism didn't *just* emerge in the last quarter century, even if Canada has come to occupy a more prominent role in the imperialist world system today than it did half a century ago.

You see, because while the imperialist powers of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were going to war to divide up the world, scrambling for the colonies of Africa, Asia, the 'Middle East, (which by the way Canada was by no means absent from) Canada was at the same time focusing on carving out an empire of its own. However, unlike the other imperialist powers, Canada's colonies were conveniently located within the bounds of a single contiguous border. This is how Canada has come to be the second largest country in the world: because it never ended its colonialism. And this hidden empire has been the major source of capital accumulation which, in the last quarter of the last century, had propelled Canadian finance capital well into the upper echelons of the imperialist world system.

Those not from Canada may not be aware that right now in this country, the Federal government is investing a significant amount of resources into *appearing* to try to 'reconcile' its genocidal past with Indigenous Peoples. Last year, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was concluded, and after a decade of mass movement from below amongst Indigenous Peoples, an Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women has finally commenced. For those who may not be aware, for decades Indigenous Women have disappeared and murdered at alarming rates, often involving or implicating police forces. But

notwithstanding recent attention being given to these issues, what continues in this country is an unbroken policy of extinguishment of Indigenous sovereignty and a removal of Indigenous Peoples from their ancestral lands.

Russel Diabo of the Mohawk Nation of Kahnawake has analyzed and referred to this as Canada's "two-track approach" to its unbroken and unchanged policy of assimilation and extermination of Indigenous Peoples. On the one hand, there remains in place racist and colonial Indian Act, legislation that created the apartheid-like reserve system, destroyed and undermined any possibilities of economic development for Indigenous Peoples in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and have ever since perpetually served as cantonments of imposed poverty. Many of these reserves are inaccessible by road in the winter, if not, are fly-in-only communities. Housing is completely inadequate; people are coping with legacies of colonial violence and trauma, and when they are not leading people to suicide, or addiction, these conditions are compelling Indigenous Peoples out of their homelands and into Canada's cities through the prospect of better housing, healthcare and education. The second-track to this modern day Termination scheme that Russ Diabo has identified is the process called Comprehensive Land Claims, or Modern Treaties, which currently consists of dozens of negotiating tables across the country that aim to extinguish Aboriginal sovereignty completely by turning Indigenous communities into municipalities governed by the municipal law of the provinces. This is an urgent task for Canadian imperialism because, as most people do not know, Canada has no legal claim to the majority of this country: the majority of lands in this country are unceded territories, never conquered by military campaigns, never signed away, just inundated with settlers with deeds given by some royal government overseas.

Those of you not from Canada may realize just how sinister Canada's techniques of colonialism have been, which have included the wholesale theft of children from their communities and their forceful conversion to Christianity and the English language. This was known as residential schooling in which children were beaten, indoctrinated, often sexually assaulted, worked as slaves, and often killed in significant proportions. Now, one and two generations after the closures of these schools, we see that these policies are continuing by other means in the form of mass incarceration of Indigenous Peoples, child apprehension through foster care, missing and murdered Indigenous Peoples, and an epidemic of addiction affecting many of those trying to survive this genocide.

Now, if these facts were not enough to convince you of Russ Diabo's thesis that Canada's extermination plan is as alive as it has ever been, then maybe you would prefer to hear this plan directly from Canada's leading counter-insurgency thinker. Douglas Bland of Canada's Armed Forces published a report for the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, a Canadian think-tank, where he proposed virtually identical policies of assimilation and termination. In this report, Bland argued that the only way to head-off a potential insurgency of Indigenous Peoples, which he himself quite honestly connected to a long history of colonial oppression, that the only way to deal with this threat, is to remove Indigenous Peoples from the land by attracting them to the cities by promise of healthcare and education. In essence, the policies of our Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau.

\* \* \*

Canada emergence as a bellicose and militarist country on a world scale – arming reactionary monarchs, deposing and kidnapping democratically elected leaders, popular leaders, bombing nations into oblivion – these deeds are a mere continuation of its sinister past and is as much about profits and conquest today as it has always been.

So how is it then that Canada has been able to get off with a relatively untarnished image?

For one, these crimes of Canada were hidden from the outside world for some time. But the other factor is how Canada cultivates and markets its image as a welcoming multicultural country to the world: For the past fifty years, Canada has been significantly reliant upon immigration to replenish and refresh its labour force, as well as recruitment of skilled labour and professionals. Canada is the highest-ranking country amongst the most developed countries in terms of foreign-born population, so many people across the world look to Canada for opportunities. But what we must also realize is that this apparently progressive immigration policy is only possible due to the settler-colonial nature of this country. Canada is ultimately able to assimilate and grant citizenship to immigrants in a way that other imperialist countries cannot because of its size and because it has always had an active need to displace and efface Indigenous Peoples.

But we know, speaking now in my capacity as a community organizer in People's Defence, that all is not well with today's generation of immigrants. I recall last year meeting this man from Yemen during my weekly organizing,

and he told me that he didn't have time because he was moving back to Yemen. Surprised (considering Saudi Arabia's war of aggression against Yemen) I asked the comrade why he was going back home. His response was that life in Canada is not what he thought it would be, and that it had been terrible and he wanted to return home. I was shocked by this, but truthfully, the sentiment from this brother reflects the sentiment of many newcomers to Canada today.

Neoliberalism has waged two generations of assaults on the social wage, and has made life more precarious for many more people in this country. Speculation within real estate is making our cities completely unaffordable, with rents in Toronto approaching those of Manhattan, New York. The prospects of home ownership have become an impossibility for most. And it is estimated that as many as 40% of jobs in Canada today could be wiped out in the next 10-20 years by currently existing technologies in automation.

The confluence of this domestic conjuncture with the global conjuncture presents, I believe, a significant opportunity to build a revolutionary alliance against Canadian capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism. Life is becoming more precarious and miserable for more and more workers; immigrants are coming to Canada to find out they are nothing more than cheap labour, there is little hope of advancement. And fascist and rightwing organizations are vying to control the narrative through which people, especially the white population, understand this crisis. Meanwhile, the quality of life of most Indigenous Peoples in this country is as bad as it has ever been: 25% of Canada's exports continue to come from primary commodities alone, which is a significant proportion for an imperialist nation, and these largely derive from the plunder of Indigenous peoples lands. So we as anti-imperialists and revolutionaries must build a movement that propagates the understanding that colonialism and genocide are not mere policies: they are as imperative for the Canadian bourgeoisie as are its foreign military expeditions with its imperialist allies. And what makes this worse is that the plunder of these resources, specifically fossil fuels, in addition to terminating the national question of Indigenous Peoples once and for all, if Canada gets its way, will contribute to accelerating humanity off the carbon cliff.

Canada may not be a weak link in the imperialist world system. Many revolutions will occur in advance of any significant changes in this country. But it will be decisive for us to struggle and fight here, just as it was for the partisans and anti-fascists who fought behind enemy lines within the heart of the imperialist nations in the first half of the last century.

\* \* \*

A century ago, on the eve of the Russian revolution, what was at stake was ending the most wicked war humanity had ever seen up to that point in time, and initiating the first socialist revolution that would hold out the prospects of eliminating capitalist imperialism and colonialism. Today, all these things remain at stake, plus one more thing, a big thing: the very material foundations for building any future civilization. And the fight against Canadian imperialism, a parasite of the first order, a plunderous and genocidal nation, is a must in the fight not only for Indigenous Peoples nationhood, but for humanity's future.

Comrades, the hour is very late. We have little time and we have many fights ahead. But the struggle, the struggle is giving birth to a new people, a new people who are showing us the way, the new people we must all become. *WE UNITE, LET'S MOVE*





