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The Subaltern Kashmiri: Exploring Alternative Approaches in the Analysis of Secession

Dustie Spencer

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The Subaltern Studies group re-visited historiography in an approach that sought to extend voices to the voiceless actors in South Asian history: the peasants, insurgents, women, and others seen as subjugated by elitist, colonialist discourses through the re-evaluation of texts, documents, and alternative sources. Although an alternative, theoretical framework has been adopted by the disciplines of history and anthropology, the political sciences tend to operate on a top-down approach and do not adequately incorporate subaltern voices. Using the secessionist movement in Kashmir as a case study, this essay aims to explore the concept of subalternity and how it may be incorporated as an alternative perspective in which to analyse, interpret, and find solutions to contemporary internecine conflicts, useful to academics and policymakers.

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The Subaltern Kashmiri: Exploring Alternative Approaches in the Analysis of Secession

by Dustie Spencer
MRes Programme South Asian Studies

Abstract

The Subaltern Studies group re-visited historiography in an approach that sought to extend voices to the voiceless actors in South Asian history: the peasants, insurgents, women, and others seen as subjugated by elitist, colonialist discourses through the re-evaluation of texts, documents, and alternative sources. Although an alternative, theoretical framework has been adopted by the disciplines of history and anthropology, the political sciences tend to operate on a top-down approach and do not adequately incorporate subaltern voices. Using the secessionist movement in Kashmir as a case study, this essay aims to explore the concept of subalternity and how it may be incorporated as an alternative perspective in which to analyse, interpret, and find solutions to contemporary internecine conflicts, useful to academics and policymakers.

The Subaltern Kashmiri: Exploring Alternative Approaches in the Analysis of Secession

Dustie Spencer

Introduction

The Kashmir dispute has been widely regarded as the most serious impasse in India-Pakistan relations since the birth of the two countries, after the British withdrew from the subcontinent in 1947. Yet even before then, Kashmiri Muslims had begun to forge an identity based largely on perceived oppression by the less populous Hindu Dogras (Zutshi, 2004). After independence and several subsequent wars, the *de facto* border, the Line of Control (LoC) was demarcated between Indian-Administered (IAK) and Pakistan-Administered (PAK) Jammu and Kashmir. At this time, Kashmiris comprised the majority of the Kashmir Valley in IAK, which will be the focus of this discussion. For generations, Kashmiris have been fighting for greater autonomy and more freedom from their perceived oppressors in modern times: the Indian Union Government. Although given a significant amount of autonomy constitutionally through Article 370, the State of Jammu and Kashmir has a history of New Delhi meddling in its internal affairs, rigging elections, and has been accused of being passive on human rights' abuses perpetrated by Indian security forces, especially in the Kashmir Valley. As Cockell suggests, this sense of collective persecution has led to a growing ethno-nationalist subaltern identity (2000). This Kashmiri identity, or *Kashmiriyat*, it is argued, is one of the primary motivations for politically mobilizing Kashmiris (Dasgupta, 2005, p240). It could follow then, that this subaltern identification has led to several generations of Kashmiris calling for greater autonomy, or outright independence from India.

The Kashmir separatist movement has come in and out of the limelight over the years, but has never left the interested academic bored with new theories or methodologies through which to analyse the ongoing conflict. In the tradition of realism, Kashmir has been analysed in terms of an Indo-Pakistan conflict; one which has gained international attention as being the first big test – and subsequent failure – of the United Nations (Schaffer, 2009, p17). Although Schaffer and others offer a concise account of political negotiations and events relating to the conflict, they fall short of offering a truly Kashmiri perspective. The political sciences and international relations remain saturated by scholars that undertake a more neo-realist or neo-liberalist evaluation of the conflict. Paul (2005), for example, claims that the conflict is more of an 'enduring rivalry' between India and Pakistan, rather than an intractable, intra-state conflict. The truth is that the Kashmir conflict is both an 'old war' as well as a 'new war', and therefore needs to be evaluated with an approach reflecting the dynamics of ground realities. Whereas the paradigmatic theories and methodologies historians have deployed to analyse historical events and discourses have evolved to incorporate a greater comprehension of subaltern actors, international relations theorists have largely been reticent to follow suit. Likewise, Subaltern Studies as a means to study *history* from below fails to reflect contemporary situations where the modern subalterns are underrepresented. Rather than scrapping Subaltern Studies as a passing fad, this essay argues that a subaltern approach can be most useful as a means to study *politics* from below. Being a disputed territory in South Asia and also a seemingly intractable conflict, Kashmir is a prime case for which to study the subaltern element within the context of a grander international relations theory.

Subaltern Studies and its Critics

South Asian and Orientalist studies at large, as posited by scholars such as Edward Said, have been formulated by a Western, imperialist interpretation of history that unjustly removes the agency of the subjected 'Other' through the dominant forces of colonialism. As a departure from elitist and colonial discourse, Marxist scholars such as Antonio Gramsci set the precedent for the Subaltern Studies discipline, which seeks to apply a revisionist historiography, giving voice and agency back to the subjugated masses and peasants. Viewing history through this alternative lens is what gave birth to the discipline of Subaltern Studies. Although the discipline has had much debate among members of its core group and has adopted a variety of methodologies and theoretical frameworks that has given it a certain mutability that makes it relevant today, As Chatterjee (2012) suggests, the discipline is in need of a revision that can adapt to a more modern paradigm that places it appropriately in contemporary India. Analyses of contemporary collective mobilization movements have been sparsely contextualized through the lens of the subaltern, but just after the Kashmiri insurgency of the 1990s had died down, Cockell (2000) attempted to do just that. In the inter-disciplinary domain of international relations, the inclusion of such theoretical frameworks as subaltern identity as an alternative perspective for evaluating modern conflicts can widen the narrow scope of neo-realism and neo-liberalism which have been status quo theories (Ayoob, 2002, p28).

Gyan Prakesh, part of the editorial group of the Subaltern Studies collective, states that the notion of the subaltern is:

drawn from Antonio Gramsci's writings [and] refers to subordination in terms of class, caste, gender, race, language, and culture and was used to signify the centrality of dominant/dominated relationships in history (1994:1477).

Gramsci, a Marxist imprisoned under the fascist regime of Mussolini, developed theories of cultural hegemony and subaltern identity, which later impacted a multitude of scholars and disciplines. The basic principles of the Subaltern project was based on the rejection of the predominate discourses of nationalism and elite bias in previous historical writing, Marxist notions of modernity as 'progress,' and the colonialist or imperialist doctrine that removes agency from the non-elites. Essentially, the Subaltern Study group's aim was to "restore history to the subordinated" (Prakesh, 1994, p1477). Furthermore, the approach was a departure from 'empirically' evaluating the peasant rebel as a "member of a class, but not as an entity whose will and reason constituted the praxis called rebellion" (Prakesh, 1994, p.1478). Works such as Guha's 1983 book *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency* were primarily aimed at a more comprehensive understanding of the Indian peasantry under British colonialism. Other essays in the *Subaltern Studies* collection have grown to include the subaltern 'untouchable' castes, religious minorities, and women. In addition to Guha's vague use of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* that describes the subaltern as someone of 'inferior rank,' he continues to suggest that the subaltern is 'a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way' (1988, p35). Although one cannot deny the putative political correctness of this definition, it is largely ambivalent and highly subjective. There has been much debate over who exactly can be classified as a subaltern. As stated earlier in this essay, Spivak argues that although there is not a singular homogenous subaltern, there are groups that a subaltern can fit into, albeit with some fluidity and ability for mobility into other categories (1988, p284). Bayly also raises the questions of who was actually considered to be a subaltern, and goes so far as to criticize Subaltern Studies for marginalizing those that don't fit neatly into the 'peasant' category (Bayly, 2008, p116).

Taking an interpretivist stance, who counts as a contemporary subaltern is largely a matter of perception. The implication is that academics and policymakers are in need of identifying the subaltern in conflict situations so as not to overlook these important actors and stakeholders in the process of conflict transformation and resolution.

As of Bayly's review of the first five volumes of *Subaltern Studies*, he noted that "The subaltern authors have not yet deployed a mass of new statistical material and indigenous records nor have they made much use of the techniques of oral history to supplement the colonial documentation" (1988, p111). In defence of this, however, the sheer difficulty of locating sources outside of those in colonial documentation is highlighted by the fact that "Indian peasants had left no sources, no documents from which their own 'voice' could be retrieved" (Prakesh, 1994, p1480). Chatterjee does, however, recognize the lack of sources that could have been integrated had there been more methodological rigor in the implementation. Because the historical transition from empirical inquiry to the inclusion of pragmatic ethnography had been slowly shifted into the foreground by Subaltern Studies, this may advent the inclusion of visual and popular culture sources (2012, p48). Despite the need for a revision of the Subaltern Studies discipline, Chatterjee only passively mentions how future historians of South Asia can progress the discipline by utilizing the "...panoply of modern technologies of communication..." (2012, p49). Indeed, in much discourse on the use of cyberpolitics, it would seem that Subaltern Studies could benefit greatly through the excavation of internet resources where many voiceless actors are granted a voice in the new mediums available. A critique raised of politics in general – and in the case of Kashmir studies in particular – is that political scientists tend to avoid ethnographic methods, even as a complementary tool. As a tool in general, it can provide the links of micro-scale ground realities to grander themes of power politics (Bayard de Volo & Schatz, 2004). In the case of Kashmir, ethnographic methods can be utilized to engage with the subaltern actors, often under-served in Kashmir discourses. It is through the exploration of alternative, more progressive methodologies that the researcher may 'hear' the voice of the subaltern.

Another predominate criticism of Subaltern Studies is the binary logics of 'elites' and 'non-elites.' Ludden describes this dichotomous barrier as a "concrete slab separating upper and lower space in a two storey building" (2001, p10). He further notes how this "hard dichotomy alienated subalternity from social histories that included more than two storeys or which move among them" (ibid.). This essentialising of the categories echoes the critics of the Marxist distinction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie which does not take into account class mobility. However, Spivak defends this criticism by suggesting that Guha proposed a 'dynamic stratification grid' which refutes the essentializing or the bifurcation of categories, instead insisting on the heterogeneity of the categories (1988, p284). Chatterjee also addresses the issue of this dichotomy by suggesting that subalternity needs to be re-defined in a modern era where there is a more complex 'framework of democratic citizenship' (2012, p46).

The Subaltern Kashmiri

A dominant theme of Subaltern Studies is the idea that a subaltern identity may be shaped in some way by a shared collective consciousness or identity, whereby heterogeneous subaltern groups have a consistently "unchanging character: that is, the notion of resistance to the imposed domination of the elite class" (Louai, 2001, p6). Spivak and Guha both discuss the idea that there is a subaltern consciousness of sorts. Despite the acknowledgement that these are not simple binary 'us' versus

'them' logics and that there are no dynamics that essentialize the non-elites as subalterns, group identity as a social and political construct is not denied. Indeed, as Guha and others re-visit the peasant rebel or insurgent as a collection of subalterns, Cockell (2000, p321) describes the Kashmiri subaltern identity as a collective consciousness borne of "the historical experience of discrimination and exclusion [which] serves to heighten the shared perception of a core commonality and shared values which may serve as the foundation for collective action..." This collective consciousness is identifiable by the common call for *azadi*, or freedom, in Kashmir. Elsewhere in South Asia, sub-national movements may also reflect a collective, subaltern consciousness and share similarities to the nationalist movements and revolts against Great Britain (Mitra, 1996, p14).

Cockell affirms that in the case of Kashmir, the collective Kashmir identity is a subaltern identity because of the Kashmiri's inferior political relationship with the dominant political institution (2000, p332). Writing in the aftermath of the full-scale insurgency in Kashmir, he suggests that Kashmiris have asserted an "autonomous insurgent consciousness' based on the theoretical components of the '...genealogical aspect of ethnicity in nationalist mobilization, and...the particular salience of such nationalist mobilization for *post-colonial* ethnic politics" (2000, p321). Despite the contradictions that a model of nationalism creates within the framework of a subaltern argument, Cockell purports that *ethno-nationalism* is not the same as a statist version of nationalism (ibid). Although implicating the subaltern identity, the arguments of a collective *ethno-national* identity are echoed in other works, such as Ganguly's (1996). Cockell continues to highlight the *ethnic* aspect of ethno-nationalism by suggesting that this identification with a common ethnicity, which has been developed and strengthened over years of continued subjugation, remains more salient than other identity markers such as religion or class (2000, p322). By consulting a Chatham House study, 'Kashmir: Paths to Peace,' it would seem that those districts of the State most in support of a separate nation-state is the Kashmiri-dominated Valley (Bradnock, 2010).

Although the subalterns of Jammu and Kashmir have scores of varying regional, ethnic, linguistic, and religious identities as explored in literature on identity politics, such as Chowdhary's *Identity Politics in Jammu and Kashmir* (2010) and Malik's *Kashmir: Ethnic Conflict, International Dispute* (2005), there has been much debate about whether or not there is any overarching communal consciousness to sustain a cohesive political movement based on any single identity alone. In fact, when juxtaposing the analysis of academic works with that of online chatting and blogging, there is a sharp contrast between some overarching Kashmiri identity and that of the Kashmiri *Muslim* identity (Spencer, 2010). Zutshi (2004) also describes the overlapping of these salient identity markers. The *only* common theme, regardless of how dynamic or loose the definition may be, is that those who are mobilizing *feel* they are being unfairly subjugated in some way; that their voices are not being heard. Whether through political pressure, a violent insurgency, massive demonstrations, or stone pelting, the politically active Kashmiri associates him- or herself with a subaltern identity.

The Subaltern in International Relations

Although an extensive discussion of Indian foreign policy is beyond the scope of this essay, it is worth noting at least cursorily that India's foreign policy itself has not fit neatly into a Western framework like 'realism' or 'liberalism.' India's policy of non-alignment, for example, was a denunciation of Cold War *realpolitik* of competing hegemonic world powers. Hewitt (1997) argues this policy was in part based on India's attempt at becoming a great regional power. This strategy,

liberal economic reforms, India's intervention in Sri Lanka, and the country's nuclear posturing with Pakistan have created confusion in foreign policy analyses. For example, Ayoob (2002) interprets Indian policy towards Kashmir as a post-colonial state's attempt to consolidate power. Ayoob argues that India has been unjustly pressured to cede to hegemonic Western doctrines. In his view India is a subaltern state, and he argues for 'subaltern realism' (2002). Where his arguments falls flat according to human rights' advocates is when he essentially vindicates Indian abuses and state repression in Kashmir by arguing that these actions are "for consolidating state authority" and should be distinguished from "...purely predatory activities of self-seeking rulers who are interested...in privatizing the state to enrich and empower themselves" (Ayoob, 2002, p46). Regardless of how the conflict is perceived outside of Kashmir or portrayed in mainstream Indian media, state repression is very much perceived in Kashmir as a predatory action by the Indian government and the 700,000 troops stationed there. Whereby India may perceive itself as a subaltern entity vis-à-vis Western powers, advocates of an independent Kashmir may perceive their state to be subaltern vis-à-vis India – the growing global powerhouse occupying disputed territory.

One of the most distinguishing features of Cockell's argument is his criticism of the arguments of prominent Kashmir experts, who repeatedly place the Kashmir conflict within the framework of institutional decay or under the guise of a fundamental Islamic insurgency (2000, p325). Overused explanations of the current situation in Kashmir are second only to the Indo-Pakistan dialogue, which seemingly extinguishes Kashmiris completely from the conflict as autonomous actors. Despite Cockell's dismissal of institutional decay, this argument does seem to hold merit. Ganguly (1996) analyzes the breakdown of institutions in the state which paved the way to the violent uprisings of the 1990s, exacerbated by an influx of Islamist militants from Pakistan. Had Kashmiris been given the option of voicing their dissent through a fair electoral process, he argues, they would have been less likely to opt for the militant option. The failure to uphold autonomy of Kashmir, to hold a plebiscite as a means to discover what political destiny Kashmiris wanted, the more recent violent repression and human rights violations, and the over-bearing presence of military camps and check-points have contributed to the supporting of a collective subaltern, Kashmiri consciousness. These politically conscious subalterns are weary of their subjugation and eager to let their voices be heard. If indeed history has a tendency to repeat itself and Kashmiris continue be denied a forum to voice their dissent, the dangerous consequences are readily apparent.

In conceptualizing the subaltern in a contemporary political movement, it would not be useful to construct an image of a peasant during the British Raj, but rather of the contemporary Indian peasant (Chatterjee, 2012, p45). The same can be said for the subaltern Kashmiri. The historical construct of ruling authorities residing 'outside the bounds of the peasant community' (Chatterjee, 2012, p46) no longer applies in an India where "the activities of the government have penetrated deep into the everyday lives of rural people and affect matters like the supply of water to their fields or electricity to their homes...transport...schooling, public health services..." (Chatterjee, 2012, p47). There is dynamism and an intersection between the call of secession and the need for issues of local governance. Despite decades of insurgency, inter-state war, and political turmoil, Kashmiris, soldier on. As Chatterjee points out, there is a distinction between politics of sovereignty and the more "...ordinary stuff of democratic politics..." (2012, p47). After the Amarnath land grab controversy over the transferring of Kashmiri lands (on a Hindu pilgrimage site) sparked protests in both Jammu and Kashmir from Hindus and Muslims, the Indian government placed a positive

spin on the turnout of voters for local *panchayat* elections (Tremblay, 2009). As Tremblay suggested (and events since then have alluded), Kashmiri support for *azadi* has not waned, but Kashmiris understand the need to engage with their local governments while in pursuit of *azadi*, as a means to continue to go about their daily lives the best they can (ibid).

In his critique of Subaltern Studies, Bayly questions the implication of the peasant's "...occasional and diverse moments of resistance..." whereby the question is raised "...why peasant, tribal or workers' movements occurred at particular times and not at others..." (1988, p114). This suggests a discontinuity in the peasant movement over time. In the case of Kashmir, people didn't suddenly stop agitating for *azadi* or for more autonomy at some points, and spontaneously erupted into protests or insurgency at others; but they adopted different methods for agitation at different times. It could be a more concise question, however, if we asked what specific events led to subsequent violence, for example. The absence of violence is not acquiescence with the ruling elite. As Cockell purports, the adoption of violence only occurs after attempts at engaging in non-violent means to illicit change (2000). As a young Kashmiri in the Channel 4 documentary *Trails of Torture* (2012) contends, he is not going to just become a suicide bomber overnight, but if everything is lost, that's when he would not care anymore.

Conclusion

Failure to include the 'Other' in historical textual analysis is, in a sense, the failure to include any supporting cast in a production. The analysis of the 'Other' as a departure from elite, colonial texts can also guide the contemporary discourse of disciplines other than those traditionally associated with Subaltern Studies, such as history and anthropology. However, the inclusion of the 'Other' in reaching a deeper understanding of the context of modern popular political movements can add depth to other disciplines of social science. As Chatterjee (2012) asserts, the discipline of Subaltern Studies is in need of revision in order to make it relevant for today's political context. This unfortunately and invariably means that problems such as who exactly a subaltern is today are left without a rigorous framework for analysis. In the context of Kashmir specifically, the subaltern represents a somewhat negotiable position in the secessionist movement, and as such there needs to be flexibility in analyses and methods within which to advance the study of the subaltern identity in contemporary secessionist movements. Although the most vocal in the conflict are those who are either activists who do not fear reprisal from the Indian government or those using new media as a means for voicing their discontent, there are many who have suffered as a direct result of a central Indian authority in Kashmir, and they remain marginalized. A more dynamic approach then is required if academics and policymakers are to better understand the dynamics of grievances in this, and other, separatist movements. As Spivak affirmed in the words of Louai (2012, p7), "...the task of an intellectual is to pave way for the subaltern groups and let them speak freely for themselves." Regardless of the discipline or the methodologies utilized, it is the duty of the academic to ensure that these voices are being 'heard' and analysed so as to justly represent them where they would otherwise be condemned to silence.

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Subaltern (postcolonialism)

In critical theory and post-colonialism, **subaltern** is the social group who is socially, politically, and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure of the colony and of the colonial homeland. In describing “history told from below”, the term *subaltern* derived from the cultural hegemony work of Antonio Gramsci, which identified the social groups who are excluded from a society’s established structures for political representation, the means by which people have a voice in their society.

The terms *subaltern* and *subaltern studies* entered the field of post-colonial studies through the works of the Subaltern Studies Group, a collection of South Asian historians who explored the political-actor role of the men and women who are the mass population — rather than the political roles of the social and economic élites — in the history of South Asia. In the 1970s, the application of *subaltern* began to denote the colonized peoples of the South Asian Subcontinent, and described a new perspective of the history of an imperial colony, told from the point of view of the colonized man and woman, rather than from the points of view of the colonizers; in which respect, Marxist historians already had been investigating colonial history told from the perspective of the proletariat. In the 1980s, the scope of enquiry of Subaltern Studies was applied as an “intervention in South Asian historiography”.

As a method of intellectual discourse, the concept of *the subaltern* is problematic because it remained a Eurocentric method of historical enquiry when studying the non-Western people of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. From having originated as an historical-research model for studying the colonial experience of South Asian peoples, the applicability of the techniques of subaltern studies transformed a model of intellectual discourse into a method of “vigorous post-colonial critique”. The term “subaltern” is used in the fields of history, anthropology, sociology, human geography, and literary criticism.^[1]

Denotations

In Post-colonial theory, the term *Subaltern* describes the lower classes and the social groups who are at the margins of a society — a subaltern is a person rendered without human agency, by his or her social status.^[2] Nonetheless, the literary critic and theoretician Gayatri Spivak advised against a too-broad application of the term, because:

. . . *subaltern* is not just a classy word for “oppressed”, for [the] Other, for somebody who’s not getting a piece of the pie. . . . In post-colonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern — a space of difference. Now, who would say that’s just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It’s not subaltern. . . . Many people want to claim subalternity. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, just by being a discriminated-against minority on the university campus; they don’t need the word ‘subaltern’ . . . They should see what the mechanics of the discrimination are. They’re within the hegemonic discourse, wanting a piece of the pie, and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse. They should not call themselves subaltern.



The *Subaltern* identity is conceptually derived from the cultural hegemony work of the Marxist intellectual Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937).

— Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: *New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa* (1992) ^[3]

In Marxist theory, the civil sense of the term *Subaltern* was first used by the Italian Communist intellectual Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937). In discussions of the meaning of the “subaltern” in Gramsci’s writings, Spivak and others

have claimed that Gramsci used the word as a synonym for the proletariat (a code-word to deceive the prison censor to allow his manuscripts out the prison),^[4] but this interpretation has been contested, with evidence indicating that it was a novel concept in Gramsci's political theory.^[5] In several essays, the Post-colonial critic Homi K. Bhabha, emphasized the importance of social power relations in defining subaltern social groups as oppressed, racial minorities whose social presence was crucial to the self-definition of the majority group; as such, subaltern social groups, nonetheless, also are in a position to subvert the authority of the social group(s) who hold hegemonic power.^[6]

In *Toward a New Legal Common Sense* (2002), the sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos applies the term *subaltern cosmopolitanism* to describe the counter-hegemonic practice, social movement, resistance, and struggle against neo-liberal globalization, especially the struggle against social exclusion. Moreover, Prof. de Sousa Santos applies *subaltern cosmopolitanism* as interchangeable with the term *cosmopolitan legality*, to describe the diverse normative framework for an *equality of differences*, in which the term *subaltern* specifically denotes the oppressed peoples at the margins of a society who are struggling against hegemonic globalization. Yet, context, time, and place determine who, among the peoples at the margins of a society, is a Subaltern; in India women, dalits, rural, tribal, immigrant laborers are part of subaltern; within India, in the Punjab, the most oppressed people are the rural folk, the dalit, and illiterate women.

Theory

Post-colonial theory studies the power and the continued dominance of Western ways of knowing, of intellectual enquiry. The work of Edward Saïd on Orientalism conceptually addresses the oppressed subaltern man and woman, to explain how the Eurocentric perspective of Orientalism produced the foundations — and the justifications — for the domination of The Other, by means of colonialism. Before their explorations of *The Orient*, the Europeans had created an imagined geography of the Orient — predefined images of savage and monstrous places that lay beyond the horizon of the known world. During their initial Oriental explorations, the Europeans' mythologies were reinforced, when the travellers returned to Europe with reports of monsters and savage lands. The concepts of the "difference" and the "strangeness" of the Orient were perpetuated through the mass communications media of the time, and through discourse that created an "Us" and "Them" binary social relation with which the Europeans defined themselves — by defining the differences of the Orient from the Occident, the European West. The Us-and-Them binary social relation was a foundation of colonialism, because it represented the Orient as backward and irrational lands, and, therefore, in need of European help to become modern, in the Western sense. Hence, the discourse of Orientalism is Eurocentric, and does not seek to include the voices of the Oriental peoples, the subalterns, themselves.^{[7][8]}

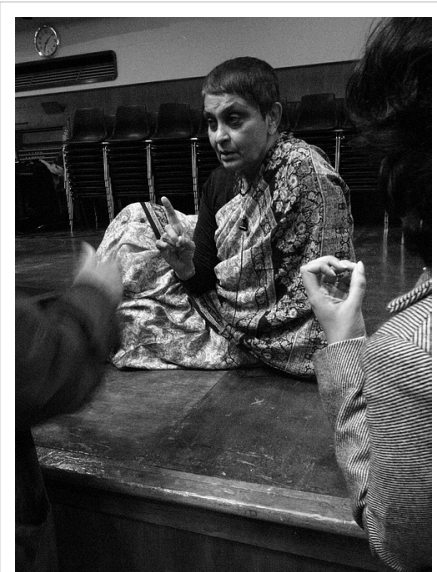
The cultural theorist Stuart Hall argued that the power of discourse created and reinforced Western dominance. The discourses on how Europe described differences between itself (The West) and others, used European cultural categories, languages, and ideas to represent "The Other." The knowledge produced by such a discourse becomes praxis, which then becomes reality; by producing a discourse of "difference" Europe was able to maintain its dominance over "The Other", with a binary social relation between the European and The Other, thereby creating and establishing the Subaltern, made possible by excluding The Other from the production of the discourse.^[9] About such a binary social relation, Owen 'Alik Shahadah said that:

The Eurocentric discourse on Africa is in error, because those foundational paradigms, which inspired the study, in the first place, were rooted in the denial of African agency; political intellectualism bent on its own self-affirmation, rather than objective study.

— *The Removal of Agency from Africa*

The voice of the Subaltern

Gayatri Spivak's line of reasoning was developed in *Geographies of Postcolonialism* (2008), wherein Joanne Sharp proposed that Western intellectuals relegate other, non-Western (African, Asian, Middle Eastern) forms of *knowing* — of acquiring knowledge of the world — to the margins of intellectual discourse, by re-formulating said forms of *knowing* as myth and as folklore. Therefore, in order to be heard and known, the oppressed subaltern must adopt Western ways of *knowing*, of thought, reasoning, and language; because of such Westernization, a subaltern people can never express their ways of *knowing* (thought, reasoning, language) and instead must conform expression of their non-Western knowledge of colonial life to Western ways of knowing the world.^[10] The subaltern's abandonment of his and her culturally customary ways of thinking — and subsequent adoption of Western ways of thinking — is necessary in many post-colonial situations. The subordinated man and woman can only be heard by his oppressors if he or she speaks the language of the oppressor; thus, intellectual and cultural filters of conformity muddle the true voice of the subaltern. For example, in Colonial Latin America, the oppressed subaltern must conform to the colonial culture and utilize the filters of religion and servitude, in his or her language, when addressing the Spanish Imperial oppressor. In order to appeal to the good graces of their Spanish oppressors, slaves and natives would mask their own voices with the culture of the Spanish Crown.



Engaging the Subaltern voice: the philosopher and theorist Gayatri Spivak.

In year 1600, Francisca de Figueroa presented a request to the King of Spain, that he permit her reunion with her daughter, Juana de Figueroa, in the Americas; as an Afro-Iberian woman, Francisca must repress her native African tongue, and speak in Spanish, her adopted colonial European tongue:

I, Francisca de Figueroa, mulatta in color, declare that I have, in the city of Cartagena, a daughter named Juana de Figueroa. And she has written, to call for me, in order to help me. I will take with me, in my company, a daughter of mine, her sister, named María, of the said color. And for this, I must write to Our Lord the King to petition that he favor me with a license, so that I, and my said daughter, can go and reside in the said city of Cartagena. For this, I will give an account of what is put down in this report. And of how I, Francisca de Figueroa, am a woman of sound body and mulatta in color . . . And my daughter María is twenty-years-old, and of the said color, and of medium size. Once given, I attest to this. I beg your Lordship to approve, and order it done. I ask for justice in this. On the twenty-first day of the month of June 1600, Your Majesty's lords presidents and official judges of this house [Casa de Contratación] order that the account she offers be received, and that testimony for the purpose she requests given.

— *Afro-Latino Voices: Narratives from the Early Modern Ibero-Atlantic World: 1550–1812* (2009)

Layers of meaning must be considered when engaging the voice of the subaltern. In Francisca's eyes, it is crucial to portray herself as servile; there is no hint of pride or defiance in her words. In the letter of appeal to the King of Spain, Francisca does not mention her own religion; by identifying herself as a Catholic, her request probably would have been granted sooner. One of the first questions that the Spanish Inquisition asked of Francisca's neighbors concerned her religion; upon finding that she was a third-generation Catholic, and "not of Moorish or Jewish caste, or of those recently converted to Our Holy Catholic Faith", Francisca's request acquired greater regard for consideration by the King. To attain the reunion with her daughter in Cartagena, in her letter to the King of Spain, Francisca must make herself a subject; thus, she continually identifies herself by her race, as a "mulatta", rather than by her ethnic lineage as an African woman; she continually degrades herself, by identifying herself with the cultural

and ethnic labels that the Spanish applied to her heritage. Such a form of self-subjugation is a common example of the sound of the voice of the Subaltern: self-relegating.

Hence, the Colonial Historian Fernando Coronil said that the goal of the investigator must be “to listen to the subaltern subjects, and to interpret what I hear”, and to engage them, and interact with their voices. We cannot ascend to a position of dominance over the voice, subjugating its words to the meanings we desire to attribute to them. That is simply another form of discrimination. The power to narrate somebody’s story is a heavy task, and we must be cautious and aware of the complications involved. Spivak and bell hooks question the academic’s engagement with the Other, and argue that, to truly engage with the subaltern, the academic would have to remove him or herself as “the expert” at the center of the Us-and-Them binary social relation. Traditionally, the academic wants to know about the subaltern’s experiences of colonialism, but does not want to know the subaltern’s (own) explanation of his or her experiences of colonial domination. According to the received view in Western knowledge, hooks argued that a true explanation can come only from the expertise of the academic, thus, the sub-ordinated subject, the subaltern man and woman, surrenders his and her knowledge of colonialism for the use of the Western academic; hooks describes the relationship between the academic and the subaltern:

[There is] no need to hear your voice, when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still [the] colonizer, the speaking subject, and you are now at the center of my talk.

— “Marginality as a Site of Resistance” (1990)^[11]

As a means of constructing a greater historical picture of society, the Subaltern’s story is a revealing examination of society; the perspective of the subaltern man and woman, the most powerless people who live within colonial confines; therefore, the investigator of post-colonialism must not assume a lumbering cultural superiority in the course of studying the voices of the oppressed subalterns.

Development discourse

Mainstream development discourse, which is based upon knowledge of colonialism and Orientalism, concentrates upon modernization theory, wherein the modernization of an underdeveloped country *should* follow the path to modernization taken (and established) by the developed countries of the West. As such, modernization is characterized by free trade, open markets, capitalist economic systems, and democratic systems of governance, as the means by which a nation should modernize their country *en route* to becoming a developed country in the Western (First World) style. Therefore, mainstream development discourse concentrates upon the application of universal social and political, economic and cultural policies that would nationally establish such modernization.^[12]

In *Making Development Geography* (2007), Victoria Lawson presents a critique of mainstream development discourse as mere recreation of the Subaltern, which is effected by means of the subaltern being disengaged from other social scales, such as the locale and the community; not considering regional, social class, ethnic group, sexual- and gender-class differences among the peoples and countries being modernized; the continuation of the socio-cultural treatment of the subaltern as a subject of development, as a subordinate who is ignorant of what to do and how to do it; and by excluding the voices of the subject peoples from the formulations of policy and practice used to effect the modernization.

As such, the subaltern are peoples who have been silenced in the administration of the colonial states they constitute, they can be heard by means of their political actions, effected in protest against the discourse of mainstream development, and, thereby, create their own, proper forms of modernization and development. Hence do subaltern social groups create social, political, and cultural movements that contest and disassemble the exclusive claims to power of the Western imperialist powers, and so establish the use and application of local knowledge to create new spaces of opposition and alternative, non-imperialist futures.

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External links

- Can the Subaltern Speak? by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (http://www.mcgill.ca/files/crclaw-discourse/Can_the_subaltern_speak.pdf)
- Subaltern.org: An organization for underrepresented artists. (<http://www.subaltern.org/>)
 - The website defines "Subaltern" in the following manner: "Originally a term for subordinates in military hierarchies, the term subaltern is elaborated in the work of Antonio Gramsci to refer to groups who are outside the established structures of political representation. In 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' Gayatri Spivak suggests that the subaltern is denied access to both mimetic and political forms of representation."
- Subaltern studies bibliography (<http://www.lib.virginia.edu/area-studies/subaltern/ssauth.htm>)
- Information on purchase of commissions in Georgian times. (<http://members.shaw.ca/jobev/military.html>)
- Biography and major publications for Spivak. (<http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Spivak.html>)
- Subalternstudies.com: An academic collective for the study of the subaltern within media, communications, and cultural studies (<http://www.subalternstudies.com/>)

Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism or **postcolonial studies** is an academic discipline featuring methods of intellectual discourse that analyze, explain, and respond to the cultural legacies of colonialism and imperialism, to the human consequences of controlling a country and establishing settlers for the economic exploitation of the native people and their land. Drawing from postmodern schools of thought, Postcolonial Studies analyse the politics of knowledge (creation, control, and distribution) by analyzing the functional relations of social and political power that sustain colonialism and neocolonialism—the how and the why of an imperial regime's representations (social, political, cultural) of the imperial colonizer and of the colonized people.

As a genre of contemporary history, postcolonialism questions and reinvents the modes of cultural perception—the ways of viewing and of being viewed. As anthropology, postcolonialism records human relations among the colonial nations and the subaltern peoples exploited by colonial rule.^[1] As critical theory, postcolonialism presents, explains, and illustrates the ideology and the praxis of neocolonialism, with examples drawn from the humanities—history and political science, philosophy and Marxist theory, sociology, anthropology, and human geography; the cinema, religion, and theology; feminism, linguistics, and postcolonial literature, of which the anti-conquest narrative genre presents the stories of colonial subjugation of the subaltern man and woman.



The Motherland and her dependant colonial offspring. (William-Adolphe Bouguereau, 1883)

Colonialism

Main article: Colonialism

Colonialism was presented as "the extension of Civilization", which ideologically justified the self-ascribed superiority (racial and cultural) of the European Western World over the non-Western world, which Joseph-Ernest Renan espoused in *La Réforme intellectuelle et morale* (1871), whereby imperial stewardship would effect the intellectual and moral reformation of the coloured peoples of the lesser cultures of the world. That such a divinely established, natural harmony among the human races of the world would be possible, because everyone—colonizer and colonized—has an assigned cultural identity, a social place, and an economic role within an imperial colony; thus:

The regeneration of the inferior or degenerate races, by the superior races is part of the providential order of things for humanity. . . . *Regere imperio populos* is our vocation. Pour forth this all-consuming activity onto countries, which, like China, are crying aloud for foreign conquest. Turn the adventurers who disturb European society into a *ver sacrum*, a horde like those of the Franks, the Lombards, or the Normans, and every man will be in his right role. Nature has made a race of workers, the Chinese race, who have wonderful manual dexterity, and almost no sense of honour; govern them with justice, levying from them, in return for the blessing of such a government, an ample allowance for the conquering race, and they will be satisfied; a race of tillers of the soil, the Negro; treat him with kindness and humanity, and all will be as it should; a race of masters and soldiers, the European race. . . . Let each do what he is made for, and all will be well.



In *La Réforme intellectuelle et morale* (1871), the Orientalist Joseph-Ernest Renan, advocated imperial stewardship for civilising the non-Western peoples of the world.

— *La Réforme intellectuelle et morale* (1871), by Joseph-Ernest Renan ^[2]

From the mid- to the late-nineteenth century, such racist group-identity language was the cultural common-currency justifying geopolitical competition, among the European and American empires, meant to protect their over-extended economies. Especially in the colonisation of the Far East and in the Scramble for Africa (1870–1914), the representation of a homogeneous European identity justified colonisation. Hence, Belgium and Britain, and France and Germany proffered theories of national superiority that justified colonialism as delivering the light of civilisation to benighted peoples. Notably, *La mission civilisatrice*, the self-ascribed civilising mission of the French Empire, proposed that some races and cultures have a higher purpose in life, whereby the more powerful, more developed, and more civilised races have the right to colonise other peoples, in service to the noble idea of "civilisation" and its economic benefits. ^{[3][4][5]}

Definition

As an epistemology (the study of knowledge, its nature and verifiability), as an ethics (moral philosophy), and as a politics (affairs of the citizenry), the field of postcolonialism address the politics of knowledge—the matters that constitute the postcolonial identity of a decolonised people, which derives from: (i) the coloniser's generation of cultural knowledge about the colonised people; and (ii) how that Western cultural knowledge was applied to subjugate a non-European people into a colony of the European Mother Country, which, after initial invasion, was effected by means of the cultural identities of "coloniser" and "colonised".

Postcolonial identity

A decolonised people develop a postcolonial identity from the cultural interactions among the types of identity (cultural, national, ethnic) and the social relations of sex, class, and caste; determined by the gender and the race of the colonised person; and the racism inherent to the structures of a colonial society. In postcolonial literature, the anti-conquest narrative analyses the identity politics that are the social and cultural perspectives of the subaltern colonial subjects—their creative resistance to the culture of the coloniser; how such cultural resistance complicated the establishment of a colonial society; how the colonisers developed their postcolonial identity; and how neocolonialism actively employs the Us-and-Them binary social relation to view the non-Western world as inhabited by The Other.

The neocolonial discourse of geopolitical homogeneity conflates the decolonised peoples, their cultures, and their countries, into an imaginary place, such as "the Third World", an over-inclusive term that usually comprises continents and seas, i.e. Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania. The postcolonial critique analyses the self-justifying discourse of neocolonialism and the functions (philosophic and political) of its over-inclusive terms, to establish the factual and cultural inaccuracy of homogeneous concepts, such as "the Arabs" and "the First World", "Christendom" and "the Islamic World", actually comprise heterogeneous peoples, cultures, and geography, and that realistic descriptions of the world's peoples, places, and things require nuanced and accurate terms.

Characteristics

Postcolonialism is the critical destabilization of the theories (intellectual and linguistic, social and economic) that support the ways of Western thought—deductive reasoning, rule of law and monotheism—by means of which colonialists "perceive", "understand", and "know" the world. Postcolonial theory thus establishes intellectual spaces for the subaltern peoples to speak for themselves, in their own voices, and so produce cultural discourses, of philosophy and language, of society and economy, which balance the imbalanced us-and-them binary power-relationship between the colonist and the colonial subject.

As a contemporary-history term, *postcolonialism* occasionally is applied temporally, to denote the immediate time after colonialism, which is a problematic application of the term, because the immediate, historical, political time is not included to the categories of critical identity-discourse, which deals with over-inclusive terms of cultural representation, which are abrogated and replaced by postcolonial criticism. As such, the terms *postcolonial* and *postcolonialism* denote aspects of the subject matter, which indicate that the decolonised world is an intellectual space "of contradictions, of half-finished processes, of confusions, of hybridity, and of liminalities".^[6]

In *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* (1996), Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins clarified the denotational functions, among which:

The term *post-colonialism*—according to a too-rigid etymology—is frequently misunderstood as a temporal concept, meaning the time after colonialism has ceased, or the time following the politically determined Independence Day on which a country breaks away from its governance by another state. Not a naïve teleological sequence, which supersedes colonialism, *post-colonialism* is, rather, an engagement with, and contestation of, colonialism's discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies. . . . A theory of post-colonialism must, then, respond to more than the merely chronological construction of post-independence, and to more than just the discursive experience of imperialism.

— *Post-Colonial Drama* (1996).

The term *postcolonialism* also is applied to denote the Mother Country's neocolonial control of the decolonised country, effected by the legalistic continuation of the economic, cultural, and linguistic power relationships that controlled the colonial politics of knowledge (the generation, production, and distribution of knowledge) about the colonised peoples of the non-Western world.^[6]

The cultural and religious assumptions of colonialist logic remain active practices in contemporary society, and are the bases of the Mother Country's neocolonial attitude towards her former colonial subjects—an economical source of labour and raw materials.^[7] Hence, in *The Location of Culture* (1994), the theoretician Homi K. Bhabha argued that so long as the way of viewing the human world, as composed of separate and unequal cultures, rather than as an integral human world, perpetuates the belief in the existence of imaginary peoples and places—"Christendom" and "The Islamic World", "The First World", "The Second World", and "The Third World". To counter such linguistic and sociologic reductionism, postcolonial praxis establishes the philosophic value of hybrid intellectual-spaces, wherein ambiguity abrogates truth and authenticity; thereby, *hybridity* is the philosophic condition that most substantively challenges the ideological validity of colonialism.^[8]

Critical purpose

The critical purpose of postcolonial studies is to account for, and to combat, the residual effects (social, political, and cultural) of colonialism upon the peoples once ruled by the Mother Country.^[7] To that end, postcolonial theoreticians establish social and cultural spaces for the non-Western peoples—especially the subaltern peoples—whose native cultures were often suppressed by the Western value systems promoted and established as the dominant ideology of the colonial enterprise, said cultural suppression was meant to civilise the natives in the European image, as proposed and justified by the French philosopher Joseph-Ernest Renan in the book *La Réforme intellectuelle et morale* (1871), and by the German philosopher G. F. W. Hegel, in the essay "The African Character" (1830).^[9]

The critical perspectives and analyses presented in the book *Orientalism* (1978), by Edward Saïd, argued that, in dealing with non-Western peoples, European scholars applied the high-abstraction idealism inherent to the concept of "The Orient", in order to disregard the existing native societies, and their social, intellectual, and cultural ways of life, in Asia, the Middle East, and of the Muslim peoples. That, in their stead, Orientalist academics substituted their European interpretations and representations of what is and what is not "Oriental", and of who is and who is not "an Oriental". That Orientalism supported the self-ascribed cultural superiority of The West, and so allowed Europeans to name, describe, and define, and thereby control, non-European peoples, places, and things.

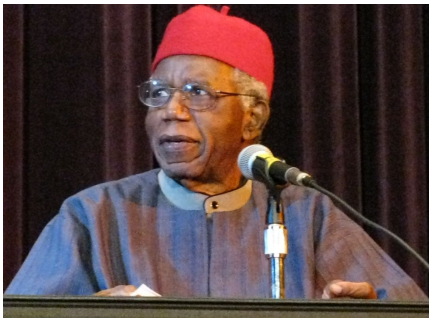
To that end, postcolonialism critically destabilizes the dominant ideologies of the West, by challenging the "inherent assumptions . . . [and the] material and discursive legacies of colonialism", by working with tangible social factors such as:

- Anthropology, by means of which Western intellectuals generated knowledge about non-Western peoples, which colonial institutions then used to subjugate them into a colony to serve the economic, social, and cultural interests of the imperial power.
- Colonialist literature, wherein the writers ideologically justified imperialism and colonialism with cultural representations (literary and pictorial) of the colonised country and its people, as perpetually inferior, which the imperial steward must organise into a colonial society to be guided towards European modernity.
- Postcolonial literature, wherein writers articulate and celebrate the postcolonial identity of the decolonised, native society (an identity often reclaimed from the coloniser) whilst maintaining the independent nation's pragmatic connections (economic and social, linguistic and cultural) with the Mother Country.



In the essay "The African Character" (1830), Hegel says that some cultures lagged in their development, and needed Christian-European stewardship to mature towards civilisation.

- Native cultural-identity in a colonised society, and the dilemmas inherent to developing a postcolonial national identity after the de-colonisation of the country, whilst avoiding the counter-productive extremes of nationalism.^[6]



In the novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958), the writer Chinua Achebe described native life in the British colony of Nigeria.

In the definition and establishment of a postcolonial identity, the literature of the anti-conquest narrative genre is the praxis of "indigenous decolonisation", whereby writers explain, analyse, and transcend the personal and societal experiences of imperial subjugation, of having endured the imposed identity of "a colonial subject". By means of their postcolonial literature, the subaltern peoples reply to the Mother Country's perceived misrepresentation of their humanity; an African example is the novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958), by Chinua Achebe, about the Nigerian experience of being part of the British Empire. Using the native varieties of the colonial languages, the Anti-conquest narrative addresses the Mother Country's cultural hegemony; by "writing back to the centre" of the empire, the

natives create their own national histories in service to forming and establishing a national identity after decolonisation.^[10]

Notable theoreticians

Frantz Fanon

In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), the psychiatrist Frantz Fanon analysed and medically described the nature of colonialism as essentially destructive. Its societal effects—the imposition of a subjugating colonial identity—are harmful to the mental health of the native peoples who were subjugated into colonies. Fanon wrote the ideological essence of colonialism is the systematic denial of "all attributes of humanity" of the colonised people. Such dehumanization is achieved with physical and mental violence, by which the colonist means to inculcate a servile mentality upon the natives. For Fanon the natives must violently resist colonial subjugation.^[10] Hence, Fanon describes violent resistance to colonialism as a mentally cathartic practice, which purges colonial servility from the native psyche, and restores self-respect to the subjugated. Thus he supported the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) in the Algerian War (1954–62) for independence from France.^[11]

As postcolonial praxis, Fanon's mental-health analyses of colonialism and imperialism, and the supporting economic theories, were partly derived from the essay *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), wherein Vladimir Lenin described colonial imperialism as a degenerate form of capitalism, which requires greater degrees of human exploitation to ensure continually consistent profit for investment.^[12]

Edward Said

To describe the us-and-them "binary social relation" with which Western Europe intellectually divided the world—into the "Occident" and the "Orient"—the cultural critic Edward Said developed the denotations and connotations of the term *Orientalism* (an art-history term for Western depictions and the study of the Orient). That the cultural representations generated with the us-and-them binary relation are social constructs, which are mutually constitutive and cannot exist independent of each other, because each exists on account of and for the Other.^[13]

Notably, "the West" created the cultural concept of "the East", which according to Said allowed the Europeans to suppress the peoples of the Middle East, of the Indian Subcontinent, and of Asia, from expressing and representing themselves as discrete peoples and cultures. Orientalism thus conflated and reduced the non-Western world into the homogeneous cultural entity known as "the East". Therefore, in service to the colonial type of imperialism, the us-and-them Orientalist paradigm allowed European scholars to represent the Oriental World as inferior and

backward, irrational and wild, as opposed to a Western Europe that was superior and progressive, rational and civil—the opposite of the Oriental Other. In "Edward Said: The Exile as Interpreter" (1993), about Said's *Orientalism* (1978), A. Madhavan said that "Said's passionate thesis in that book, now an 'almost canonical study', represented Orientalism as a 'style of thought' based on the antinomy of East and West in their world-views, and also as a 'corporate institution' for dealing with the Orient."

In concordance with the philosopher Michel Foucault, Saïd established that power and knowledge are the inseparable components of the intellectual binary relationship with which Occidentals claim "knowledge of the Orient". That the applied power of such cultural knowledge allowed Europeans to rename, re-define, and thereby control Oriental peoples, places, and things, into imperial colonies. The power–knowledge binary relation is conceptually essential to identify and understand colonialism in general, and European colonialism in particular. Hence,

To the extent that Western scholars were aware of contemporary Orientals or Oriental movements of thought and culture, these were perceived either as silent shadows to be animated by the Orientalist, brought into reality by them, or as a kind of cultural and international proletariat useful for the Orientalist's grander interpretive activity.

— *Orientalism* (1978), p. 208.^[14]

Nonetheless, critics of the homogeneous "Occident–Orient" binary social relation, said that Orientalism is of limited descriptive capability and practical application, and proposed that there are variants of Orientalism that apply to Africa and to Latin America. To which Saïd replied that the European West applied Orientalism as a *homogeneous* form of The Other, in order to facilitate the formation of the cohesive, collective European cultural identity denoted by the term "The West".^[15]

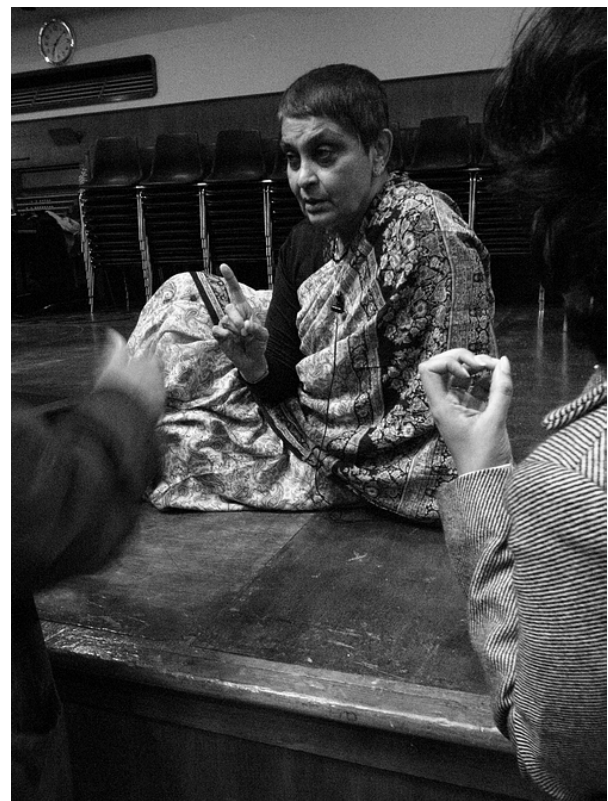
Gayatri Spivak

In establishing the Postcolonial definition of the term *Subaltern*, the philosopher and theoretician Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak cautioned against assigning an over-broad connotation; that:

. . . *subaltern* is not just a classy word for "oppressed", for The Other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie. . . . In postcolonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern—a space of difference. Now, who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not *subaltern*. . . . Many people want to claim subalternity. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, just by being a discriminated-against minority on the university campus; they don't need the word 'subaltern' . . . They should see what the mechanics of the discrimination are. They're within the hegemonic discourse, wanting a piece of the pie, and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse. They should not call themselves subaltern.

— *Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa* (1992)^[16]

Spivak also introduced the terms *essentialism* and *strategic essentialism* to describe the social functions of postcolonialism. The term *essentialism* denotes the perceptual dangers inherent to reviving subaltern voices in ways that might (over) simplify the cultural identity of heterogeneous social groups, and, thereby, create stereotyped representations of the different identities of the people who compose a given social group. The term *strategic essentialism* denotes a temporary, essential group-identity used in the praxis of discourse among peoples. Furthermore, essentialism can occasionally be applied—by the so-described people—to facilitate the subaltern's communication in being heeded, heard, and understood, because a strategic essentialism (a fixed and established subaltern identity) is more readily grasped, and accepted, by the popular majority, in the course of inter-group discourse. The important distinction, between the terms, is that strategic essentialism does not ignore the diversity of identities (cultural and ethnic) in a social group, but that, in its practical function, strategic essentialism temporarily minimizes inter-group diversity to pragmatically support the essential group-identity.



Engaging the voice of the Subaltern: the philosopher and theoretician Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, at Goldsmith College.

Spivak developed and applied Foucault's term *epistemic violence* to describe the destruction of non-Western ways of perceiving the world, and the resultant dominance of the Western ways of perceiving the world. Conceptually, epistemic violence specifically relates to women, whereby the "Subaltern [woman] must always be caught in translation, never [allowed to be] truly expressing herself", because the colonial power's destruction of her culture pushed to the social margins her non-Western ways of perceiving, understanding, and knowing the world.

In June of the year 1600, the Afro-Iberian woman Francisca de Figueroa requested from the King of Spain his permission for her to emigrate from Europe to New Spain, and reunite with her daughter, Juana de Figueroa. As a subaltern woman, Francisca repressed her native African language, and spoke her request in Peninsular Spanish, the official language of Colonial Latin America. As a subaltern woman, she applied to her voice the Spanish cultural filters of sexism, Christian monotheism, and servile language, in addressing her colonial master:

I, Francisca de Figueroa, mulatta in colour, declare that I have, in the city of Cartagena, a daughter named Juana de Figueroa; and she has written, to call for me, in order to help me. I will take with me, in my company, a daughter of mine, her sister, named María, of the said colour; and for this, I must write to Our Lord the King to petition that he favour me with a licence, so that I, and my said daughter, can go and reside in the said city of Cartagena. For this, I will give an account of what is put down in this report; and of how I, Francisca de Figueroa, am a woman of sound body, and mulatta in colour . . . And my daughter María is twenty-years-old, and of the said colour, and of medium size. Once given, I attest to this. I beg your Lordship to approve, and order it done. I ask for justice in this.

[On the twenty-first day of the month of June 1600, Your Majesty's Lords Presidents and Official Judges of this House of Contract Employment order that the account she offers be received, and that testimony for the purpose she requests given.]

— *Afro-Latino Voices: Narratives from the Early Modern Ibero-Atlantic World: 1550–1812* (2009)

Moreover, Spivak further cautioned against ignoring subaltern peoples as "cultural Others", and said that the West could progress—beyond the colonial perspective—by means of introspective self-criticism of the basic ideals and investigative methods that establish a culturally superior West studying the culturally inferior non-Western peoples.^[17] Hence, the integration of the subaltern voice to the intellectual spaces of social studies is problematic, because of the unrealistic opposition to the idea of studying "Others"; Spivak rejected such an anti-intellectual stance by social scientists, and about them said that "to refuse to represent a cultural Other is salving your conscience . . . allowing you not to do any homework."^[18] Moreover, postcolonial studies also reject the colonial cultural depiction of subaltern peoples as hollow mimics of the European colonists and their Western ways; and rejects the depiction of subaltern peoples as the passive recipient-vessels of the imperial and colonial power of the Mother Country. Consequent to Foucault's philosophic model of the binary relationship of power and knowledge, scholars from the Subaltern Studies Collective, proposed that anti-colonial resistance always counters every exercise of colonial power.

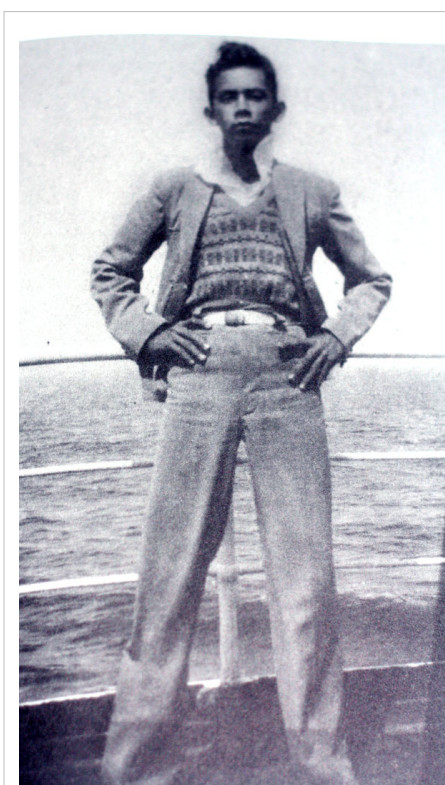
Dipesh Chakrabarty

In *Provincializing Europe* (2000), Dipesh Chakrabarty charted the subaltern history of the Indian struggle for independence, and countered Eurocentric, Western scholarship about non-Western peoples and cultures, by proposing that Western Europe simply be considered as culturally equal to the other cultures of the world, that is, as "one region among many" in human geography.^{[19] [20]}

Postcolonial nations

As a literary theory, postcolonialism deals with the literatures produced by the peoples who once were colonies of the European imperial powers (e.g. Britain, France, and Spain); and the literatures of the decolonised countries engaged in contemporary, postcolonial arrangements (e.g. *Francophonie* and the British Commonwealth) with their former mother countries.^{[21][22]} Postcolonial literary criticism comprehends the literatures written by the coloniser and the colonised, wherein the subject matter includes portraits of the colonised peoples and their lives as imperial subjects. In Dutch literature, the Indies Literature includes the colonial and postcolonial genres, which examine and analyse the formation of a postcolonial identity, and the postcolonial culture produced by the diaspora of the Indo-European peoples, the Eurasian folk who originated from Indonesia; the peoples who were the colony of the Dutch East Indies; in the literature, the notable author is Tjalie Robinson.

To perpetuate and facilitate control of the colonial enterprise, some colonised people, especially from among the subaltern peoples of the British Empire, were sent to attend university in the Imperial Motherland; they were to become the native-born, but Europeanised, ruling class of colonial satraps. Yet, after decolonisation, their bicultural educations originated postcolonial criticism of empire and colonialism, and of the representations of the colonist and the colonised. In the late twentieth century, after the dissolution of the USSR (1991), the constituent soviet socialist republics became the literary subjects of postcolonial criticism, wherein



En route to the Netherlands: the Eurasian novelist Tjalie Robinson aboard the Batavia-Amsterdam ocean liner (1930).

the writers dealt with the legacies (cultural, social, economic) of the Russification of their peoples, countries, and cultures in service to Greater Russia.

Postcolonial literary study is in two categories: (i) that of the postcolonial nations, and (ii) that of the nations who continue forging a postcolonial national identity. The first category of literature presents and analyses the internal challenges inherent to determining an ethnic identity in a decolonised nation. The second category of literature presents and analyses the degeneration of civic and nationalist unities consequent to ethnic parochialism, usually manifested as the demagoguery of "protecting the nation", a variant of the Us-and-Them binary social relation. Civic and national unity degenerate when a patriarchal régime unilaterally defines what is and what is not "the national culture" of the decolonised country; the nation-state collapses, either into communal movements, espousing grand political goals for the postcolonial nation; or into ethnically mixed communal movements, espousing political separatism, as occurred in decolonised Rwanda, the Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; thus the postcolonial extremes against which Frantz Fanon warned in 1961.

The Middle East

In the essays "Overstating the Arab State" (2001), by Nazih Ayubi, and "Is Jordan Palestine?" (2003), by Raphael Israel, the authors deal with the psychologically fragmented postcolonial identity, as determined by the effects (political and social, cultural and economic) of Western colonialism in the Middle East. As such, the fragmented national identity remains a characteristic of such societies, consequence of the imperially convenient, but arbitrary, colonial boundaries (geographic and cultural) demarcated by the Europeans, with which they ignored the tribal and clan relations that determined the geographic borders of the Middle East countries, before the arrival of European imperialists.^[23] Hence, the postcolonial literature about the Middle East examines and analyses the Western discourses about identity formation, the existence and inconsistent nature of a postcolonial national-identity among the peoples of the contemporary Middle East.^[24]

In the essay "Who Am I?: The Identity Crisis in the Middle East" (2006), P.R. Kumaraswamy said:

Most countries of the Middle East, suffered from the fundamental problems over their national identities. More than three-quarters of a century after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, from which most of them emerged, these states have been unable to define, project, and maintain a national identity that is both inclusive and representative.^[25]

Independence and the end of colonialism did not end social fragmentation and war (civil and international) in the Middle East.^[24] In *The Search for Arab Democracy: Discourses and Counter-Discourses* (2004), Larbi Sadiki said that the problems of national identity in the Middle East are consequence of the Orientalist indifference of the European empires when they demarcated the political borders of their colonies, which ignored the local history and the geographic and tribal boundaries observed by the natives, in the course of establishing the Western version of the Middle East.

In the event, "in places like Iraq and Jordan, leaders of the new sovereign states were brought in from the outside, [and] tailored to suit colonial interests and commitments. Likewise, most states in the Persian Gulf were handed over to those [Europeanised colonial subjects] who could protect and safeguard imperial interests in the post-withdrawal



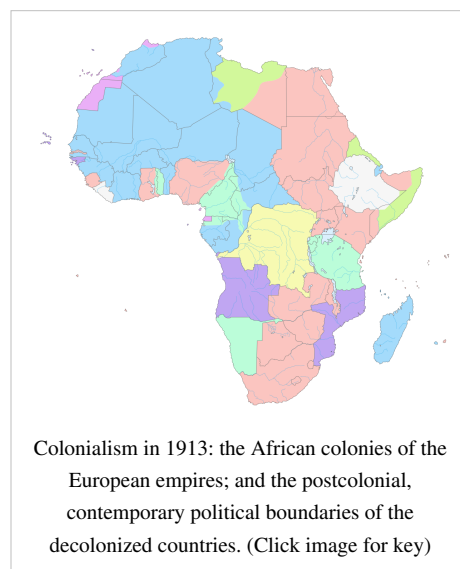
"The Middle East" is the Western name for the countries of South-western Asia.

phase."^[25] Moreover, "with notable exceptions like Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, most [countries] . . . [have] had to [re]invent, their historical roots" after decolonisation, and, "like its colonial predecessor, postcolonial identity owes its existence to force."^[26]

Africa

In the late 19th century, the Scramble for Africa (1874–1914) proved to be the tail end of mercantilist colonialism of the European imperial powers, yet, for the Africans, the consequences were greater than elsewhere in the colonised non–Western world. To facilitate the colonisation—the European empires laid railroads where the rivers and the land proved impassable. To wit, the Imperial British railroad effort proved overambitious in the effort of traversing continental Africa, yet succeeded only in connecting colonial North Africa (Cairo) with the colonial south of Africa (Cape Town).

Upon arriving to Africa, the Europeans encountered the native African civilisations of the Ashanti Empire, the Benin Empire, the Kingdom of Dahomey, the Buganda Kingdom (Uganda), and the Kingdom of Kongo, all of which annexed by imperial powers under the belief that they required European stewardship, as proposed and justified in the essay "The African Character" (1830), by G. W. F. Hegel, in keeping with his philosophic opinion that cultures were stages in the course of the historical unfolding of The Absolute.^[27] Nigeria was the homeland of the Hausa people, the Yoruba people and the [Igbo people]; which last were among the first people to develop their history in constructing a postcolonial identity. (See: *Things Fall Apart*, 1958).



About East Africa, the Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o wrote *Weep Not, Child* (1964), the first postcolonial novel about the East African experience of colonial imperialism; in *The River Between* (1965), as James Ngugi, with the Mau Mau uprising (1952–60) as political background, he addressed the postcolonial matters of native religious culture, and the consequences of the imposition of Christianity, a religion culturally foreign to Kenya and to Africa; and the essay *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986).

In postcolonial countries of Africa, the Africans and the non–Africans live in a world of genders, ethnicities, classes and languages, of ages, families, professions, religions and nations. There is a suggestion that individualism and postcolonialism are essentially discontinuous and divergent cultural phenomena.^[28]

Criticism

National identity

The concentration of Postcolonial Studies upon the subject of *national identity* has determined it is essential to the creation and establishment of a stable nation and country in the aftermath of decolonisation; yet indicates that either an indeterminate or an ambiguous national identity has tended to limit the social, cultural, and economic progress of a decolonised people. In *Overstating the Arab State* (2001), by Nazih Ayubi, the Moroccan scholar Bin 'Abd al-'Ali proposed that the existence of "a pathological obsession with . . . identity" is a cultural theme common to the contemporary academic field Middle Eastern Studies.^[29]

Nevertheless, Kumaraswamy and Sadiki said that such a common sociologic problem—that of an indeterminate national identity—among the countries of the Middle East is an important aspect that must be accounted in order to have an understanding the politics of the contemporary Middle East.^[25] In the event, Ayubi asks if what 'Bin Abd al-'Ali sociologically described as an obsession with national identity might be explained by "the absence of a championing social class?"^[30]

Literature of Postcolonialism

Foundation works

- *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950), by Aimé Césaire
- *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), by Frantz Fanon
- *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), by Frantz Fanon
- *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1965), by Albert Memmi
- *Consciencism* (1970), by Kwame Nkrumah
- *Orientalism* (1978), by Edward Saïd

Important works

- *The Myth of the Lazy Native* (1977), by Syed Hussein Alatas.
- *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983, 1991), by Benedict Anderson. London: Verso. ISBN 0-86091-329-5.
- *Coexisting Contemporary Civilizations*, by G. Ankerl. Geneva INU PRESS; 2000 ISBN 2-88155-004-5.
- *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature* (1990), by B. Ashcroft.
- *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (1995), B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, and T. Tiffin, Eds. London: Routledge ISBN 0-415-09621-9.
- *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (1998), B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, and T. Tiffin, Eds. London: Routledge.
- *L'eurocentrisme* (Eurocentrism, 1988), by Samir Amin.
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- *The Post-Colonial Question* (1996), I. Chambers and L. Curti, Eds. Routledge.
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- *Iran: A People Interrupted* (2007), by Hamid Dabashi.
- *At the Risk of Being Heard: Indigenous Rights, Identity, and Postcolonial States* (2003), B. Dean and J. Levi, Eds. University of Michigan Press. ISBN 0-472-06736-2.
- *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (1998), by Leela Gandhi, Columbia University Press: ISBN 0-231-11273-4.
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- *Postcolonial Theory and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (2008), Ph. C. Salzman and D. Robinson Divine, Eds. Routledge.
- *African Philosophy: Myth & Reality* (1983), Paulin J. Hountondji.
- *Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa* (1988), A. JanMohamed.
- *Inventing Ireland* (1995), by Declan Kiberd.
- "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism" (1916), by Lenin.
- *Prospero and Caliban, the Psychology of Colonization* Octave Mannoni and P. Powesland.
- *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (1983), by Ashis Nandy.
- *Traditions, Tyranny, and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness* (1987), by Ashis Nandy.
- *On the Postcolony* (2000), by Achille Mbembe. The Regents of the University of California.
- "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Postcolonialism' " (1994), by Anne McClintock, in *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory* (1994), M. Baker, P. Hulme, and M. Iverson, Eds.
- *Beginning Postcolonialism* (2010), by J. McLeod, second edition, Manchester University Press.

- *The Idea of Latin América*" (2005), by Walter Mignolo.
- *Local Histories/Global designs: Coloniality* (1999), by Walter Mignolo.
- ** "New Orientations:Post Colonial Literature in English" by Jaydeep Sarangi ,Authorspress,New Delhi
- *Infinite Layers/Third World?* (1989), by Trinh T. Minh-ha.
- *Under Western Eyes* (1986), by Chandra Talpade Mohanty.
- *The Invention of Africa* (1988), by V. Y. Mudimbe.
- *Dislocating Cultures* (1997), by Uma Narayan.
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- "The Postcolonial Ghetto" ^[31] (2010), by L Paperson.
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- Postcolonial Student: Learning the Ethics of Global Solidarity in an English Classroom ^[33], by Masood Ashraf Raja.
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- *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), by Edward W. Saïd ^[34]
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- *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988), by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.
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- *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (2001), by Robert J.C. Young.
- "Presentations of Postcolonialism: New Orientations" (2007),Jaydeep Sarangi,Authorspress,New Delhi

Notes

- [1] Fischer-Tiné 2011, § Lead; Quayson 2000, p. 2-.
- [2] Edward Saïd, "Nationalism, Human Rights, and Interpretation", *Reflections on Exile, and Other Essays* (2000) pp. 418–19
- [3] "Colonialism", *The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations* (1998) Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newnham, p. 79
- [4] "Imperialism", *The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations* (1998), by Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newnham. p. 244
- [5] "The Clash of Definitions", in *Reflections on Exile, and Other Essays* (2000), Edward W. Saïd. p. 574.
- [6] Dictionary of Human Geography 2007, p. 561.
- [7] Fischer-Tiné 2011, § Lead.
- [8] Bhabha, 1994: 113
- [9] Paul B. Armstrong, Editor. *Heart of Darkness: Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Context, Criticism* (Fourth Edition), 2006, pp. 208–212.
- [10] Fanon 1963, p. 250.
- [11] Fanon 1961.
- [12] *The Globalization of World Politics* (2005), by John Baylis and Steve Smith, pp. 231–35
- [13] Saïd 1978.
- [14] Saïd, 1978: 208
- [15] Saïd 1978, Chapter Three: Latent and Manifest Orientalism, pp. 201–225.
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- [17] Spivak 1990, p. 62–63-.
- [18] Spivak 1990, p. 62–63-.

- [19] Fischer-Tiné 2011, # 9.
- [20] Fischer-Tiné 2011, # 10, 11.
- [21] Hart & Goldie 1993, p. 155.
- [22] *The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations* (1998) Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newnham, pp. 83–84, 182–83
- [23] "Is Jordan Palestine", by Raphael Israel, in *Israel, Hashemites, and the Palestinians: The Fateful Triangle*, Efraim Karsh and P.R. Kumaraswamy (eds.) (London: Frank Cass, 2003), pp. 49–66; and *Overstating the Arab State*, by Nazih Ayubi (Bodmin: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2001) pp. 86–123
- [24] Sadiki 2004.
- [25] Kumaraswamy 2006, p. 1.
- [26] Sadiki 2004, p. 122.
- [27] *Heart of Darkness: Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Context, Criticism* (Fourth Edition), Paul B. Armstrong, Editor. (2006), pp. 208–212.
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- [31] <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/3q91f9gv/>
- [32] <http://books.google.com/?id=wIFMuFC0E-wC&dq=pem+poddar>
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- Contemporary Postcolonial and Postimperial Literature (<http://www.postcolonialweb.org/>)
 - Paper about Post-Colonialism: Definition, Development and Examples from India (<http://www.nilsole.net/referate/post-colonialism-definition-development-and-examples-from-india/>)
 - The Postcolonial Space (<http://postcolonial.net/>)
 - Postcolonialities (<http://postcoloniality.org/>)
 - Postcolonial Studies Association (<http://www.postcolonialstudiesassociation.co.uk/>)
-

Antonio Gramsci

Antonio Gramsci



Gramsci in 1916

Born	22 January 1891 <div>Ales, Sardinia, Kingdom of Italy</div>
Died	27 April 1937 (aged 46) <div>Rome</div>
Era	20th-century philosophy
Region	Western Philosophy
School	Marxism
Main interests	Politics, ideology, culture
Notable ideas	Hegemony, war of position, the distinction between "traditional" and "organic" intellectuals

Part of a series on

Socialism



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Antonio Gramsci (Italian: [anˈtɔːnjo ˈɡramʃi]; 22 January 1891 – 27 April 1937) was an Italian Marxist theoretician and politician. He wrote on political theory, sociology and linguistics. He was a founding member and one-time leader of the Communist Party of Italy and was imprisoned by Benito Mussolini's Fascist regime. Gramsci is best known for his theory of cultural hegemony, which describes how states use cultural institutions to maintain power in capitalist societies.

Life

Early life

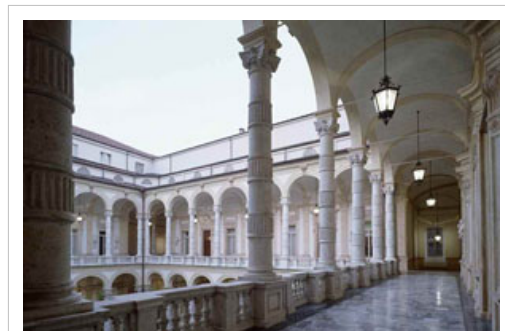
Gramsci was born in Ales, on the island of Sardinia, the fourth of seven sons of Francesco Gramsci (1860–1937). The senior Gramsci was a low-level official from Gaeta, who married Giuseppina Marcias (1861–1932). Gramsci's father was of Arbëreshë descent,^[2] while his mother belonged to a local landowning family. The senior Gramsci's financial difficulties and troubles with the police forced the family to move about through several villages in Sardinia until they finally settled in Ghilarza.^[3]

In 1898 Francesco was convicted of embezzlement and imprisoned, reducing his family to destitution. The young Antonio had to abandon schooling and work at various casual jobs until his father's release in 1904.^[4] As a boy, Gramsci suffered from health problems, particularly a malformation of the spine that stunted his growth (his adult height was less than 5 feet)^[5] and left him seriously hunchbacked. For decades, it was reported that his condition had been due to a childhood accident – specifically, having been dropped by a nanny – but more recently it has been suggested that it was due to Pott disease,^[6] a form of tuberculosis that can cause deformity of the spine. Gramsci was also plagued by various internal disorders throughout his life.

Gramsci completed secondary school in Cagliari, where he lodged with his elder brother Gennaro, a former soldier whose time on the mainland had made him a militant socialist. However, Gramsci's sympathies then did not lie with socialism, but rather with the grievances of impoverished Sardinian peasants and miners.^[7] They perceived their neglect as a result of privileges enjoyed by the rapidly industrialising North, and they tended to turn to Sardinian nationalism as a response.

Turin

In 1911, Gramsci won a scholarship to study at the University of Turin, sitting the exam at the same time as future cohort Palmiro Togliatti.^[8] At Turin, he read literature and took a keen interest in linguistics, which he studied under Matteo Bartoli. Gramsci was in Turin as it was going through industrialization, with the Fiat and Lancia factories recruiting workers from poorer regions. Trade unions became established, and the first industrial social conflicts started to emerge.^[9] Gramsci frequented socialist circles as well as associating with Sardinian emigrants. His worldview shaped by both his earlier experiences in Sardinia and his environment on the mainland. Gramsci joined the Italian Socialist Party in late 1913.



University of Turin: the Rectorate

Despite showing talent for his studies, Gramsci had financial problems and poor health. Together with his growing political commitment, these led to his abandoning his education in early 1915. By this time, he had acquired an extensive knowledge of history and philosophy. At university, he had come into contact with the thought of Antonio Labriola, Rodolfo Mondolfo, Giovanni Gentile and, most importantly, Benedetto Croce, possibly the most widely respected Italian intellectual of his day. Such thinkers espoused a brand of Hegelian Marxism to which Labriola had

given the name "philosophy of praxis".^[10] Though Gramsci would later use this phrase to escape the prison censors, his relationship with this current of thought was ambiguous throughout his life.

From 1914 onward, Gramsci's writings for socialist newspapers such as *Il Grido del Popolo* earned him a reputation as a notable journalist. In 1916 he became co-editor of the Piedmont edition of *Avanti!*, the Socialist Party official organ. An articulate and prolific writer of political theory, Gramsci proved a formidable commentator, writing on all aspects of Turin's social and political life.^[11]

Gramsci was, at this time, also involved in the education and organisation of Turin workers: he spoke in public for the first time in 1916 and gave talks on topics such as Romain Rolland, the French Revolution, the Paris Commune and the emancipation of women. In the wake of the arrest of Socialist Party leaders that followed the revolutionary riots of August 1917, Gramsci became one of Turin's leading socialists when he was both elected to the party's Provisional Committee and made editor of *Il Grido del Popolo*.^[12]

In April 1919 with Togliatti, Angelo Tasca and Umberto Terracini Gramsci set up the weekly newspaper *L'Ordine Nuovo* (The New Order). In October of the same year, despite being divided into various hostile factions, the Socialist Party moved by a large majority to join the Third International. The *L'Ordine Nuovo* group was seen by Vladimir Lenin as closest in orientation to the Bolsheviks, and it received his backing against the anti-parliamentary programme of the extreme left Amadeo Bordiga.

Amongst the various tactical debates that took place within the party, Gramsci's group was mainly distinguished by its advocacy of workers' councils, which had come into existence in Turin spontaneously during the large strikes of 1919 and 1920. For Gramsci these councils were the proper means of enabling workers to take control of the task of organising production. Although he believed his position at this time to be in keeping with Lenin's policy of "All power to the Soviets", his stance was attacked by Bordiga for betraying a syndicalist tendency influenced by the thought of Georges Sorel and Daniel DeLeon. By the time of the defeat of the Turin workers in spring 1920, Gramsci was almost alone in his defence of the councils.

In the Communist Party of Italy

The failure of the workers' councils to develop into a national movement led Gramsci to believe that a Communist Party in the Leninist sense was needed. The group around *L'Ordine Nuovo* declaimed incessantly against the Italian Socialist Party's centrist leadership and ultimately allied with Bordiga's far larger "abstentionist" faction. On 21 January 1921, in the town of Livorno (Leghorn), the Communist Party of Italy (*Partito Comunista d'Italia – PCI*) was founded. Gramsci supported against Bordiga the *Arditi del Popolo*, a militant anti-fascist group which struggled against the Blackshirts.

Gramsci would be a leader of the party from its inception but was subordinate to Bordiga, whose emphasis on discipline, centralism and purity of principles dominated the party's programme until the latter lost the leadership in 1924.

In 1922 Gramsci travelled to Russia as a representative of the new party. Here, he met Julia Schucht, a young violinist whom Gramsci married in 1923 and by whom he had two sons, Delio (born 1924) and Giuliano (born 1926).^[13] Gramsci never saw his second son.^[14]



Antonio Gramsci commemorative plaque, Mokhovaya Street 16, Moscow. The inscription reads "In this building in 1922–1923 worked the eminent figure of international communism and the labor movement and founder of the Italian Communist Party ANTONIO GRAMSCI."

The Russian mission coincided with the advent of Fascism in Italy, and Gramsci returned with instructions to foster, against the wishes of the PCI leadership, a united front of leftist parties against fascism. Such a front would ideally have had the PCI at its centre, through which Moscow would have controlled all the leftist forces, but others disputed this potential supremacy: socialists did have a certain tradition in Italy too, while the communist party seemed relatively young and too radical. Many believed that an eventual coalition led by communists would have functioned too remotely from political debate, and thus would have run the risk of isolation.

In late 1922 and early 1923, Benito Mussolini's government embarked on a campaign of repression against the opposition parties, arresting most of the PCI leadership, including Bordiga. At the end of 1923, Gramsci travelled from Moscow to Vienna, where he tried to revive a party torn by factional strife.

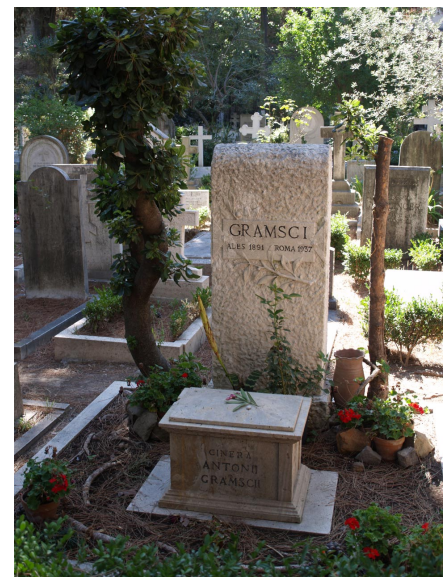
In 1924 Gramsci, now recognised as head of the PCI, gained election as a deputy for the Veneto. He started organizing the launch of the official newspaper of the party, called *L'Unità* (Unity), living in Rome while his family stayed in Moscow. At its Lyon Congress in January 1926, Gramsci's theses calling for a united front to restore democracy to Italy were adopted by the party.

In 1926 Joseph Stalin's manoeuvres inside the Bolshevik party moved Gramsci to write a letter to the Comintern, in which he deplored the opposition led by Leon Trotsky, but also underlined some presumed faults of the leader. Togliatti, in Moscow as a representative of the party, received the letter, opened it, read it, and decided not to deliver it. This caused a difficult conflict between Gramsci and Togliatti which they never completely resolved. Wikipedia: Citation needed

Imprisonment and death

On 9 November 1926 the Fascist government enacted a new wave of emergency laws, taking as a pretext an alleged attempt on Mussolini's life several days earlier. The fascist police arrested Gramsci, despite his parliamentary immunity, and brought him to Roman prison *Regina Coeli*.

At his trial, Gramsci's prosecutor stated, "For twenty years we must stop this brain from functioning".^[15] He received an immediate sentence of 5 years in confinement on the island of Ustica and the following year he received a sentence of 20 years of prison in Turi, near Bari. In prison his health deteriorated. In 1932, a project for exchanging political prisoners (including Gramsci) between Italy and the Soviet Union failed. In 1934 he gained conditional freedom on health grounds, after visiting hospitals in Civitavecchia, Formia and Rome. He died in 1937, at the "Quisisana" Hospital in Rome at the age of 46. His ashes are buried in the Protestant Cemetery there.



Grave of Gramsci at the Protestant Cemetery of Rome.

In an interview archbishop Luigi de Magistris, former head of the Apostolic Penitentiary of the Holy See stated that during Gramsci's final illness, he "returned to the faith of his infancy" and "died taking the sacraments." ^{Wikipedia:Verifiability} ^{Wikipedia:Link rot} However, Italian State documents on his death show that no religious official was sent for or received by Gramsci. ^{Wikipedia:Citation needed} Other witness accounts of his death also do not mention any conversion to Catholicism or recantation by Gramsci of his atheism. Cremation, which was banned for Catholics, and his ashes being buried in a Protestant cemetery, would both be further evidence that he had no deathbed conversion.

Thought

Gramsci was one of the most important Marxist thinkers of the twentieth century, and a particularly key thinker in the development of Western Marxism. He wrote more than 30 notebooks and 3000 pages of history and analysis during his imprisonment. These writings, known as the *Prison Notebooks*, contain Gramsci's tracing of Italian history and nationalism, as well as some ideas in Marxist theory, critical theory and educational theory associated with his name, such as:

- Cultural hegemony as a means of maintaining and legitimising the capitalist state.
- The need for popular workers' education to encourage development of intellectuals from the working class.
- An analysis of the modern capitalist state that distinguishes between political society, which dominates directly and coercively, and civil society, where leadership is constituted by means of consent.
- "Absolute historicism".
- A critique of economic determinism that opposes fatalistic interpretations of Marxism.
- A critique of philosophical materialism.

Hegemony

For more details on this topic, see Cultural hegemony.

Hegemony was a term previously used by Marxists such as Vladimir Ilyich Lenin to denote the political leadership of the working-class in a democratic revolution.^[16] Gramsci greatly expanded this concept, developing an acute analysis of how the ruling capitalist class – the bourgeoisie – establishes and maintains its control.^[17]

Orthodox Marxism had predicted that socialist revolution was inevitable in capitalist societies. By the early 20th century, no such revolution had occurred in the most advanced nations. Capitalism, it seemed, was even more entrenched than ever. Capitalism, Gramsci suggested, maintained control not just through violence and political and economic coercion, but also through ideology. The bourgeoisie developed a hegemonic culture, which propagated its own values and norms so that they became the "common sense" values of all. People in the working-class (and other classes) identified their own good with the good of the bourgeoisie, and helped to maintain the *status quo* rather than revolting.

To counter the notion that bourgeois values represented "natural" or "normal" values for society, the working class needed to develop a culture of its own. Lenin held that culture was "ancillary" to political objectives, but for Gramsci it was fundamental to the attainment of power that *cultural hegemony* be achieved first. In Gramsci's view, a class cannot dominate in modern conditions by merely advancing its own narrow economic interests. Neither can it dominate purely through force and coercion. Rather, it must exert intellectual and moral leadership, and make alliances and compromises with a variety of forces. Gramsci calls this union of social forces a "historic bloc", taking a term from Georges Sorel. This bloc forms the basis of consent to a certain social order, which produces and re-produces the hegemony of the dominant class through a nexus of institutions, social relations, and ideas. In this manner, Gramsci developed a theory that emphasized the importance of the political and ideological superstructure in both maintaining and fracturing relations of the economic base.

Gramsci stated that bourgeois cultural values were tied to folklore, popular culture and religion, and therefore much of his analysis of hegemonic culture is aimed at these. He was also impressed by the influence Roman Catholicism had and the care the Church had taken to prevent an excessive gap developing between the religion of the learned and that of the less educated. Gramsci saw Marxism as a marriage of the purely intellectual critique of religion found in Renaissance humanism and the elements of the Reformation that had appealed to the masses. For Gramsci, Marxism could supersede religion only if it met people's spiritual needs, and to do so people would have to think of it as an expression of their own experience.

For Gramsci, hegemonic dominance ultimately relied on a "consented" coercion, and in a "crisis of authority" the "masks of consent" slip away, revealing the fist of force.

Intellectuals and education

Gramsci gave much thought to the role of intellectuals in society. Famously, he stated that all men are intellectuals, in that all have intellectual and rational faculties, but not all men have the social function of intellectuals.^[18] He saw modern intellectuals not as talkers, but as practically-minded directors and organisers who produced hegemony by means of ideological apparatuses such as education and the media. Furthermore, he distinguished between a "traditional" intelligentsia which sees itself (wrongly) as a class apart from society, and the thinking groups which every class produces from its own ranks "organically". Such "organic" intellectuals do not simply describe social life in accordance with scientific rules, but instead articulate, through the language of culture, the feelings and experiences which the masses could not express for themselves. The need to create a working-class culture relates to Gramsci's call for a kind of education that could develop working-class intellectuals, whose task was not to introduce Marxist ideology from without the proletariat, but to renovate and make critical of the *status quo* the already existing intellectual activity of the masses. His ideas about an education system for this purpose correspond with the notion of critical pedagogy and popular education as theorized and practised in later decades by Paulo Freire in Brazil, and have much in common with the thought of Frantz Fanon. For this reason, partisans of adult and popular education consider Gramsci an important voice to this day.

State and civil society

Gramsci's theory of hegemony is tied to his conception of the capitalist state. Gramsci does not understand the 'state' in the narrow sense of the government. Instead, he divides it between 'political society' (the police, the army, legal system, etc.) – the arena of political institutions and legal constitutional control – and 'civil society' (the family, the education system, trade unions, etc.) – commonly seen as the 'private' or 'non-state' sphere, mediating between the state and the economy. He stresses, however, that the division is purely conceptual and that the two, in reality, often overlap.^[19] The capitalist state, Gramsci claims, rules through force plus consent: political society is the realm of force and civil society is the realm of consent.

Gramsci proffers that under modern capitalism, the bourgeoisie can maintain its economic control by allowing certain demands made by trade unions and mass political parties within civil society to be met by the political sphere. Thus, the bourgeoisie engages in passive revolution by going beyond its immediate economic interests and allowing the forms of its hegemony to change. Gramsci posits that movements such as reformism and fascism, as well as the 'scientific management' and assembly line methods of Frederick Taylor and Henry Ford respectively, are examples of this.

Drawing from Machiavelli, he argues that 'The Modern Prince' – the revolutionary party – is the force that will allow the working-class to develop organic intellectuals and an alternative hegemony within civil society. For Gramsci, the complex nature of modern civil society means that a 'war of position', carried out by revolutionaries through political agitation, the trade unions, advancement of proletarian culture, and other ways to create an opposing civil society was necessary alongside a 'war of maneuver' – a direct revolution – in order to have a successful revolution without a danger of a counter-revolution or degeneration.

Despite his claim that the lines between the two may be blurred, Gramsci rejects the state-worship that results from identifying political society with civil society, as was done by the Jacobins and Fascists. He believes the proletariat's historical task is to create a 'regulated society' and defines the 'withering away of the state' as the full development of civil society's ability to regulate itself.

Historicism

Gramsci, like the early Marx, was an emphatic proponent of historicism.^[20] In Gramsci's view, all meaning derives from the relation between human practical activity (or "praxis") and the "objective" historical and social processes of which it is a part. Ideas cannot be understood outside their social and historical context, apart from their function and origin. The concepts by which we organise our knowledge of the world do not derive primarily from our relation to things (to an objective reality), but rather from the social relations between the users of those concepts. As a result, there is no such thing as an unchanging "human nature". Furthermore, philosophy and science do not "reflect" a reality independent of man. Rather, a theory can be said to be "true" when, in any given historical situation, it expresses the real developmental trend of that situation.

For the majority of Marxists, truth was truth no matter when and where it is known, and scientific knowledge (which included Marxism) accumulated historically as the advance of truth in this everyday sense. On this view, Marxism could not be said to not belong to the illusory realm of the superstructure because it is a science. In contrast, Gramsci believed Marxism was "true" in a socially pragmatic sense: by articulating the class consciousness of the proletariat, Marxism expressed the "truth" of its times better than any other theory. This anti-scientistic and anti-positivist stance was indebted to the influence of Benedetto Croce. However, it should be underlined that Gramsci's "absolute historicism" broke with Croce's tendency to secure a metaphysical synthesis in historical "destiny". Though Gramsci repudiates the charge, his historical account of truth has been criticised as a form of relativism.

Critique of "economism"

In a notable pre-prison article entitled "The Revolution against *Das Kapital*", Gramsci claimed that the October Revolution in Russia had invalidated the idea that socialist revolution had to await the full development of capitalist forces of production. This reflected his view that Marxism was not a determinist philosophy. The principle of the causal "primacy" of the forces of production, he held, was a misconception of Marxism. Both economic changes and cultural changes are expressions of a "basic historical process", and it is difficult to say which sphere has primacy over the other. The belief, widespread within the workers' movement in its earliest years, that it would inevitably triumph due to "historical laws", was, in Gramsci's view, a product of the historical circumstances of an oppressed class restricted mainly to defensive action. Such a fatalistic doctrine was to be abandoned as a hindrance once the working-class became able to take the initiative. Because Marxism is a "philosophy of praxis", it cannot rely on unseen "historical laws" as the agents of social change. History is defined by human praxis and therefore includes human will. Nonetheless, will-power cannot achieve anything it likes in any given situation: when the consciousness of the working-class reaches the stage of development necessary for action, it will encounter historical circumstances that cannot be arbitrarily altered. However, it is not predetermined by historical inevitability or "destiny" as to which of several possible developments will take place as a result.

His critique of economism also extended to that practiced by the syndicalists of the Italian trade unions. He believed that many trade unionists had settled for a reformist, gradualist approach in that they had refused to struggle on the political front in addition to the economic front. For Gramsci, much as the ruling class can look beyond its own immediate economic interests to reorganise the forms of its own hegemony, so must the working-class present its own interests as congruous with the universal advancement of society. While Gramsci envisioned the trade unions as one organ of a counter-hegemonic force in capitalist society, the trade union leaders simply saw these organizations as a means to improve conditions within the existing structure. Gramsci referred to the views of these trade unionists as "vulgar economism", which he equated to covert reformism and even liberalism.

Critique of materialism

By virtue of his belief that human history and collective praxis determine whether any philosophical question is meaningful or not, Gramsci's views run contrary to the metaphysical materialism and 'copy' theory of perception advanced by Engels^{[21][22]} and Lenin,^[23] though he does not explicitly state this. For Gramsci, Marxism does not deal with a reality that exists in and for itself, independent of humanity.^[24] The concept of an objective universe outside of human history and human praxis was, in his view, analogous to belief in God.^[25] Gramsci defined objectivity in terms of a universal intersubjectivity to be established in a future communist society. Natural history was thus only meaningful in relation to human history. In his view philosophical materialism resulted from a lack of critical thought,^[26] and could not be said to oppose religious dogma and superstition.^[27] Despite this, Gramsci resigned himself to the existence of this arguably cruder form of Marxism. Marxism was a philosophy for the proletariat, a subaltern class, and thus could often only be expressed in the form of popular superstition and common sense.^[28] Nonetheless, it was necessary to effectively challenge the ideologies of the educated classes, and to do so Marxists must present their philosophy in a more sophisticated guise, and attempt to genuinely understand their opponents' views.

Influence

Gramsci's thought emanates from the organized left, but he has also become an important figure in current academic discussions within cultural studies and critical theory. Political theorists from the center and the right have also found insight in his concepts; his idea of hegemony, for example, has become widely cited. His influence is particularly strong in contemporary political science (see Neo-gramscianism). His work also heavily influenced intellectual discourse on popular culture and scholarly popular culture studies in whom many have found the potential for political or ideological resistance to dominant government and business interests.

His critics charge him with fostering a notion of power struggle through ideas. They find the Gramscian approach to philosophical analysis, reflected in current academic controversies, to be in conflict with open-ended, liberal inquiry grounded in apolitical readings of the classics of Western culture. Gramscians would counter that thoughts of "liberal inquiry" and "apolitical reading" are utterly naive; for the Gramscians, these are intellectual devices used to maintain the hegemony of the capitalist class. To credit or blame Gramsci for the travails of current academic politics is an odd turn of history, since Gramsci himself was never an academic, and was in fact deeply intellectually engaged with Italian culture, history, and current liberal thought.

As a socialist, Gramsci's legacy has been disputed.^[29] Togliatti, who led the Party (renamed as Italian Communist Party, PCI) after World War II and whose gradualist approach was a forerunner to Eurocommunism, claimed that the PCI's practices during this period were congruent with Gramscian thought. Others, however, have argued that Gramsci was a Left Communist, who would likely have been expelled from his Party if prison had not prevented him from regular contact with Moscow during the leadership of Joseph Stalin.

Influences on Gramsci's thought

- Niccolò Machiavelli – 16th-century Italian writer who greatly influenced Gramsci's theory of the state.
- Karl Marx – philosopher, historian, economist and founder of Marxism.
- Vladimir Lenin – founder of the Bolshevik Party and a leader of the Russian Revolution.
- Antonio Labriola – Italy's first notable Marxist theorist, believed Marxism's main feature was the nexus it established between history and philosophy.
- Georges Sorel – French syndicalist writer who rejected the inevitability of historical progress.
- Vilfredo Pareto – Italian economist and sociologist, known for his theory on mass and élite interaction.
- Henri Bergson – French philosopher.
- Benedetto Croce – Italian liberal, anti-Marxist and idealist philosopher whose thought Gramsci subjected to careful and thorough critique.

- Giovanni Gentile – Italian neo-Hegelian philosopher

Later thinkers influenced by Gramsci

- Zackie Achmat
 - Louis Althusser
 - Perry Anderson
 - Giulio Angioni
 - Michael Apple
 - Stanley Aronowitz
 - Giovanni Arrighi
 - Zygmunt Bauman
 - Enrico Berlinguer
 - Homi K. Bhabha
 - Christine Buci-Glucksmann
 - Judith Butler
 - Alex Callinicos
 - Robert W. Cox
 - Alain de Benoist
 - Ernesto de Martino
 - Marilena de Souza Chaui
 - Rudi Dutschke
 - John Fiske
 - Paulo Freire
 - Néstor García Canclini
 - José Aricó
 - Eugenio Garin
 - Eugene D. Genovese
 - Stephen Gill^[30]
 - Sam Gindin^[31]
 - Todd Gitlin
 - Paul Gottfried
 - Stuart Hall
 - David Harvey
 - Hamish Henderson
 - Eric Hobsbawm
 - Samuel P. Huntington
 - Bob Jessop
 - Michael Parenti
 - Ernesto Laclau
 - Subcomandante Marcos
 - Chantal Mouffe
 - Antonio Negri
 - Luigi Nono
 - Michael Omi
 - Pier Paolo Pasolini
 - Antonio Pigliaru
 - Nicos Poulantzas
-

- Gyan Prakash
- William I. Robinson
- Edward Said
- Ato Sekyi-Otu
- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak
- E.P. Thompson
- Cornel West
- Howard Winant
- Raymond Williams
- Eric Wolf
- Howard Zinn
- Partha Chatterjee
- Eqbal Ahmad^[32]
- Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff^[33]

In culture

Occupations – Gramsci is a central character in Trevor Griffiths's 1970 play *Occupations* about workers taking over car factories in Turin in 1920.

A major road going through the lower portion of Genoa, along the coast, is named after Antonio Gramsci.

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 - Fondazione Instituto Gramsci (<http://www.fondazionegramsci.org/>)
 - Special issue of International Socialism journal with a collection on Gramsci's legacy (<http://www.isj.org.uk/index.php4?s=contents&issue=114>)
 - Roberto Robaina: Gramsci and revolution: a necessary clarification (<http://www.isj.org.uk/index.php4?id=162&issue=109>)
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Cultural hegemony

In philosophy and sociology, the term '*cultural hegemony*'; carries denotations and connotations derived from the Ancient Greek word *hegemony* (leadership and rule). Hegemony is the geopolitical method of indirect imperial dominance, with which the *hegemon* (leader state) rules subordinate states by the implied means of power (the threat of intervention) rather than by direct military force—that is, invasion, occupation, or annexation.^[1]

In Marxist philosophy, however, the term describes the domination of a culturally diverse society by the ruling class, who manipulate the culture of the society — the beliefs, explanations, perceptions, values, and mores — so that their ruling-class worldview becomes the worldview that is imposed and accepted as the cultural norm; as the universally valid dominant ideology that justifies the social, political, and economic *status quo* as natural, inevitable, perpetual and beneficial for everyone, rather than as artificial social constructs that benefit only the ruling class.^{[2][3]}

Background

Etymologic

The etymologic and historical evolution of the Greek word **hegemony**, and of its denotations, has proceeded thus:

- In Ancient Greece (8th century BC – 6th century AD), *hegemony* (**leadership**) denoted the politico–military dominance of a city-state upon other city-states, as in the Hellenic League (338 BC), a federation of Greek city–states, established by King Philip II of Macedon, to facilitate his use of the Greek militaries against Persia.
- In the 19th century, *hegemony* (**rule**) denoted the geopolitical and cultural predominance of one country upon other countries, as in the European colonialism imposed in the Americas, Africa, and Asia.^[4]
- In the 20th century, the political-science denotation of *hegemony* (**dominance**) expanded to include the cultural domination, by a ruling class, of a socially stratified society. That by manipulating the dominant ideology (cultural values and mores) of the society, the ruling class can intellectually dominate the other social classes with an imposed worldview (*Weltanschauung*) that ideologically justifies the social, political, and economic *status quo* of the society as if it were a natural and normal, inevitable and perpetual state of affairs that always has been so.^{[5][6]}



The Communist intellectual Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) developed the theory of cultural hegemony to further the establishment of a working-class worldview.

Historical


In 1848, Karl Marx proposed that the economic recessions and practical contradictions of a capitalist economy would provoke the working class to proletarian revolution, depose capitalism, restructure societal institutions (economic, political, social) per the rational models of socialism, and thus begin the transition to a communist society. Therefore, the dialectical changes to the functioning of the economy of a society determine its social superstructures (culture and politics), and the composition of its economic and social classes.




To that end, Antonio Gramsci proposed a *strategic distinction*, between a War of Position and a War of Manœuvre. The war of position is an intellectual and cultural struggle wherein the anti-capitalist revolutionary creates a proletarian culture whose native value system counters the cultural hegemony of the bourgeoisie. The proletarian culture will increase class consciousness, teach revolutionary theory and historical analysis, and thus propagate further revolutionary organisation among the social classes. On winning the war of position, socialist leaders would then have the necessary political power and popular support to begin the political manœuvre warfare of revolutionary socialism.

The initial, theoretic application of **cultural domination** was as a Marxist analysis of **economic class** (base and superstructure), which Antonio Gramsci developed to comprehend **social class**; hence, **cultural hegemony** proposes that the prevailing cultural norms of a society, which are imposed by the ruling class (bourgeois cultural hegemony), must not be perceived as natural and inevitable, but must be recognized as artificial social constructs (institutions, practices, beliefs, et cetera) that must be investigated to discover their philosophic roots as instruments of social-class domination. That such praxis of knowledge is indispensable for the intellectual and political liberation of the proletariat, so that workers and peasants, the people of town and country, can create their own working-class culture, which specifically addresses their social and economic needs as social classes.

Part of a series on

Marxism



-  Socialism portal
-  Communism portal
-  Philosophy portal

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In a society, cultural hegemony is neither monolithic, intellectual praxis, nor a unified system of values, but a complex of stratified social structures, wherein each social and economic class has a societal purpose and an internal class-logic that allows its members to behave in a way that is particular and different from the behaviours of the members of other social classes, whilst co-existing with them as constituents of the society.

As a result of their different social purposes, the classes will be able to coalesce into a society with a greater social mission. When a man, a woman, or a child perceives the social structures of bourgeois cultural hegemony, personal common sense performs a dual, structural role (private and public) whereby the individual person applies common

sense to cope with daily life, which explains (to himself and to herself) the small segment of the social order stratum that each experiences as the *status quo* of life in society; “the way things are”. Publicly, the emergence of the perceptual limitations of personal common sense inhibit the individual person’s perception of the greater nature of the systematic socio-economic exploitation made possible by cultural hegemony. Because of the discrepancy in perceiving the *status quo* — the socio-economic hierarchy of bourgeois culture — most men and women concern themselves with their immediate (private) personal concerns, rather than with distant (publicly) concerns, and so do not think about and question the fundamental sources of their socio-economic oppression, and its discontents, social, personal, and political.

The effects of cultural hegemony are perceptible at the personal level; although each person in a society lives a meaningful life in his and her social class, to him and to her, the discrete social classes might appear to have little in common with the private life of the individual man and woman. Yet, when perceived as a whole society, the life of each person does contribute to the greater societal hegemony. Although social diversity, economic variety, and political freedom appear to exist — because most people *see* different life-circumstances — they are incapable of perceiving the greater hegemonic pattern created when the lives they witness coalesce as a society. The cultural hegemony is manifested in and maintained by an existence of minor, different circumstances that are not always fully perceived by the men and the women living the culture. (See: *Entfremdung*, Karl Marx’s theory of alienation)

Intellectuals and cultural hegemony

In perceiving and combating cultural hegemony, the working class and the peasantry depend upon the intellectuals produced by their society, to which ends Antonio Gramsci distinguished between bourgeois-class intellectuals and working-class intellectuals, the proponents and the opponents of the imposed, normative culture, and thus of the societal *status quo*:

Since these various categories of traditional intellectuals [administrators, scholars and scientists, theorists, non-ecclesiastical philosophers, etc.] experience through an *esprit de corps* their uninterrupted historical continuity, and their special qualifications, they thus put themselves forward as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group. This self-assessment is not without consequences in the ideological and political fields, consequences of wide-ranging import. The whole of idealist philosophy can easily be connected with this position, assumed by the social complex of intellectuals, and can be defined as the expression of that social utopia by which the intellectuals think of themselves as “independent” [and] autonomous, [and] endowed with a character of their own, etc.

— *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (1971), pp. 7–8.^[8]

The traditional and vulgarized type of the intellectual is given by the Man of Letters, the philosopher, and the artist. Therefore, journalists, who claim to be men of letters, philosophers, artists, also regard themselves as the “true” intellectuals. In the modern world, technical education, closely bound to industrial labor, even at the most primitive and unqualified level, must form the basis of the new type of intellectual. . . .

The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist of eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor [and] organizer, as “permanent persuader”, not just simple orator.

— *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (1971), pp. 9–10.^[9]

Gramsci's intellectual influence

In the event, cultural hegemony has philosophically influenced Eurocommunism, the social sciences, and the activist politics of socially liberal and progressive politicians. The analytic discourse of cultural hegemony is important to research and synthesis in anthropology, political science, sociology, and cultural studies; in education, cultural hegemony developed critical pedagogy, by which the root causes of political and social discontent can be identified, and so resolved.

In 1967, the German student movement leader Rudi Dutschke reformulated Antonio Gramsci's philosophy of cultural hegemony with the phrase *Der lange Marsch durch die Institutionen* (The Long March through the Institutions), denoting the war of position, an allusion to the Long March (1934–35) of the Communist Chinese People's Liberation Army, by means of which, the working class would produce their own organic intellectuals and culture (dominant ideology) to replace those imposed by the bourgeoisie.^{[10][11]}



The German student leader Rudi Dutschke, of the *68er-Bewegung*, said that changing the bourgeois West Germany required a long march through the society's institutions, in order to identify and combat cultural hegemony.

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External links

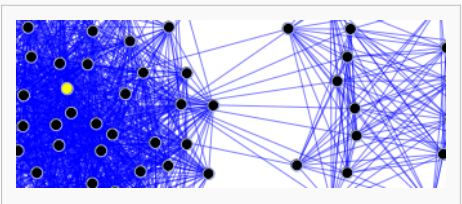
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Critical theory

"Critical sociology" redirects here. For the journal, see Critical Sociology (journal).

Sociology	
	
Outline	
•	Theory
•	History
•	Positivism
•	Antipositivism
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Research methods	
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Critical theory is a school of thought that stresses the reflective assessment and critique of society and culture by applying knowledge from the social sciences and the humanities. As a term, *critical theory* has two meanings with different origins and histories: the first originated in sociology and the second originated in literary criticism, whereby it is used and applied as an umbrella term that can describe a theory founded upon critique; thus, the theorist Max Horkheimer described a theory as critical insofar as it seeks "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them."^[2]

In philosophy, the term *critical theory* describes the neo-Marxist philosophy of the Frankfurt School, which was developed in Germany in the 1930s. Frankfurt theorists drew on the critical methods of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. Critical theory maintains that ideology is the principal obstacle to human liberation.^[3] Critical theory was established as a school of thought primarily by five Frankfurt School theoreticians: Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, and Erich Fromm. Modern critical theory has been influenced by György Lukács and Antonio Gramsci as well as the second generation Frankfurt School scholars, including Jürgen Habermas. In Habermas's work, critical theory transcended its theoretic roots in German idealism, and progressed closer to American pragmatism. Concern for social "base and superstructure" is one of the remaining Marxist philosophic concepts in much of the contemporary critical theory.^[4]

While critical theorists have been frequently defined as Marxist intellectuals^[5] their tendency to denounce some Marxist concepts and to combine Marxian analysis with other sociologic and philosophic traditions has been labeled as revisionism by Classical, Orthodox, and Analytical Marxists, and by Marxist-Leninist philosophers. Martin Jay has stated that the first generation of critical theory is best understood as not promoting a specific philosophical agenda or a specific ideology, but as "a gadfly of other systems".^[6]


Definitions

The two meanings of critical theory—from different intellectual traditions associated with the meaning of criticism and critique—derive ultimately from the Greek word κριτικός, *kritikos* meaning judgment or discernment, and in their present forms go back to the 18th century. While they can be considered completely independent intellectual pursuits, increasingly scholars Wikipedia:Avoid weasel words are interested in the areas of critique where the two overlap.Wikipedia:Citation needed

To use an epistemological distinction introduced by Jürgen Habermas in *Erkenntnis und Interesse* [1968] (*Knowledge and Human Interests*), critical theory in literary studies is ultimately a form of hermeneutics, i.e. knowledge via interpretation to understand the meaning of human texts and symbolic expressions—including the interpretation of texts which are themselves implicitly or explicitly the interpretation of other texts. Critical social theory is, in contrast, a form of self-reflective knowledge involving both understanding and theoretical explanation to reduce entrapment in systems of domination or dependence, obeying the emancipatory interest in expanding the scope of autonomy and reducing the scope of domination.

From this perspective, much literary critical theory, since it is focused on interpretation and explanation rather than on social transformation, would be regarded as positivistic or traditional rather than critical theory in the Kantian or Marxian sense. Critical theory in literature and the humanities in general does not necessarily involve a normative dimension, whereas critical social theory does, either through criticizing society from some general theory of values, norms, or "oughts," or through criticizing it in terms of its own espoused values.Wikipedia:Citation needed

In social theory

Part of a series on the
Frankfurt School

Major works
<i>Reason and Revolution</i> <i>The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction</i> <i>Eclipse of Reason</i> <i>Escape from Freedom</i> <i>Dialectic of Enlightenment</i> <i>Minima Moralia</i> <i>Eros and Civilization</i> <i>One-Dimensional Man</i> <i>Negative Dialectics</i> <i>The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere</i> <i>The Theory of Communicative Action</i>
Notable theorists
Max Horkheimer · Theodor Adorno Herbert Marcuse · Walter Benjamin Erich Fromm · Friedrich Pollock Leo Löwenthal · Jürgen Habermas · Axel Honneth
Important concepts
Critical theory · Dialectic · Praxis Psychoanalysis · Antipositivism Popular culture · Culture industry Advanced capitalism Privatism · Non-identity Communicative rationality Legitimation crisis
<div><div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div><div>v t e^[7]</div></div>

Main article: Frankfurt School

Critical theory was first defined by Max Horkheimer of the Frankfurt School of sociology in his 1937 essay *Traditional and Critical Theory*: Critical theory is a social theory oriented toward critiquing and changing society as a whole, in contrast to traditional theory oriented only to understanding or explaining it. Horkheimer wanted to distinguish critical theory as a radical, emancipatory form of Marxian theory, critiquing both the model of science put forward by logical positivism and what he and his colleagues saw as the covert positivism and authoritarianism of orthodox Marxism and Communism.^[8]

Core concepts are: (1) That critical social theory should be directed at the totality of society in its historical specificity (i.e. how it came to be configured at a specific point in time), and (2) That critical theory should improve understanding of society by integrating all the major social sciences, including geography, economics, sociology,

history, political science, anthropology, and psychology.

This version of "critical" theory derives from Kant's (18th-century) and Marx's (19th-century) use of the term "critique", as in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and Marx's concept that his work *Das Kapital* (*Capital*) forms a "critique of political economy." For Kant's transcendental idealism, "critique" means examining and establishing the limits of the validity of a faculty, type, or body of knowledge, especially through accounting for the limitations imposed by the fundamental, irreducible concepts in use in that knowledge system.

Kant's notion of critique has been associated with the disestablishment of false, unprovable, or dogmatic philosophical, social, and political beliefs, because Kant's critique of reason involved the critique of dogmatic theological and metaphysical ideas and was intertwined with the enhancement of ethical autonomy and the Enlightenment critique of superstition and irrational authority. Ignored by many in "critical realist" circles, however, is that Kant's immediate impetus for writing his "Critique of Pure Reason" was to address problems raised by David Hume's skeptical empiricism which, in attacking metaphysics, employed reason and logic to argue against the knowability of the world and common notions of causation. Kant, by contrast, pushed the employment of a priori metaphysical claims as requisite, for if anything is to be said to be knowable, it would have to be established upon abstractions distinct from perceivable phenomena.

Marx explicitly developed the notion of critique into the critique of ideology and linked it with the practice of social revolution, as in the famous 11th of his *Theses on Feuerbach*, "Philosophers have only interpreted the world in certain ways; the point is to change it."

One of the distinguishing characteristics of critical theory, as Adorno and Horkheimer elaborated in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), is a certain ambivalence concerning the ultimate source or foundation of social domination, an ambivalence which gave rise to the "pessimism" of the new critical theory over the possibility of human emancipation and freedom.^[9] This ambivalence was rooted, of course, in the historical circumstances in which the work was originally produced, in particular, the rise of National Socialism, state capitalism, and mass culture as entirely new forms of social domination that could not be adequately explained within the terms of traditional Marxist sociology.^[10]

For Adorno and Horkheimer, state intervention in economy had effectively abolished the tension between the "relations of production" and "material productive forces of society," a tension which, according to traditional critical theory, constituted the primary contradiction within capitalism. The market (as an "unconscious" mechanism for the distribution of goods) and private property had been replaced by centralized planning and socialized ownership of the means of production.^[11]

Yet, contrary to Marx's famous prediction in the *Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, this shift did not lead to "an era of social revolution," but rather to fascism and totalitarianism. As such, critical theory was left, in Jürgen Habermas' words, without "anything in reserve to which it might appeal; and when the forces of production enter into a baneful symbiosis with the relations of production that they were supposed to blow wide open, there is no longer any dynamism upon which critique could base its hope."^[12] For Adorno and Horkheimer, this posed the problem of how to account for the apparent persistence of domination in the absence of the very contradiction that, according to traditional critical theory, was the source of domination itself.

In the 1960s, Jürgen Habermas raised the epistemological discussion to a new level in his *Knowledge and Human Interests*, by identifying critical knowledge as based on principles that differentiated it either from the natural sciences or the humanities, through its orientation to self-reflection and emancipation. Though unsatisfied with Adorno and Horkheimer's thought presented in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Habermas shares the view that, in the form of instrumental rationality, the era of modernity marks a move away from the liberation of enlightenment and toward a new form of enslavement.^[13]

His ideas regarding the relationship between modernity and rationalization are in this sense strongly influenced by Max Weber. Habermas dissolved further the elements of critical theory derived from Hegelian German Idealism, though his thought remains broadly Marxist in its epistemological approach. Perhaps his two most influential ideas

are the concepts of the public sphere and communicative action; the latter arriving partly as a reaction to new post-structural or so-called "post-modern" challenges to the discourse of modernity. Habermas engaged in regular correspondence with Richard Rorty and a strong sense of philosophical pragmatism may be felt in his theory; thought which frequently traverses the boundaries between sociology and philosophy.

Postmodern critical theory

While modernist critical theory (as described above) concerns itself with "forms of authority and injustice that accompanied the evolution of industrial and corporate capitalism as a political-economic system," postmodern critical theory politicizes social problems "by situating them in historical and cultural contexts, to implicate themselves in the process of collecting and analyzing data, and to relativize their findings".^[14] Meaning itself is seen as unstable due to the rapid transformation in social structures. As a result, the focus of research is centered on local manifestations, rather than broad generalizations.

Postmodern critical research is also characterized by the *crisis of representation*, which rejects the idea that a researcher's work is an "objective depiction of a stable other." Instead, many postmodern scholars have adopted "alternatives that encourage reflection about the 'politics and poetics' of their work. In these accounts, the embodied, collaborative, dialogic, and improvisational aspects of qualitative research are clarified".^[15]

The term "critical theory" is often appropriated when an author (perhaps most notably Michel Foucault) works within sociological terms, yet attacks the social or human sciences (thus attempting to remain "outside" those frames of inquiry).

Jean Baudrillard has also been described as a critical theorist to the extent that he was an unconventional and critical sociologist; this appropriation is similarly casual, holding little or no relation to the Frankfurt School.

Language and construction

The two points at which there is the greatest overlap or mutual impingement of the two versions of critical theory are in their interrelated foci on language, symbolism, and communication and in their focus on social construction.

Language and communication

From the 1960s and 1970s onward, language, symbolism, text, and meaning came to be seen as the theoretical foundation for the humanities, through the influence of Ludwig Wittgenstein, Ferdinand de Saussure, George Herbert Mead, Noam Chomsky, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and other thinkers in linguistic and analytic philosophy, structural linguistics, symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics, semiology, linguistically oriented psychoanalysis (Jacques Lacan, Alfred Lorenzer), and deconstruction.

When, in the 1970s and 1980s, Jürgen Habermas redefined critical social theory as a theory of communication, i.e. communicative competence and communicative rationality on the one hand, distorted communication on the other, the two versions of critical theory began to overlap to a much greater degree than before.

Construction

Both versions of critical theory have focused on the processes by which human communication, culture, and political consciousness are created. This includes:

- Whether it is through universal pragmatic principles through which mutual understanding is achieved (Habermas).
- The semiotic rules by which objects obtain symbolic meanings (Barthes).
- The psychological processes by which the phenomena of everyday consciousness are generated (psychoanalytic thinkers).
- The *episteme* that underlies our cognitive formations (Foucault),

There is a common interest in the processes (often of a linguistic or symbolic kind) that give rise to observable phenomena and here there is some mutual influence among the different versions of critical theory. Ultimately, this emphasis on production and construction goes back to the revolution in philosophy wrought by Kant, namely his focus in the *Critique of Pure Reason* on synthesis according to rules as the fundamental activity of the mind that creates the order of our experience.

Footnotes

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[2] (Horkheimer 1982, 244)

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[9] Adorno, T. W., with Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002. 242.

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[11] "[G]one are the objective laws of the market which ruled in the actions of the entrepreneurs and tended toward catastrophe. Instead the conscious decision of the managing directors executes as results (which are more obligatory than the blindest price-mechanisms) the old law of value and hence the destiny of capitalism." *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. p. 38.

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subaltern

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English

Etymology

From Late Latin *subalternus*, from Latin *sub-* + *alternus*, from *alter*.

Pronunciation

- IPA^(key): /ˈsʌbəltərn/

Adjective

subaltern (*comparative* **more subaltern**, *superlative* **most subaltern**)

1. Of a lower rank or position; inferior or secondary; especially (*military*) ranking as a junior officer, below the rank of captain.
*a **subaltern** officer*
2. (*logic*) Asserting only a part of what is asserted in a related proposition.

Noun

subaltern (*plural* **subalterns**)

1. a subordinate
2. (*UK*) a commissioned officer having a rank below that of captain; a lieutenant or second lieutenant
3. (*logic*) A subaltern proposition; a proposition implied by a universal proposition. For example, *some crows are black* is a subaltern of *all crows are black*.

Translations

[show ▼]

See also

- lieutenant

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