

Elephants in the Room: Why Do America and Britain Commit War Crimes? Neoliberalism and Predatory Capitalism

Part II

By [Rod Driver](#)

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Region: [Europe, USA](#)

Theme: [History, US NATO War Agenda](#)

"I spent 33 years...being a high class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and the bankers. I helped make Mexico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in.

I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street. The record of racketeering is long. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American Sugar interests in 1916. In China I helped to see that Standard Oil went its way unmolested. In short, I was a racketeer for capitalism."(1) (Major-General Smedley D. Butler, 1931, US Marine Corps)

Read Part I:



[Elephants in the Room: US Military and CIA Interventions since World War II](#)

By [Rod Driver](#), October 29, 2020

Once people understand the extent of the crimes of the US and British governments, the next question they ask themselves is 'Why?'

The quote above shows clearly that US war and economic exploitation are two sides of the same coin. Military aggression by rich nations often supports the economic interests of a small number of the world's wealthiest and most powerful people and corporations. Decisions about wars and decisions about how the world's trading system is structured are each made by a small number of powerful people.

This includes not only politicians, but also senior executives in industry, particularly banking, oil, mining, food and weapons. Most of these people live in the world's advanced nations, particularly the US. I shall use the phrase 'Western elites' to refer to these people. Some of these elites have gone to extraordinary lengths to try to make sure that their position of power and wealth in the world is maintained. In 1948 the US had only 6% of the world's

population but 50% of the world's wealth. A US official stated at the time that their aim was "to maintain this position of disparity"(2). As will become clear throughout these posts, the views of US planners have changed little in the last 70 years.

Control of Resources and Trade

What is important in the minds of Western elites can be summed up by the phrase 'control of resources and trade'. This is a shorthand way of summarising a number of connected ideas. Resources include things like land, oil, minerals, crops and human labor. Rich countries want poor countries to allow global corporations to extract and process these resources, and to take them overseas, without too much interference from national governments, whatever the downsides for local people. Rich countries also want poor countries to have economic systems that will allow global corporations to dominate trade, buying and selling in order to make substantial profits, without being too restricted by local laws. Again, this applies even where there are downsides for local people.

Western elites therefore want leaders in other countries who will implement the 'right' economic system. This means a particularly exploitative version of capitalism, sometimes called neoliberalism or predatory capitalism, including widespread privatisation, weaker regulations for big companies, and decreases in government expenditure, known as austerity. (These economic policies will be discussed in more detail in later posts). The global financial and trade system is manipulated deliberately and systematically to create this outcome. This might sound like a conspiracy, but it does not really work that way. Provided everyone just plays their part (corporate executives and bankers pursue profit, politicians make laws that favor corporations, and trade negotiators from rich countries try to create trading agreements that benefit their corporations), the rich get richer and the poor stay poor.

Blocking Independent Development

If leaders in other countries want to determine their own economic systems, this is known as independent development. This does not mean that a country cuts itself off from the rest of the world, or does not engage in trade. It simply means that the leaders of a country refuse to implement neoliberal economic policies that allow corporations from rich countries to dominate their economies, to plunder their resources, or to exploit their people. Western elites have tried very hard to block independent development, because it limits their control. Leaders who object to being exploited by rich nations can be overthrown and replaced, often causing devastating consequences for their people, particularly the poor. The new leaders are often referred to as US clients. They usually cooperate with the US because this helps them gain power and wealth in their own country. Getting these rulers into power can be quite tricky. Techniques range from manipulating elections right up to full-scale military invasion.

US Dominance

The US in particular has two other key goals. It wants to maintain a global financial system based around the US dollar, and it would like to ensure that no other country becomes strong enough, either militarily or economically, to be a rival. In 2018 the US announced that its main focus was no longer on the 'war on terror', but would focus on "inter-state strategic competition"(3), meaning Russia and China.

Whenever the reasons for a war are discussed in the mainstream, there is a tendency to look for a single explanatory factor. In practice there tend to be a cluster of factors, often connected to each other, that all push in the same direction. As well as the reasons discussed above, there are plenty of big corporations that frequently benefit from war. This includes the weapons industry, financial companies, private military contractors (mercenaries), oil and minerals companies, and more recently many companies that win contracts to participate in the reconstruction process in war zones.(4)

The Importance of Oil

Oil in the Middle East has been described as

“a stupendous source of strategic power and one of the great material prizes in world history.”(5)

Without oil, most advanced economies would grind to a halt. Of all the resources that American leaders want to control, by far the most important is oil. Their control of oil is not so much about wanting it all for themselves. It is more about being able to deny it to others.(6) Anything that a country cannot produce for itself, but needs badly, can be used as a means of control. A shortage of oil for a country such as China would make life very difficult for them. This is the main reason that the major wars of the 21st century have been in oil rich regions. Specific motives relating to recent wars will be discussed in later posts.



How Do We Know The Real Reasons For British and US Wars

Until 2006 it was difficult to know what politicians and government decision-makers were really saying to each other about their reasons for wars and other activities. The

government kept many files secret in order to hide their crimes. In the UK we had to wait for 30 years (this has now been reduced to 20 years) until some of these files became declassified. During that period, we had to rely on the word of politicians and journalists for information. The declassified files show that politicians often lie, particularly about their reasons for war, and that mainstream media are not sufficiently questioning.(7) Time and again, the mainstream media would show clips of Prime Ministers and Presidents saying 'We want peace', while those same individuals were responsible for major wars. The files also show that Politicians use concepts like 'national security' or 'official secrets' to cover up their crimes.

In 2006 a man named Julian Assange set up a new organisation called Wikileaks. This enabled whistleblowers (people who witness criminal or unethical activity, usually by their employers) to make information available to the public without their identity becoming known. Millions of documents were given to Wikileaks exposing widespread war crimes by the British and US governments, and widespread criminal activity by other governments and big companies. All of these documents are available online and can be examined by anyone.(8)

Key Points

US and British wars are about control of trade and resources in other countries.

Of all the resources that the US wants to control, oil is the most important.

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Rod Driver is a part-time academic who is particularly interested in de-bunking modern-day US and British propaganda. This is the second in a series entitled Elephants In The Room, which attempts to provide a beginners guide to understanding what's really going on in relation to war, terrorism, economics and poverty, without the nonsense in the mainstream media.

This article was first posted at medium.com/elephantsintheroom

Notes

1) Smedley D. Butler, *War is a Racket*, 1931

2) Mark Curtis, *Ambiguities of power*, p.17

3) <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>

4) Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, 2008

5) US State Department, cited in Noam Chomsky, 'A Modest Proposal', Dec. 3, 2002, at www.chomsky.info/articles/20021203.htm

6) The expression 'veto power' is used frequently by Noam Chomsky in interviews to refer to control over other countries by denying them access to oil supplies.

7) The writer, Mark Curtis, has written multiple books that examine the declassified files in Britain. These include *Unpeople*, *Web of Deceit*, *The Great Deception*, *Ambiguities of Power* and *Secret Affairs*.

8) www.wikileaks.org

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