

Postcolonialism in South Africa: Unraveling Historical Legacies and Contemporary Impacts

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Abstract. *Critically observing and analyzing South Africa calls for the mentions of colonialism and postcolonialism. The African country was highly influenced throughout its history by western powers, those times having an important impact in today's day and age. Frantz Fanon and Edward Said will be the main inspiration points of the study, their viewpoints helping us to understand the implications of colonialism and postcolonialism. Narrative building, stereotyping and power games will be added to the problematics of racial subjugation, psychological traumatization and the need for self-realization in order to frame the image of South Africa. These ideas will be complemented by the addition of critical theory, which will complement the paper by looking into the economic dimension of the colonial and postcolonial periods. This mash-up of ideas will try to serve as a framework that will better explain the situation in South Africa and how the discovered problems could or should be settled.*

Keywords: postcolonialism, exploitation, dominance, capitalism, apartheid

Introduction

The adverse effects of colonialism can be seen in 21st century South Africa. Using various tools of critical discourse combined with several ideas borrowed from authors from different domains, these effects are to be discovered and analyzed.

This work thus aims to fill the gaps in the postcolonial literature, combining the psychological trauma explained by Fanon, the economic subjugation of the colonial and neocolonial period of the indigenous, and the deficient portrayal of southern Africans through discourse and stereotypes demonstrated by Said. The paper attempts to answer the question present in the title of the paper: How have the events of the past affected the present situation in South Africa?

The interdisciplinary role of the paper and its ultimate aim of fostering dialogue and transformative change will be supported and aided by looking into power dynamics and socio-economic and identity debates.

Literature review

Postcolonialism and its emergence as a field of study

In order to provide a deeper understanding of the text, it is strictly necessary to clearly define both postcolonialism and colonialism. Thus, in this paper, colonialism is seen as a geopolitical, cultural and economic project involving the control of one nation over another. Using Frantz Fanon's perspective, colonialism implies the imposition of an intellectual authority of the colonizer on the colonized, a process that dehumanizes both parties. Colonizers place themselves at the head of society, thus involving both the creation and maintenance of a dominant political, social and economic system. Economic as well as social, especially psychological, subjugation is the defining feature of this colonist system. It is fundamentally characterized by power dynamic relations, imposed via the use of cultural hegemony, economic exploitation, psychological traumatization

and educational control. Postcolonialism includes multiple fields and subfields of study that allow an analysis of both colonizers and colonized, both from the position of individuals in society and from the perspective of the political, economic and social group they represent. To discover, understand and to combat the effects of colonialism remains the ultimate aim of postcolonialism. To this aim, we also add the call for the need of resistance and reconstruction, the necessity for understanding the interconnectivity of oppressive structures and the use of dialectics. It has a revolutionary and reformist status, pointing out also the dehumanization of the colonizer and the colonized.

Since both the concepts of colonialism and postcolonialism are defined and the way the paper will treat them is set, the study continues by clearly defining the words used to describe them, to have full clarity going forward. Words like domination, subjugation or dehumanization are viewed in a particular way by postcolonial thinkers, this study using their view for the future analysis. According to Edward Said, the Eastern world was wrongly represented by the Western civilized world, the discourse regarding it being stereotypical. Domination, for Said, implies the use of power through cultural representations and the reproduction of knowledge that perpetuates stereotypes and maintain hierarchical relationships. He understands the concept of subjugation by using the term Other, referring to the fact that the Western powers defined the outer world as others, different to the civilized and modern occidentals. By separating the world into these two dimensions, Said observes how the West reinforced superiority and imperialist endeavors by marginalizing and disempowering the east via discourse. In strong relation to the concept of subjugation lies the problem of dehumanization, Said's understanding of it being that through the subjugation of the east, the Others remain solely essentialized stereotypes. (Said, 2018) Frantz Fanon, in his two books "Black Faces, White Masks" and "The Wretched of the Earth" embarked on an analysis of mainly psychological value, but from which political, cultural, and economic conclusions can be drawn. As Said, Fanon views domination as the imposition of the colonizer's culture, values and norms on the colonized, using the concept of power dynamics to reinforce colonial structures that are favorable to the settler. By dominating the Others, they become subjugated, Fanon seeing this concept as a process encompassing political and economic subjugation that can be explained mainly by psychological and cultural alienation. That, in Fanon's view, led to a sense of inferiority and almost self-hatred among the colonized. So both writers have similarities in their separate ways of understanding and looking into the problem of colonialism, subjugation, discrimination and dominance, while at the same time centering their arguments on different grounds, focusing mainly on different viewpoints and thesis.

The paper will employ Critical Theory, specifically Critical Race Theory, in an effort to break away from the conventional civil rights rhetoric. The purpose of including this idea alongside that of Frantz Fanon and Edward Said is to highlight the significance of creating a racially conscious reality and doing away with racial or ethnic discrimination. This theory will also emphasize the significance of racial discourse in a community and how it influences the overall story in both positive and bad ways. Dependency Theory, which provides insightful explanations of the economic dependence of former colonies and the unequal economic connections they have inherited, will be added to these three. (Held, 1980)

Connecting postcolonialism to the South African situation

Connecting this study to South Africa is logical, considering the historical narrative that the country has been through. South Africa, a nation marked by the legacies of Dutch and British colonialism, battles with both colonial and postcolonial consequences.

The eviction of native communities and the implementations of racially and ethnically influenced laws was also faced by the economic exploitation of resources. Economic and social imbalances that are felt today are motivated by a wide array of decisions and actions that were made during the colonial period. South Africa's rich natural resources were aggressively exploited by colonial powers for their economic benefit. The exploitation of labor and migration of black populations to work in mines and agricultural sectors, the Natives Land Act of 1913 and the apartheid policies segregated communities based on race. All these events reinforced social and economic dominance for the white minority, with the cost of the voice of the black minority. Moreover, access to education, healthcare and most social services were restricted to the white minority, this proving that the dominance imposed on the black population was not only of economic value, but also social, the natives being treated in a dehumanizing way. (Delius, 1991)

While the dismantling of apartheid in the 1990s marked a crucial and transformative moment in South Africa's history, the post-apartheid era introduced a new set of challenges. Changing the status quo was a necessity for South Africa, but the Truth and Reconciliation Commission failed to achieve this change. Cultural identity, land reform and economic transformation will all be symptoms of the colonial and postcolonial eras.

Methodology

In order to be able to understand as completely as possible the postcolonial problem in South Africa, the methodology of the work must be as pragmatic as possible. Thus, the work will have both qualitative and quantitative research methods, the selection being made according to the necessity and relevance of each category of analyzed information. Nevertheless, this study being interdisciplinary and using mainly humanist authors, qualitative methods of research will be more present to test and prove the importance of different theories in our case study. Where numerical evidence is needed, we will reach out to the quantitative methods, to better understand and be sure of the validity of the conclusions discovered.

The use of qualitative research methods will be understood as asking open-ended questions and making assumptions that allow the discovery and understanding of the processes and patterns mentioned in the paper. Phenomenology, a technique for analyzing the cultural and psychological factors of South Africa's monetary circumstances, can also be used on this endeavor. It is vital to recognize this monetary weather if you want to recognize the power games and demanding situations that the state's citizens face. Furthermore, through introducing dialectics, we are able to have the ability to analyze how political, cultural, mental, and monetary elements have interaction and form one another.

Scholars such as Angela Davis, Antonio Gramsci and David Harvey will be cited to contribute aspects that the other cited scholars do not cover, such as the concept of interconnectedness of oppressive structures, cultural hegemony and accumulation by dispossession.

Results and discussions

This chapter aims to disclose economic, social, cultural and political revelations and the connection among them, in regard to the postcolonial scenario of South Africa. This may be viable through making use of insights from the aforementioned authors and theories.

The Group Areas Act and its legacy

Precisely 40 years after the gaining of its independence, the South African legislation system proposed the Group Areas Act of 1950, which sought to assign different geographical areas to different racial groups, to organize communities efficiently and reduce social tensions via urban planning. (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 1950) While the real motive behind the Act cannot be proven, the fact that it had psychological, economic, and political effects that discriminated against the black community is evident. The Act revealed a planned strategy that reduced the power and impact of the black minority, while empowering the white ethnic groups. This act was nonchalantly proof of cultural hegemony, a concept created by Antonio Gramsci that was later improved and applied to postcolonial theory. While using this idea, the Group Areas Act was a legislative tool employed by the government to institutionalize racial segregation not only in a geographical way, but both in an economic, political, and social way. The Act reinforced the superiority of the white minority over the other racial groups and sought to establish and maintain dominance by controlling economic resources, political power, and cultural narratives. The Act still echoes in the present-day, urban planning and housing patterns continuing to reflect historical racial divisions.

Applying Edward Said's and Frantz Fanon's concept of economic dominance and subjugation, the Group Areas Act served as a tool for economic exploitation by allowing certain racial groups to be extracted from their cheap labor. At the same time, by confining a community to a specific area, spatial segregation directly influenced its access to employment and economic mobility. White controlled industries could easily access a segregated labor force, using their economic dominance for the benefit of their community. By also applying Paulo Freire's educational approach, limiting educational opportunities based on residential biases limited the development of human capital in Black communities and the growth of skilled labor forces. The Act was therefore not solely about separating communities along racial lines but was intricately linked to economic interests. These economic limitations are still present to this day, more than 70 years after the Act was first put into use.

The Group Areas Act also might have had a psychological impact that gave birth to economic limitations for the Black communities. The physical landscape was meant to mirror the racial hierarchy of those times, fueling a sense of inferiority and displacement among the Black population. Being forcibly eliminated from their houses results in mental trauma, perpetuating an internalized inferiority complex that has profound effects on their economic productiveness and the manner they compare themselves to the extra productive, rich, and effective white minority. The Black community could associate their poverty and limitation of rights to their Blackness, a concept introduced by Frantz Fanon that explained the feeling that a racially oppressed community might associate their situation to their race, a fact explained by the author using culture and discourse to hide the oppressive nature of their society and to highlight racial biases. (Fanon, 2011)

Using Critical Theory to analyze the Group Areas Act, the intersection of economic and cultural systems aligns with the view of the postcolonial authors. According to the Critical Theory's critique of capitalist structures, by dictating where people could live and work, the Act perpetuated economic disparities. Applying Dependency Theory, the confinement of black communities to certain areas allowed for easy access to a segregated labor force, reinforcing economic dominance and dependency through the use of the state. (Held, 1980) The study looks into institutional racism by observing legal and political decisions that have a racial mantle. Critical Race Theory will also be used to highlight the impact of race-based discourse and to see and understand the ways of imposing racial prejudices and ideas. By also using ideas proposed by other authors interested in

the problematic of oppression, we can see how the postcolonial and critical approach hold firm positions to the matter. Angela Davis idea of intersectionality affirms that various forms of oppression intersect and are interrelated. The relationship between racial segregation and economic exploitation and the spatial understanding of capitalism will be clearly analysed.

While the Group Areas Act of 1950 seems far away in time, its impact is still visible today. Spatial segregation is still present in urban planning and housing patterns of South Africa, towns created under the apartheid-era still existing and still being characterized by inadequate infrastructure, limited access to resources and economic marginalization. Historical spatial divisions still infiltrate in today's South Africa, sub-par education and employment opportunities being present in the area affected by the Act. Socioeconomically, the communities that were moved away from their initial homes are still trying to reconnect and to ignore the traumatic implications of gentrification. Access to funds and to skilled laborers is still a minus in the communities affected by the Act, while problems regarding land ownership prevent the zones from developing agricultural advancement. Mobilities, especially economical, are still a challenge for these communities, hindering their ability to break the cycle of poverty and finally achieve economic independence. The disruption of the cycle of poverty and to ability to achieve economic freedom and independence are still challenges for the affected minorities.

Police brutality, healthcare discrimination and legal punishment of the Others

More recent events also unfold the postcolonial approach to South Africa's society. Labor and resource exploitation are still present in South Africa, the Marikana Massacre of 2012 seeing mine workers being killed by police brutality while they were asking for better wages and working conditions. (Alexander, 2014) Law enforcement used to suppress resistance is therefore still present in postcolonial and post-apartheid South Africa, this contributing to mistrust between communities and the state forces. The concept of the Other articulated by Said finds resonance in this situation, the perpetuation of stereotypes, marginalization and cultural biases contributing to the Othering and to the easiness of motivating such a brutal event.

Historical disparities also exist in the healthcare system, the Covid-19 pandemic seeing black communities more affected than the white ones, similarly to the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the late 20th century, a fact that echos postcolonial legacies. (Futshane, 2021) The coexistence of public and private healthcare systems in South Africa might also lead to disparities, especially in the case of South Africa where rural and urban disparities are very present after the gentrification and racial segregation that happened during the colonial and apartheid eras. The poor communities are affected by the unequal rights between them and the rich and powerful. This influences their accessibility to healthcare and education services since the state does not offer comparable privileges to all citizens.

At the same time, the year 1978 saw South Africa applying the capital punishment mainly against Black people, disregarding the motives behind these communities turning to murder or rape to better their living, while being able to forgive the white community for its crimes. Between 1947 and 1969, 288 whites were convicted of rape of non-whites, while 844 blacks were convicted of rape of whites. Considering this, not a single white person was executed, while 108 black persons were. Regarding murder accusations, only in one year, from 1974 to 1975, black persons received 132 of the 136 death sentences imposed. (Wallace, 1978) Even if the legal discrimination against the black community was evident during the apartheid era, a period when 59 race-based laws passed, the post-Apartheid government passed 90, the new wave of South African racism being also against immigrants, especially Indians, not only against the black Africans. (Du Bois, 2020)

These racial prejudices are rooted in South Africa's colonial past and seem to have an impact even on today's situation in the country. These unjust legal punishments might lead an inferiority problem of the black community and a sense of revenge against the state that mistreated them. As a result, both the apartheid and post-apartheid eras were filled with protests about and against the system that discriminated against the black minority. But the nature of these protests being against the system, the media, elite and the privileged communities positioned against them. The Fees Must Fall movement from South Africa was portrayed as a disruptive and violent uprising by the ruling classes rather than them focusing on the underlying systemic inequality in the education sector and how to address the problems the protestants are rallying about. (Greeff et al., 2021) Applying Said's theory on discourse, this way of viewing and presenting the protests leads to a specific understanding of the event by the masses, a view that might impact their vision on the matter. Moreover, using Fanon's theory, the usage and popularization of this perspective of the protests leads to the possibility that the protesters might internalize this stereotype themselves, impacting their self-perception and contest the importance of their former motives behind the manifestation. The importance of the dismantling of multiple forms of oppression is highlighted in Angela Davis's theory on intersectionality. According to her, there is an important need to attack the economic and racial concerns in quite similar times.

The Saidian concept of the Other can also be applied to the xenophobic attacks from 2022 (Schwikowski, 2023), immigrant communities, especially from African or Indian descent being portrayed as strangers or Others by the citizens of South Africa, especially in the media and political discourse. The competition for scarce resources, job opportunities and housing contribute to this attitude, both the local population being alienated in the process, because of the unsafe economic situation they were in.

Economic exploitation, inequal education, and cultural debates

Economically speaking, the introduction of cryptocurrencies in the South African financial market may inadvertently Other certain communities that lack the financial funds and the educational understanding of this new currency. The Others might feel as intruders in the financial market of South Africa, especially in the case of the emergence of crypto debates, discussions and mentions in mainstream media or in political decisions. Moreover, this exclusion might lead to psychological effects for the marginalized communities and for their tendency to Other themselves from their community. (Fanon, 2011) This situation is similar to the emergence of capitalism in the former South African colonies of the Dutch and British settlers, when the black community was still living a feudal lifestyle, while the white masters were living through the industrial revolution.

Colonial or apartheid cultural sites are also a reason of debate for today's South Africa, the removal or preservation of statues from the colonial and apartheid eras involving media representation and educational considerations, highlighting both Said's and Freire's themes on discourse and education. Both authors might explain how these statues reinforce colonial narratives and how critically engaging with historical symbols via an educational approach might disclose their importance, even for a post-apartheid South Africa. (Jora, 2016)

The education system of South Africa is lacking black staff members, unequal distribution of educational opportunities leading to, usings Freire's theory, to a cycle of disadvantage, limiting critical thinking and reinforcing racialized class structures. The omission of black personnel in the South African universities find their roots in the colonial way of viewing society, where Black individuals were only mere executants. (Freire, 2017) The students are also affected by discrimination, 68% of youth in South Africa says that discrimination is part of everyday life, age,

gender, education, income, and color of skin being the main reason for hatred and misconduct. (UNICEF, 2022) While the discrimination based on age might not be necessarily linked to the colonial past of South Africa, the rest are intertwined and usually one leads to the apparition of another. The Othering of individuals is also present in the educational sphere of South Africa. If educational opportunities favor specific demographics, it may reinforce the notion that Others are outsiders in the realm of knowledge and skill development. This might lead to economic imbalances in productiveness among the others and the privileged, especially considering the fact that the alienation of individuals from the educational field has several aftereffects. The dependency on a system set up for the benefit of the colonizers, elites or for a certain race perpetuated economic and educational disparities, hindering the development of a self-sufficient and independent educational system. In a dialectical manner, this is a vicious circle that finds its end only in the abolishment of discrimination and economic disparities since each of them exist in close relation to another.

Conclusion

Colonial and postcolonial South Africa are highly affected and might also be considered defined by problems regarding power dynamics, socioeconomic unequal rights, cultural identities and class relations. With the use of all the authors cited throughout the text, the paper gathers several motives to understand the importance of these debates and discussions. This work also highlights the importance of engaging in several viewpoints when talking about the understanding of a colonial and postcolonial state.

Economic exploitation, spatial segregation and mental trauma were observed to be effects of the Group Areas Act of 1950, presenting therefore the many implications it had behind the ones mentioned by the South African government of the time. Moreover, police brutality, healthcare unequal opportunities and legal injustices were also discussed throughout the text in order to observe the ways in which the way postcolonial South Africa is still affected by the colonial era. The study showcases how overcoming colonial challenges is still a problem for the South African population and government.

The chosen methodology enhances the text and its purpose. Combining Phenomenology with dialectics, while also trying to answer to open ended questions serves the text with the necessary critical perspectives. At the same time, the methodology helps in contributing to a more general and total comprehension of South Africa's situation in regard to political, economic and social issues.

But of course, this work also has limitations and is far from being complete. Focusing mostly on qualitative methods of research, the study lacks the quantitative aspect. It might benefit therefore from a more complete empirical understanding of the situation in South Africa, validating our findings via numerical facts. Moreover, each and every chapter and subchapter of the text might benefit from a work of its own, all of them being highly complex and with several implications in today's situation.

The work has many applications, drawing attention and being also a warning signal to policy makers, students, professors and social activists. This way of understanding the work highlights the challenges and problems that postcolonial states face after separating from the colonial powers. It also serves in underlining the importance of interconnectedness of oppressive structures, highlighting the significance of this theory in understanding postcolonial problems.

Concluding, this work showcases the need to understand South Africa's situation by looking at colonialism and postcolonialism. It also aids in comprehending the complex imagine of South Africa and to also grasp the entangled concepts of postcolonialism and colonialism. The relation between colonialism and South Africa proved to be very important, the addition of postcolonialism proving to be beneficial in understanding both the concept of colonialism and the situation in South Africa in a more easy and complete way. In a dialectical manner, the study also helps in understanding economic, social and political domains, since the South African case serves as a tool of understanding these areas.

While also featuring limitations and unique aspects, this paper can lie as a basis for future researches about South Africa or postcolonialism. As previously mentioned, this paper might also benefit from a second rendition, trying to complete the work by adding numerical understanding of the ideas mentioned throughout the text.

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