

POL SC HELP
FYUGP Series

Perspectives on Colonialism

(Liberalism, Marxism,
Postcolonialism)

NEW FYUGP SYLLABUS

BA HONS. POLITICAL SCIENCE 1ST SEMESTER-2022-23



DSC 3: Colonialism and Nationalism in India

Unit 1. Colonialism and Nationalism:

- Main perspectives on colonialism: Liberalism, Marxism, Postcolonialism
- Approaches to the study of nationalism in India: Nationalist, Imperialist, Marxist, and Subaltern

Unit 2. Colonial Rule in India and its impact:

- Constitutional developments and the colonial state
- Colonial ideology of civilizing mission: Utilitarians and Missionaries
- Impact on agriculture, land relations, industry and ecology

Unit 3. Reform and Resistance:

- The 1857 war of Independence
- Major social and religious movements
- Education and the rise of the new middle class

Unit 4. Nationalist Politics and Expansion of its Social Base

- Phases of the Nationalist Movement: Liberal constitutionalist, Swadeshi and the Radicals, Formation of the Muslim League



Colonialism: Definitions & Meaning

- The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically. (<https://www.lexico.com>)
- **Colonialism** is the practice by which a powerful country **directly** controls less powerful countries and uses their resources to increase its own power and wealth. (*Collins Dictionary*)
- Colonialism is a practice of **domination**, which involves the **subjugation** of one people to another. (*Oxford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*)
- a policy or system in which a country controls another country or area. (*Cambridge English Dictionary*)
- Colonialism is the extension of a nation's rule over territory beyond their borders. Colonizing countries usually control and exploit the resources, labour and markets of the colonized.
- Colonialism is a relationship between an indigenous majority and a minority of foreign invaders. The fundamental decisions affecting the lives of the colonized people are made and implemented by the colonial rulers in pursuit of interests that are often defined in a distant metropolis. Rejecting cultural compromises with the colonized population, the colonizers are convinced of their own superiority and their ordained mandate to rule. (*Jürgen Osterhammel's Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview ; taken from Wikipedia*)



Colonialism and Imperialism

- Both are related but slightly different concepts
- **Colonialism**, originating from the Latin word colonus, meaning farmer, denote transfer of population to a new territory, where they live permanently while maintaining political allegiance to their country of origin
- **Imperialism**, originated from Latin term imperium, meaning to command, denotes the way that one country exercises power over another. It may be through settlement or indirect mechanisms of domination and control.
- Thus, practice of colonialism is driven by the ideology of Imperialism. Colonialism is one of the methods of Imperialism
- All colonialism is Imperialism, but all Imperialism is not colonialism
- Neo-colonialism and Imperialism: Left/Marxist ideology treats global capitalism led by free trade, and free market as form of modern colonialism and Imperialism (refer to Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* and Kwame Nkrumah's *Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of imperialism*)



Theoretical Perspectives

Liberal, Marxist, Post-Colonial



Liberal Perspective on Colonialism-1/2

- **Contradictory approach**

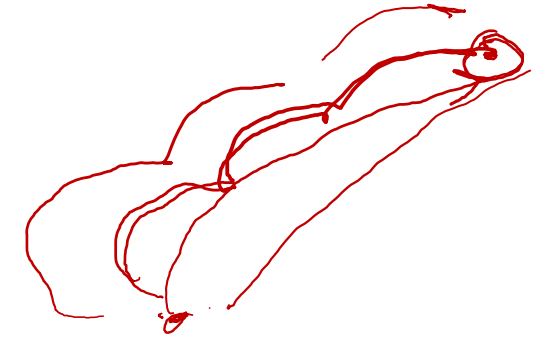
- Great Enlightenment thinkers of equality, justice defended in-egalitarian and exploitative colonialism
- condemned racism and misuse of political power, but endorsed economic exploitation and cultural superiority.
- insisted on protection of the material interests of the colonial subjects, but thought little of destroying their ways of life
- egalitarian interpersonal morality and an in-egalitarian political and international morality
- Rooted to individual autonomy, self-governance, humanism, equality and equal worth of each human life, tolerance, egalitarianism, it nevertheless supported colonialism on thinly based assumptions of universal human nature, laws of nation, contingent views on culture, history of human progress, wastage principle, etc.

- **“Civilizing Mission”:**

- Universal human nature: humans as part of same species have same natural faculty, express themselves in similar ways, and hence entire human civilisation is one unbreakable chain
- Part of humanity, living in remote places, progressed less; those who became more developed have moral obligation to handhold their undeveloped brethren
- a temporary period of political dependence or handholding was necessary in order for “uncivilized” societies to advance to the point where they were capable of sustaining liberal institutions and self-government.
- Pulling “uncivilized” societies towards civilization./modernization was white man's burden
- Ideological effort to appropriate history as a means of establishing cultural hegemony and legitimizing British rule over India



Liberal Perspective on Colonialism-2/2



- **Utilitarianism:**

- Act of colonization is morally good as it increases net pleasure

- **Laws of nation:**

- People of colonies were not a sovereign political community, hence laws of nation was not applicable to them
- Interpersonal relations between all men were subject to the laws of nature, international relations were subject to laws of nation

- **Wastage principle:**

- Lockean principle that humans have God imposed duty to maximize the conveniences of life by best utilization of natural resources
- people of colonies were wasting natural resources(not utilizing in best way); hence, colonizing people were justified in best utilization and improvement of natural resources of the colonies.

- **Historical progression of civilization**

- The idea that civilization is the culmination of a process of historical development, in which some part of the humanity are left behind and they need to be shown path and pulled up.

- **Social Darwinist Approach-**

- if history is a struggle between various peoples and cultures, akin to the struggle among the species, Britain having come to the top could be ipso facto legitimately considered to be superior and as the fittest to rule.

- **Main proponents:** Franciscus de Victoria, John Locke, James Mill, JS Mill, Herbert Spencer



Pros & Cons of the Liberal Perspective

Pros

- Moral protection to natives
- Attempted elaborate theoretical justifications
- Established modern liberal institutions and trained natives for self-governance
- condemned racist prejudices and misuse of political power in the colonies
- protection of the material interests of the colonial subjects,

Cons

- Contradictory- both in theory & practice
- endorsed economic exploitation and cultural superiority
- Destroyed language, culture, and way of life of natives
- Eurocentric, Ethnocentric, and patronizing Approach
- Not free of violence and ills of racism, subjugation, hegemony



Marxist Perspective on Colonialism-1/3

- Views colonialism and imperialism as distinctive features of capitalism;
- expansion is inherent and inbuilt in capitalism (due to overproduction and under-consumption)- Marx (*The Communist Manifesto, Grundrisse, and Capital*)
 - Colonies were required for capitalist expansion; colonies provided cheap labour, natural resources, and new market
- Marx declared India as stagnant society where Oriental despotism(coined by Karl Wittfogel) denoted specific type of class domination; he termed Indian economic structure as 'Asiatic Mode of Production'
- To him, India was going through painful process of modernization under British colonization
- Thus, to Marx, colonialism as a progressive force, though exploitative, bringing modernization to a backward feudal society
- Thus, Marx's views on British Colonization in India has three dimensions
 - 1.an account of the progressive character of colonial rule,
 - 2.a critique of the human suffering involved,
 3. a concluding argument that colonial rule must be temporary if the progressive potential is to be realized.



Marxist Perspective on Colonialism-2/3

- Lenin(in his book Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism) argued that imperialism was driven by the economic logic of late-capitalism
- Imperialism was a technique which allowed European countries to avoid proletarian revolution by sucking wealth from colonized nations to pacify labour class at home.
- However, Marx and Lenin saw capitalism as a progressive, though exploitative, force for development of peripheral/colonies
- Thus, Marxism viewed colonialism and imperialism as interplay of class struggle and capitalism at global level
- Capitalist class of the colonizers collided with capitalist class of the colonies to exploit/subjugate the labour class of the colonies
- Linked anti-colonial struggle to struggle against capitalism



Marxist Perspective on Colonialism-3/3

- **Neo-Marxism and the Dependency theory**
- **Kautsky's views**
 - Imperialism won't lead to the development of the areas subjected to economic exploitation. Imperialism is a relatively permanent relationship structuring the interactions between two types of countries.
 - Although imperialism initially took the form of military competition between capitalist countries, it would result in collusion between capitalist interests to maintain a stable system of exploitation of the non-developed world
- **Wallenstein World System Theory**
 - Capitalist structure of global economic system
 - Core & Periphery
 - Unequal exchange between the core and periphery
- **Andre Gunder Frank's : Development of underdevelopment**
 - Seemingly developed regions with a underdeveloped nation are satellites of the 'Core' or dominant economic powers/regions
 - Such development is not autonomous, self-generating, sustainable, and equitable. Actually, it is development of underdevelopment!
- **Proponents** : Marx, Lenin (Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism), Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Kautsky, and Nikolai Bukharin, and all dependency thinkers (Raul Prebisch, Cardoso, Dos Santos, AG Frank, Wallerstein)



Pros & Cons of the Marxist Perspective

Pros

- Using the class lens, revealed the economic motive of colonisation
- Busted the liberal theories of 'civilisation mission' and other moral grounds for colonialism
- By linking colonialism to global capitalist structure, gave permanency to anti-imperial thoughts
- Influenced Dependency theories, post-colonial, and sub-altern perspectives

Cons

- Excess focus on economic aspects, undermined other aspects
- Seemed to defend colonialism as modernizing force
- Faulty depiction of Indian society as stagnant and under oriental despotism
- Could not resolve the colonial question- anti colonial movements led by the bourgeoisie class



Post-Colonial Perspective on Colonialism-1/2

- Postcolonialism denotes both
 - 1. the historical period or state of affairs of the nation-states(post-colonial states) which were under Western colonialism
 - 2. Intellectual project to reclaim and rethink the history and agency of people subordinated under various forms of colonialism/imperialism.
- Postcolonialism attempts to explain the impact of colonialism from the view points of the colonized people
- Post colonial thinkers reveals psychological and cultural aspects of colonialism
- Edward Said(in his book *Orientalism*) revealed real motives behind production of knowledge about the oriental societies by the western thinkers which was to depict oriental culture as backward and inferior in comparison to the western culture.
- Post colonial thinkers used Foucault's discursive analysis to show the knowledge power Nexus in built into colonialism.



Post-Colonial Perspective on Colonialism-2/2

- Franz fanon(The Wretched of the Earth; Black Skin, White Masks) analyzed the deep effects of racism and colonialism on the experiences, lives, minds and relationships of colonized people
- He revealed the psychopathology of colonization- how psyche of entire people of colonies were sickened by colonilaism
- Gayatri Spivak(Can the Subaltern Speak) contended that lived experience of the sub-alterns cannot be interpreted within the knowledge system established through colonial rule
- Post-colonialism is critical to both Liberal and Marxist perspectives on colonialism
- It opposes materialist, rationalist, and progressive perspectives on colonialism
- It contend the liberal assumption of universal human nature and hierarchy of culture; it also criticizes the overtly materialistic and economic focus of Marxism while explaining coloniztaion



Pros & Cons of the Post-Colonial Perspective

Pros

- Gave a 3rd way, different from both liberalism and Marxism, to analyse colonialism
- Explained psychological and cultural aspects of colonialism
- Tried to centrally place the views of colonised people
- Argued for contingent human nature and equal respect/recognition of different cultures
- Recreated colonial history by writing 'history from below' and 'sub-altern' perspective
- Ideological confusion- floated between neo-Marxism and post-structuralism
- Different theoretical apparatus for explaining colonialism and de-colonization
- Post-colonialism inherently denotes sense of history- leading it to rely on a progressive understanding of history
- Uniform treatment of very different forms of colonialism at different places
- By taking anti-elitist view, it became critical to national independence movements led by the Bourgeoise class



In Sum

- Liberalism, though believing in equality and universal humanism, labouriously defended colonialism tenuous grounds of 1. Lockean Property theory 2. Cultural Hierarchy 3. Laws of Nation
- Liberalism viewed colonialism as 'Civilisation Mission'
- Marxism viewed colonialism as natural outcome of inherent expansionist tendencies of capitalism
- It linked colonialism/imperialism to global capitalist structure
- Post-colonial thinkers explained psychological and cultural aspects of colonialism
- It analysed devastating impacts of colonialism from the viewpoints of the colonial people



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- Pol Sc Help videos on Colonialism



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