

Terminator 2 : A Call to Economic Arms?

Mark Duckenfield

***Harvard University
Department of Government***

***Littauer Center, M-22
Cambridge, MA 02138***

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Ninety years ago, when the United States was caught in the grip of an economic and political crisis fueled by the rapid changes in industrial and agrarian relations, L. Frank Baum wrote *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, a work with a strong allegorical undercurrent that reflected the economic and political conflicts of his day.¹ As the twenty-first century approaches, the United States again faces economic dislocations, and different anxieties permeate the country. Post-modern fairy-tales are not found in books, but rather in the popular culture of the movies. Today's fairy-tale is *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, Arnold Schwarzenegger's megahit, an escapist action flick that features sensational special effects and lots of violence. Costing nearly \$100 million to produce -- more than any previous motion picture -- *Terminator 2* has proven itself well worth this massive initial investment, grossing more than \$200 million at the American box office with even larger returns predicted from overseas distribution and video rentals. By all accounts, this movie has set both new records and new standards for an industry that has stagnated in recent years. Yet *Terminator 2* is more than just an escapist action flick -- it is an unwitting allegory and judgment on the United States in the closing years of the twentieth century. Once the premise that the characters and events in the *Terminator* movies have symbolic meaning is accepted, a viewer can see that a sophisticated political, economic, and social commentary about the future of the United

¹ Littlefield, Henry M. "The Wizard of Oz: Parable on Populism," *American Quarterly*, 16 (Spring 1964), pp. 47-58; Rockoff, Hugh. "The ' Wizard of Oz' as a Monetary Allegory," *Journal of Political Economy*, 98:4 (1990), pp. 739-760; Littlefield, Henry M. "' Oz' Author Kept Intentions to Himself," *The New York Times*, (February 7, 1992).

States runs unconsciously throughout the entire film. While these subliminal themes have less to do with the film's immense box-office appeal than Schwarzenegger, they do exercise a certain unseen pull on the audience by pandering to their anxieties and fears about the future. Indeed, a careful analysis of the movie reveals much about what concerns Americans today.

A quick perusal of any major newspaper will soon turn up an article about a new plant closing, a domestic industry that is threatened by foreign competition, or increased calls for protectionism in the Congress. This was not always the case. In the wake of the Second World War, the American economy surpassed all the other economies in the world. Two-thirds of the world's gold supplies were in American possession, more than half the items manufactured in the world came from American factories, half the world's merchant tonnage was American, and nearly one-half of all world trade involved the United States either as exporter or importer.² This artificial economic dominance gradually fell away in the years after World War II. With European and Japanese rivals no longer digging themselves out from beneath the rubble of their bombed-out cities, our industries have increasingly had to compete with competitors from abroad. In the past decade, whole sectors of the American economy have fallen into economic crisis. The United States' once dominant economic position in steel and automobiles has come under great threat from abroad. The newly developing industries based on computer and information technologies are increasingly becoming the domain of America's economic competitors in Japan. These present-day realities are reflected in *Terminator 2*.

² William Ashworth, *A Short History of the International Economy Since 1850* (London: Longman, Green and Company, 1962), p. 258.

A look at *Terminator 2*'s allegorical content shows that it represents a struggle between declining industries in the United States and the rising high-technology ones of an economically vibrant Japan. In the first *Terminator* movie, the Terminator represents American industrial capitalism during its worst stage -- man mechanized to the point of complete exhaustion and dehumanization. A disastrous wedding of old with new occurs in the body of the Terminator. The old technology of the manufacturing industry is merged with high-technology computer chips and biotechnology as the Terminator's metal skeleton is covered by living tissue. This marriage of "Steel and Flesh" is just as dysfunctional and violence-prone as Bismarck's marriage of "Iron and Rye" was more than a century earlier.³ The Terminator lacks both the morality of humans and the productivity of other machines. Rather, it is a conscienceless cyborg assassin programmed to kill and destroy. It is the worst of both worlds.

This representation was fine for the heyday of Reaganomics when the original movie came out in 1984, but the world is a different place in the 1990s than it was a decade ago. No longer are American corporations perceived as enemies -- not when they themselves are in danger of becoming obsolete. This is the ominous fate confronting the American automobile and steel industries. They presided over the rise in American industrial power and have, in recent years,

³ In the late nineteenth century, Imperial Germany faced a crisis in its economic development: a growing industrial sector called for government protection while the old Junker elite insisted upon a continuation of tariff barriers against cheap foreign wheat. Chancellor Otto von Bismarck helped forge a coalition of these two groups, the famous marriage of "Iron and Rye", which gave both industry and agriculture protection from foreign competitors. Many historians have seen this alliance between the traditional economic elite (the Junkers) and the high-technology industries of that age (steel and chemicals) as a fateful coupling of a modern industrial economy to a pre-modern form of autocratic government -- a combination that would twice visit a continent-wide war upon Europe. For an analysis of the German "revolution from above", see Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Democracy and Dictatorship: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), pp. 436-441, 448.

suffered during its decline. Their slowness in adapting to changing market conditions and the increase in competition from East Asia and Western Europe has led to serious financial reverses. Once-great corporations such as Ford, General Motors, and USX (once United Steel) have all been forced to cut back on jobs when confronted by unfavorable sales.

In the 1990s, Americans are less prone to look upon these industries as cold-hearted and inhuman -- this attitude will not do anymore if Americans want their manufacturers to be successful competitors in international markets. This change in public attitudes brings with it a change in Terminators with the reprogrammed Terminator as a kinder, gentler, domesticated heavy industry: still big and powerful, but losing its competitive edge. It must adjust to a world in which its influence and might are still substantial, but where it is no longer the strongest around. This is Schwarzenegger's second Terminator, the embodiment of America's endangered automobile and steel industries. Even Schwarzenegger's Austrian accent is reminiscent of the accents of the millions of immigrant laborers from South and Central Europe who provided the backbone of America's industrial development in such cities as New York, Chicago, and Detroit -- cities hard-hit by recent economic woes.

This rewired Terminator emphasizes its virtue by swearing an oath barring it from killing anyone. Immediately after taking this oath, the Terminator shows that it can succinctly articulate its ability to wreak havoc while living up to its pledge when it declares "he'll live" after shooting a prison guard in the kneecap. Later, when surrounded by police, the Terminator destroys all their vehicles while assuring viewers that there are no human casualties. Whereas the Terminator killed

everyone in an entire police station in the first movie, the reprogrammed Terminator makes sure that all the policemen and women it attacks survive, although the members of the SWAT team it encounters are unfortunate enough to suffer the same incapacitating fate as the prison guard. In the past, the military creations of heavy industry have provided for the deaths of countless millions across the world. Now, in the day of high-technology, the Terminator employs the same hi-tech destructive capability that Pentagon planners would have Americans believe makes conflict a precise activity that can take place on a video screen with little loss of life.

In stark contrast to the economic lethargy that grips many of the United States' traditional industries is Japan's "Economic Miracle". Since the devastations of the Second World War, the Japanese economy has recovered to such an extent that it is now considered the most competitive in the world. Politicians, pundits, and professors have all expended a great amount of rhetorical, analytical, and intellectual energy in their attempts to explain the success of Japan. Many of their explanations can be found in *Terminator 2* where Robert Patrick's evil Terminator personifies the Japanese economy and its alleged threat to America's future economic prosperity.

Some scholars have pointed to Japan's emphasis on advanced technology, superior quality control, and greater efficiency as the keys to her success. Since the late 1940s, major Japanese conglomerates have set about a conscious policy of purchasing new technologies from abroad while at the same time investing heavily in research and development. During the 1950s and 1960s, these massive infusions of capital and foreign technologies allowed Japan to invest in newer and more efficient machinery than was used in the United States and Western Europe. As a

result, Japan is the world-leader in the use of labor-saving robots in industry.⁴ Japanese industry's high-technology, efficiency, and robotic skill are mirrored in the T-1000, a machine so advanced that it relies on a liquid metal alloy for its shape rather than the flesh and blood that covers the older Terminator portrayed by Schwarzenegger (a lowly Model 101). While the Terminator and the T-1000 are both impervious to bullets, Patrick's Terminator is physically stronger than the less advanced Terminator -- a trait which becomes apparent in their first encounter when the T-1000 throws its rival through a concrete wall.

In the past several decades, Japanese industries have proven time and again that they are more adaptable than their American competitors to changing market conditions. This adaptability has enabled Japanese corporations to concentrate resources and skilled personnel in growing industries rather than in those in decline. In Japan, the central government works in conjunction with business to develop long-term goals for a growth-oriented economy.⁵ This relationship has been one of the principle reasons for Japan's recent economic successes. The Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) works hard to provide guidance to Japanese companies about trends in the world economy. It protects infant industries from foreign competition and helps euthanize industries that are no longer competitive.⁶ Its identification of industries essential to Japanese economic prosperity determines which sectors of the economy receive government

⁴ Nicholas Wade, "America's last robot? Once again, Japan targets an industry with a future," *The New York Times*, (September 29, 1990), section A, p. 22; *World Press Review*, "The advent of the 'steel-collar' worker: new techniques bring robot labor to life," 38:2 (February, 1991), p. 30-1; Andrew Tanzer, "Why Japan loves robots and we don't," *Forbes*, (April 16, 1990), pp. 148-54.

⁵ T.J. Pempel, "Japanese Foreign Economic Policy: The Domestic Bases for International Behavior," in *Between Power and Plenty*, ed. by Peter J. Katzenstein (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), pp. 149-151.

⁶ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), pp. 417, 460.

encouragement and which do not. Favored industries receive market assistance, assistance that enables corporations such as Mitsubishi, Toyota, and Hitachi to seize opportunities and capture market share in a wide variety of industries.⁷ Many foreign observers have charged that this form of national capitalism exceeds the bounds of fair competition. They argue that when MITI encourages the formation of cartels it is tilting the economic playing field decisively in favor of Japanese corporations.⁸ SKYNET, the self-aware machine that implements ‘Judgment Day’ in 1996, is a computerized MITI, intent upon global domination and the destruction of the American way of life. SKYNET’s minions are not the industrial conglomerates of modern Japan, rather they are robotic warriors intent upon the destruction of humanity. The T-1000 follows the desires of SKYNET by killing John Connor’s foster parents -- a deadly blow to the American suburban lifestyle.

The belief that Japan is at best extremely adaptable and at worst an economic cheat is reflected in the amazing ability of the T-1000 to alter its shape to fit new environments. Throughout *Terminator 2*, the evil Terminator adopts various forms in order to fulfill its mission. For most of the movie it stalks its prey as a police officer; however, when circumstances change, so does the T-1000, assuming the shape of various people and objects. When it kills, its arms turn into sharp blades reminiscent of samurai swords, delivering deadly blows to unsuspecting

⁷ Jeffrey A. Hart, “The Effects of State-Societal Arrangements on International Competitiveness: Steel, Motor Vehicles and Semiconductors in the United States, Japan and Western Europe,” *British Journal of Political Science*, 22,3 (July, 1992), pp. 139-190.

⁸ For MITI’s role in encouraging cartelization and nursing of new industries, see Chalmers Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925-1975* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1982), 28-34, 224-7, 242-274, 303; W.G. Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), pp. 245-9. For a dark view of MITI and Japanese trade policies, see Clyde V. Prestowitz, Jr., *Trading Places: How We Allowed Japan to Take the Lead* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

suburbanites, policemen, and truckers. It also uses its metamorphosing abilities when fighting to alter its shape and reform in a new position so as to gain a tactical advantage over the older Terminator. Lacking the ability to mutate, Schwarzenegger's Terminator is no match for its high-tech competitor. At other times, the T-1000's deadly adaptability is so extreme that it oversteps the bounds of fair play -- such as when it shapes itself in the forms of both John Connor's mother and his foster mother.

The evil Terminator's mission of performing a post-natal abortion on John Connor (Edward Furlong) before he can rally humanity against the peril posed by machines is the cinematic equivalent of "dumping" -- an illegal trade practice through which a competitor "dumps" its product into a foreign market at below market prices in an attempt to accumulate market share and strangle foreign industries in their infancy. Japan has been frequently accused of dumping computer chips and semiconductors on the American market in order to stifle the development of competitors in the United States.⁹ Killing John Connor in his youth is an attempt to keep a competitor from growing to maturity and challenging the hegemonic pretensions of SKYNET/MITI. The national memory of Pearl Harbor is also unconsciously tapped by the T-1000's "sneak attacks" on all its victims. Some commentators have similarly warned that Japan's trade policies constitute an "economic Pearl Harbor" from which American industry will not be able to recover. Like the American fleet in 1941, none of them realize the danger that they are in until the evil Terminator/Japan strikes.¹⁰

⁹ Prestowitz, pp. 46-51; Lee Iacocca, "Taking Care of Business: The Japanese Must Open Their Markets," *Vital Speeches*, 58:10 (March 1, 1992), pp. 295-299.

¹⁰ Diane Pikunas, "Japan's Economic 'Pearl Harbor' Threatens the United States," *Conservative Review*, 1:7 (November, 1990), pp. 5-9.

Another view held by many Americans concerning the Japanese economy is the belief that the United States has given Japan a “free ride” for the last 45 years.¹¹ They point to the American security umbrella that has protected Japan and enabled her to spend less than one per cent of her GNP on defense while the United States has fought two land wars in Asia, intervened throughout the world on numerous occasions, and kept a standing army of more than 300,000 in Europe for four decades. In addition to protecting Japan from foreign threats, the United States has provided an open market for Japanese goods in America and has preserved a world trade system that keeps cheap raw materials flowing to resource-poor Japan. Recent debates over the rise of Japanese economic strength reveal a strong undercurrent of resentment from Americans who feel that the United States built Japan from the ruins of World War II into an economic giant. Like the machines depicted in *Terminator 2*, Japan is seen by many as having arisen from the atomic ashes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and as having turned on its American benefactor and creator.

Cultural stereotypes can be seen in both Patrick’s portrayal of the T-1000 and the film’s multi-million dollar special effects. In the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, Japan imported much in the way of Western technology in order to industrialize and resist European imperialism. In Europe and the United States, this gave rise to the prejudicial belief that the Japanese borrowed and mimicked their way to success.¹² Japanese industry’s imports of American technologies after the Second World War reinforced this existing stereotype. For many years, Americans looked upon Japanese “borrowing” as a teacher would upon a successful

¹¹ Jim Smith and Mark Oliver, “The Japanese Miracle,” *Machine Design*, 64:7 (April 9, 1992), pp. 35-38.

¹² Beasley, pp. 105-106.

student. However, with increased trading friction, this previously tolerant attitude has become derisive.¹³ In the evil Terminator the viewer sees the ultimate mimic -- a being that cannot come up with an original form, it can only duplicate what it “samples”. The subject sampled is always terminated, a fate confronting several American industries due to fierce Japanese competition.

There is also the belief that Asians are unemotional robots -- mindlessly serving the needs of the whole rather than the desires of the individual. At two points in *Terminator 2*, the T-1000 is shown to be composed of millions of identical entities pursuing a common goal. The first occurs immediately after Sarah Connor’s rescue from the psychiatric institution. As the evil Terminator attempts to board their getaway car, a small piece is shot off one of its bladed arms. When thrown into the road by John Connor, the piece turns into a small glob of liquid metal and is reabsorbed into the T-1000. Later, the T-1000 is frozen by liquid nitrogen and shattered into millions of crystalline pieces. However, heat from nearby molten steel thaws the pieces and they all start accumulating to continue their common mission. In addition, there is the unemotional behavior of the evil Terminator -- unlike Schwarzenegger’s model which learns why humans cry -- which appeals directly to stereotypical views held by many in the Western world about the inscrutability of Asians. At no point in the film does the T-1000 show any sign of emotion. While the older Terminator protects John Connor and occasionally plays with him, the evil Terminator is a workaholic concerned solely with its mission of death.

¹³ John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), pp. 110, 312-314.

Terminator 2 is more than a recount of the slipping American economic power; it also contains a possible solution for America's plight. Several social, economic, and ethnic groups achieve representation through characterization during the course of the film as the heroic trio of the Terminator, John Connor, and Sarah Connor attempt to thwart the designs of the evil Terminator. They manage to form a broad-based and diverse coalition that creates some new relationships between groups and perpetuates several traditional relationships in the struggle against the Japanese onslaught. An alliance between nearly all ethnic sectors of America is necessary to thwart the designs of the evil Terminator. White suburbanites, women, Hispanics, and African-Americans all help in opposing the T-1000 during the course of the film. Is it too much to suggest that they represent a need for a unified America in the face of foreign economic threats?

While the industries of the past struggle to stay competitive in the present, the industries of the future, telecommunications and electronics, struggle as well. John Connor is the symbolic representative of the United States' high-technology future. He seeks financial gain by manipulating computers and automatic teller machines, then uses his ill-gotten gains for hi-tech consumerism -- playing video games. Like the American consumer of the 1980s, he spends his money on gadgetry (video games) that give him little return on his investment. As the evil Terminator approaches, John is driven from the mass consumerism of the video arcade. It is no accident that he first attempts his escape on a motorcycle, a desperate effort to return to the spirit of individualism and solitary effort that marked the development of the United States' industrial economy. The Terminator also rides a motorcycle in the early scenes of the movie, a reminder of

things past. Even the bike's manufacturer contains allegorical importance, for Harley-Davidson is the last American company producing motorcycles. All the others have given way to cheaper and higher-quality imports from Japan. In fact, Harley-Davidson itself had a close brush with corporate extinction in the mid-1980s. It has since recovered market share and become a profitable company again.

In the modern day, the efforts of the lone individual are out-paced by the workings of complex organizations and marketing networks. The innovative idea of the American entrepreneur only succeeds when harnessed to the productive power of the anti-individualistic assembly line. In *Terminator 2*, the day of the individual is forever gone. Saved by Schwarzenegger on his individualistic Harley-Davidson, John and the old Terminator soon abandon the individuality of motorcycles and move into a car, a vehicle capable of handling a group. In contrast, the T-1000 moves onto a motorcycle and later a helicopter, showing that it takes over products and industries in which Americans are no longer competitive.¹⁴

The leading role of advanced technology industries in the future economy is replicated in the Terminator's programming which puts him at John's command -- the interests of the future predominate over the interests of the past. John uses his control of the Terminator to impose his post-modern value system on the machine. John, like the American public, has grown tired of the

¹⁴ While the aircraft industry has not fallen under the sway of Japanese industry, MITI has targetted aerospace as one of three industries that an advanced 21st century company should have; there is also the case of the conflict between the U.S. and Japan over the 'co-development' of the FSX fighter that has led many to charge that Japan is gaining access to American aircraft technology. For these, see Prestowitz, p. 138, fn.17; John Harbison, "Taking Japan Seriously in Aero," *The New York Times*, (June 25, 1989), section F, p. 3; and Michael Mastanduno, "Do Relative Gains Matter? America's Response to Japanese Industrial Policy," *International Security*, 16:1 (Summer, 1991), pp. 84-93.

days when war brought great suffering and destruction upon millions of people. His desire to avoid the hard reality that the Terminator represents leads him to force the no-violence pledge on the unwilling machine. The limits of his commands are soon revealed for the Terminator now disables people by shooting them in the knees rather than killing them. While death is avoided, pain and suffering continue even under the most enlightened rules.

In *Terminator 2*'s new world order, women occupy an ambiguous place. Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) begins the movie imprisoned against her will in a mental institute, aptly representing the psychological imprisonment many women feel in today's society. Her efforts to liberate herself from the restrictions and sexual violations of the psychiatric prison are thwarted by doctors and nurses who see her as something less than a "model citizen". Sarah does manage to escape and is on her way to freedom when she collides with the Terminator. Under the instructions of John Connor, the Terminator has gone to Sarah Connor's rescue -- corresponding to the influence of civil rights legislation in encouraging industries to hire more women, thus giving them greater economic power. It is note-worthy that Sarah began her escape through her own efforts, just as women in the United States began their quest for economic and social liberation without the help of established institutions.

Resistance to participation by women still continues in many sectors of American life. The Terminator's reluctance to help free Sarah from the mental asylum reflects the U.S. military's reluctance to allow women into combat. Thus, the Terminator declares that Sarah's liberation is "not a mission priority" when John suggests they rescue her and allow her to take part in the

upcoming conflict. This suggests that *Terminator 2* seeks a new position for women in society, one in which they are now allowed to enter the combative world of men both in the military and economic realms. Sarah fulfills both roles admirably being a warrior and a supporter of the dual economic system represented by John and the Terminator. However, as can be seen, this does not always have positive implications for either women or other historically oppressed peoples.

The same civil rights legislation that has increased women's opportunities has also put women's groups at odds with African-American groups and has led to competition between women and minorities in the workplace. In a violent rendition of the economic conflict between white women and black men that recent civil rights legislation has fostered, Sarah attacks Miles Dyson (an African-American computer scientist) in his home. After this encounter, John and the Terminator arrive at Dyson's house in an effort to stop Sarah. While she is allowed to take part in combat, it has to be against targets approved by John and the Terminator. Her subordination to their goals is reinforced after the Terminator explains to Dyson the consequences of developing the SKYNET microchip. At this point the following exchange takes place:

SARAH: Men like you built the hydrogen bomb. Men like you thought it up. You think you're so creative. You don't know what it's like to really create anything, to create life, to feel it growing inside you. All you know how to create is death and destruction...

JOHN: Mom! We need to be a little more constructive here....

Sarah's attempt to express her own opinion and issue a ringing indictment of the "death and destruction" that Dyson creates and the Terminator delivers is interrupted by her son. Their dialogue is a close reflection of a debate that has been simmering among many feminists in the scientific community over the the relation of women to science. One school argues that the world-

view of women is more personal and less 'objective' than that of men and that a female value system for science will do away with the sort of 'bad science' that is represented by atomic warfare and the Terminator.¹⁵ The flipside of this view is that the world-view of women, while value-filled, also has the disadvantage of making them unobjective and irrational. This is John Connor's counter to his mother's attempt to put forth a new ideology. She is silenced and the ideological dominance of "the patriarchy" in American society continues.

The future status of African-Americans as presented by *Terminator 2* is also less than optimal. The representative of African-Americans is Miles Dyson, the creator of the microchip that forms the basis for SKYNET. His character represents two contradictory trends in American life. The first is the promise of material prosperity and economic wealth that the "American Dream" offers. This is shown in Dyson's clear technical competence and his spacious suburban house complete with swimming pool and personal computer. All this is ruined by Sarah Connor's attack, from which Dyson barely escapes death. However, Dyson only temporarily avoids death as he is enlisted by John Connor and the Terminator to assist them in their attempt to recover the SKYNET microchip and defeat their computer enemy.

Miles Dyson is not the most willing of recruits for this enterprise. This reveals the second American trend he represents -- the economic and social subordination of African-Americans to a predominantly white and male society. After violently destroying Dyson's home, he is "drafted"

¹⁵ Evelyn Fox Keller, "How gender matters, or, why it's so hard for us to count past two," in *Inventing Women: Science, Technology, and Gender*, ed. by Gill Kirkup and Laurie Smith Keller, (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 42-56; Joan Rothschild, ed., *Machina Ex Dea: Feminist Perspectives on Technology* (New York: Viking Press, 1983).

into the fight against SKYNET. In this, he resembles the hundreds of thousands of black soldiers who are recruited into the American armed forces through a so-called “poverty draft” of the poorest and most economically disadvantaged members of society. It is not a coincidence that Dyson is the only one killed in the ensuing battle -- just as African-Americans suffered a disproportionate number of casualties in America’s wars in East Asia and the Persian Gulf, so, too, do black Americans in *Terminator 2*.¹⁶

The role of Hispanics in the struggle with Japan is not overlooked by *Terminator 2*. Sarah leads the Terminator and John south where they encounter Enrique Saiceda. They are not welcomed with open arms as Sarah uncertainly leaves the car with her gun drawn. Enrique, too, is nervous about the encounter as he hides and reveals himself by leaping out with a shotgun aimed at Sarah. Like many in Central America, Enrique does not welcome the arrival of the North Americans. He remembers the past and recalls that it was not pleasant.

However, Sarah and her American cohorts have a geopolitical mission to fulfill. Prior to entering each of the world wars of this century, the United States sought to pacify the Western Hemisphere. Faced with a German threat from across the seas, the United States sought order in its own hemisphere and asserted its political and economic power to secure the allegiance of the South and Central American republics. In the 1910s, this entailed military interventions in Panama, Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and several other nations in the hemisphere. These

¹⁶ Margaret Lowe Benston, “Women’s voices/men’s voices: technology as language,” in *Inventing Women: Science, Technology, and Gender*, ed. by Gill Kirkup and Laurie Smith Keller, (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1992), p. 33. Clearly many essays could be written on the role of women and African-Americans in *Terminator 2*; however, that task is beyond the scope of this essay.

occupations have made the people of Latin America particularly wary about the presence of American marines near their nations. In the years between 1939 and 1941, the Roosevelt Administration used policies different from the ones that had been used 25 years earlier. Rather than sending in the military to prop up pro-American regimes, the decision was made to practice a form of hemispheric appeasement. American commercial interests were subordinated to national security -- the United States did not want to be distracted from its goal of stopping Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. In the Cold War era, direct interventions on the Central American mainland were put aside in favor of military aid to friendly regimes and subversion of unfriendly ones.

In the 1990s, the United States has triumphed in the Cold War, but now looks to a future where economic might will carry more weight. *Terminator 2* duplicates the attempt by the Bush Administration to reach a free trade agreement with Mexico in Sarah's effort to obtain goods from Enrique and his family. Enrique is understandably a bit upset at his continued subordination to the desires of Sarah and her friends. He is forced to accept this new economic arrangement for the same reasons that Latin Americans accept their political and economic relationship with the United States -- they have few other options. All Latin Americans are aware of the ostracism that Cuba has labored under for more than thirty years and the decade of civil war that resulted in Nicaragua when the Sandinista government refused to accept American regional domination. The fate of Grenada and Panama is an equally graphic reminder of the costs the United States can impose on those nations in the Caribbean basin that defy American wishes. There is also a realization that acceptance of the American system can bring certain benefits in the form of a promising ideology

and ideals that, while not often lived up to, promise a better way of life in the future. The call of “coca colonization” is at once both threatening and inviting; it is a call that Latin Americans both praise and condemn.¹⁷ In the present trade negotiations with Mexico, it is apparent that Mexicans would like to have access to the consumerism of America but also fear the threat that consumerism presents to their own culture.¹⁸ Enrique realizes the advantages and disadvantages of his situation and is ultimately forced to acquiesce to the new “New World” Order that Sarah Connor demands.

This new “New World” Order is modeled in several important ways after the American relationship with East Asia and Japan. Operating under American regional hegemony, the United States, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have developed relationships with each other that are almost ideal reflections of the product cycle. Each nation is arranged in a hierarchical relationship that allows for the development of new products in the core nation and the manufacturing of older products in semi-peripheral and later peripheral countries. As the production of new products passes the mature phase of the cycle, the core nation allows other nations to take advantage of their supply of relatively cheap labor to start producing. Manufacturing in the core country then moves on to new and better products.¹⁹ This system worked admirably for the first few post-war decades as the Japanese moved into and out of textiles, passing the task along to the South Koreans in the 1960s (who are now passing it along to the Chinese in the 1990s). Automobile manufacturing also

¹⁷ Lester D. Langley, “Anti-Americanism in Central America,” in *The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 497, *Anti-Americanism: Origins and Context*, ed. by Richard D. Lambert, (May 1988), pp. 77-88.

¹⁸ Tim Golden, “In Free Trade, Mexico Sees an Economy in U.S. Image,” *The New York Times*, (July 23, 1992), section A, p. 1; *Ibid*, section D, p. 8.

¹⁹ James R. Kurth, “The political consequences of the product cycle: industrial history and political outcomes,” *International Organization*, 33:1 (Winter, 1979), pp. 1-34; Raymond Vernon, *Sovereignty at Bay: The Multinational Spread of U.S. Enterprises* (New York: Basic Books, 1971), ch. 3.

reached its mature phase in the U.S. and was passed along to Japan. Here, problems arose as American industry refused to move out of automobiles to newer and more profitable tasks. Detroit has not become a center of microprocessor manufacturing; rather, it has stagnated and stayed in the business of making cars. The United States has failed to live up to its end of the transpacific bargain and economic conflict has resulted.²⁰

To make up for this short-coming and to rally the economic might of the continent, *Terminator 2* moves into the southern desert to arrange an agreement between the forces of American industry and Latin America. While American trade negotiators have a difficult job of compromising on the protection of certain industries and the free flow of goods in others, Sarah Connor is under no such constraints:

SARAH: I just came for my stuff. I need clothes, food, and one of your trucks.

ENRIQUE: Hey! How about the fillings out of my fucking teeth...

SARAH: *Now*, Enrique.

She mirrors the American demands for cheap agricultural products, cheap textiles, and a certain amount of heavy industry. These three items are also the three lowest steps on the stairs of industrialization. While production of these low value-added goods is allowed to “trickle down” south of the Rio Grande, industry in the United States will concentrate on the high value-added products of the present and the leading technologies of the future. This is the goal of economic policy-makers in Washington and it is the goal of the American representatives in *Terminator 2*.

²⁰ Bruce Cumings, “The origins and development of the Northeast Asian political economy: industrial sectors, product cycles, and political consequences,” *International Organization*, 38:1 (Winter, 1984), pp. 4-8.

In the final events of *Terminator 2* can be seen an outline for a final confrontation between America and Japan. After all the movie's Japan-bashing and promotion of American industry, the best that it can come up with for an ending is one of violence and destruction -- of both the representative of Japan's economic miracle and the embodiment of the industries that made America great. If this is to be the final judgment on the United States's future, it certainly doesn't reflect well on the views, attitudes, and values of present-day Americans.

(Article: October 1994)

Addendum: Supporting Evidence

After the publication of this article, I became aware of a Special Edition videotape of *Terminator 2* sold by Carolco Home Video, part of director James Cameron's multimedia empire. The Special Edition contained scenes that were filmed but ultimately edited out of the theatrical release. One of these "missing" scenes provides additional support for my thesis that *Terminator 2* has a political message; indeed, it could indicate that the allegories might not be as unconscious as I originally suggested in 1994. The ending of the Special Edition is from an alternate future set in the late 2020's. It takes place on the Mall in Washington, DC, with the Capital building in the background. Older versions of John and Sarah Connor play with children in a playground while Sarah Connor provides a concluding narrative to the movie. She explains that because of the destruction of the Terminators, a nuclear holocaust did not occur. As part of this explanation, she mentions what her son does in the alternative future:

SARAH: John fights the war differently than it was foretold. Here, on the battlefield of the Senate, his weapons are common sense and hope.

John Connor, it seems, has become a politician. Was he part of a political allegory all along?

(Addendum: December 1999)

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