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# **Imperialism, crisis and geopolitical chaos today**

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# Introduction

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- Place of report in the session
  - Reporter:
    - a US
    - Jewish
    - queer (last book/Nina's report)
    - anti-imperialist
    - ... in Holland (Alex's report)
  - Reporter's limits:
    - not an economist
    - not an expert on any of these countries
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# Overview of report

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- I. Imperialism: Lenin's and Trotsky's theories
  - II. Neoliberal globalization and the 'war on terror'
  - III. New imperialist powers? China, Russia ...
  - IV. Imperialism in crisis: new challenges, Brexit, Trump ...
  - V. Anti-imperialism real and fake
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# I. Imperialism: Lenin's theory

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## Marxist approach to imperialism before Lenin

- Marx and Engels in the era of 'free trade imperialism': Ireland, Poland, Algeria & India
  - German social democracy: 'not a man, not a penny'
  - An outdated vision of capitalism: revisionism
  - The shock of 1914
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# Basics of Lenin's theory

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(from a non-economist)

- # Laissez-faire capitalism & monopoly capitalism
  - # Uneven development & export of capital
  - # Competition for raw materials
  - # The division of the planet: colonial empires
  - # Spheres of influence and semi-colonies
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# (Official) division of the world

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## PERCENTAGE OF TERRITORY BELONGING TO THE EUROPEAN COLONIAL POWERS (including the US)

	1876	1900	Increase or decrease
Africa.....	10.8	90.4	+79.6
Polynesia....	56.8	98.9	+42.1
Asia.....	51.5	56.6	+5.1
Australia....	100.0	100.0	—
America.....	27.5	27.2	-0.3

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# (Unofficial) control of the world

## DISTRIBUTION (APPROXIMATE) OF FOREIGN CAPITAL IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE GLOBE (circa 1910)

	Britain	France	Germany	Total
				(in billions of German marks)
Europe.....		4	23	18 5
America.....		37	4	10 51
Asia, Africa, and Australia.....			29	8 7 44
Total.....		70	35	35 140

NB Even in Lenin's time, imperialist investment was not mainly in colonies!

# Imperialism, 1916-1982

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- 1914-20 Re-division: German & Ottoman empires become British, French, Italian, Japanese and US
  - 1936-45 Failed German challenge to re-division
  - 1947 Truman Doctrine: US replaces UK
  - 1949 Chinese revolution
  - 1955 Bandung: India, Egypt, etc. gain autonomy
  - 1975 US defeat in Vietnam
  - 1979/1980/1982 Thatcher & Reagan win; debt crisis
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# Cold War imperialism

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- Post-1945: one imperialist superpower (and one ‘anti-imperialist’)
  - No more inter-imperialist wars
  - Trilateral imperialisms: US, Western Europe, Japan
  - New forms of inter-imperialist rivalry: trade wars, currency wars, proxy wars (Harvey)
  - Imperialism vs. national liberation ... until 1980s
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# Our anti-imperialism: permanent revolution

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- # Trotskyism and the Bolshevik heritage
  - # World War II, Yugoslavia and China: national liberation & bureaucratized revolution
  - # The 1968 generation, Vietnam, Che and the Sandinistas
  - # The revolution: begins nationally, progresses internationally, is completed globally
  - # Since 1995: where is the power?
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## II. Neoliberal globalization and the ‘war on terror’

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Is imperialism still a relevant framework to analyze the world economy today?

Claudio Katz’s arguments:

- Growing inequality: dominant & dependent countries
  - Terms of trade
  - Extraction of financial resources
  - Transfer of industrial profits
  - Loss of political autonomy (notably in Europe)
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# Distribution of wealth (2012)

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% world pop.   % world GDP   GDP per cap.

Dominant countries      18%                      68%                      \$ 37,157

Dependent countries      82%                      32%                      \$ 3,840

(Figures from CADTM)

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# Multinationals: monopoly finance capital

Selected GDP of countries and revenues of multinational corporations

## Countries (IMF, 2017, \$ billion)

1. US	\$ 19,391
2. China	12,015
6. India	2,611
7. France	2,584
8. Brazil	2,055
14. Spain	1,314
18. Netherlands	826
27. Iran	432
32. Israel	351
39. Philippines	313

## Multinationals (2017, \$ billion)

1. Walmart	\$ 500
2. China State Grid	349
3. Sinopec	327
4. PetroChina	326
5. Shell	312
6. Toyota	265
7. Volkswagen	260
8. BP	245
9. ExxonMobil	244
10. Berkshire Hathaway	242

# Autonomy lost

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- # IMF/World Bank/WTO: \$1=1 vote ( $\pm!$ )
  - # ‘Structural adjustment’ & ‘conditionality’
  - # Structural adjustment in the EU: troika tyranny
  - # Consequences for social spending and debt repayment
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# Accumulation by dispossession (Harvey)

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- Neoliberalism: capital in search of new sources of profit
  - Nature: genetic resources, air, water
  - Culture: music
  - Public sphere: education, healthcare
  - Global drive: transcends North/South divide
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# Armed globalization and the 'war on terror'

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- Militarism: response to — and cause of — disintegration of peripheral states (Katz)
  - Role of US:
    - \* Enforcer of neoliberal world order
    - \* Sole superpower: 35% of global military spending
    - \* Military-industrial complex
    - \* Military supremacy & inter-imperialist rivalries
    - \* Oil: Latin America, the Middle East and shale
  - Tools: 'Coalitions of the willing', NATO and UN
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# The empire and Obama

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- # Inheritance of Bush senior's 'new world order': military technology, bases and alliances
  - # Since 2008: deepening crisis
  - # Challenges to US/European/Japanese power
  - # China: 'pivot to the Asia/Pacific'
  - # Middle East: oil, geopolitics and 'clash of civilizations'
  - # Multiplying crises: Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Ukraine...
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# The clash of barbarisms

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- # 9/11: Spotlight on Islamic world
  - # The diversity of fundamentalism: pro-imperial, anti-‘crusader’ and undecided
  - # Zionism, Hizbullah, Hamas & the left
  - # Women and LGBTI people
  - # The Arab uprisings: fundamentalism challenged - and resurgent
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# III. New imperialist powers?

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- # BRICS: beyond dependence?
  - # A theoretically empty category
  - # Were Germany, Italy and Japan the last new imperialist powers (Trotsky)?
  - # Is escaping dependency possible under capitalism?
  - # Every case is an exception
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# China

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- # Anti-capitalist revolution & capitalist restoration
  - # Bourgeoisifying bureaucracy & overseas bourgeoisie (Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore)
  - # Largest exporter, 2nd economic power, 2nd in military spending - and 79th in GDP (PPP) per capita (behind Botswana and the Dominican Republic)
  - # Capital export (Americas, Africa, Europe) - & flight
  - # Bubbles (stock market, real estate)
  - # Regional clashes (East Asia) - and global integration? (WTO, US debt, Mali)
  - # Pierre's conclusion: 'an imperialism in formation'
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# Russia

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- # Anti-capitalist revolution & capitalist restoration
  - # Bourgeoisifying bureaucracy & ‘extractivism’
  - # 4th in military spending (passed by Saudis), 12th economic power - and 48th in GDP (PPP) per capita (behind Portugal)
  - # Is Russia a capital exporter?
  - # The Eurasian project
  - # National stakes in great-power status
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## ... and the others

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- # Signs of change: Doha (failed), Bancosur (failed), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
  - # Stages of crisis and relative growth rates (India from 10.3% (2010) to 7.1% (2016), Russia from 4.5% to -0.2%, Brazil from 7.5% to -3.6%)
  - # From the BRICS to the 'Fragile Five' (3 of the 5 BRICS) - 'just the C'
  - # Patrick Bond: talk left, walk right
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# IV. Imperialism in crisis: new powers, Brexit, Trump ...

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- # Economic crisis and state fragility
  - # Crisis of imperialist hegemony
  - # Crisis of neoliberal project
  - # Cracks in the power bloc (analogy with the 1930s (Poulantzas) - and ...
  - # Crisis of anti-capitalist project
  - # Playing on more and more chessboards at once
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# The challenge from China and the pivot to Asia

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- ‘Indispensable nation’ (US) & main rival (China)
  - Japan: economic recovery, resurgent militarism
  - Tigers at bay
  - Stakes: control of global sea lanes
  - Clashes in East China & South China Seas
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# Clash with Russia: crisis in Ukraine (don't forget)

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- # 20 years of NATO and EU eastward expansion
  - # Maidan: a popular revolution and its weaknesses
  - # Movements torn between imperialisms
  - # Russia and the Donetsk and Lugansk 'republics'
  - # Is Ukrainian independence possible?
  - # The risks of miscalculation and 'hot war'
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# EU imperialism in crisis: Brexit

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- German/UK/French imperialism & EU imperial project
  - Eastward expansion & its contradictions
  - Crisis, austerity & the North/South divide
  - Free movement of goods, services, capital & labour - and racism & the far right (France, Holland ...)
  - Popular resistance & divides within capital - 1930s & now
  - Brexit & different fractions of UK capital
  - Threat of authoritarian statism
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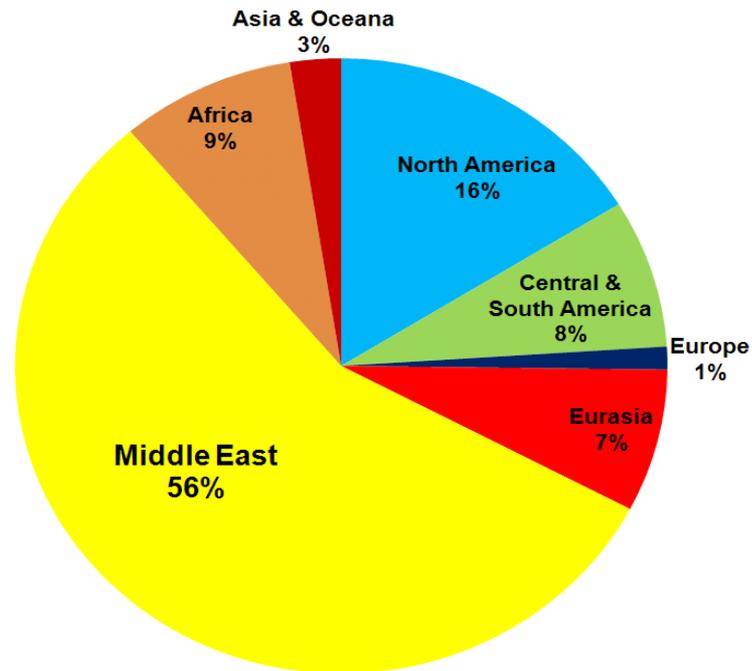
# US imperialism shaken?: Trump

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- The US imperial consensus, 1948-2016; Clinton & Obama
  - NAFTA, multinational finance & Chinese capital
  - A latent ‘America First’ tradition
  - Trump and the costs of imperial supremacy
  - Immigrant mobilization, Black Lives Matter & reaction
  - Islamophobia (& femonationalism & homonationalism)
  - Republican Party, battleground of capital
  - Imperial presidency and authoritarian statism
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# Crisis in the Middle East: oil

**World Oil Reserves by Region**



Data source: US Energy Information Administration from Oil and Gas Journal (2007)  
Oil includes crude oil and condensate

# Crisis in the Middle East: geopolitics

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- #Economic crisis
  - #Crisis of imperialist hegemony
  - #The stakes besides oil: Zionism & geopolitics
  - #The Saudi/Iranian confrontation
  - #Results and prospects: imperialist return?  
popular revolution? terror & chaos?
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# V. Anti-imperialism real and fake: the Arab region

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- A long anti-imperialist tradition & ‘despotic exception’
  - Contrast with Latin America: from Cuba & Nicaragua to the ‘Pink Tide’ and beyond
  - 1967/1979/1991: crisis of the anti-imperialist left & rise of fundamentalism
  - Arab uprisings (2011-?): challenge to imperialism, setbacks for the left
  - A new far right: parallels & differences with imperialist countries
  - The stakes for permanent revolution
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# Anti-imperialism today: contenders in the Middle East

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- # The undead past: Syria's Assad
  - # Fundamentalism I: An-Nahda and the Muslim Brotherhood
  - # Fundamentalism II: Daesh, counter-revolutionary threat, theoretical challenge
  - # Rojava: from Leninism to US sponsorship
  - # Tunisian Popular Front: class independence?
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# Questions for discussion

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- # What challenges do Brexit and the rise of the new far right (Trump, Le Pen, etc.) pose for the left?
  - # How should we respond to Trump's conflicts with the EU, Russia, China?
  - # What is the best hope for anti-imperialism in the Middle East today?
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