

Colonialism and imperialism versus a Community of Common Destiny for Humankind: violence and hegemony versus harmony

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Have no illusions about states in which capitalism predominates (I do not include China)

- Capitalism emerged and achieved an ‘increasing development of science’, ‘ample ... achievements in the accumulation of wealth’ and ‘repeated periods of the fullest blooming of art’,
- Yet it ‘has never been anything but the development of the small minority at the expense of the exploited and oppressed great majority’ and
- it did so as it set in motion and developed ‘the most sordid instincts and passions of man’, the ‘naked greed’ of ‘shabby individual[s], ‘brutal sensuality, sordid avarice, [and] selfish plunder’, and it deployed the most outrageous means—theft, rape, deceit and treachery’ Engels, 1884 [1999], pp. 204 and 275.

IMPERIALISM (AND COLONIALISM)
AS THE EXERCISE OF POLITICAL,
MILITARY AND DISCURSIVE POWER

The meaning of words

- The word imperialism derives from the Latin imperium (absolute rule, supreme power and empire as territory over which power is exercised) and imperāre (command or rule).
- Colonialism derives from the Latin colonia meaning a colony or extra-territorial settlement (an overseas plantation of emigrants in a dependency of the country of emigration such as the British plantations in Ireland).
- Imperialism and colonialism designate processes through which a powerful state conquers and dominates, rules, settles and exploits subordinate states, territories and peoples that exist beyond its own boundaries.
- These terms do not relate to pre-capitalist empires. As Kumar (2021, pp. 284–285) asks in the case of Imperial China: '[m]ight it be that a political entity can be an empire—ruling over a multiplicity of peoples—without pursuing imperialism?

Marxist theories

- Colonialism and imperialism in the capitalist epoch denote the striving of leading capitalist powers to establish direct or indirect political, economic and cultural control over as extensive a range of countries as possible, combining them into imperial and sub-imperial spheres of power, to secure, mainly through the exercise of military and political power, access to markets, assets, resources, and profitable capital investment opportunities (Pannekoek, 2012 [1913], pp. 692–693).
- In the Marxist tradition, theories of imperialism examined a new monopoly stage of capitalism, and ‘a series of acts of aggression including the Spanish-American War of 1898, the Boer War (1899-1902), and the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion in China by the Western powers in 1900’ (Day & Gaido, 2012; Daniel Gaido & Manuel Quiroga, 2013, p. 452).

Competitive capitalism versus monopolies

- Outside of Marxism, Max Weber and Joseph Schumpeter claimed that liberal (competitive) capitalism does not require imperialist expansion. For Weber, imperialism is a permanent potential development within capitalism, 'associated with a specific expansionist dynamic of the capitalist state, as well as with economic domination by monopoly interests' (cited by Milios & Sotiropoulos, 2009, p. 58).
- '[T]o maintain the political and economic domination of a class', the world was divided into 'great powers' and 'privileged oppressors and plunderers', on the one side, and oppressed countries, that included colonies and semi-colonies, along with many small countries developed as 'markets for investment', on the other (Lenin, 1968 [1912–16], pp. 302, 430).
- In 2016 politics was excluded from Lenin's article due to Tsarist censorship but he forecasted a 'tumultuous era' that has continued to this day.

Domination, coercion and consent

- In the international systems that emerged in the era of colonialism and imperialism, the strongest powers sought domination: the establishment and maintenance of hegemony
- Domination rests, however, not just on coercion and repression (fear) of subordinated countries, but also on consent: 'intellectual and moral leadership', alliances, and integration.
- In this quest, dominant international and transnational social forces, and hegemonic powers, draw on the assistance of: international organisations, that they create, shape and control; national agencies, with predominantly international responsibilities; and a variety of entities (intelligence agencies, non-governmental organisations, and so on), that all intervene in the domestic affairs of other countries.

Imperialism in our era

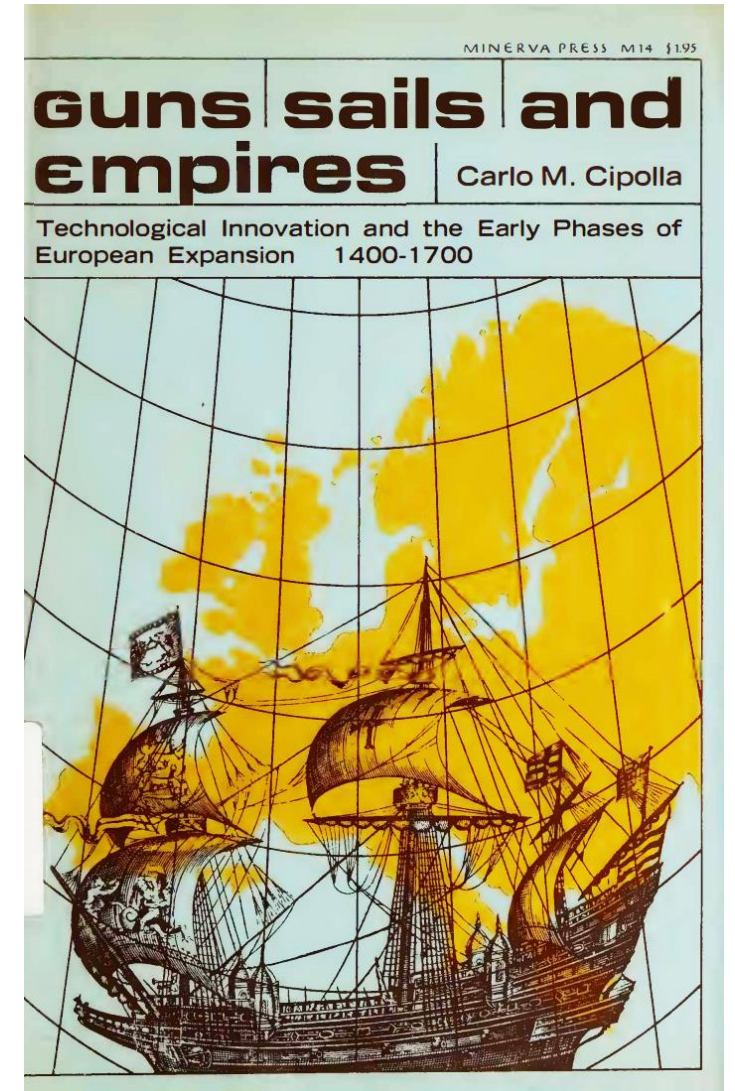
- In the US, the neo-Conservative Project for a New American Century planned regime change in seven countries, in five years: Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Iran. Although many regime change operations succeeded, the main consequence was a trail of death and destruction across West Asia, refugee crises, Belgrade, Baghdad, Tripoli, Gaza, Damascus, Beirut, Teheran
- Hegemonic destabilisation, direct and indirect military intervention and regime change in the name of 'Western democracy' had disastrous consequences: chronic states of war and terrorism (ISIS, Al-Qaeda, Al-Nusra); trails of death and destruction across West Asia; state collapse; economic ruin; and humanitarian crises.
- The consequences for the West were also serious: the international recognition of 'double standards', serious reputational damage, a crisis of legitimacy, an erosion of US power, successive refugee crises, (an erosion of fear), and a acceleration of moves in the GSE to establish a new non-western international order.

ON SOCIETAL AND CIVILISATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Civilizational drivers: Ming China versus merchant and industrial capitalism and the ages of colonialism



- By 1450 Chinese inventions (gunpowder, magnetic compass, printing, watertight ship compartments) had reached Europe.
- Outside west Timurid Empire in 15-16 century Iran and central Asia, Ming in 14-15 century China, Ottomans, Safavids, Mughals
- European feudal absolutist states put guns on ships and started to colonize the world



A peaceful Asia versus almost constant war in the West

- From Greece and Rome until the present the Western world was almost constantly at war (and geographical expansion).
- The One Hundred Years Peace of 1814-1914 was characterised by incessant colonial and imperial wars.
- In East Asia there were 300 years of peace between two Japanese invasions of Korea, into which China was drawn (1592-98 and 1894-95).
- In 1598 and 1894 only three conflicts involved China: in 1659-60, and 1767-71 (Myanmar), 1788-89 (Vietnam)
- Otherwise two Siamese-Myanmar wars in 1607-18 and 1660-62
- For China 500 years of peace as after 1406-28 (assisted restoration of Tran dynasty) to 1592 Japanese invasion of Korea China not at war (other than north/northwest border conflict)
- An absence of creation of overseas empires

A polycentric East Asian gongsheng (symbiosis system) characterised by a set of principles, norms and codes of conduct relating to inter-state relations in which large and small countries found a proper place and which over the course of millennia fostered voluntary and tribute trade, peaceful coexistence

Japan adopted the western ethos of progress with the restoration of the Meiji dynasty in 1868, and lurched into industrialisation and into the imperialist adventures

Civilisational and societal differences: Contrasting visions of an international system

- In February 2021, the newly appointed Secretary of State Antony Blinken gave several speeches and interviews in which he repeated the line: 'The world doesn't organize itself. When we're not engaged, when we don't lead, then one of two things happens: either some other country tries to take our place, but probably not in a way that advances our interests and values, or no one does, and then you get chaos.'
- In China/Asia the hybrid results of civilisational values, and engagement with other civilisations and Marxism have led to a distinctive vision of an international order that western civilisation finds it difficult to understand.
- Chinese visions are of a harmonious international order (avoidance of conflict through pursuit of shared interests) and are rooted in Chinese concepts of 'All under heaven' (tiān xià – 天下), 'relationality' (关系 - guānxi), and 'symbiosis' (共生 - gòngsheng) (Grydehøj and Su, 2022).
- In this light the BRI is 'a vision of the world in which the success of one country can only be guaranteed by the success of all. The BRI is only a success if all its member states develop and prosper in tandem' (Li et al., 2020).

Never seek hegemony (bù chēng bà - 不称霸)

- In a CCCPC discussion of China's relationship with the world in December 1972 Mao Zedong (Mao, 1972 [2020]) **updated** three stratagems recommended by Zhu Sheng to the first Ming Emperor in the late Yuan Dynasty: 'dig deep caves, store grain everywhere and never seek hegemony.'
- Mao drew on a traditional distinction between a king who rules by benevolence and righteousness (wáng quánlì - 王权力) and a hegemon who rules by power (bàquán- 霸权).
- Mao insisted China should never seek hegemony (bù chēng bà - 不称霸). Xi Jinping repeatedly says it never will, although Mao did not preclude benevolent or virtuous rule (wáng dào tiān xià – 王道天下) (Zhu, 2011, p.114).

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五个问题、五个赤字和人类命运共同体

- 2017年，习主席在日内瓦联合国总部发起《人类命运共同体》他推出了五个问题
- 一 世界怎么了？、二 我们怎么办？、三 我们从哪里来？、四 现在在哪里？、五我们要到哪里去？
- 和平赤字- hépíng chìzì, 发展赤字-fāzhǎn chìzì, 治理赤字-zhìlǐ chìzì. 以后加上 安全赤字- ānquán chìzì
- 全球发展倡议 (quánqiú fāzhǎn chàngyì)、全球安全倡议 (quánqiú ānquán chàngyì)、全球文明倡议 (quánqiú wénmíng chàngyì)
- 全球治理倡议 (quánqiú zhìlǐ chàngyì)

Common or shared values and 'our' or Collective West's 'universal' values

- In January 2021, Xi Jinping (Xi 2021) spoke of the 'common values of humanity, i.e. peace, development, equity, justice, democracy, and freedom.' Equality?
- In China, the word 'common' is consciously used to denote a critical distinction between a generic concept (gōng yì) and
- a specific concrete instantiation (gè yì) and used in this instance to challenge the way western (neo-)liberalism conflates the generic concept (a 'universal value') with specific western instantiations (denying sovereignty).

Conclusions

- Colonialism and imperialism involve the use by states and their elites of political, military, economic and ideological power to establish direct or indirect control over territories beyond its own boundaries (combining them into imperial and sub-imperial spheres of power) and the use of hegemonic destabilisation, direct and indirect military intervention, interference in the internal affairs, colonisation and regime change operations in order to extend their sphere of influence: courses of action that can lead to genocide, war and inequality.
- China's international engagement is underpinned by concepts of harmony and symbiosis, and evidence that the aforementioned conduct of China in countries beyond its boundaries is extremely limited (although it was a major victim of such conduct)
- In that sense the claims that China is imperialist is false, deflects attention from the fundamental problems that bedevil our world and impedes attempts to address them.

Thank you
谢谢



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