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DEFINING Imperialism Colonialism and Neo-Colonialism

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2026 has been marked by imperialist aggression across the world.



GENOCIDE IN GAZA



PROXY-WAR IN UKRAINE



CUBA BLOCKADE



ATTACK ON VENEZUELA



WAR ON IRAN

As a result, anti-imperialist consciousness has been increasing.

Images: (Palestine) Omar Al Qattaa / AFP; (Ukraine) Kyodo / AP Images; (Cuba) A bicitaxi rides along a street in Havana amid nationwide fuel shortages in February 2026. Yamil Lage / AFP via Getty Images; (Venezuela) Eduardo Muñoz/Reuters; (Iran) Mohsen Ganji/AP.



It is imperative that we sharpen this consciousness by deepening our understanding of imperialism (including its relationship to capitalism), colonialism, and neo-colonialism.

A clear analysis of the systems we are up against is essential for developing strategies to defeat them.

Image: *Protest for Palestine in London.*

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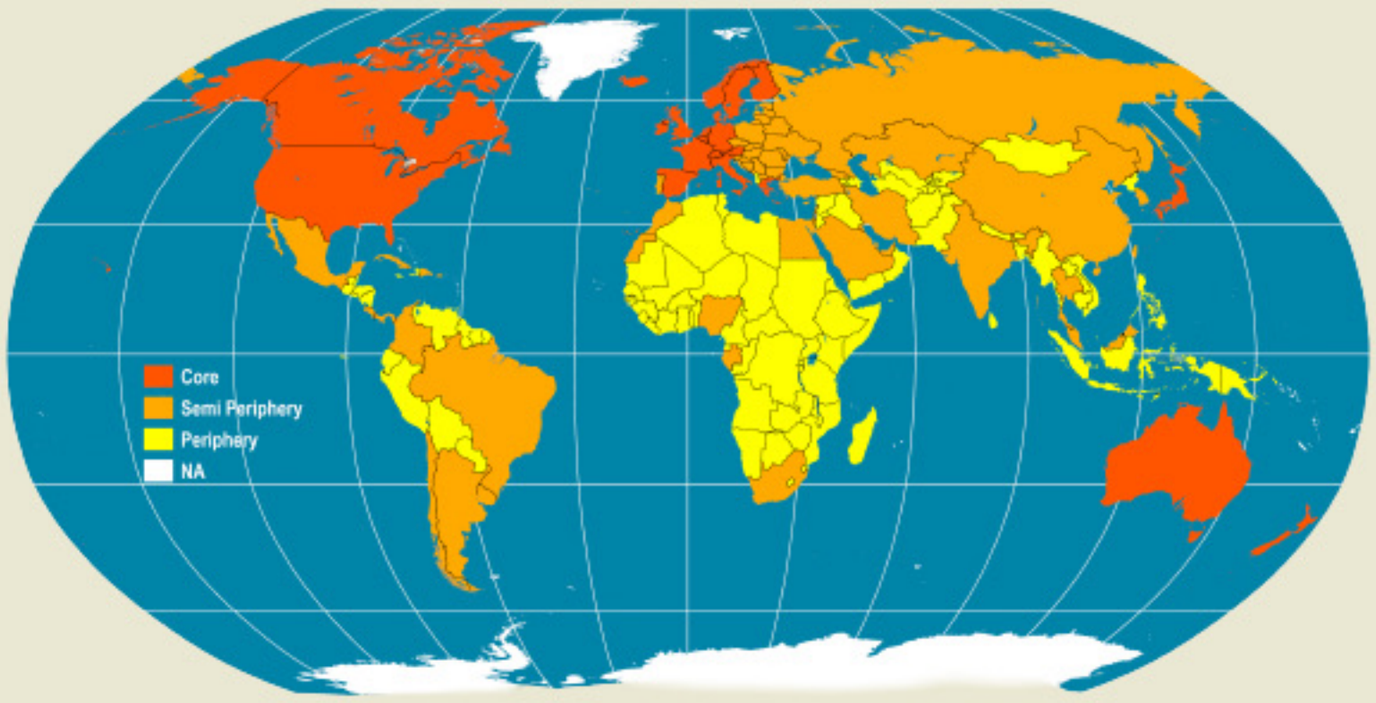

Imperialism is a system in which core capitalist states (i.e. the Global North) deny sovereignty to peripheral states (i.e. the Global South) in order to transfer value from the periphery to the core. Imperialism helps capitalism function in three different ways:

- **Expropriation:** Imperialist violence expropriates people in the periphery of the means of production and further concentrates them in the hands of the capitalist class.

- **Value of money:** Imperialism suppresses wages in peripheral states, reducing their capacity to purchase essential goods. This curbs inflationary pressure that would cause capitalist crisis.

- **Class compromise:** Capitalists 'buy off' the working class in the core through cheap commodities and welfare programmes, made available by intensifying exploitation of the periphery.

Images: *Core / Periphery division of the world.*

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Imperialism Walks on Two Legs

The conditions for imperial value transfer are not natural – they are created and maintained through economic and military force.

However, Southern states are increasingly challenging the economic dominance of US-led imperialism (e.g. through the establishment of BRICS), which has pushed core states to increase their reliance on military force. This helps to explain the recent increase in imperialist aggression.

Image: *(Economic Leg) IMF Managing Director, always a European appointee, Kristalina Georgieva (left) and World Bank President, always a US appointee, Ajay Banga (right) at the 2025 Annual Meetings of the World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund. IMF Photo/Joshua Roberts.*

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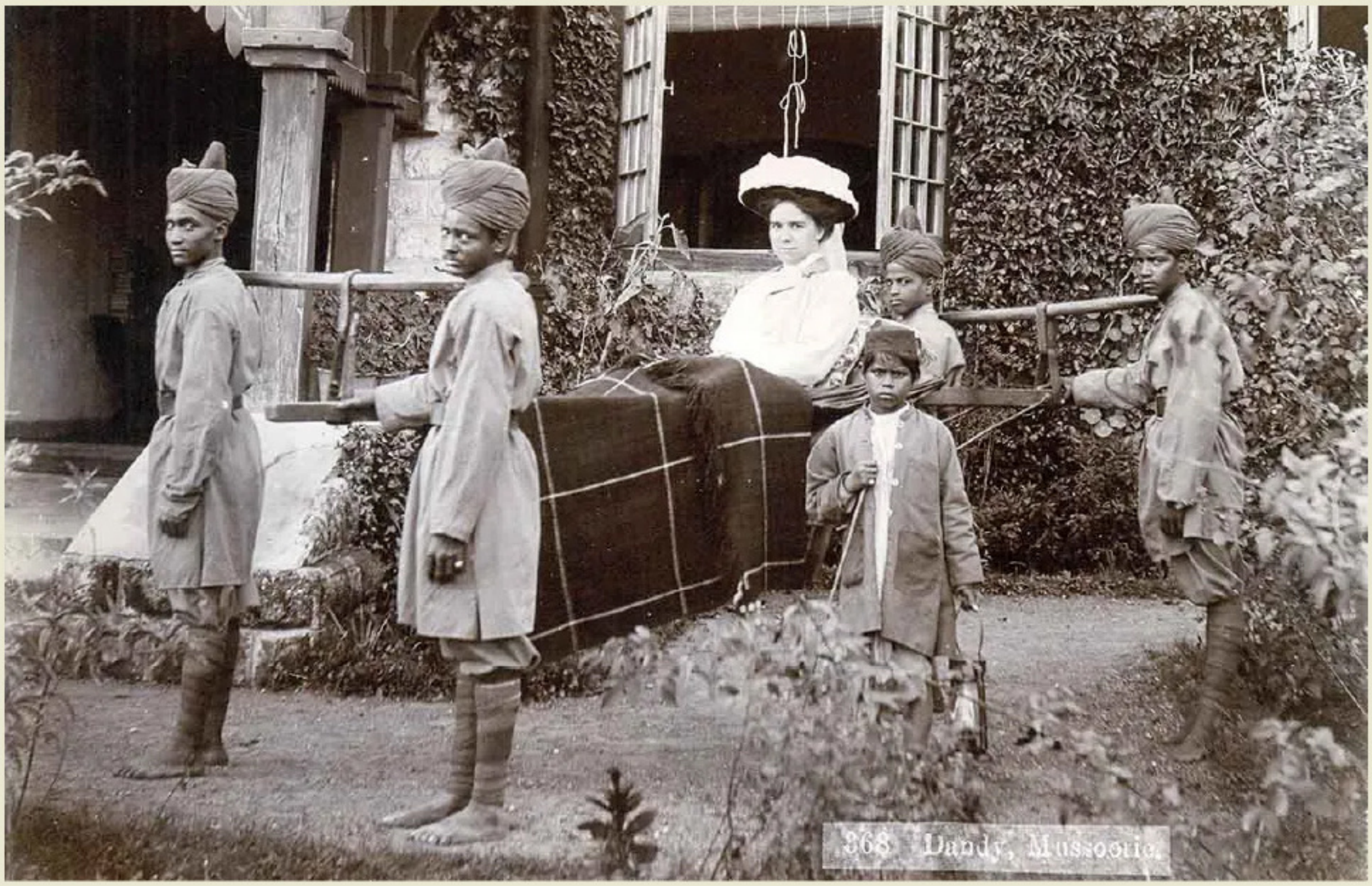
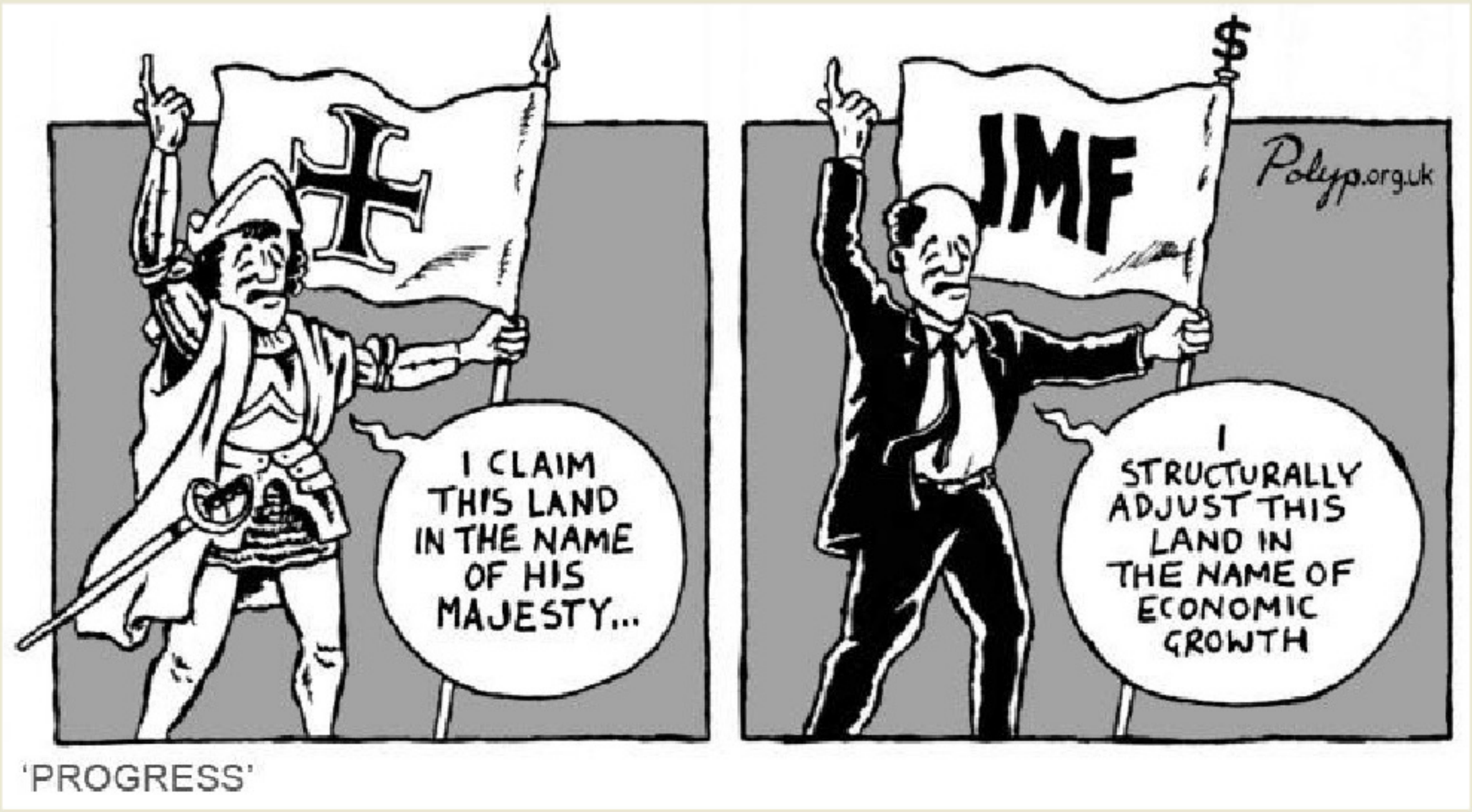


Colonialism

Colonialism is a form of imperialist domination in which one state exercises formal political control over another territory, forcibly integrating its economy and society into the capitalist world system. This one-to-one relationship helps facilitate imperial value flow.

After WWII, over 80 nations won their political sovereignty. But this didn't end imperialism →

Images: *The British colonised India from 1757-1947.*



Neo-Colonialism

Neo-colonialism is a system in which Southern states are denied economic sovereignty despite having political independence.

Under neo-colonialism, Northern capital forcibly re-organises production in the South to cheapen labour and resources, creating a 'hidden transfer of value' from the periphery to core estimated at $10.8 trillion annually.

Image: polyp.org.uk

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Neo-colonialism denies Southern economic sovereignty through:



Images: *(Regime Change) Coup d'état in Chile, 1973. Leopoldo Victor Vargas / Courtesy Contact Press Images; (Aid) J. Countess/Getty Images; (Trade Institutions) Getty Images.*

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Imperialism is a world-shaping systems responsible for widespread immiseration, poverty, war, and genocide. All movements struggling for collective liberation must be anti-imperialist.

“The only thing you need to remember is that when the people stand up, imperialism trembles.”

– *Thomas Sankara*

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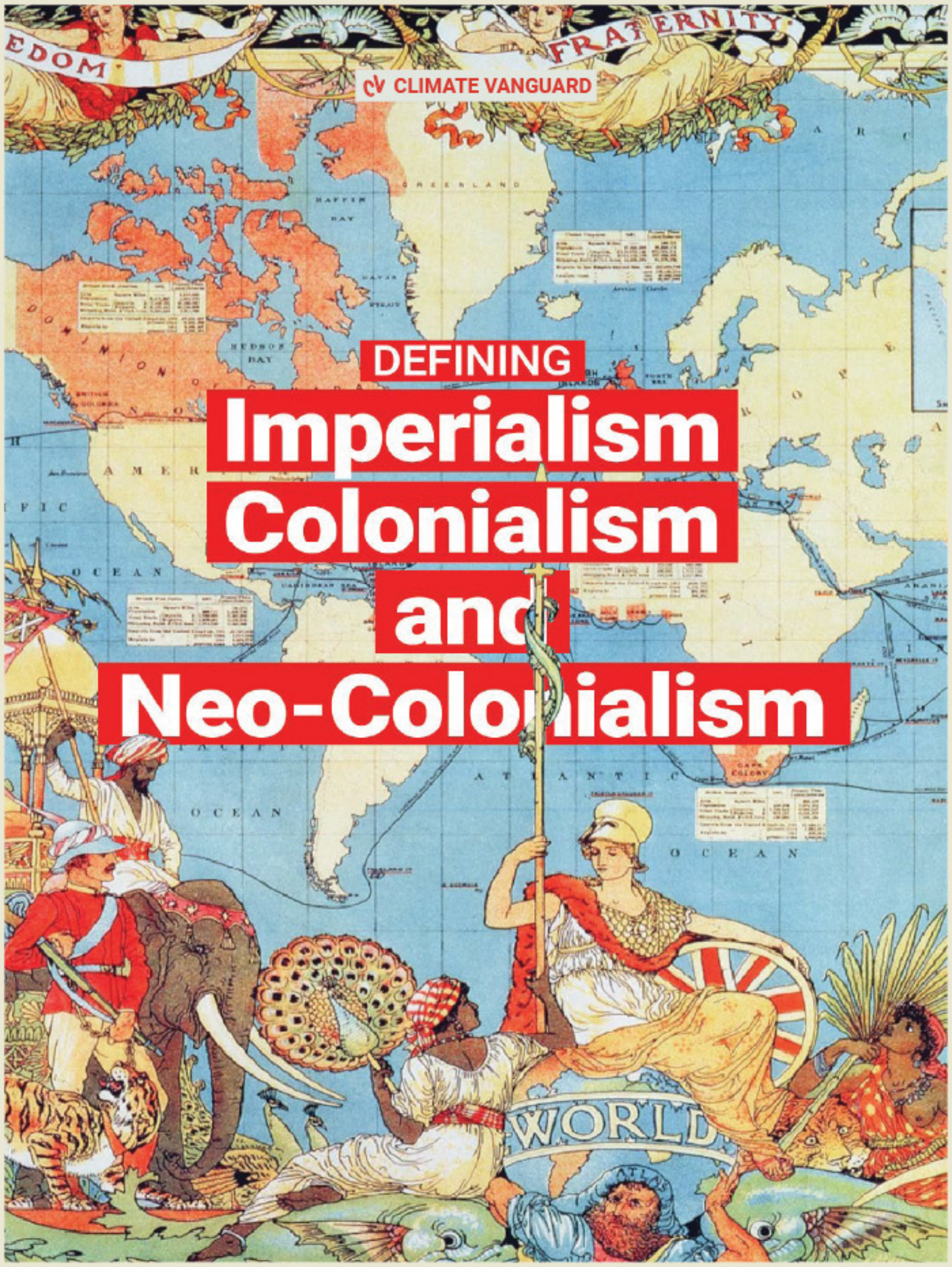

For more, read the updated brief on our website.