

# Historical Evolution of Imperialism

After 2nd WW – Cold War

- In 1947, two camps were formed, the USSR and the USA asserting themselves as the leaders of two worlds that everything opposed.
- But the break-up was not surprising. It was the culmination of a long process, foreshadowed as early as 1943.
- From 1949 onwards, Europe, too, was structured into two blocs, whose borders would remain intangible until the fall of the USSR.

# After 2nd WW – Cold War

- After the 2nd World War, a number of international institutions and agreements were set up by the USA and its European allies to guarantee the capitalist system, notably in the economic (EEC and then EU), financial (IMF, World Bank, etc.), military (NATO, OASE, Atlantic Alliance, etc.) and political (European Parliament, UN, etc.) spheres. The United States set up security and political agreements with Japan, obliging the latter to follow U.S. policies and interests.
- The USA had ambitions for its industries, the most productive and advanced in the world, after the 2nd World War, to expand into the global economy through the free market. The European powers, exhausted by the war, had no way of standing in their way.

# After 2nd WW – Cold War

- The USSR had emerged victorious and extended its domination and influence over large swathes of territory, but the USSR's industries were far less productive than those of the USA, and lacked the means to compete with the US.
- The battle between the USSR and the USA began in Europe, with Eastern Europe under USSR domination, whose economies were often subordinated to the USSR's military-industrial objectives.

# After 2nd WW – Cold War

- The USA increased its influence in Western Europe through financial support for pro-American Christian Democrat and Social Democrat parties, the Marshall Plan to reinvigorate European industry in a framework favorable to American interests, the creation of NATO and the installation of American bases in Europe
- All regions of the world affected by the Cold war. In MENA, between 1940 and 1967, US companies considerably expanded their control of oil in the MENA region from 10% to almost 60%. Control of oil supplies is an important tool in opposing any shift in power, both economic and military, within the global economy.
- Struggle against Arab Nationalism and Communism in MENA

“Decolonisation” processes and  
neocolonialism

# Processus de «Décolonisations»

- The major event of the second half of the 20th century was the end of colonialism.
- The revolutionary upheavals that spread through the two world wars altered the balance of power, but in an unforeseen configuration, marked by the Cold War between the two great powers.
- The driving force was the challenge of colonial relations. Decolonization was first and foremost the result of the struggle of popular classes and the weakening of the great British and French colonial empires in 1939-1945.
- But the newly independent states also sought to widen their margins of political sovereignty through "non-alignment", taking advantage of rivalries between the two "camps".



# Processus de «Décolonisations»

- The same dynamic drives all the world's states to ally themselves with one of the two blocs, the US or the Soviet Union - and in particular the competition between the two superpowers, combining seduction, through economic and technological aid as well as the supply of armaments, with intimidation, or even direct military intervention if necessary.
- However, by neutralizing each other, the influences of Washington and Moscow enable certain third-party states to play off one influence against the other and gain a margin of autonomy.
- This is how decolonization led to the emergence of a "Third World", an expression coined on the model of the "Third State" by the Frenchman Alfred Sauvy, and which met with revealing success.

# Processus de «Décolonisations»

- A "non-alignment" emerged from this third world "camp".
- It grew out of the momentum generated by the Bandung summit, named after the Indonesian town where the leading figures of the Afro-Asian "Third World" met in 1955, including India's Jawaharlal Nehru, Indonesia's Sukarno, Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser and China's Zhou Enlai.
- In 1961, this conference founded the Non-Aligned Movement. It brought together 25 states, which defined non-alignment in terms of military neutrality, in an international context marked by numerous tensions between the two great powers and within each "bloc".

# Processus de «Décolonisations»

- However, from the mid-1970s onwards, these "Third World" movements and their opposition to Western states were challenged.
- Many of these states adopted neo-liberal policies and questioned their policies of state capitalism.

# Processus de «Décolonisations»

- This was also achieved through the dual process of encouraging indebtedness, followed by a conditional requirement for continued access to credit.
- These are the famous "Structural Adjustment Plans" of the IMF and the World Bank, set up as part of development aid.
- Through their integration into capitalist globalization, these countries are gradually moving closer to Western capitals

# Processus de «Décolonisations»

- In order to receive a loan, it was necessary to accept conditions that placed the economies of formerly colonized countries under the dependence of formerly colonizing countries:
  - privatization and withdrawal of state functions,
  - end of subsidies for basic necessities,
  - end of customs protection
  - opening up to competition from Western multinationals.

# Néocolonialismes

- Neo-colonialism here means political independence, the existence of states recognized internationally as sovereign, but remaining fairly dependent on the colonial metropolises in particular, and on imperialism in general - with the possibility of a certain diversity of dominants, in line or not with the intra-imperialist hierarchy - through tried and tested mechanisms, above all economic but also cultural.
- These mechanisms also benefit the indigenous ruling strata, who are generally the objective allies of imperialist capital, albeit with the possibility of internal friction,

# Néocolonialismes

- The situation has not fundamentally changed: the neo-coloniality of the so-called independences persists, even if the situation is no longer absolutely identical to that of the 1960s.
- Domination has been reorganized and restructured in line with the new balance of power brought about by the neoliberalization of globalization since the 1980s, the collapse of the Cold War "communist bloc" and the emergence of new capitalist powers in the new century.

# Néocolonialismes

- Similarly, when the colonies gained independence, the main colonial shareholders agreed to transfer to them the burden of the debt contracted by the colonial power.
- In particular, the World Bank generalized this procedure, which consists of transferring the debt contracted by a colonial power to the newly independent state.



# Néocolonialismes

- This colonial debt, absolutely iniquitous and revolting, is the basis for a future cycle of debts, the new privileged market of the World Bank.
- It implies political and economic dependence on the creditor powers.
- Debt is so central to the capitalist system that its repayment takes precedence over any other economic, environmental or social necessity.

# Key points

- Colonization was not, as the dominant ideology asserts, the entry into history of peoples outside history, but rather the interruption of the history of these peoples.
- The independence of colonial countries has very often not meant the end of dependence, both political and economic.
- Neo-colonialism has meant the introduction of new mechanisms of dependence, which in most cases do not require military occupation.

Unipolar Moment

# Unipolar Moment

- The end of the USSR marked the domination and extension of the American empire, including beyond the former Iron Curtain.
- It marked the emergence of a "unipolar world", with the increasing paralysis of the Soviet Union and its eventual demise - or rather, a "unipolar moment",
- 1991 was a pivotal year, fraught with symbolism because it signalled real change: not only the collapse of the USSR, but also the 2nd Gulf War, a decisive war in shaping the post-Cold War era.

# Unipolar Moment

- The invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein's Iraq in August 1990 was used by the American administration to re-establish a military presence in this region of the world, which it had been forced to leave in the early 1960s (evacuation of the American base at Dhahran in the Saudi kingdom under pressure from Nasserite Egypt).
- The United States was re-establishing itself in force in this area, whose strategic importance, due to oil and ongoing geopolitical recompositions, is clearly not lost on them.
- Control of this area serves as a strategic argument in relations with partners dependent on Middle Eastern oil, such as Western Europe and Japan, as well as with potential adversaries such as China, which is no less dependent in this respect.
- The U.S. Rapid Deployment Force has considerably strengthened its network of bases and facilities in the Middle East: Turkey, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia

# Unipolar Moment

- After the end of the Cold War, moreover, there was a desire on the part of the various US administrations to expand through the export of neoliberalism and the expansion of NATO, in order to create a global economic and political order dominated by the United States.
- The U.S. aimed to consolidate its status as the world's sole superpower and prevent the rise of a new peer competitor by incorporating all the world's states into its so-called rules-based order of free-trade globalization.
- This took on a very aggressive form with the arrival in power of George W Bush, and particularly after the events of September 11, with the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2003 to impose US domination of the Middle East. There is also the highly visible threat against Iran and Syria.

# End of the Unipolar Moment

- The failure of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, as well as that of Afghanistan in 2001, the consequences of which can be seen every day (Iraq: Islamic State, central government controlled by Shiite sectarian and reactionary parties, close to Iran, insecurity, ec...),
- The global financial and economic crisis in 2007-2008, which undermined the American economy and above all the capitalist economic model as dominated and encouraged by the United States. On its side, China bounced back from the global economic crisis very quickly, thanks in particular to its control of the Chinese banking system, which lent large amounts to companies in order to save themselves and get back on their feet more quickly.
- The MENA uprisings of 2011 and onward.
- This situation led to the end of an unipolar moment and rise of inter-imperialist / multipolar system

# Regional Imperialism – Sub Imperialism

- Recent decades have seen the emergence of a number of major centers of capital accumulation, new industrialized countries. Thus, economic expansion began to change the relative balance of power between states within global capitalism
- The ruling classes of these countries are not simply clients of Western imperialism, but have their own interests and the ability to defend them.
- This sub-imperialism or regional imperialism can be found throughout the world, and can be defined by the desire of states to become the dominant power in their region: Brazil in South America, South Africa in Sub-Saharan Africa, etc...
- The American failure in Iraq and the relative weakening of its power and influence in the Middle East has not only left more room for other imperialist forces, but above all has enabled regional states to play a growing role in the region and in revolutionary processes.
- There are many rivalries in the Middle East: Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.



# Israel in the MENA

- In the region, the State of Israel is also at the service of Western imperialism, except that in this case it is in the framework of a colonial project of expulsion of the indigenous population, the Palestinians.
- Israel has actually been playing for decades the role of watchdog of Western imperialist interests in the region,

Russian invasion of Ukraine – an  
Intensification of imperialist  
tensions and rivalries

- Russia's invasion of Ukraine has accelerated a series of underlying trends in world politics that are leading us into a dangerous new world order.
- This is probably the most important historical event since the US invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003, with immeasurable devastating consequences.
- In addition to its catastrophic humanitarian impact in Eastern Europe, Russia's war has already had a significant impact on geopolitics and global capitalism itself.

- Putin launched the war to rebuild Russia's empire, colonize Ukraine, crush domestic and regional struggles for democracy, and counter NATO's expansion into what he regards as Russia's sphere of influence.
- Putin believed Russia was in an ideal position to launch the war after securing "friendship without limits" with China and in the wake of Biden's shambolic withdrawal from Afghanistan. What he underestimated was the Ukrainian resistance, which stopped Russia in its tracks and surprised the U.S. and NATO powers who expected Kyiv to fall.

- The Biden administration has seized on President Putin's aggression to weaken Russia and rally its allies against both Moscow and Beijing. Indeed, Putin's war has been a gift to U.S. imperialism.
- Washington has re-legitimated and galvanized NATO, which should have been abolished after the Cold War. The expanding security alliance recently accepted Finland and is negotiating Sweden's membership. And the U.S. successfully pressed its European allies to increase their military budgets.
- Ukraine's success, with Western backing, has allowed the US to recover some of the prestige it lost after its disastrous Middle East wars and occupations, which culminated in its panicked withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021.
- Moreover, Washington managed to convince the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to identify China as one of its "systemic challenges.", because China is the main rival of the USA

- However it is important to clarify some issues regarding Ukraine. It is an imperialist war of invasion against a backdrop of Great Russian chauvinism, waged by an ultra-reactionary autocratic and oligarchic government.
- In this context, revolutionary defeatism only applies to workers and soldiers who belong to the imperialist aggressor country, in this case the Russian state. The working class of the oppressed nation, in this case the Ukraine, on the other hand, has a legitimate right to defend its country and its processes.

- Another point of debate: does the bourgeois nature of a government or armed resistance movement prevented the Left from supporting a people in struggle against an overarmed invasion? Should we only support resistance led by communists?
- This is an old ultra-left position on the national question, which Lenin strongly criticized even in his own time. Support for a legitimate struggle against foreign occupation must be given regardless of the nature of its leadership. Let's take the case of Palestine under the colonial yoke of the Israeli apartheid regime as a comparison. We support the right of Palestinians to resist Israeli occupation, including by military means. Likewise, we do not condemn the arms sent to the Palestinian resistance from authoritarian states.
- In the Ukrainian case, this position translates into support for the liberation of the country from its occupiers by any legitimate means, including the right of Ukrainians to obtain defensive weapons from any source, including NATO countries.
- Support for the right to armed resistance and the supply of weapons must not, however, be confused with support for the political perspectives of the leaderships or political groups leading them.