

Research paper on usa and new imperialism

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New Imperialism

In the history of human civilization, one of the main tendencies was supremacy of certain classes or states over the others. In this or that way, some states were more advanced in technological and conceptual development than others. The difference in developmental perspectives and simple inconsistency in ethno-cultural traditions were leading to unequal position of states on the world arena. The best example of such inequality was the phenomenon of imperialism. While the first wave of imperialism was relatively homogenous in its nature, the second wave or new imperialism was characterized by diversity of approaches and subsequent consequences mainly due to the rise of new of new imperial states. The aim of the present research paper is to examine new imperialism from the American perspective, identifying the reasons for this new wave and certain difference between European and American approaches, implications for the regions affected and its place in American nation building.

Just as the Great Depression can be viewed as one of the triggers of the World War II, the Long Depression of the 1873-1896 caused the old world to reconsider its policies and head for the foreign markets (Wright 63). For the United States, the negative implications of the Panic of 1873, when the silver standard was abandoned by Prussia after Franco-Prussian war 1870-1871, were embodied in the Panic of 1893 in US, when the core industry of railroads simply went into deadlock due to the overbuilding and subsequent inability of financial sector to follow the tendency under the limited conditions of national market (Walton and Rockoff 87). Economic instability resulted in subsequent socio-political misbalance.

Since European events had affected United States, the country could not stay away from the only feasible option of that time - participation in the global quest of the new imperialism (Walton and Rockoff 72). In this regard, it does not mean that United States was forced to conduct severe foreign policy, but it was rather a rationale necessity (Wright 28). In this regard is meant the fact that under conditions of being new developing industrial country, “ stagnation of the inner market’s demand could have resulted in extremely negative consequences threatening the very existence of the new state” (Biel 76). Thus, expansion of foreign trade and opening of the foreign markets can be viewed as existential matter for the United States. However, it can be just an excuse for imperialism, which “ has constantly ‘ reinvented’ itself”, irrespective of changes of global capitalism (Ayers 3).

However, unlike European countries, USA did not have strong century-long connections with other parts of the world and numerous colonies like Great Britain; thus, it has to establish its position in new imperialism (Wright 253). Just as Britain, “ combining traditional master-subject territorial systems (as in India) with expansive engagements through capitalist accumulation in foreign parts (the Atlantic economy)”, United States diversified its approaches to new imperialism (Harvey 60). In this regard, irrespective of the Spanish-American War, that resulted in acquisition of the Philippine islands, Puerto Rico and Guam, American approach was based on the establishment of the long-termed economic and financial relationship with the target countries, mainly through trade, economic benefits and financial loans. From the point of British royal rule, “ American approach was still more civilized in sense of mutual benefits and interdependence outside the

status of subject-object relations, which Americans despised themselves” (Biel 98).

In order to understand the very essence of new imperialism, it should be analyzed from the point of consequences it caused for the participants. In this regard, the impact of phenomenon on the Imperial states was quite obvious – improvement of national economic, political and social stability, leading to strengthening international positions of the imperial states (Wright 124). Until certain extent, new wave of imperialism and reduction of internal conflict in imperial society directed this conflict into international environment, resulting in the clash between world empires in Two World Wars (Ayers 6). From the point of developing states, “ the main impact of the new imperialism was in asserting of their “ third world status” and disruption of unique ethno-cultural and historical development” (Wright 124). In each region, the impact was different, mainly due to the differences of local development and subsequent usefulness of countries for the imperial states (Walton and Rockoff 274).

The impact for the Latin America and Asia was completely different. From global perspective, new imperialism established contemporary century-long geopolitical map of connections in the world. In this regard, geographical closeness and strategic meaning of the Latin America for the United States established American influence on most of the aspects of life in the Latin America (Walton and Rockoff 452). From political perspective, this meant constant American observation over the change of political regimes in the countries, particularly such as Cuba. From economic perspective, it resulted in tying Latino-American economies to the American one and further to the

global (Biel 234). On the other hand, the impact in the Asian region was that relationships with the China and Japan were based on “relatively civilized conditions of mutual trade and attempted change of Eastern ideology through the process of Westernization” (Walton and Rockoff 296). In this regard, from political perspective, Asian countries were gaining new options for development; on the other hand, imposing of the imperial values and rule contributed to the strengthening of the internal national wisdom for change, which further resulted in militarization of the Asian countries, particularly Japan and its military power in Two World Wars (Wright 85).

Particular feature of the American approach to new imperialism was in its systematic nature. Understanding that United States lacked long-termed imperial influence of Great Britain, Germany and France as its main competitors, it used all possible means for positioning its influence in the regions. In this regard, it concentrated on the closest regions and those which were less under the influence of other potential competitors.

Obviously, United States could do very little in India (full colony of Great Britain), but could spread its influence in the region of Latin America and Asia (Wright 64). Since Latin America was closer, United States could use both soft and hard powers. The best example of hard power was Spanish American War, which resulted in acquisition of new territories and imposing of American rule (Ayers¹²). From strategic perspective, this move was crucial in showing American intentions in the region and its imperial ambition to compete with Great Britain for the control over the region.

In order to decrease British presence in the region and not to cause war with the British Empire, United States had to switch from hard power to soft one,

establishing economic dependence of the countries of Latin America from its financial help. In this context, the best example was financial investment into developing countries, use of American businesses and keeping control over the projects within those countries. The best example of this policy was construction of the Panama Canal which was supervised by the Isthmian Canal Commission and practically conducted by engineers from Illinois Central Railroad (Wright 61). Except for building and manufacturing industries involved in this policy, financial institutions were used for buying loans of developing countries from other imperial competitors, which was attempted in case of Honduras' loan before Great Britain (Wright 65).

Detail from "The Crash at Crush" by artists R. R. Abernathy (1911-1981), showing the failure of railroad industry.

Source: Ames, Eric. Scott Joplin's "Great Crush Collision March" and the Memorialization of

Marketing Spectacle, 19 April 2012. Web. 07 May 2012 < <http://blogs.baylor.edu/digitalcollections/> >.

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