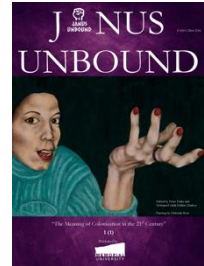

Title: Review of *Capitalism, The American Empire, and Neoliberal Globalization* by Kenneth E. Bauzon

Author(s): Jay Foster

Source: *Janus Unbound: Journal of Critical Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Fall 2021), pp. 102-109

Published by: *Memorial University of Newfoundland*



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Janus Unbound: Journal of Critical Studies
E-ISSN: 2564-2154
1(1) 102-109
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Bauzon, Kenneth E. *Capitalism, The American Empire, and Neoliberal Globalization: Themes and Annotations from Selected Works of E. San Juan Jr.* (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2019), xix+304 pages.

At the G7 summit in June 2021, leaders of the top seven “advanced economies” met at a seaside resort in Cornwall, England. After three days of frolicking on the beach for photo-ops, they emerged promising a billion COVID-19 vaccine doses for “less well-off” countries and affirmed \$100 billion per year in “climate finance” from both public and private sources. In short, the summit—laughably described as a meeting of world “leadership”—was simply yet another lackluster performance piece. The spending on climate change was already promised in 2009, and it pales in comparison to the *trillions* of dollars spent by G7 countries on domestic pandemic relief. Behind the G7 are the legacies of carbon capital and colonial capitalism that enabled them to be rich enough to be first in the vaccine queue and help themselves to large numbers of scarce doses. For example, Canada, a leading global exporter of moral puffery, had already snatched up about 80% more vaccines than it actually needed—more than ten doses for every person in the country. It had even elbowed in on COVAX, an international program to ensure equitable global access to vaccines. Having looked after itself at the expense of others, Canada exuded generosity at the G7 by promising to donate its “surplus” and to fund other vaccine purchases.

Canada was not alone in its rich-world entitlement. At the time of the summit, ten nations had monopolized 75% of the global vaccine supply (Al Jazeera 2011). Little wonder that UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres admonished wealthy nations for the “wildly unfair and uneven” global distribution of vaccines (Cohen and Kupferschmidt 2021). The Director-General of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, described the inequality as “scandalous” and warned that the world was “on the brink of a catastrophic moral failure” (Cohen and Kupferschmidt 2021).

This meeting of the G7, like other big-G gatherings and the World Economic Forum, was a reminder (for anyone who still needed it) of the way 21st century geopolitics continues to echo the imperial order of the 19th century. For the most part, the beneficiaries of extractive and settler colonialisms continue to be well-off nations while the colonized mostly continue to struggle economically and politically. It is mainly the recipients of the benefits of colonialism that can worry about their healthcare systems being swamped by COVID-19 patients.

What the G7 euphemistically called the “less well off” barely have health care at all, never mind anything so sophisticated as a health care system. Indeed, UNICEF reports (2001) that 60% of the world—4.5 billion people—lacks the most basic tool for public health: a toilet. The egregious inequality in global wealth and health might be attributed to the earlier industrialization of Europe and North America. It might be written off to the inescapably stochastic character of history. Either story might be plausible except for the strong evidence that colonialism *purposefully* enriched some territories in direct proportion to the extent other territories were impoverished. Walter Rodney (1973) famously expressed the point: Europe underdeveloped Africa. Kenneth E. Bauzon would suggest extending this point. The United States underdeveloped Mexico, Central America, South America, and parts of the Pacific rim.

A burgeoning body of academic argument strongly suggests that 19th century colonialism was not brought to an end between about 1950 and 1985 as former colonies achieved independence from European powers. When political scientists and global historians look at the history of “decolonization,” they offer a less emancipatory story. On this account, there is an uninterrupted line from the end of the Habsburg Empire to the World Trade Organization (WTO). (For a recent example, see Slobodian 2018.) The kind of neo-liberal globalization promoted by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and later the WTO is a direct descendent of 19th century imperialism. The upshot is that the *longue durée* did not see what Paul Kennedy (1987) once described as “the rise and fall of the great powers.” As COVID-19 vaccine distribution starkly shows, the great powers never really fell, even if former colonizers (especially the UK) like to tell themselves stories about the end of empire. All that really changed was how global power is exerted. The so-called “decolonization” period did not mark the end of colonialism but rather its restructuring. The metropole-colony model of the 19th century underwent a great transformation into the neoliberal globalization model of the late 20th century.

Between 1918 and 1995, colonialism was rebuilt, not dismantled. The putatively invisible hand of the market was protected and entrenched using the visible hand of national and international law, framed in neo-Hobbesian terms. In Colonialism 2.0, the global expansion of capitalist markets has been achieved by implementing laws and regulations to guarantee the “fair” treatment of global capital (Gil and Clair 2014; Nicol 2010). The new global system of trade rules effectively insulates economic relations from popular accountability. This was realized ideologically, in part, by developing the notion that economics is a science akin to physics, thereby naturalizing capital (Mirowski 1989). It was entrenched organizationally by the development of national and global institutions that protect capital from democratic oversight, institutions now run mainly by

economists (Mirowski and Plehwe 2009). The end result has been an international juridical framework of trade regulation, international banking, and corporate governance managed by supposedly expert elites that can, more often than not, run roughshod over local taxation regimes, labor protections, land holding, and environmental regulations.

Bauzon's *Capitalism, The American Empire and Neoliberal Globalization* adds to this line of thinking by focusing on the US contribution to the expansion of capitalism from the early 19th century into the 20th century. Potted histories of the United States often tell a story of the 13 Colonies overthrowing odious and onerous British colonial taxation to form "a more perfect union" based on principles of liberty and freedom for the benefit of "we the people." Given the title of his book, it is not unexpected that Bauzon wholly rejects this well-worn national hagiography. Insofar as this is a history of the United States, by self-admission, it mirrors Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* (1980). The emphasis of Bauzon's discussion is to sketch the imperial expansion of the United States into the Pacific. This is in contrast to more standard historical accounts that take the US's expansionist ambitions to have strict "continental" or "hemispheric" limits.

The 1823 Monroe Doctrine may seem purely hemispheric by pushing back on Russian, Spanish, Portuguese, and British interventions in North and South America. But this in no way precluded the US having its own imperial interest in the Pacific. Likewise, the concept of "manifest destiny" that emerged around 1845 aspired to the acquisition of Mexican territory after the annexation of Texas. Yet again such a nebulous notion need not have continental limits. The Tyler Doctrine of 1841 should not be overlooked. It opposed any European occupation of Hawai'i, thus clearly signaling US interest and intent in acquiring the islands.

The US had clear imperial ambitions in the Pacific from the earliest days of the Republic. The United States undertook exploratory forays into the Pacific rim well before its continental interior had been conquered. When the US Navy was formed in 1838, its first mission was to assess the possibilities for Pacific expansion as far as the Fiji Islands. That first imperial foray would ultimately lead to the occupation of the Philippines between 1898 and 1946. Arguably, the US's long-standing imperial sentiments fed into George Kennan's doctrine of communist containment which ended up drawing the US into the Vietnam War (or, from the other side, the Vietnamese War of Independence) between about 1954 and 1975.

On Bauzon's account, the underlying model for the US's exploitative colonialism in the Pacific and the Americas was its experience of settler-colonialism. The brutal American-Indian Wars were undertaken to "eradicate Indian resistance to Federal forces" (Bauzon, 67). From this experience, the US learned the basic lesson of colonization: vicious barbarity is the most efficient means to overwhelm opposition to the will of the state and capital. It then became a standing *modus operandi*. Overt and deliberate brutality was used to suppress the Philippine revolution against US occupation. Indeed, the "water cure"—a prototype of the "water boarding" torture technique used by the US at Abu Ghraib and

Guantanamo—was pioneered during the Philippine campaign. The same brutality has been manifested repeatedly in subsequent US conflicts in Central and South America, Southeast Asia, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

An immediate rejoinder to this way of seeing US military invention might be to claim that war by its very nature is a brutal undertaking. Bauzon rejects this kind of response, arguing that it elides the key point that US military violence and economic expansion is deeply informed by racism. The recurrent brutality exhibited by the US in foreign conflicts is not merely part of warfare but is “racialized state violence” learned from the practice of settler-colonialism (Bauzon, 151).

The so-called American-Indian Wars, which only ended in 1924, were not wars in the sense of a series of battles between combatants. Millions of Indigenous American Indians and whole communities were not wiped out in battles. US state and federal troops, as well as mobs of armed citizen militias, systematically savaged men, women, and children and burned villages. This was nothing other than state-sanctioned domestic terrorism with a deliberate genocidal intent. Once cultivated and normalized domestically, the same savagery could be turned outward as the US expanded into the Pacific. The first US Navy expedition to the Fiji Islands, undertaken by Commodore Charles Wilkes, involved hostage taking, blood-drenched beaches, and burned villages. Many years later, the brief Spanish-American War ended with the Treaty of Paris of 1898, which effectively transferred the remnants of Spain’s overseas empire to the United States. Cuba, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines all became, in one way or another, imperial possessions of the US. The US stepped into Spain’s role as colonial master, claiming that the local populations were unprepared for self-governance. The path to further brutality was cleared by reinterpreting the US Constitution so that its declared rights are applicable only to US citizens and not the inhabitants of the newly occupied territories. Cuban and Filipino revolutionaries who resisted US occupation and rule were killed as “insurgents.” Millions of Filipinos were killed by US soldiers in acts of so-called “pacification” by means of “depopulation.”

This part of Bauzon’s argument is both compelling and illuminating, though frequently disturbing. The overall argument would have been helped if it had been buttressed by a greater discussion of how US militarism in the Pacific was connected to its commercial interests and how those commercial interests were distinctly shaped by capitalism. The dark history of US imperial companies, like the United Fruit Company in Central America, is familiar, but how US corporate power expanded into the Philippines is more obscure. It also would have been interesting to learn the details of how Bauzon connects US Pacific imperialism to its operations in the Pacific “theatre” of the Second World War and also to the Korean and Vietnam Wars. In this context, it would have been helpful to read how racism and imperialism contributed to the justification for the dropping of not just one but two atomic bombs on Japan as well as the use of the Marshall Islands for atomic bomb testing. Unfortunately, the book does not build on its four core chapters to present a detailed account of US Pacific imperialism. Instead, the book’s other chapters (four in total) offer a variety of less developed claims about capitalism, neoliberalism, the Cold War, the state of contemporary social theory, global inequality, post-colonialism, and climate change.

Frustratingly, these chapters read more like a collection of disparate polemics than a well worked-out academic argument.

The shortcoming of these chapters is their propensity to offer sweeping theoretical claims that are problematic and supported by evidence that is often merely suggestive. For example, the book opens by situating US imperialism and hegemony in Enlightenment social and political theory, which Bauzon claims (for the most part) “rationalized colonialism” and served as “a vehicle to assert the universality of Enlightenment values” (5). He then offers the startling assertion that the “Enlightenment and its relationship to empire has, unfortunately, eluded generations of critical scholarly scrutiny” (5). Bauzon is right that the antiquated Enlightenment historiography of Ernst Cassirer and Peter Gay entirely neglected the way philosophes made the white, bourgeois, European male a transhistorical universal. Nevertheless, his broad claim is difficult to square with the large and still growing literature on the relationship between the Enlightenment and empire. Notable contributions include Jennifer Pitts’ 2006 *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* and Thomas McCarthy’s 2012 *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development*. There are also comprehensive edited volumes, for example, Katrin Flischuh and Lea Ypi’s 2014 *Kant and Colonialism* and Sankar Muthu’s 2012 wide-ranging *Empire and Modern Political Thought*. The role of Enlightenment values in the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) also probably deserves some discussion.

Several chapters later, Bauzon inveighs against the current state of academic social and political theory. His main charge is that Cold War conflict studies and game theory abstracted “conflict,” idealizing it as just two people with different preferences engaged in a utilitarian calculus. This sterile account of conflict “defanged and de-Marxified conflict theory” by leading theorists away from the analysis of concrete, in-the-world class conflict (Bauzon, 194). At one point, Bauzon decries “mainstream academics” who gave “blessing and endorsement” to the “suppression of liberation struggles.” He then observes, without even a hint of irony, that, “producers and purveyors of supposedly value-free knowledge, in fact, promote their own preferred ideological presuppositions” (194). This claim is hardly innovative. In the 1980s, there were at least two book-length studies of this issue in the disciplines of political science and history (Ricci 1984 and Novick 1988). But so far as Bauzon’s argument is concerned, it is not clear why the reader should accept its claims as something other than yet another expression of preferred ideological presuppositions. He does not engage with the excellent literature detailing how Cold War strategy transformed the very idea of rationality. (See, for example: Amadae 2003, Amadae 2016, Mirowski 2002 and Erickson 2013.) Instead, he controversially asserts that structural-functionalist approaches and systems theory accounts of society are “dominant paradigms” that are “status quo affirming” and have “conservative predispositions” (Bauzon, 192). This generality is difficult to accept without significant caveats. Were the radical systems theorists who constructed Chile’s Cybersyn as an alternative model of economic management in the 1970s simply committed to conserving the status quo? (Medina 2011)

Bauzon might be right that, within the social sciences, structuralism is coming back into vogue after post-structuralist extravagances. This point cannot be accepted as *prima facie*, however. It would require an argument rather than a set of

assertions to show that structuralism is currently dominant or even that it is intrinsically conservative. He mentions Talcott Parsons and Bronislaw Malinowski who may or may not be conservative. It isn't clear why either exemplifies structuralism. Early canonical structuralists like Claude Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes were clearly anti-colonialist and neither seems conservative in any usual sense. Bauzon only buttresses his position with the strident claim that prevailing social theory has “traces of organismic and mechanistic principles drawn from Darwin and Newton” (191-192). This repeats the common error that Newtonianism is mechanistic—gravity's action-at-a-distance was spooky theism, not Cartesian mechanism. Further, as Piers J. Hale argues, Darwin's ideas came to be aligned with a variety of political standpoints, some liberal but others socialist (Hale 2014).

These omissions (and commissions) might be overlooked since, as the book's subtitle suggests, this is not written to be a comprehensive history of the US empire in the Pacific or a detailed analysis of the present state of social and political theory. The book is more of an exercise in comparative literature broadly informed by the ideas of the polymath E. San Juan, Jr. Both San Juan and Bauzon are Filipino intellectuals for whom the struggle to liberate the Philippines from US colonial occupation is present, and raw. San Juan is still writing and his many works span English literature, Gramscian Marxism, colonialism and post-colonialism, racism and cultural studies. Almost all his work has the lived experience of US colonialism in the Philippines as its background. Bauzon's book is peppered with references to and quotes from San Juan's writing on racism, revolution, and post-colonialism. Unfortunately, Bauzon never discusses San Juan's contribution in a unified or systematic way. Presumably, this is explained by the somewhat vague gesture at “themes and annotations” from San Juan.

Bauzon's overarching argument seems much indebted to San Juan's observation that: “the messianic impulse to genocide springs from the imperative of capital accumulation—the imperative to reduce humans to commodified labor-power, to saleable goods or services” (77). Bauzon underscores the role of racism in linking labor commodification to genocide, but there is a crucial argument here that never seems to be fully articulated. The various practices of racializing specific peoples make it much easier to *class* them as objects of brutality. Skin, because it is literally superficial, must be aligned with some claim of deeper, subcutaneous deficiency: intellectual inferiority, moral degeneracy, or a lack of the political agency needed for self-government. While ultimately spurious and ungrounded, deficiency claims are buttressed and sustained by political rhetoric, literary portrayals, social and political theory and even the natural sciences. Deficiency, or some combination of deficiencies, is then taken as licensing various brutal subjugations: impoverishment, slavery, conscription, incarceration, or extermination. At this point, what began as a mere surface has been entrenched as a very ugly and pernicious nominal essence. The same mechanism of deficiency works all too easily and efficiently with gender as well, a point that does not seem to be addressed by Bauzon, though it is addressed by San Juan in *Filipina Insurgency: Writing Against Patriarchy in the Philippines* (1999).

It is because race is used to class people, and then that classification is used to mobilize the brutality of settler and extractive colonialism, that class is much too important to be ignored or sidelined. This may be the underlying reason

Bauzon rails against “the displacement of class” in the social sciences (192). Racial classification licenses brutality, brutality enables colonialism, and colonialism is an indispensable part of capitalism, if not capitalism itself. For Bauzon as well as San Juan, it is a grievous historical error to miss these connections. Colonialism was never merely an addendum or appendage to capitalism. As even non-Marxist economic historians acknowledge, global colonial empires emerged by trade, plunder, and settlement before cottage manufactures and factory industry. In the British case, the so-called “triangle trade” of the 17th century arguably provided the capital required to intensify agricultural production, making a dislocated, precarious pool of labor available for industrial-scale exploitation. (Consider, for example: Davies 1973 and Andrews, 1984.) For this historical reason, Bauzon is bewildered by fellow Marxists Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt who open *Empire* (2000) by saying, “Empire is materializing before our eyes” and go on to argue that, “with the global market and global circuits of production has emerged a global order, a new logic and structure of rule” (qtd in Bauzon, 11). For Bauzon, this kind of claim is historically oblivious, and unforgivably so. There is nothing new about empire. He takes further issue with Hardt and Negri for ignoring the US’s imperial history. They fail to recognize or acknowledge that the “United States is an empire in its own right, history and motives” and by so doing they “absolve it of any culpability, and by identifying abstractly the network of global neoliberal institutions ... they also fail to assign proper blame” (Bauzon, 13). Bauzon urges recognition of “the deliberate and sustained drive of the US empire for expansion and hegemony, an empire that is neither accidental or abstract” (255). For Bauzon, it is nonsensical to argue that a new style of capitalist empire has emerged after some period of decolonization. Without empire and without colonialism, capitalism simply is not. Since capitalism continues, so does colonialism. In other words, Lenin was wrong. Imperialism isn’t the highest stage of capitalism, capitalism simply is imperialism full stop.

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