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Introduction 1 Freedom's Just Another Word... 2 The Construction of Consent 3 The Neoliberal State 4 Uneven Geographical Developments 5 Neoliberalism 'with Chinese Characteristics' 6 Neoliberalism on Trial 7 Freedom's Prospect @article{Harvey2020ABH, title={A Brief History of Neoliberalism}, author={David Allen Harvey}, journal={The Anti-Capitalist Chronicles}, year={2020}} Neoliberalism - the doctrine that market exchange is an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide for all human action - has become dominant in both thought and practice throughout much of the world since 1970 or so. Its spread has depended upon a reconstitution of state powers such that privatization, finance, and market processes are emphasized. State interventions in the economy are minimized, while the obligations of the state to provide for the welfare of its citizens are diminished... Neoliberalism: the shadow of classK. MoodyPolitical Science, Economics2008In 3 years from 1978 through 1990, neoliberalism as an economic theory and policy recipe made its political debut on the world stage. In China in 1978 Deng Xiaoping opened the door to market reforms: ... Neoliberalism, Post-Communism, and the LawB. BugarićPolitical Science, Economics2016Neoliberalism represents the revival of economic liberalism that has been taking place since the late 1970s. Its main premise is that the market is morally and practically superior to government and... View 1 excerpt, cites backgroundSHOWING 1-10 OF 537 REFERENCESSORT BYRelevanceMost Influenced PapersRecencyNeoliberalizing SpaceJamie Peck, A. TickellSociology2002This paper revisits the question of the political and theoretical status of neoliberalism, making the case for a process-based analysis of "neoliberalization." Drawing on the experience of the... The state in capitalist societyR. MilibandPolitical Science1969Presenting a sustained and concrete challenge to the current political consensus, this reference identifies the radical alternative of adopting socialism as the key issue facing civilization and the... Globalization and its DiscontentsDavid FasenfestEconomics2012In this issue of the journal, William Robinson offers his analysis of the rise of transnational elites emerging outside of the traditional frame of nation-based capitalism. What is significant, in... The primary Western Leftist intro on how capitalist power was reconstituted following the 1960-70's crises...The Essentials:--(2022 Update): As you can see from the amount of reviews for a critical nonfiction on "Neoliberalism", this book is the go-to Western Leftist academic critique, whereas Naomi Klein's The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism (unpacked here: is for the general public. --While Harvey piles on a litany of structural issues an The Primary Western Leftist intro on how capitalist power was reconstituted following the 1960-70's crises...The Essentials:--(2022 Update): As you can see from the amount of reviews for a critical nonfiction on "Neoliberalism", this book is the go-to Western Leftist academic critique, whereas Naomi Klein's The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism (unpacked here: is for the general public. --While Harvey piles on a litany of structural issues and events, the central thesis is clear: following the 1960-70's crises in global capitalism, Neoliberalism was a response to rebuild capitalist class power. This claim is supported by listing actions/consequences in numerous global case studies ("unequal geographies") of workers' power/organization smashed, public services dismantled (shift from welfare state redistribution to the "Neoliberal State" of debt enforcement), private power restored via privatization/Financialization/"accumulation by dispossession", and new capitalist class formations. --In conjunction with real-world material conditions are the contradictions in ideas, i.e. mainstream economic theory/propaganda of Neoliberalism/market fundamentalism/corporate globalization (with useful reference to Karl Polanyi's positive vs. negative freedoms unleashed by the market). --Discontent is easy to misdirect given Neoliberalism's abstract global reach, where capital (esp. finance) freely floods into certain regions forming speculative bubbles/gentrification while fleeing other regions (capital flight) leaving behind rust belts and opioid crises. All of this is conveniently hidden from the public (even for experts, financial instruments are purposefully complex to hide systemic risk). The public only see surface changes like immigration/government spending and are well-conditioned to assume "supply and demand"/household budgeting Economics 101. See: global Neoliberalism's successes dismantling (national) organized labour/leftist movements/class consciousness, this leaves reactionary movements open to use misleading rhetoric against the "globalist" status quo while actually preserving the structures and scapegoating visible minorities (foreshadowing today's global Trumpism).The Missing/Questionable:1) The Geopolitical context of "Neoliberalism":--One risk with focusing on national case studies is losing the historical (esp. geopolitical) context, causing the concept to lose its form and relevance. To better situate Neoliberalism, consider:--The preceding period is the rise and fall of US's post-WWII global plan, Bretton Woods, the "Golden Age of Capitalism" (end of WWII to end of 1960's). Prior to this was the global capitalist crisis of the Great Depression (following an escalating series of crashes the boom/bust history of capitalism). This latest-and-greatest crash in scope was endless, as capitalists foresaw no future profits and thus refused to revive production; the capitalist exception was fascism, which temporarily revived private enterprise with militarism and beat down leftist alternatives (i.e. workers' control, socialism). --However, the Great Depression was only truly alleviated by the creative destruction of WWII, the greatest war in human history which destroyed stagnant capital and re-invented new markets for the mass production of destruction, resulting in the US Military Industrial Complex. --Post WWII, Bretton Woods global trade/financial regulation was built with the new US empire (which was the WWII global creditor and arms dealer for the rest-of-the-world's destruction) in the center as the key trade/monetary-gold surplus country. With the end of WWII, the US Military Industrial Complex's advances in mass production required external markets to soak up its products, or else capitalism would spiral down another depression (oh, the irrationality)! --While this "enlightened" Bretton Woods plan (paired with domestic "Keynesian" welfare state redistribution; we should note that the rise of the USSR was a major pressure in Western capitalists relenting to the welfare state compromise) did shift war production to mass consumerism for allied countries, this global plan unravelled due to US military spending in genocidal bombings of Korea and Vietnam depleting the US's gold reserves, leading to the 1971 Nixon Shock severing the exchange between the US dollar and gold: see Hudson's 1972 classic Super Imperialism - New Edition: The Origin and Fundamentals of U.S. World Dominance-interview: take: The Global Minotaur: America, the True Origins of the Financial Crisis and the Future of the World Economy --Both Hudson and Varoufakis provide more context to the 1960-70's capitalist crises, and how US's solution of replacing Bretton Woods' global regulation in order to preserve US hegemony required unleashing Wall Street (thus, the "financialization" of "Neoliberalism") as the new regime controlling global monetary flows and preserving the US dollar as the global reserve currency. This geopolitical context is less in focus when Harvey dives into national case studies. ...At least Harvey recognizes that Klein's popular presentation of "Disaster Capitalism" Neoliberalism focuses on the Neoliberal ideology (i.e. Milton Friedman health to building public infrastructure to alternatives to imperialist trade/intellectual monopolies with technological transfers) been key features of Neoliberalism? Also, the Dengist reforms/aftermath should not be taken in isolation, but contextualized with the tumultuous history of modern China (Century of Humiliation, second most deaths in WWII, pre-Communist revolution life expectancy around 30-35 years old, massive social reforms/experiments amidst US embargo, etc.).--If we move beyond economizing the world as isolated nations and consider geopolitics (including violence): while Harvey mentions some of the overt militaristic violence coinciding with Neoliberalism (Pinochet in Chile, Bush Jr. invasion of Iraq), the geopolitics of the US military industrial complex somehow still seems like an "externality". Is this adequate, when US military threats/spending is so integral to enforcing the global "Washington Consensus" behind Neoliberalism, i.e. IMF/World Bank/US Treasury/WTO? It turns out Harvey has a messy take on "imperialism" and an ongoing debate with the Patnaiks/Prashad, which I unpack here: ... --We can now return to China's own geopolitical struggles as a post-colonial nation with a gigantic rural population ravaged by colonialism; during China's Century of Humiliation semi-colonization, the result of losing the Opium Wars was Britain flooding opium grown in colonial India to a deregulated China (free trade!). Imperialist violence, not "free market" competition, was how Britain finally resolved its trade imbalance with Asia, as without colonialism Britain had little to offer to the superior markets of China/India other than silver/gold looted from the Americas (wait, that is colonialism as well...). --Upon independence, China would fight for the other side of the US's genocidal bombings in Korea, which meant a US trade embargo from 1950 to 1972; this coincides with the Bretton Woods "Golden Age of Capitalism" period. Meanwhile, the US empire's plan for the post-colonial Global South was to monopolize world food supply via the World Bank, by enforcing the Global South to export cash crops (for World Bank loans etc.) while becoming dependent on the US's heavily industrialized/subsidized/patent-protected corporate agriculture for staple crops (see the World Bank chapters in Hudson's "Super Imperialism"). This is only the better-hidden "economic" side, although the details of the militaristic side are easily forgotten as well--Washington Bullets-The Jakarta Method: Washington's Anticommunist Crusade and the Mass Murder Program that Shaped Our World-The Management of Savagery: How America's National Security State Fueled the Rise of Al Qaeda, ISIS, and Donald Trump-Killing Hope: U.S. Military and C.I.A. Interventions Since World War II--Simply put, China's 20th century conditions are unimaginable by Western standards; luckily, there is a strong comparison to be made with the other Asian giant, who conveniently took a capitalist path for colonial independence: India: ... --Given Harvey's avoidance of using "imperialism" in terms of economic theory (preferring "shifting hegemonies"/"uneven geographical development"), he does stay consistent with only one mention of "the revival of certain strains of imperialism" regarding China. Is "imperialism" just an economized description of asymmetrical economic productivity, which is such a basic condition that can be diluted to even regional levels (city vs. rural, California vs. Nevada, etc.)? For deeper theory, see the Patnaiks references above. ...Early 20th century critics of imperialism (Vladimir Lenin, W.E.B. Du Bois, Rosa Luxemburg), etc. recognized the militaristic expansionism of imperialist rivalries, in particular Du Bois' "The African Roots of War" on how WWI's origins stem from the imperialist "Scramble for Africa"; see ... ..Harvey actually tries to use the militarism definition in The New Imperialism (War on Terror), but it seems like a rather shallow effort to describe the US Military Industrial Complex as "new". Compare this with Drums of War, Drums of Development: The Formation of a Pacific Ruling Class and Industrial Transformation in East and Southeast Asia, 1945-1980...Varoufakis' response to an American's concern about China colonizing Africa: ♦♦s Marxist analysis of China: ... 3) Writing style (or lack thereof): --It's nonfiction, so content matters most, right? But consider the spirit of Marx's "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it.". This topic deserves the greatest reach into public discourse and consciousness and must not be siloed in academic obscurity, and while this book has reached a relatively impressive readership it still lacks the writing craft of Klein, let alone Varoufakis, Graeber, etc. While Harvey's prose is clear enough (compared to the inferno of ivory tower social science meditations), I still cannot fathom how he made topics of class war, financial crisis, the global division of labor, and the fate of nations rather dry and spiritless. Sure, this was not intended to be a Marx/Engels pamphlet stirring up the working class, and not everyone can conjure up nonfiction epics like Varoufakis, but even chalkboard-eraser Chomsky still injects some sarcasm into his political nonfiction. Heck, I prefer Harvey talking than his writings, especially his Marx's Capital companion lectures! ... --What came after?--Since this book was published in 2007, everything from the 2008 Financial Crisis, Obama's Neoliberal-with-a-progressive-face response, and the global Trumpism backlash are not included. --We can turn again to Prashad, whom I find a much more dynamic presenter of big-picture syntheses (today's Michael Parenti?), there is a clarity in Prashad's depictions of capital's freedom of movement while labor is restrained by borders, global unemployment and reactionary scapegoating, etc. - //youtu.be/HXhogt3Zq9c ...more





