

Imperialism

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Capitalism must expand or die. When the capitalists of a particular country are compelled to expand beyond their own borders militarily and economically, this is called imperialism — the highest and last stage of capitalism.

What is it that forces the capitalist system to become imperialist?

At a certain stage in the development of capitalism, production becomes concentrated in the hands of a few giant monopolies. These powerful corporations, dominated by a few banks, take control of the economic life of society. Such financial groupings both collaborate (e.g., price fixing) and compete with one another for greater control of society's wealth.

In order to survive, they must constantly amass ever-greater profits, which means exploiting the labor of the working class even more intensively, since labor is the source of all value.

To protect their overseas investments, the imperialists raise huge armies and navies, not only to forcibly subjugate oppressed people seeking independence from foreign domination but to make war against other imperialist countries competing for control. World War I and World War II are examples of two such inter-imperialist rivalries, where whole portions of the world were carved up among the major imperialist powers in Europe, Japan, and the United States.

But World War II signaled a turning point in world imperialist relations. After 6 years of global slaughter that took 50 million lives, the United States emerged as the world's most powerful imperialist country, gaining control of former European empires in Asia and Africa. The U.S., which had become an imperialist power in

1898, had already gained control of Latin America by the end of World War I.

Today, they call it globalization, but it's still imperialism. The Pentagon budget and military contracts exceed \$1 trillion a year, with some 800 military bases in more than 80 countries. Some countries occupied by U.S. imperialism are out-and-out colonies, like Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam. Others are run by puppet regimes such as in Guatemala and El Salvador. Whatever the form of government, the results are the same. The oppressed nation remains a one-crop or one-mineral "underdeveloped" economy, its riches systematically pumped out to fill the vaults of the big U.S. banking institutions.

These banks, which stand at the pinnacle of imperialism, have their branch offices from Bangkok to Beirut, from Buenos Aires to Bombay.

As mighty as U.S. imperialism seems, it is already past its peak and has started to decline.

Imperialism is the enemy of all working people whether they live in an imperialist country or in the country victimized by it. But it is the special obligation of the workers in the exploiting country to give support to those fighting to rid their country from super-exploitation and foreign domination.

Additional reading

- [Imperialism and the Split in Socialism](#) – by V.I. Lenin [summarizes the main points of Lenin's "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism"]
- [Expanding Empire](#): The global war drive of big business and the forces that will stop it – by Vincent Copeland [1969]
- [Bolsheviks and War](#): Lessons for today's anti-war movement – by Sam Marcy [1985, on Marxists Internet Archive]

- [Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism](#) - by Kwame Nkrumah PDF
 - [Liberate the Colonies! Communism and Colonial Freedom 1917-1924](#) - published by LeftWord Books, New Delhi PDF
 - [How Europe Underdeveloped Africa](#) - by Walter Rodney [1972] PDF
 - [The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World](#) - by Vijay Prashad [2007] PDF
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