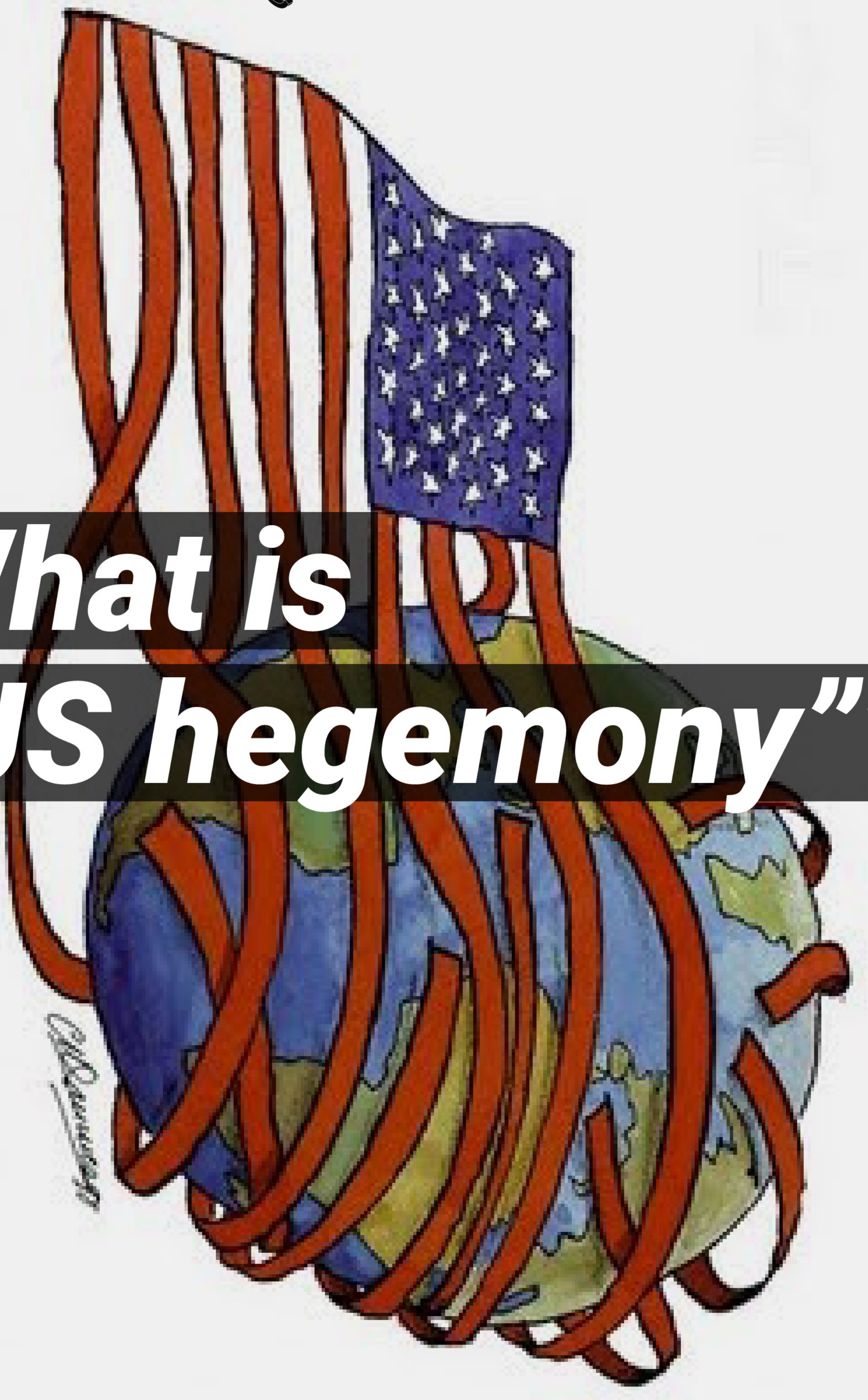
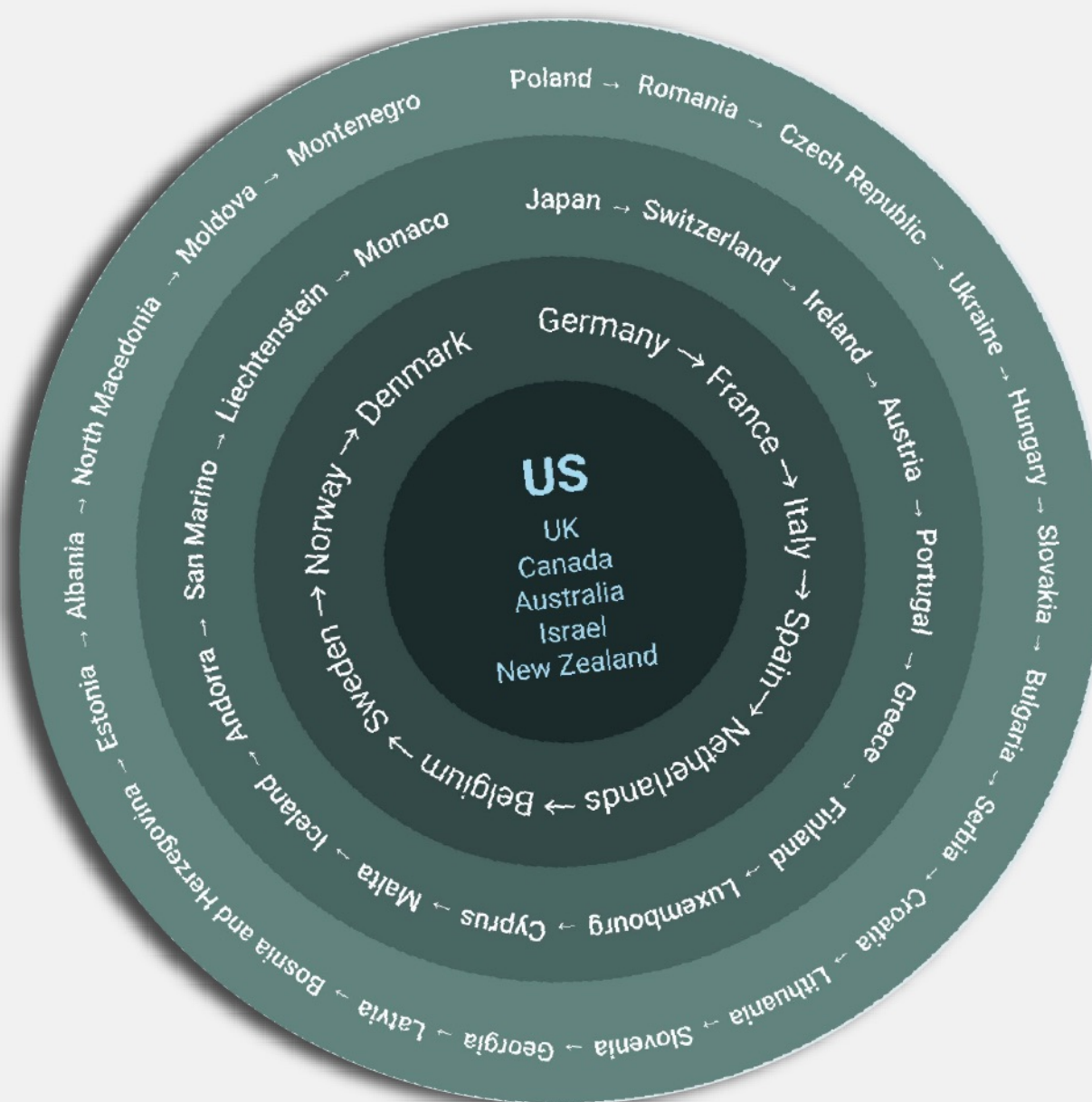


What is “US hegemony”?



By setting the rules of the game, the US ruling class and the rest of the imperialist bloc* have amassed immense wealth through the exploitation of people and the planet.

The US is not just one powerful country among many. It is the global hegemon, i.e. the dominant force shaping politics, economics, and culture on a world scale.



* The imperialist bloc is made up of other imperialist nations including European countries, Israel, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.

How did the US gain this preponderant power, and how does it exercise it?



A History of Empire

The US is a settler colony, established through the genocide of Indigenous peoples, the kidnapping and enslavement of Africans, and violent expansion westward. By 1898, it became a formal empire, occupying the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Guam, and Cuba.

Through its growing industrial base, military might, and colonial plunder, it rose as a global power throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.



1945 was a key inflection point. As the US' main competitors (Europe, the Soviet Union, China, and Japan) were ruined by World War II, the US solidified its position as the leader of the capitalist world.

In 1945, over half of global industrial production was concentrated in the US, and it was the only country to possess a nuclear weapon. It used this economic and military advantage to solidify its hegemony.



This dual advantage enabled the US to spearhead the Cold War against the socialist bloc, sabotage newly independent non-aligned states, and entrench its global domination through international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Once the USSR collapsed in the early 1990s, the so-called “end of history” had begun and the US’ unipolar hegemony flourished.

Here’s a look at what that entails* →

* The next slides introduce five forms of control that comprise neocolonial structure as identified by Egyptian political economist Samir Amin.

Control over natural resources

Many of the raw materials needed for industrial production – often found in Africa, Asia, and Latin America – are controlled by Northern multinationals.

These firms extract resources and profits through both direct ownership and control over global supply chains.

Many of these corporations are US-based, serving the interests of the US ruling class.

For example, in July 2025, the Democratic Republic of Congo signed a deal with KoBold Metals, a US mining company owned by Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates. The deal outlines “a strategic partnership that paves the way for further American investments in Congo’s mining sector.”

Sources: Tricontinental, *The World Needs a New Socialist Development Theory* (2023); Ilunga, msn (2025); Mullin & Shahshahani, *Uneven Earth* (2020).

Control over financial flows

The US dollar is the world’s reserve currency, i.e. the most widely used currency for international trade and financial transactions. This gives the US immense power over the global economy. It can crush countries that resist US hegemony by imposing sanctions or obstructing their access to dollar-based transactions.

US sanctions on Iran, for example, which were expanded by the first Trump administration in 2018, forced the country’s economy to contract by 9.3% the following year. And in Venezuela, the 2017 round of US sanctions drastically reduced people’s access to basic goods and services, leading to a 31% increase in mortality and 40,000 more deaths.



Image: Mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Control over science and technology

The US and its allies hoard technological knowledge, protected by intellectual property laws and enforced through global trade rules. Southern countries are forced to pay licensing fees for essential technologies, including medicine, seeds, software, and renewable energy systems. When countries try to produce them domestically, they face legal threats, sanctions, or exclusion from global markets.

Meanwhile, brain drain to the North and underfunded education systems – often the result of foreign debt and imposed austerity – keep countries dependent on Northern universities and research institutions.

Control over military power

The US spends more on its military than the next 10 countries combined, controls 74.3% of all military spending worldwide, and has nearly 900 military bases abroad.

In addition, it is the biggest arms dealer in the world, responsible for 43% of weapons exports from 2020 to 2024 and home to 7 of the top 10 arms companies by sales.

From Korea to Libya to Gaza, it has orchestrated countless coups, invasions, and proxy wars in order to snuff out any a spark of Southern sovereignty.



Control over information (and culture)

Control over information is largely monopolised. Today just a few (mostly US-based) firms own the platforms we rely on to communicate, get information, and even organise politically (e.g. Google, Meta, Twitter). They don't just design the algorithms that determine what information we receive, they also control the data they gather from us.

For many decades, influential US cultural outputs, from CIA-backed radio stations to countless Hollywood blockbusters, have created and spread propaganda for the US. Ultimately, these soft power tools serve to manufacture consent for a world system dominated by this capitalist, imperialist pariah.

Despite the US' strength in these five forms of control, its absolute hegemony is revealing growing cracks – from China's rapid economic development, to the rise of South-South alliances (e.g. BRICS, the Alliance of Sahel States) and the global movement for Palestinian liberation.

As anti-imperialist eco-socialist organisers, we must struggle to widen these cracks, dismantle imperialism, and build a world rooted in political, economic, ecological, and cultural sovereignty, solidarity, and care.