

Imperial State, Imperialism and Empire

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Introduction

Imperialism, the political-economic domination and exploitation of countries via economic penetration and/or military conquest or intervention is the driving force of contemporary history. Whole regions of Eastern Europe, the former USSR, Africa, South-Central Asia and Latin Americas have been converted into neo-colonies, colonies or spheres of influence of the US, the European Union and Japan. Newly emerging capitalist countries, like China, are challenging the established imperial powers for markets, raw materials and energy sources. Imperial wars, colonial occupations, military intervention and military coups to expand the empire are euphemistically referred to as “regime change” and “democratization”. In order to understand the nature, structure and dynamics of the imperial system it becomes necessary to identify and explain the key political concepts and their place in the construction of the contemporary world empire.

Three inter-related concepts are central to understanding the contemporary world: imperial state, imperialism and empire. The dynamics of accumulation on a world scale, the need for great concentrations of capital located in large economic units to expand throughout the world is premised on the notion that they can move overseas and can find safe, secure and profitable territories and labor forces which to exploit. The relocation of capital (via multi-national corporations), its ability to exploit raw materials, secure energy sources, lend capital and enforce debt collection, dominate captive markets and mount low wage manufacturing subsidiaries is totally dependent on political relations which facilitate these conditions.

The essential political institutions facilitating the overseas expansion of capital is the imperial state and the emergence within the targeted regions of regimes and ruling classes oriented toward imperial-centered models of capital accumulation.

The organization and activity of the imperial state are crucial in creating the political conditions for imperialism – the economic expansion of capital. Empire is the joint product of

the combined activity of the imperial state and the process of imperialist economic expansion. Much has been written about the economic dimensions of imperialism: the growth and role of multinational corporations, the importance of energy resources and the petroleum industry, the take-over and buyout of privatized firms, the economic conditions and structural adjustment policies imposed by the international financial institutions (IFI) like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). Some studies have linked these imperialist economic forces with imperialist policies and their favorable results for the MNC's and their negative social economic consequences for the targeted country. The common or unstated assumption is that the imperial state is simply a passive reflection, an empty vessel of imperialist capital; the assumption that the imperial state can be reduced to a simple instrument of the collective interests and forces of imperial capital. This confuses an analysis of the political structures of imperialism with the economic processes of imperialism (the expansion of capital). The assumption is that there is such a powerful identity of purpose between 'structure' and 'process' that one needs only to look at the process (capital accumulation) to deduce the nature and internal dynamics of the imperial state.

This simplistic economic deductive approach has several egregious weaknesses in understanding the formation of empire. In the first place the imperial state formulates strategies and tactics, which go far beyond the immediate demands and interests of all or most of the capitals, which are engaged in overseas expansion. Secondly this reductionist approach fails to take account of conflicts of interests between politico-military decision makers and ideologues in the imperial state and the strategists of the MNC's. The reductionists merely assume that whatever the imperial policy-makers decide is automatically in the interests of the imperial economic corporations. There is a presumed unity of policy, strategy and ideology where in fact that should be merely a working hypothesis to be tested by observable historical or empirical facts.

Imperial State: Myth and Reality

The relation of the imperial state to the dominant imperial economic interests is complex and changing, even as they appear to share and/or work toward a common goal of creating a world empire.

The imperial state represents, but is not identical, with the dominant economic interests. This distinction is fundamental because it encompasses two concepts. On the one hand, when we refer to the notion of “representation”, we mean that the Imperial State (IS) is, in all cases, organized to expand and defend the dominant economic interests of the ruling class, by pursuing and creating economic opportunities for investment, sales, profits, rents and interest payments on a world scale. Equally important the IS operates to create an optimal political environment for securing economic advantage over and against national and international adversaries and competitors.

On the other hand, when we say that the IS is not identical with the ruling class, we mean to highlight the fact that the key decision-makers and agencies of the IS decide how, when and where to defend and represent imperial interests. Between the ruling class economic interests and imperial policies there are the ideologies, bureaucratic interests, particularistic allegiances and strategic conceptions of the imperial state agencies and decision-makers who assign priorities, devise strategies and tactics and allocate IS resources – namely military troops, CIA operatives, payments to military conspirators and so on. The imperial economic interests of the MNC are filtered through this web of interests and ideologies of the IS policymakers.

While some writers refer to this distinction between representation and non-identity as the “relative autonomy of the state”, the term raises multiple questions: relative to what? Where? When? Under what circumstances and time frame? Further related questions are raised by the term “autonomy” – From what? To do what? Sometimes, most of the time or all the time?

The use and abuse of the term “relative autonomy of the state” has led some writers to move on to consider the state as independent of the class-economic matrix in which it is embedded. The “state-centered” analysis is mechanically counterpoised to a “society-centered” (class determined) approach. Both these approaches lack any dialectical understanding of the inter-relations between state-class, reducing state policy to the political conceptions of decision-makers or a direct reflection of ruling class economic interests.

The “state-centered” approach short circuits the analysis by eliminating the structures of economic power, the socialization and selective process that defines the recruitment of state decision-makers and the cumulative historical influences which define the purposes and imperatives of the state apparatus. As a result the state-centric approach cannot explain the long-term, large-scale economic direction and capitalist imperatives which guides state action. What the state-centric approach does provide us with is a description and in some cases an analysis of

idiosyncratic and political variation among state decision-makers and the plurality of policies pursued within the larger structural-historical framework.

In a similar fashion the so-called “society centered” analysis (class analysis) describes the ruling class, some of the links, social origins and career patterns of specific state decision-makers and proceeds to attribute specific IS policies to ruling class interests. This approach assumes that all IS policy-makers are direct transmission belts of ruling class interests, emptying them of their ideological and political loyalties and bureaucratic power. This approach fails to explain or simply ignores IS policies which prejudice ruling class interests, prioritize non-economic interests (military-expenditure/wars of conquest) which might threaten the economic stability of the imperial ruling class. Equally significant this approach assumes a monolithic imperial state which always acts in consonance, failing to understand the internal conflicts and their reflection of different power centers outside of the state.

The most egregious examples of this fallacy of misplaced concreteness is found with regard to IS policy in the Middle East. Many leftwing analysts link the US invasion of Iraq with oil interests based on a simplistic syllogism: The US needs oil, the Middle East has oil, therefore the US goes to war to secure oil. This “analysis” is deficient on several counts. First it assumes that the only influence acting on policy-makers are the “oil interests” or a “strategy of war for oil”. This totally excludes the powerful role of the pro-Israel “lobbies” and the Zionists and pro-Zionists in making US Middle East policy. Secondly and equally important it overlooks the political, diplomatic and economic agreements (all non-military) which have facilitated US access to oil via political clients in the region. Thirdly it fails to account for the lack of major effort by the Petroleum Industry to secure oil via war (before or during the war) in contrast to the civilian militarists and Zionists. Finally it fails to discuss the prejudicial effects which the war has had on the oil industry in terms of the access, security and stability which existed prior to war or to the difficulties in securing new oil contracts during the war.

By ignoring the specificities of the imperial state (divisions between pro/anti-Zionists), by imputing causal determination on one set of economic interests (petroleum), by reducing policy to one option (war instead of pacts with clients), what appears like a “class analysis” becomes a vulgar caricature of reality, which obscures the complex nature of the imperial state and its internal contradictions.

The Imperial State: Complementarity, Convergence, Competition and Conflict

There are several problems with studies of imperialism. In the first instance they fail to adequately analyze the imperial state. In most cases these analyses focus exclusively on the economic dimensions of imperialism – overlooking the central role of the IS in creating conditions for the advance and security of the multinational corporations. Secondly what passes as a discussion of the politics of imperialism is either anecdotal (CIA intervention to overthrow a regime), single dimensional (role of the Pentagon, of the military) or very general (“Washington”). There are few if any writers who analyze the multiple agencies of the imperial state in a systematic way. Thirdly many writers who do mention the political dimension of the IS fall into two erroneous conceptions. Some consider the IS a homogeneous bloc which always acts exclusively at the behest of a particular set of economic interests. Others, usually US political scientists, who ignore the imperialist content of the state, focus on the internal conflicts and fragmentation within the bureaucratic apparatus of the state. The first group of writers provides no knowledge of the multiple inter-related agencies and activities of the IS and how these converge and conflict over policies in different sets of circumstances. The second school, focusing on internal rivalries, fails to account for the long-term, large-scale convergence of interests and policies among the agencies of the IS, particularly with regard to major adversaries, and in defense of markets, MNCs and strategic materials.

Among leftist and Marxist writers there is little serious discussion of the imperial state as opposed to the debates over the capitalist state. The categories used are very general referring to the “coercive”, “ideological” and “regulatory” apparatuses, each in turn associated with a limited number of agencies of the state (State Department, Pentagon, CIA). Once again the writers make sweeping generalizations, attributing to the “military” the aggressive bellicose positions and the civilian administrators the ‘soft’ diplomatic, political approach. In reality almost all of the major agencies of “the state” are predominantly involved in the spread of empire, over and above their domestic activity. Agriculture, Treasury, Commerce and many other cabinet and specific agencies are engaged in, and allocate the bulk of their personnel and budget to promoting the economic interests of MNCs in competition and conquest of foreign markets and investment opportunities. In the age of imperialism, especially in a conjuncture when the majority of profits of the biggest MNCs comes from overseas activities and the Government has defined a state of world-wide, permanent conflict, the center of activity of the imperial state focuses on world empire-building and its defense.

The predominant role of the IS is evident in the vast resources and personnel channeled toward promoting overseas investment and lending on the one hand, and on the other, the enormous sum devoted to colonial wars, covert operations, military bases and offensive weaponry. In contrast the “capitalist state” focused on the domestic economy has run up huge budget deficits and current account deficits and allowed domestic industrial and agricultural producers to become uncompetitive and dependent on massive government subsidies and protective legislation. In the age of empire building the IS is the central unit for understanding the direction and flow of “domestic politics” – budgetary politics and trade - as well as questions of war and peace. “Domestic politics” are subordinated to the welfare of the empire and the priorities of the IS set the parameters for domestic political debate.

The imperial state has different ‘components’, agencies with specialized but overlapping functions or activities. These agencies include all the economic, intelligence, military and regulatory departments. Underneath each is a vast hierarchical structure which in turn have detailed specialized units organized to deal with specific policy areas, territorial units and operation. At the top these agencies of the IS complement each other in pursuit of imperial goals, converge as well as compete and conflict for jurisdiction, resources and privileged positions in the imperial decision-making structure.

Within the parameters of the transcendent goal of empire building, and the imperatives of permanent expansion and conquest, the different agencies struggle for pre-eminence, giving the appearance of a ‘fragmented’, ‘plural’ structure of power. In reality the very solid, vertical control and homogeneity of imperial interests of all the agencies and their convergence with the larger imperial goals, define the boundaries for the intra-bureaucratic rivalries. In fact the main points of dispute between the State Department, the CIA and the Pentagon is over which agency’s policies and personnel are best suited at a particular time and place to implement the commonly agreed imperialist policy. In almost all cases on questions of economic penetration, war, markets, destabilizations of nationalist regimes, the activities of the agencies of the IS converge and complement each other.

There are three broad components of the IS – each with its specific set of activities and extensions in “civil society” overseas.

The first component of the IS focuses on the political, ideological, diplomatic and cultural activity, usually associated with the State Department, but with overlap in the Pentagon and the CIA. Essentially this component is directed toward consolidating allies or clients, winning over “center” or “center-left” political regimes or leaders and isolating anti-imperialists;

The second component of the IS is the economic agencies like the Treasury Department, Commerce, Federal Reserve and Agriculture which are directed to promote US MNCs, conquer markets, smash trade and investment barriers, secure strategic energy and primary materials, finance exports, create financial circuits and undermine competitors. Once again these ‘economic components’ of the imperial state work in tandem with the political and military components in pursuit of their goals. Diplomatic pressure, ideological warfare and CIA covert operations create malleable interlocutors in target countries amenable to signing trade and investment treaties favorable to US MNCs.

The third component of the IS is the military and intelligence apparatus which usually but not always work in tandem with the political and economic components. There are at least 10 distinct intelligence agencies involved in assassinations, information collection and processing, destabilization campaigns and other covert and overt activities involving civilian state operatives, NGO’s, military officials and private sector elites including especially the mass media. The military empire extends to over 180 bases in over 125 countries, ranging from direct colonial occupations, to the deep penetration of Defense Ministries, to the direct influence over operational counter-insurgency efforts and in advising and financing mercenary clients against state adversaries. The military-intelligence apparatus engages in sequential wars, multiple wars, threats of war (psychological war), proxy wars, separatist wars, as well as assassinations, kidnappings and torture of adversaries. The military-intelligence component of the imperial state operates on the imperial principle that the laws, edicts and interests of the empire are paramount and have precedence over international law, Geneva Accords and US constitutional principles. The empire recognizes no frontiers, rejects national sovereignty except as it fits with its own interests, declares its laws supreme and the right to the pursuit of adversaries anywhere, any time – the imperial principle of ‘extraterritoriality’. A corollary of this imperial principle is the doctrine of permanent offensive wars (euphemistically called “preventive wars”), an approach designed specifically to secure unquestioned world domination. Given the sweeping ‘world historical’ tasks embraced by the imperial state and its limited formal capacity, a key element in the operation of the IS is to contract and secure mercenary forces, client regimes and civic groups to act as ‘extensions of the IS’. This refers to organizations which are not formally linked to or

legally attached to the IS but which are deeply penetrated, funded and directed by key operatives or representatives of the imperial state. Each of the components of the IS has its special links with these ‘civil society’ organizations and institutions which play a highly significant and successful role in the empire building process. In large part their success in empire building is based on the ideological cover, the appearance of being unaffiliated to empire, of being ‘international’ rather than imperial, of being ‘non-governmental’ instead of imperial transmission belts, of being of ‘society rather than by and for the IS. As such they deflect hostile attention from the role of the IS to ‘international institutions’, convert international aggrandizement to an ‘internal struggle’ between local antagonists, and provide an ideological cover of ‘expanding democracy’ to justify imperial hegemony or domination.

The civil extensions of the economic components of the imperial state include: 1) the international financial institutions (IFI) including the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and regional banks. The US members of the IFI are selected and instructed by the US Treasury and their loan decisions are exclusively based on the political and economic interests of the IS and US MNCs. 2) The MNC operate both as economic units and as political instruments; they provide intelligence, operative positions for agents of the IS, they disinvest or invest, provide services and finished goods or parts or withdraw them, according to IS policies. 3) Civic-private foundations and universities are key instruments in recruiting politicians, journalists, intellectuals, artists and other ‘opinion-makers’ via scholarships, grants, academic appointments and honorific awards. The academic world frequently provides specialized intelligence following “field work” via de-briefing sessions to top IS operatives. The role of ‘private’ philanthropies, like the Ford Foundation, the Soros Foundation and scores of others fund, subsidize and indoctrinate entire strata of future pro-imperial ideologues and technocrats in the ex-Communist countries. Their role cannot be over-estimated. 4) In this regard a special importance should be assigned to the self-styled “non-governmental organizations”, a misnomer if there ever was one. The NGO’s are government-funded (mostly by imperial states), work with governments and create or engage collaborator NGO’s in targeted countries in implementing political and economic tasks beneficial to the empire. In the socio-economic sphere they compete with and confront socio-political movements, fragmenting poor communities, co-opting leaders, depoliticizing struggles, localizing “solutions” in micro-projects and diverting attention from the pillage and exploitation by neo-liberal elites. In the political realm, the NGO’s receive millions to propagandize and mobilize mass support to destabilize anti-imperialist regimes, promote pro-empire electoral clients and provide cadre and leaders for the subsequent client regimes. The NGO’s perform overtly the exact same tasks that the CIA used to pursue covertly.

The NGO's market-oriented economic agenda at the mass level complements the IFI agenda at the national level.

Several more recent "international" organizations have emerged, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), which are under the joint control of the European and US imperial states and provide a legal enforcement framework for facilitating the expansion and conquest of markets and investment penetration throughout the world, which benefit the powerful MNCs in the imperial countries and the agro-mineral export elites in the client states.

The political components of the MNC operate out of some of the same 'civil' organizational weapons as the economic. The private foundations provide funds for ideological indoctrination, training economists, social scientists and other professionals into capitalist cadres ("entrepreneurs") and provide them with a doctrine legitimizing the pillage of the economy ("privatization"), denationalization of ownership ("free-markets"), and the promotion of inequality ("individual social mobility"). The foundation recruits serve as "go-betweens" or "intermediaries" between the imperial state and the client state, between the MNCs and local lucrative resources.

Civic organizations and NGO's heavily funded by IS conduits also play a major role in expanding the political reach of empire. Locally sponsored political parties, civic groups and NGO's, some pre-existing others recently created, are provided with funds, training schools, scores of IS advisers from imperial trade unions, political parties and consulting agencies on strategies and tactics, biased polling and electoral "watch" committees. The IS deep penetration of "civil society" via local transmission belts highlights the growing importance of "civil organizations" to empire building and the projection of imperial policies into new territories.

The optimal result of the IS civil strategy is the creation of "viable legitimate client states" which provide a façade of democracy for subservience to the economic, military and political interests of the empire.

The military component of the imperial state works with local paramilitary groups, retired military officer organizations as well as through bilateral treaties and military "alliances" which are largely staffed and directed by imperial officials. Through the local military elite and in consonance with the political clients of the imperial state, the imperial military recruits mercenary armies to serve in the colonial wars and occupations. Through the indoctrination, training and arming of client military officers, the imperial military can extend its war-making

and intervention capacity beyond its domestic capability. The client states proximity to new regions of potential conquest facilitates penetration while lowering the logistical costs. Military bases provide joint security for the local client state and the IS: the client regime can count on imperial protection from a popular revolution; the dependence of the client regime assures continuation of the imperial military outposts.

In evaluating the strength or weakness of empire, a serious analyst must go beyond a cost-benefit analysis of the domestic returns and expenditures of the empire to take account of the multiple effects which overseas extensions can have in perpetuating and expanding the empire. The successful multiplication of political, economic and military “extensions” relieves the economic and personnel costs of empire maintenance. Moreover the framework for measuring the cost and benefits of empire in examining its sustainability has to take into account the heavy up-front costs to the state (until conquest is achieved and exploitation started) and the downstream benefits that accrue to the private sector (once implanted in the economy).

Moreover the entire calculation of costs and benefits has to be based on a fundamental distinction between the larger public (taxpayers, soldiers) and the elite classes (which benefit). What some writers cite as the “heavy cost of empire” to an ill-defined “nation” (the US) is in reality a redistribution of income from the wage and salaried classes to the wealthy via the IS.

In so far as a particular IS strategy toward empire building does not jeopardize the profits, investment opportunities and partnerships of the economic elites, the ‘costs’ of empire to passive citizens are irrelevant. However when IS policymakers adopt strategies which both prejudice the economic interest of the MNCs and provoke popular unrest, elite divisions appear in the Imperial State, between components and within components of the IS.

Complementarity Components of the Imperial State

The everyday reality of the operations of the IS agencies is the complementarity of their activities. At the pinnacle of power - ‘the White House’ and the ‘National Security Council’ - a common position is usually hammered out. Policies however are dictated by the imperatives of empire building inherent in the perpetual expansion and accumulation of capital – the essential necessity to expand or decay. The accumulation and overseas expansion means increasing imperial political power, securing markets, imposing client regimes and establishing spheres of influence in which favorable macro-economic policies favoring the MNCs are in place. It means

expanding military influence via bases or local officials, displacing competitors, undermining anti-imperialists (nationalists, socialists, Islamists), overthrowing regimes, promoting pro-imperialist parties and civic organizations. Each component of the IS operates, largely within its specialty area: The State Department funds political groups, pressures politicians, recruits intellectuals; the Pentagon activates the military; the Treasury via the IFI intervenes in the formulation of economic policy; and the CIA infiltrates groups, engages in violent direct action via clandestine operations. The “extension groups” in civil society are activated to denounce, propagandize and demonstrate for elections or against elected officials, to provide a legitimate cover for coups or to destabilize regimes.

The key theoretical point is that above and beyond the usual bureaucratic rivalries, the components of the IS converge in mobilizing resources, human and material, especially in time of crisis, war, revolution, coup-making and counter-revolution to secure the empire. At the level of serving the imperatives of empire building, there are usually no major divisions between the State Department, the Pentagon and the CIA. There are no “invisible” governments operating “behind” the apparatus of the IS. That is not to say that the activities and operations organized and directed by the agencies of the IS are open to public perusal or accountability. What it does mean is that the clandestine, violent actions or acts of political subversion are organized by identifiable official agencies of the IS, and are designed to implement specified imperial policies.

Conflicts within the IS

Having stated the general rule of the complementarity of activities within the IS, there are however two types and moments of internal conflict between components of the IS. The most commonplace occurrence is the competition between agencies for resources, jurisdiction, personnel and budgets, what can be called bureaucratic enhancement. This may effect the degree to which one or another of the agencies of the IS may increase its role in pursuing the empire building agenda. These “intra-bureaucratic conflicts” are common subjects of conventional political scientists, who describe these conflicts as the major determinants of foreign policy, blissfully ignoring the larger convergences and complementarities. In most cases these conflicts may reveal tactical differences and emphases in imperial policymaking.

The second and very infrequent type of conflict within the IS, and yet the far more serious one, is over ideology, strategy, priorities and political loyalties. The major conflicts within the IS usually occur at a time of a major turn in foreign policy, emphasizing an escalation of aggression, the launching of a war, a shift in alliances. For example there was debate and

conflict within the IS over the launching of the Cold War against Russia, with a few officials arguing for the maintenance of co-operative politics as a way of gradually undermining communist power against the bellicose majority. The debate was brief and ended in a total political rout – the Cold Warriors not only dictated policy but also purged their opponents from the State Department. Likewise toward the climax of the US losing war in Vietnam, a debate within the IS emerged between those who called for cutting losses and ending the war in order to defend other strategic regions of the empire and to end internal political turmoil and those officials who sought to continue or escalate the war with a disintegrating colonial army. A compromise, between the two groups was reached: The Vietnamization of the war involving the withdrawal of the bulk of the US troops and the reliance on US advisers and Vietnamese troops. What is clear in these divisions in the IS is that they all take place within the framework of the best approach to empire building. None of the participants question the empire itself – only the best combination of military force, diplomacy, political priorities and economic interests. Nevertheless these differences do have substantial consequences in the short and medium run for the people affected and the future of empire.

At then end of the 20th Century and into the new millennium a major new division has opened within the IS over strategy, ideology and political loyalties, between Zionist-extremists (Z-E) and traditional conservative empire builders. The Z-E occupy key positions in several components of the IS, including the Pentagon, the State Department and have established their own intelligence networks. They have the unconditional backing of the major Jewish organizations and their civic networks, influencing the Democratic and Republican Parties, Congress and the mass media. The Z-E in the IS have made the expansion and enhancement of Israeli power in the Middle East the central priority in shaping the IS foreign policy. The Z-E have been the strategic architects of the Iraq war, the cost of which runs to over \$250 billion dollars in its first two years, with several tens of thousands of US casualties. The Z-E in the IS, more than any other past influential group have an active, powerful set of organized and influential backers in civil society, a well-organized group of extremist ideological “think tanks” linked to the mass media vigorously propagandizing the educated classes and a powerful set of Jewish organizations censoring and intimidating critics of the Israel Firsters in the IS. This powerful civil apparatus is politically connected to the legislature, parties and executive and provides protection for an otherwise extremely controversial group within the IS – one which has loyalties to a foreign state (Israel) over their commitments to US empire building. More accurately, the Z-E have shaped US empire building around the needs of Israeli regional hegemony. Moreover when there is a conflict of interest between empire building and Israeli

interests they have prejudiced the former to serve the latter. The persistence and expansion of Zionist power in the IS, despite the major problems (political isolation, exposed lies and universal hostility) it has created for empire building, not to speak of the horrendous casualties for the victimized peoples of the Middle East, can only be explained by the high level of influence or hegemony which the Jewish pro-Israel apparatus wields over US society and especially political institutions.

Given the array of forces in opposition to the Z-E in the IS, only its powerful supporting cast outside of the IS can account for its continued dominance in US foreign policy, especially in the Middle East. The opposition to the Z-E has been forced to operate in a semi-clandestine way – and has at best been a critical force which has lost more often than won the policy-debates within the IS.

The Middle East war policy designed, propagandized, promoted and implemented by Z-E in the IS provoked opposition within the professional military, the CIA and State Department as well as from a multitude of former officials. It provoked concern among major oil companies, diplomats and the energy markets. The post-invasion occupation strategy of the Z-E, in line with Israeli interests, favored the destruction of the Iraqi state and the disarticulation of society, hindering reconstruction but destroying a major adversary of Israeli conquest and annexation of Palestine. The fragmentation of Iraq into ethno-religious sub-regions, the use of Israeli urban warfare techniques and torture were encouraged by the Z-E. The policies of war, the occupation and the dismemberment of Iraq were executed by the civilian militarists in the Pentagon, namely the Z-E in opposition to many professional officers. The entire fabrication of the pretexts for war – the weapons of mass destruction, the links to Al Qaeda, etc – were propagated by the Z-E to justify their sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit real agenda of promoting Greater Israel. The political lies served their higher purpose.

The exposing of their lies and their disloyal collaboration with a foreign state however did not lead to any hearings, any firings or forced resignations, as normally would be the case in a situation where a war has turned into a costly debacle. The reason is the unconditional unanimous backing the Z-E received from organized Jewish civil society and its hegemony over the political institutions. On the other hand, the critics in the IS, legislatures, the media and academia, who have challenged or criticized the Zionists in the IS have been castigated (as Anti-Semites), marginalized and in some cases driven from office. As a consequence the Z-E retain their posts or have advanced to even more influential positions, e.g. Elliot Abrams, neo-fascist, convicted felon, is now in charge of Middle East policy in the State Department.

The Z-E policy of sequential wars against Israel's adversaries is at the top of the IS agenda: announced targets include Iran and Syria. New divisions have appeared over the 'next' war, between a minority who argue for a negotiated settlement and the strident Israel-First crowd which demands immediate military attacks. The larger issues of oil access and oil prices, long-term, large-scale warfare and instability in the Middle East, raised by the powerful petroleum companies, international bankers and consultancies have taken a distant second place to the Zionist agenda of destroying Iran, Israel's defiant neighbor.

This raises several larger theoretical issues: Under what conditions is there a breach between IS policymakers and the interests of the MNCs and empire building? How well does the IS represent major sectors of the ruling class today?

Only the ignorant can assume that because the US has major oil interests in the Middle East, that US foreign policy follows or pursues those interests to the exclusion of others, or that it is the determining factor in that policy. The latter position has been put forth by a number of well-meaning progressives who are short in analysis or who by omission or commission do not wish to offend their Jewish colleagues – even in the face of contrary evidence.

Imperial State: Does it Always Represent the Ruling Class?

Under most circumstances (but not all, as we previously discussed) policymakers in the imperial state represent the interests of the ruling class, the major banks and corporations. However the question arises as to how well the imperial state – its various components – represents those interests?

An evaluation of the effectiveness of the IS is central in analyzing its role in empire building. To answer that question one needs to ask another: Do the personnel, policies and strategies expand opportunities and enhance security of the MNCs, increase access to or control of strategic resources, expand markets and facilitate lucrative partnership with local elites? Do imperial policymakers pursue military policies which are compatible with economic interests?

These are complex questions because one of the defenses put up by policy makers faced with apparently "failed policies" is that the 'positive results' would appear in the 'long run'. Whatever the complexities of measuring the success or failures of imperial policies over time and place, in most instances, an objective determination can be made. For example, the decisions to

go to war in Korea and Vietnam, to invade Cuba, to intervene in Somalia were clearly failed policies from the perspective of the costs to the imperial economy and the negative outcomes in terms of opening new economic opportunities and expanding territorial control. In other cases imperial policies of intervention in smaller, defenseless countries like the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Grenada and El Salvador were successful in destroying progressive regimes or movements and foisting client regimes, but provided few substantive economic opportunities for MNCs as the economies stagnated, consumer power contracted, few natural resources were exploited and labor out-migration lessened the reserves of cheap labor. In the case of imperial policies toward more lucrative resource-rich countries, like Iran, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia and the Congo (Zaire), the outcomes are mixed. The short-term gains in overthrowing the nationalist regime of Mossadegh in Iran and installing the Shah provided great opportunities for US MNCs and a staunch politico-military client in the Gulf region for 26 years; however the dictatorial neo-colony was overthrown by a coalition of nationalist Islamic and secular forces in 1979 and became a strategic adversary for the next 26 years and perhaps beyond. In contrast, the US intervention in Chile, Argentina, Bolivia and Brazil in the 1960's and the subsequent client military regimes elaborated a political-economic framework for long-term, large-scale US economic penetration. Even more important the transitions to civilian electoral regimes and their subsequent policies were conditioned by the 'lessons' dictated by imperial politics. While the imperial state and MNCs have reaped the benefits of 30-40 years of pro-imperial regimes, it has not been without violent massive challenges as has been the case of popular rebellions and the overthrow of client regimes in Argentina and Bolivia and continued instability in Peru and Ecuador.

The US war in Iraq was clearly a blunder from the perspective of empire building: it has led to tactical defeats, prolonged unwinnable street warfare, decline in military enlistments, demoralized National Guard and Reserve troops, ballooning budget deficits, isolation from EU allies and abandonment by coalition clients. Moreover the military debacle provides a demonstration that the US empire is not invincible. Clearly the key architects of this war have inadvertently dealt a severe blow to the military component of the empire. From the perspective of economic interests of the US, the costs of the war far outweigh any benefits from oil ownership or extraction, now or in the medium future. The gross massive violations of human rights and civilian killing have generated universal hostility throughout the Middle East (except Israel) making investment and market activities by the MNC very insecure and problematical. Were the IS architects of war so obtuse, so ignorant of the opposition, cost and consequences of the war? Clearly there was every historical reason to anticipate severe resistance and casualties.

Even granted the mediocrity of the key decision-makers there is no basis for thinking that the persistence of the war and the policy of following the Iraq debacle with a new catastrophe in Iran is simply ignorance. The Iraq war was a success in the eyes of its makers, because their criteria was: *Does it benefit the Jewish State?*, which it did, and not how does it affect US Empire building. The fact that the Z-E are strenuously pushing for a new war with Iran, which will wreak havoc on the empire and its client regimes and generalize conflict throughout the Middle East, is further indication that policy effectiveness is measured by whether it furthers Israel's power in the region, diminishes its enemies, and not how it effects US empire building.

In terms of the "quality" and competence of imperial policy-making, it is clear that Z-E performed superbly in pursuit of Israeli State interests – maximizing benefits at virtually no cost – and miserably in term of furthering US empire building. The difference in performance is not a result of lack of political skills but a result of different priorities, motivations and strategic goals.

The ascendancy of civilian-militarists, including but not exclusively the Z-E, has largely relegated economic interests of the MNC to a secondary position in IS empire building. While military spending increases, the foreign debt grows exponentially, the budget deficit and interest payments weaken the economic foundations of empire and dependence on foreign financing grows. Increasingly most of US MNCs produce abroad and export to the US increasing the trade deficit of the domestic economy. Equally important the civilian-militarists do not have a strategy in which high immediate military expenditures and intervention will lead to future economic gains for the MNCs, as took place after World War II and during the Cold War. Since most of the military expenditures have been directed toward the destruction of the Iraqi civilian-productive infrastructure, they have put in jeopardy the principle sources of profits and driven out or killed most of the key professional/scientific community. The politics of colonial occupation, destruction and pillage by colonial satraps has severely restricted imperial 'gain via pain'. The civilian-militarist politics of total war, permanent occupation, and regime imposition undermines the possibility of long-term stability and security necessary for large-scale productive investors, at best it encourages speculative capitalists, smugglers and mafia oligarchs interested in short-term, high-profit ventures.

Conditions for Conflict: Imperial State – MNC

We can now specify some of the conditions under which components and agencies of the IS conflict with MNC over alliances, priorities, policies, regional and global strategies and tactics.

The first point of conflict between IS and MNC is over ideology: the IS, especially under civilian-militarist influence, focuses on military alliances with ideological cousins, while the MNC look toward lucrative investments, trade agreements and economic partners based on notions of free markets and free trade – as mechanisms for eventual penetration and domination. Several contemporary cases come to mind involving the US relations with the Middle East, China and Cuba. In each region the civilian-militarist ideologues pursue policies designed to further military confrontation to the detriment of lucrative MNC investment and trade agreements. In the Middle East the civilian-militarists line up with Israel against Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria and the rest of the Arab Islamic world, while the MNC engage in investments and trade with the Arab and Islamic countries. With regard to China, the civilian militarists pursue a policy of military encirclement, back Taiwan independence and engage in shrill rhetorical demonization of Chinese defense policy, while the Fortune 500 firms have invested over \$300 billion dollars in China and Peking finances the US trade deficit, much to the relief of US bankers. A similar conflict is evident with regard to Cuba. The civilian militarists – led by progeny of Cuban exiles -- pursue policies ranging from sponsoring exile terrorists to an aggressive economic boycott, while major US MNC engage in a billion dollar trade in food and pharmaceuticals with Cuba. Similar conflicts are evident with regard to Venezuela where the civilian militarists have organized coups and funded extremist civic organizations to install a pro-imperialist regime, while major US oil companies like Chevron-Exon have signed multi-billion dollar investment agreements with the social-liberal nationalist regime. There are other regions and issues of IS-MNC conflict with regard to Western Europe and Russia.

What is clear however is that imperial policy reflects the strengths and weaknesses of the civilian militarists and MNCs in specific areas. In the Middle East, the power of the civilian militarists, backed by the major Jewish organizations and their power over Congress and the mass media, is more than a match for the petroleum MNCs, the professional diplomats and sectors of the professional military. In contrast, in China the vast array of MNCs and the sheer size of US investment and trade clearly has greater influence over policy than the civilian

militarists, who lack the equivalent of an influential domestic power base comparable to organized Jewry. With Cuba and Venezuela, there is a ‘trade off’, where the US MNC work around trade restrictions and engage in trade and investment in the case of Venezuela while the civilian militarists work to overthrow the regimes without opposition from the MNCs.

The Mind of the Civilian Militarists

While it is clear what motivates and drives the CEOs of the MNC (profits, markets, resources, and low operating costs) there has been less understanding of the mind-set of the civilian-militarists and the Zionist subset. In telegraphic fashion we can specify eight characteristic, some of which apply only to the subset of Zionists:

1. Military priorities over economic. Most of the militarists have had no direct and deep involvement in big business or direct military combat. They live and work in a rarefied world of ideologues, ingrown ideological institutes and interact with like-minded extremist politicians. They have little knowledge or interest in the human or economic consequences of imperialist wars, which are seen as good in themselves, as ‘liberating’ experiences.
2. They obsessively see the world exclusively as an area for seizing power at any cost. They pursue policies of mass killings without a second thought and are totally dismissive of charges of genocide and war crimes. They have an absolute belief in the righteousness of mass killings in enhancing political power for their own empire and for their adopted ‘mother country’.
3. Many are driven by a religious or quasi-religious vision that ignores all economic constraints. The virulent arrogance of their righteous style is as revelatory as is the proto-fascist substance of their politics. One hundred thousand Iraqi deaths are nothing; the mind of a professional assassin acting on behalf of a ‘holy cause’ writ large. The Zionists never admit any failing or any crime. They use their influence to shift responsibility to others – torture at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo are attributed to the military officials or to the White House Attorney. Not a single top Zionist appears on the list of those responsible for the abuses although they were organizationally complicit. The sources of the Zionist mind-set reflect their intimate embrace of Israeli methods of rule over the Palestinians: massive displacement and destruction of the

means of livelihood and institutions, collective punishment, torture, long-term imprisonment without trial, indiscriminant military attacks on population centers and slaughter with impunity.

It is absurd to search in the writing of obscure, mediocre political theorists dabbling in astrology (Leo Strauss) for the roots of the totalitarian imperialist practices of the Zionist policy-makers, when their whole formative active political life was deeply involved with the terrorist policies of the Israeli State from which they took their ideological cue and political lessons.

The convergence of Christian fundamentalism, Zionist extremism and imperialist power has driven the totalitarian doctrine of permanent offensive warfare, total war, without distinction of civilian or military objectives and undisputed world domination. What sustains these extremist elites in power and the reason why they retain power, despite disastrous policies, is that they have formidable constituencies in civil society who have substantial influence over key political institutions like the US Congress and the mass media.

The extremist civilian militarists have not been severely tested by the MNC for several reasons. In the first place the MNC have received enormous benefits from the imperial regime in the form of very substantial tax reductions and subsidies, low interest rates, aggressive policies opening markets, promoting privatizations and enforcing debt payments overseas. In addition, the White House has defended US MNC against competitors weakened labor and environmental legislation and in cases of uncompetitive enterprises, provided protective legislation.

These benefits have outweighed the conflicts between the MNC and the civilian-militarists in the IS. The conflict between the MNC-IS plays out in competing pressures over specific policy areas, with the civilian militarists most influential over Mid-East policy and 'global strategic' pronouncements and the MNCs carving out favorable policies on China and to a lesser degree Cuba and Venezuela.

Structural Basis of Ideological Conflicts in the IS

The political differences between the civilian militarists and the MNC are in part based on conflicting ideological perspective. In the case of the civilian militarists (CM) their conceptions are explicit while for the MNC, they are less clearly articulated.

Voluntarism Versus Global Integration

The CM operate under the assumption that “political will” can overcome all obstacles, that ‘projecting power’ can ‘create facts’ that other countries (former allies or adversaries) have to live with - hence the notion of unilateral action and multiple wars. Voluntarism presumes unlimited capacity for military action, limitless capacity for material ‘sacrifices’ all sanctified by ideological platitudes (“democratic crusades”) and intangible rewards. Voluntarism assumes a high degree of elite autonomy and mass submissiveness, based on the visionary mission of the former and the ignorance, reflex loyalty or fear of the latter.

The voluntarist philosophy is profoundly authoritarian; leaders are (self) chosen to lead, and the followers are to follow. The formulae to justify wars in pursuit of world domination vary according to circumstance from outright blatant lies, demonization, deceit and fabrications to magnifying minor incidents into world threats. Voters are a mass to be deceived, cajoled, flattered and manipulated via the mass media and critics threatened by punitive authoritarian edicts and legislation. Congress is to be disciplined and mobilized behind leaders via imminent threats of war and terrorism.

In contrast the implicit and explicit assumptions of the MNC is that the world economy has become an integrated structure, in which rival imperial enterprises coalesce and compete; the MNC recognize a multi-polar economic world which requires support from the IS as well as accommodation with the rules of other IS (European Union and Japan). MNC do not eschew limited wars and military subversive activities as long as it doesn’t substantially disrupt the ongoing circuits of trade, investment or access to strategic materials. The most competitive and powerful of the MNCs as well as the powerful financial institutions promote multi-lateral trade and investment agreements, and see the military-political activities of the IS as securing or negotiating international support for these agreements among clients and allies. The less competitive MNC are more ‘unilateral’, protectionist and state centered – dependent on protection of domestic markets and subsidies to compete in foreign markets. There is a closer political identity between the less competitive MNC and the civilian-militarists in terms of ‘unilateral action’ but often conflicts in terms of overseas trading partners.

The CM belief in “extra-territoriality”, the supremacy of US laws and enforcement authority over national sovereignty and its logical extension and colonial occupation. This

position is in conflict with MNC demands for a recognized international legal order to defend and promote capitalist relations and adjudicate disputes. However this conflict is muted by some of the special privileges that accrue to MNCs under US colonial control, such as special access to lucrative privatized enterprises, reconstruction contracts and military related purchases. On the other hand the CM embargo policies hinder overseas subsidiaries of MNC from engaging in trade or restricts the commodities to be sold. The conflict between the military centered CM policies and the 'free market' policies of MNC however does not prevent co-operation in destabilizing vulnerable regimes. US oil refineries refused to process Cuban oil imports in the early 1960's in line with US efforts to overthrow the revolution. During the early 1970's under the socialist government of Allende US copper companies pursued judicial suits to prevent Chilean copper exports in tandem with the CIA efforts to overthrow the regime. US aeronautics industry co-operated with the IS in pressuring the Chavez government by refusing to repair and upgrade its fighter planes.

The theoretical point is that within the empire-building project there are "special interests" and the "general interests" of the ruling class. There is no such thing as an "imperialist logic" that provides a coherent homogeneous set of policies anywhere and anytime. The 'inconsistencies' occur for both domestic political reasons, as well as because of the influence of different ideological groups within the IS. For example though "free trade" is the general doctrine of the MNC, the exceptions include protection of uncompetitive but politically influential agricultural interests. The Cuban American lobby backing a trade embargo against Cuba, the Israeli State and economy heavily subsidized by the US for over a half century are clear examples contrary to the "free market" doctrines of the MNCs. When "special interests" like the Zionist/Jewish power configuration impose policies favorable to Israel but which prejudice major oil MNC interests, undermine alliances with EU and Arab countries and in the course of pursuing their agenda marginalize traditional components of the IS, a major "subterranean" but vicious conflict emerges over personnel, jurisdiction and strategic policy.

The second Bush presidency represents further consolidation and expansion of power of the civilian militarists in strategic positions. The Zionists remain in control of the Pentagon, while expanding their reach within the National Security Council and Middle East policy with the ascendancy of Elliott Abrams. Meanwhile Homeland Security is to be run by another member of the Zionist network, Michael Chertoff, who demonstrated his zeal by arbitrarily rounding up and jailing hundreds of US Arabs and Muslims simply because of their ethnicity or religion. The key to the growing ascendancy of the CM is the strategic appointment of Porter Goss to head the

CIA. Goss is an ardent proponent of the military confrontationist doctrine toward China and certainly reflects a weakening of the MNCs “free trade” policy-makers.

There is a negative interdependence between economic expansion and war, particularly in the Middle East and Asia. Greater military threats and tighter encirclement of China emanating from the dominant CM can have extremely destabilizing effects on China’s continuing financing of US enormous trade deficit and prejudice US investors in China – leading to a weakening of the dollar and the profitability of the top 500 MNC. A new series of US-Israeli military attacks of Syria and Iran can lead to a general military conflagration throughout the Middle East, precipitating an oil crisis, skyrocketing prices and further instability of US clients, leading to a crisis in the US economy and a greater series of wars, further bleeding the country. Israel, of course would be the only beneficiary in a region which becomes a Middle East wasteland (a ‘howling wilderness’ of Biblical proportions) and in which the US will be exhausted by wars, an over-extended military and economic crises. What is more likely is that the imperial policies of the CM will result in losses for all parties: the US will go into crisis and the anti-imperialist countries will suffer massive destruction. The long-term effects on empire building will depend on the political consequences of failed imperial policies – the way the failures are analyzed, the policies and policymakers involved and the political alternatives which emerge.

The diagnosis of the reasons for imperial failures is crucial because it can lead to either re-building and further strengthening the empire or to a challenge to the policies, personnel, ideologies, institutions and interests which directed the failed policies. The most conservative critics will argue that empire building was the correct approach but the implementation was wrong – the occupation wasn’t handled properly, too few troops were utilized and so on. Liberal critics will argue that policies were mistaken, that the war should have been a ‘multilateral affair’ with the EU, in which the war and the booty would have been shared. The progressive minority will argue that institutions like the Pentagon civilians played too strong a role, instead of the diplomats in the State Department.

Each of these diagnoses and prescriptions are guided by the idea of reversing the negative fall-out from imperial failures and defeats and reconfiguring the IS in order to reconsolidate the forward positions of the empire. At best they lead to some personnel changes, ideological adjustments (the shrill war cries of the CM are toned down), a re-shuffle of agencies (with a recovery by the professional military and diplomats) and efforts to reconcile with international allies. The potentialities for these “changes so that nothing changes” depend on the

capacity for the IS to “reform itself” in time of crises. Imperial reform however will not be easy given the entrenched nature of the CM, their backing among the Zionist zealots, Christian fundamentalists and subservient masses.

Only if the new wars result in prolonged conflicts costing thousands of lives, in massive disruption of the economy leading to an international crisis affecting the MNC and the domestic economy can we envision a significant opposition arising among an otherwise cowed and fragmented populace lacking an authentic anti-imperialist political organization. The emergence of mass discontent will require a clear understanding of the responsibility of the civilian militarists and the Zionist “Israel Firsters”, the principle architects of the war policy. It will need to bring to bear an analysis of the geopolitics of war, the role of the MNC and the necessity of sacrificing the empire to rebuild the ‘republic’. This requires a class war against the costs of empire and for the transformation of the US economy, property ownership and direction.

Empire building by its nature is violent and disruptive to others; resistance and defeat, especially involving strategic sectors of the imperial state always have violent repercussions within the empire. Its weakest link, the workers and taxpayers, exploited and sacrificed to sustain the empire, will only react when forced by external circumstances. Only “outside” shocks will detonate internal reaction in a population imbued with imperial beliefs and righteous submission.

The IS, contrary to the CM and their zealous Zionist counterparts, is not invincible; Iraq has demonstrated the same lessons taught earlier in Korea and Vietnam. The US economy cannot sustain the CM agenda of new, multiple wars and prolonged mass resistance in multiple sites. The CM can ignore the loss of allies, the abandonment of clients from the war coalition, the vulnerability of new points of conflicts in the Empire... The CM can substitute like-minded ideologues to run the CIA, the Pentagon, the White House and the State Department who will echo each other doctrines, but their collective will cannot change fundamental structural constraints on power – budgets, debts, draft resistance, armed resistance, vulnerable armies, diplomatic isolation, the lack of mercenaries... The will to power can do many things destructive, but as Hitler realized (or proved) it can also destroy itself.