

Lecture #5: Post-Colonialism

Post-Colonialism

Neglected Aspects of History

- Earlier lecture: C19 as remarkably peaceful; almost no war among great powers
- In Europe this was true...but not for the rest of the world
 - Rise of imperialism
- Worldwide, C19 actually one of the bloodiest in history
- Or the Cold War:
 - Waltz: bipolarity most stable
 - Mearsheimer (1990): We'll all soon miss the Cold War
- Sure, pretty peaceful among the great powers
- But extremely violent elsewhere
 - Ie. superpowers fighting "proxy wars" in Africa, Asia, Middle East, and Latin America
- Effects still linger even today
 - Ie. Al Qa'eda and 1980s Mujahideen

International Order and Globalization

- **Post-Colonialism:** development of today's international order and international economy directly linked to colonialism and its forms of violence
- Partial result of rise of worldwide European empires and colonies
- World's coming together as single unit (what today we would call globalization) was one of Europe's legacies to the world...but was soaked in blood

Impact of Decolonization

- **Decolonization process after WWII:** one of the most important events to shape 20th-century international system
- **World:** from international society dominated by European States and their empires, to world where most States in the UN General Assembly are from Asia and Africa

History of P-C

- **Early inspirations:** Aime Cesaire, Albert Memmi, Frantz Fanon
- Founding work: Edward Said's Orientalism (1978)
- Has thrived in many different disciplines (anthropology, cultural studies, literary criticism), but not in IR until the late 1990s
- Surprising, because closely connected to International concerns:
 - Nations and nationalism, relations between cultures, imperialism, transnational flows of people, questions of identity

Focus

- Lasting impact of colonialism and imperialism on previously colonized and colonizing societies, and on world politics
- Continuing forms of colonial/neo-colonial domination and power between these two groups of society
 - Ie. 1st world and 3rd world, Global North and Global South)
- Role 1st world (and the colonial experience) has played in dramatically shaping the 3rd world, but also reverse...each has helped create/constitute the other
- Global relations of inequality and power
- Influence of practices of representation in N-S relationship (how each get represented in discourse, culture, imagery, etc.)

General Argument

- Colonial encounter between peoples is a key event in modern history; helped shape our modern existence and experience
- Obviously: shaped political and economic patterns, established markets necessary for industrial revolution, etc.
- But also: shaped the sense of self of both the colonizers and colonized, and helped structure the categories through which the world was/is seen and constructed
- Important effects on imagination, identity and sense of self and other, both in colonies and in European powers that controlled them

Identity, Culture and Power

- PC interested in relationship between identity, culture, and power, and their centrality to International relations
- Emphasizes relationship between cultural forces and power, and importance of ways of thinking systems of domination

Said and “Orientalism”

- **Orientalism**: name of academic discipline in C19, early C20 that studied societies and cultures in Near and Far East (Middle East and Asia)
- **Said**: also uses the term more generally to describe style of thought based on strong distinction between “the Orient” and “the Occident” (or “the West”)
- Tendency to portray Orient as exotic place of sensuality, cruelty, irrationality, and tyranny; also defined West vs. this image
- **Said**: “The Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience”

Power and Knowledge

- **Orientalism**: a way of knowing and representing “the orient”, but in doing this, also a way of dominating and ruling it
- Placed Westerner in position of authority and superiority over Orient; important to processes by which non-Western territories and peoples controlled
- Draws on Michel Foucault’s ideas about close connection between power and knowledge:
 - Discourse not just about the world, but also shapes the world; power doesn’t contaminate knowledge, but is inseparable for it
- Not just set of ideas, but closely tied to relationships of political and economic power and domination between Europe and lands of the East
- European interest in the Orient was political, but it was culture that created that interest
- Culture interacted constantly with political, economic, and military rationales for European involvement in that part of the world

Orientalism

- Bleiker and Kay (post-structuralism reading): Orientalism=
 - A style of thought that isn’t based on geographical, political or cultural factors, but instead based on stereotypes about the values and behaviours of people who inhabit such exotic lands
 - The central idea here is the contrast between the orient and the occident (East and West)
 - West is characterised by progress, values, reason etc., while areas like Africa are characterised by ideas of savagery and chaos
 - The practices of such authority in terms of the West’s dominant power is seen in all domains of life: philosophy, science, history, economic structures, etc.

Some Oppositions

- “Advanced”, modern world vs. “backward” or “primitive” underdeveloped” world
- Global South is “behind” the North; needs to “catch up”
 - North: civilized, rational, sovereign, strong ect.
 - South: uncivilized/barbaric, instinctual, dependent, weak (distinctions take different forms)
- “Natives” require tutelage and guidance to become modern, independent and free

The Non-Western World

- Characterized by:
 - Irrationality and fanaticism (ie. portrayals of political Islam)

- “Rogue States” and “failed States”; ethnic and tribal conflict, warlords, danger, a “State of Nature”
- Western military action in Non-Western world: almost always represented as a kind of humanitarian/humane warfare, that aims to liberate and civilize

Todorov: The Conquest of America

- Tsvetan Todorov, the Conquest of America (1982)
- How Western (Spanish) conquerors of New World dealt with the “otherness” they encountered there
- Civilizations they met were very “different”
 - Todorov: two different ways Spaniards reacted to this difference:
 - 1. Difference as inferiority: must be conquered in the name of a superior civilization
 - Spaniards raped, murdered, pillaged and spread disease, all in the name of suppressing exotic horrors of human sacrifice among indigenous peoples
 - 2. Other response (ie. Spanish priests): defended natives; condemned repugnant behaviour of conquistadores, and treatment of native populations
 - Condemned it on basis of universalist framework: Indians were beings who possessed immortal soul that had to be saved
 - Indians thus defended by placing them within Western framework....giving them identity as “potential Christians”
- Thus:
 - One approach: preserves difference between self and other, but in relationship of superior vs. inferior that justifies horrible acts
 - Other approach: asserts equality (more or less) of self and other, but only by assimilating and eliminating difference
- One way or other...as inferiors or as sort of equals, Indians had to be brought within Western frameworks
- Repeated pattern in history of Western empire and of different ways West has typically coped with otherness and difference

Third Way?

- Todorov:
 - Isn't there a third possibility of difference without hierarchy? What about “different and equal”?