

# Canadian Capital and Extractive Imperialism

Sunday 28 April 2019, by [EZQUERRO-CAÑETE Arturo](#) (Date first published: 31 January 2019).

**Review of Todd Gordon and Jeffery R. Webber *Blood Of Extraction: Canadian Imperialism in Latin America*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2016.**

*Blood of Extraction* is a book about the seamy side of Canadian foreign policy. Its aim is to shed light on the ways in which the Canadian state exercises its (secondary) imperial power to facilitate the expansion of Canadian capital in Latin America. These mechanisms include pushing for neoliberal reforms, underregulating the Toronto Stock Exchange, providing tax benefits, direct subsidies, and diplomatic support to Canadian mining companies operating abroad, and refusing to regulate them outside of the country (Tetreault, 2013). One of the major contributions of this book is its ability to discredit a number of old claims and myths centering around Canada's commitment to democracy and human rights overseas.

Gordon and Webber's book takes us over a wide range of environmental and human rights abuses, unveiling that "the wealth repatriated to Canadian companies is routinely covered in blood and dirt" (181)—a direct allusion to Marx's famous insistence that capitalism stalks about the world "dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt" (Marx, 1990 [18871: 926]). It draws together important material from a wide range of academic, journalistic, and governmental sources, including documents released through access-to-information requests in Canada, as well as insights gained from dozens of interviews with trade unionists, indigenous activists, peasant militants, human rights lawyers, feminists, and environmentalists throughout the region. Simply attaining the access to information they have is in itself quite an achievement. The result is a lengthy (390 pp.) but extremely readable, fascinating, and horrifying account of the machinations and depredations of Canadian extractive capital in Latin America today.

Thus, in *Blood of Extraction* we are provided with a lucid description of the realities of Canadian imperialism—the key focus of the book. Not only do the authors go to great lengths to show that the foreign policies of Canada benefit primarily the interests of Canadian capital rather than those of the citizens, let alone the peoples of Latin America, but also they offer rather detailed coverage of the vicious methods of Canadian imperialism. In this context, the book's catalogue of violent appropriation of natural resources includes "murder, death threats, assaults, and arbitrary detention against opponents of resource extraction" (28). Here the authors might have drawn more on the Uruguayan political ecologist Eduardo Gudynas, whose concept of *extrahección*—a term coined to capture "the most acute cases of the appropriation of natural

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