

Conference Paper

Notions of Empire and Cultural Imperialism in the Postcolonial Discourse

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Abstract

This article considers various theoretical approaches specific to the postcolonial era and modern imperialism. The following approaches are noteworthy: the postcolonial discourse as a history and development discourse (A. Biccum); the postcolonial theories in relation to the interaction of the colonizer and the colonized (S. Slemon); the representation of cultural dominance (H. Münkler); the correlation between culture and imperialism (E. Said); the discourse of culture and wealth in the postcolonial era (B. Ashcroft). There are a number of the varieties of modern cultural imperialism, including: scientific imperialism (J. Galtung); telecommunication imperialism (J. Galtung, D.Y. Jin); and linguistic imperialism (R. Phillipson). The scope of general statements includes: the existence of a globalized empire; the possible influences of the colonizer and the colonized either via a direct influence or via the institutional regulators and the semiotic field; the significance of cultural imperialism in a general meaning of culture as a whole; the understanding of an empire as an overabundance of both wealth and culture under the common denominator of economics of discourse. As a result, the semantic core of cultural imperialism is determined, and the authorial definition is given.

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1. Introduction

More and more researchers of postcolonialism and the conditions of ex-colonies note the actualization of notions such as empire and imperialism in relation to interactions between regions. For example, in the Ural Federal University such studies are conducted by T.A. Kruglova [1], E.S. Cherepanova [2] and A.V. Pertsev [3]. In this context, we aim to address the theoretical positions regarding postcolonial research as a whole and then to consider the modern definitions of empire and imperialism.

2. Postcolonial Discourse

2.1. The postcolonial discourse in A.R. Biccum's research

The postcolonial studies emerged in the 1980s with the publication of E. Said's book *Orientalism* [4] and spurred further research on the topic. Australian researcher A.

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Biccum notices that the modern postcolonial discourse researchers tend to specify the following types of empires: European and British types, American empire with modern American empire as a separate type, and globalized types of empires. The outcomes of globalization, including, among others, reinforcements of the international unions together with the planned elimination of poverty, the lobbying activity of capitalist interests and the counteraction against terrorism, are influencing the development of the characteristics of the new types of empires. According to Biccum, Said made the conclusions that "... actually comprise a complex shift in vocabulary in the discourse of development, history and modernity that has also been accompanied by metropolitan attempts in popular and public discourses on the centre and the right of the spectrum to normalize the 'new' imperialism, justify the (re)colonisation of the Middle east, pose neo-liberal capitalism as the only option for global governance" [5].

The central conflict point of all postcolonial empire research regards the discourse of history and development, for which Biccum defines the following categories: 1) the narrative of history and progress; 2) the narrative of national history with correlation between the narrative of international relations and the narrative of development; 3) the narrative of normalizing the connection between an empire and a colony as a relation of dependency, i.e. the first and the third world, the center and the outskirts, the advanced and the underdeveloped, the rich and the poor, etc. Against a backdrop of the historical shocks of XX century, with World War II as the bifurcation point that led to the fall of the colonial system as a whole, the discourse shifts, or rather, according to Biccum, transforms into the discourse of globalization, in the framework of which the new empires can now function. All this leads to "...a theorization of the historical consolidation of metropolitan power, the construction of the Western liberal democratic state as an onto-epistemic construct that is inseparable from empire" [5].

2.2. Interactions of postcolonial discourse theories (S. Slemon)

Canadian researcher S. Slemon also points out the fragmentation of approaches and movements in the modern postcolonial discourse and remarks that the discourse "...is at heart of the institutional scramble, a debate whose specific provenance is an emerging critical and pedagogical field within the apparatus of the Western 'humanities'" [6]. He constructs a diagram of this discourse based on the interactions of the colonizer and the colonized via institutional regulators and semiotic field. Fig. 1 presents the idea that colonialism works in an order of dominance, from left to right.

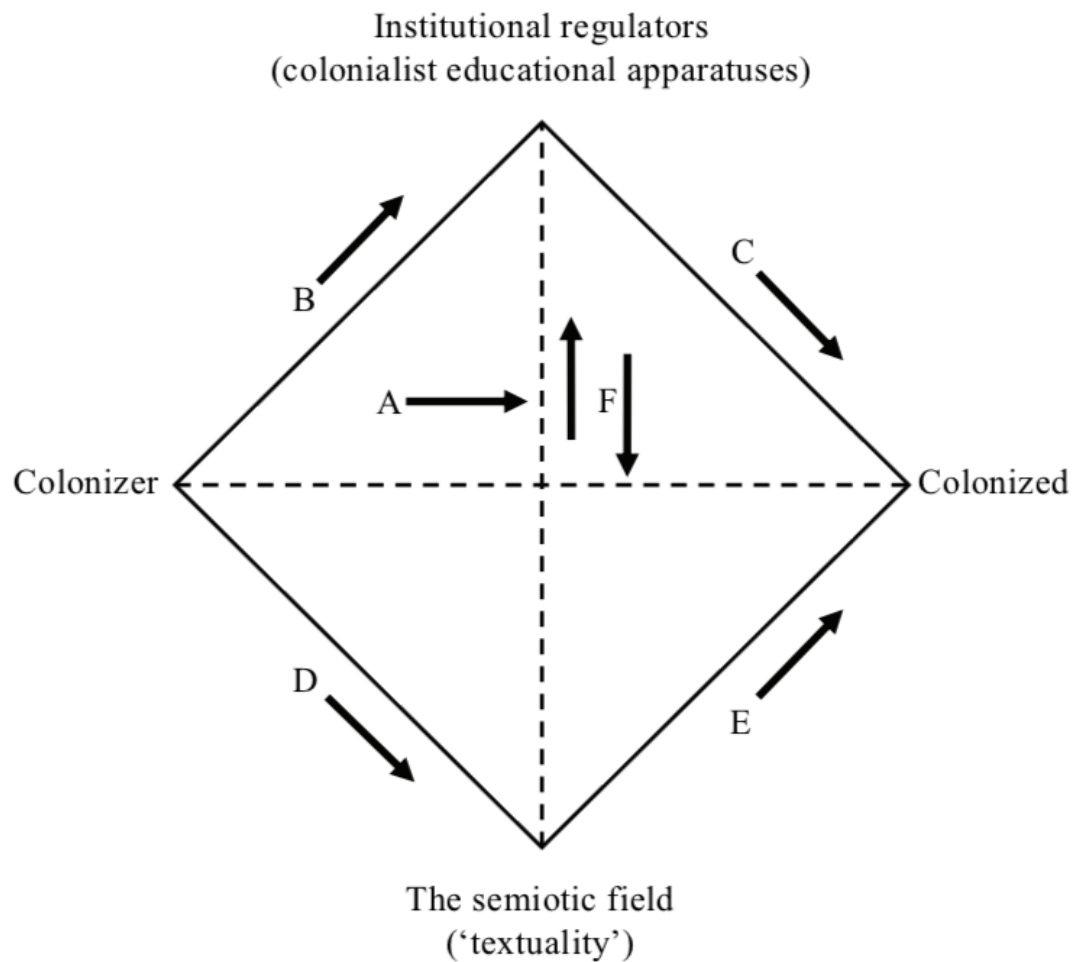


Figure 1: Interaction of postcolonial discourse theories

In the diagram (Fig. 1) the line A represents various 'brute force' theories, where colonialism acts as an instrument of oppression by means of direct political and economic control. The lines BC and DE represent various concepts of ideological regulations of colonial subjects and subjugations through an agreement with the center. The BC line represents the ideological threshold of economic colonialism focusing on the influence of education as a state agency, by means of which colonial relationships are reproduced. The theories comprising the DE line appraise ideological means of reproduction of colonial relationships through the unfolding of the semiotic field of representations, e.g. in the works of literature, commercials, fine arts, scientific documents, etc.

The line F highlights the research of E. Said. The ascending line marks the reproduction of scientific theory through the influences of the ideas about The Fantastic East, and the descending line, on the contrary, marks the scientific approach working on reifying the idea of The Fantastic East. One can say that in Orientalism the East becomes both an object of scientific knowledge and a psychological projection or a fantasy. Through

this Slemon demonstrates that colonialism is connected to the semiotic field and can, therefore, work in it, thus recreating the idea of colonial, subordinated relationships. He notes that the main focus of colonial and postcolonial research is on representation of state agencies and their economic and political interrelations with satellites, viewed as relations of an empire and its colonies.

2.3. Phenomenon of imperialism in the postcolonial discourse

The phenomenon of imperialism and its variations have become a distinct topic within the post-colonial discourse, including some elaborations on one of its newest types – cultural imperialism. In the early XXI century, such researchers as H. Münkler [7], S. Mains [8], O. Boyd-Barrett [9] and others firmly declared the rise of a new type of empires in the modern globalist world. The classic empires differ from new empires by means of domination over other territories, i.e. by types of imperialism. As Münkler demonstrates, imperial domination includes superiority in four of the most important spheres of intergovernmental interaction: political, economic, military, and cultural [7].

Imperialism originated as a form of imperial dominance and a variant of imperial policy. In 1872, the British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli in his speech at the Crystal Palace used the word “imperialism” to describe the expansionist foreign policy [7]. Later, “imperialist” became the definition for any kind of aggressive, expansionist, predatory policy, regardless of whether the subject of such a policy is an empire or not [10].

When conceptualizing the postcolonial research in the late XX century, E. Said in *Culture and Imperialism* gave the following definition for imperialism: “...the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory” [11], while colonialism refers to creating settlements on the distant lands. Defining cultural domination for the first time, Said aims to analyze the means with which imperialist processes occur in the sphere of culture on a national level, contrary to assuming them happening in the spheres of politics and economics, as it was customary represented in the early studies. By the sphere of culture he understands various cultural formations and consolidations in education, literature, visual and musical arts, while dominance in the sphere of culture was defined as the multifaceted cultural suppression, by result of which the dominating culture forces out and subdues all manifestations of the suppressed culture – from high to low, private to public, from system of values to consumer interests, from symbols and rituals to their imitations in mass culture. Thus, culture as integrity defines imperial senses, thoughts and imperial imagination.

2.4. Discourse of culture and wealth in B. Ashcroft's research

In his analysis of postcolonialism, Australian researcher B. Ashcroft addressed the discourse of culture and wealth. In the framework of the colonial world the overabundance of wealth is presented as high culture. According to the postcolonial theory, expenses of excessive energy emerge through cultural hegemony and support production and distribution of valuables, significantly succeeding the war expenses. Empire as a concentration point for wealth, according to Ashcroft, will be interpreted as an overabundance, "Imperial power expands its excess wealth through war (that is, military force such as that employed in colonial expansion) to create greater wealth which is then diffused as luxury, further military expansion and so on" [12].

The cultural increase, like a surplus value, creates wealth for the center in the language part as well, because wealth, like culture, is represented as a discourse formation. The economics of imperialism, thus, becomes an economics of discourse. The framework of postmodernism displays abuse and breaking of discourse practices, which indicates the desire to disrupt dominance dictated by the empire or a dominant center.

2.5. Classification of cultural imperialism in the postcolonial studies

If culture is defined through the activity theory as everything humanity has created as a result of its actions, then the phenomenon of cultural imperialism uncovers itself not only as domination in the sphere of arts. According to J. Galtung, a subtype of cultural imperialism is scientific imperialism, when one region serves as a science center and defines the scientific discourse for other regions [13]. In addition, D.Y. Jin [14], the above-mentioned J. Galtung [13] and others, distinguish telecommunicative forms of cultural imperialism, when the dominant region offers submissive regions means to communicate, creates/offers broadcasted content and defines the news agenda. There are also tendencies to define linguistic imperialism as a separate type. This idea was developed by R. Phillipson [15].

3. Conclusion

To summarize, we can note that postcolonial discourse establishes the existence of a globalized empire, with a conflict point of modern empires being the discourse of history

and progress. Postcolonial disciplinary discourse focuses on researching the influences between a colonizer and a colonized that can follow these scenarios: by means of a direct influence; by means of an influence via institutional regulators; by means of a semiotic field. The frame of postcolonial research also includes the development and analysis of various forms of imperialism, the most significant of which, according to Said, is cultural imperialism, which includes not only various cultural formations themselves, but their consolidations in education, literature, visual and musical arts into the sphere of culture. According to B. Ashcroft, the discourse of culture and wealth leads to defining an empire as an overabundance of wealth and culture, represented in the notion of “economy of discourse”. In the framework of the activity theory, the definition of culture uncovers an internal heterogeneity of cultural imperialism which can assume the form of scientific imperialism (J. Galtung), telecommunicative imperialism (J. Galtung, D.Y. Jin), and linguistic imperialism (R. Phillipson). Summarizing definitions of “cultural imperialism” used in various theories, we can isolate the semantic core of the concept and define it as follows: cultural imperialism is a subordination of the entirety of cultural system and its discrete components to the power of the empire, broadcasting of this power on a global scale.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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