Week 1

What is the “New Imperialism”? Part 1

Readings:

Recommended, though optional:
http://newimperialism.files.wordpress.com/2010/12/niintro.pdf,
http://www.box.net/shared/eanyx98hivcjz7am0ut2
Overview of the Seminar

➢ Imperialism: Capital Accumulation, accumulation by dispossession

➢ Humanitarianism – Emergency and Exception: “Humanitarian” Intervention, Military Humanism, and the Responsibility to Protect:
  o Humanitarianism, the new ideology of imperialism
  o Saving the world (from itself, for the U.S.)
  o Divine providence, manifest destiny
  o Civilizing mission
  o Protecting civilians
  o Individual human rights, civil liberties
  o Democracy, freedom, prosperity — code words, not to be dismissed as empty propaganda
  o Civil society and NGOs
Militarization, Militarism, Counterinsurgency, and the Social Sciences:
- Process versus ideology, structure versus beliefs/values/attitudes
- COIN, winning hearts and minds, population-centric, protecting civilians, humane warfare
- Militarization of the academy
- HTS, combat ethnography, windshield ethnography, armed social science, scholar warriors
- “Reducing harm,” actually refined targeting, intelligence gathering
- Military power, bases, contractors, a defining feature of contemporary U.S. power, merits focus on the U.S. as the leading military power on the planet, military spending matches that of the rest of the planet, navy the size of the 20 next biggest navies combined
- Pentagon, defence industries, single largest employer in the U.S., Pentagon single largest owner of international real estate = size of Belgium
Why a “New” Imperialism?

1. America as the “New Empire”
2. Imperialism without colonies
3. Post-Cold War sole superpower
4. Empire Avowal, American Exceptionalism
5. Imperialism as a civilizing mission
6. Imperialism by diffuse means: humanitarianism, democratization, media
7. Maximum power with maximum vulnerability
8. Competition between major powers
Initial Outlines of a “New Imperialism”

- Ideology, ideas, values, beliefs, symbols
- Morality of empire
- “empire as duty”

J. A. Hobson:

1) economic competition against other emergent powers;
2) a new phase of expansionism;
3) empire as responsibility and duty;
4) public propaganda to win supporters at home for new adventures abroad.
“The New Imperialists”

“Imperialism used to be the white man’s burden. This gave it a bad reputation. But imperialism doesn’t stop being necessary just because it becomes politically incorrect. Nations sometimes fail, and when they do, only outside help—imperial power—can get them back on their feet. Nation-building is the kind of imperialism you get in a human rights era, a time when great powers believe simultaneously in the right of small nations to govern themselves and in their own right to rule the world. Nation-building lite is supposed to reconcile these principles: to safeguard American interests in Central Asia at the lowest possible cost and to give Afghanistan back a stable government of its own choosing.” (Ignatieff, 2002)

“the 21st century imperium is a new invention in the annals of political science, an empire lite, a global hegemony whose grace notes are free markets, human rights and democracy, enforced by the most awesome military power the world has ever known” (Ignatieff, 2003b)
Truth of “liberal democracy”: Ignatieff, “A liberal society cannot be defended by herbivores”

Militarism, Militarization of Politics, Society, Culture

Eisenhower Farewell Address
http://newimperialism.wordpress.com/2014/01/05/president-eisenhower-on-the-military-industrial-complex/
and

The Power Elite (1956), C. Wright Mills:

“In so far as the structural clue to the power elite today lies in the enlarged and military state, that clue becomes evident in the military ascendency. The warlords have gained decisive Political relevance, and the military structure of America is now in considerable part a political structure. The seemingly permanent military threat places a premium on the military and upon their control of men, materiel, money, and power; virtually all political and
economic actions are now judged in terms of military definitions of reality: the higher warlords have ascended to a firm position within the power elite of the fifth epoch.”

“In so far as the structural clue to the power elite today lies in the economic order, that clue is the fact that the economy is at once a permanent-war economy and a private-corporation economy. American capitalism is now in considerable part a military capitalism, and the most important relation of the big corporation to the state rests on the coincidence of interests between military and corporate needs, as defined by warlords and corporate rich. Within the elite as a whole, this coincidence of interest between the high military and the corporate chieftains strengthens both of them and further subordinates the role of the merely political men. Not politicians, but corporate executives, sit with the military and plan the organization of war effort.”
"the OHR used its power to dismiss presidents, prime ministers, judges, mayors, and other elected officials. It could pass legislation and create new institutions without reference to the preferences of the Bosnian people. Much of the administrative capacity of the Bosnian government lay in the hands of international experts rather than indigenous civil servants, to the point that some observers compared it to the British Raj.” (Fukuyama, 2004, p. 103)

“This international imperium may be a well-meaning one based on human rights and democracy, but it was an imperium nonetheless and set a precedent for the surrender of sovereignty to governance by international agencies” (Fukuyama, 2004, p. 98).
“Neither the United States nor the international community has made much headway in creating self-sustaining states in any of the countries it has set out to rebuild” (Fukuyama, 2004, p. 103).

“the rhetoric of the international community stresses ‘capacity-building’ while the reality has been rather a kind of ‘capacity sucking out’….The international community, including the vast numbers of NGOs that are an intimate part of it, comes so richly endowed and full of capabilities that it tends to crowd out rather than complement the extremely weak state capacities of the targeted countries.” (Fukuyama, 2004, p. 103)

Michael Ignatieff: “humanitarian relief cannot be kept distinct from imperial projects, not least because humanitarian action is only possible, in many instances, if imperial armies have first cleared the ground and made it safe for humanitarians to act” (2003c, pp. 16-17).
Matthew Connelly: “the essence of empire, is not military force, but the exercise of untrammeled power” (2006, p. 32).

“And imperialists have long understood that an entrance exam or a vaccination program are less costly and more compelling instruments of influence, especially when infused with an appealing idea–like mission civilisatrice or médecins sans frontières” (Connelly, 2006, p. 32).

**New Imperial Ideals (and Practical Outcomes)**

→ “Democracy”
→ “Freedom”
→ “Human rights”