

FROM COLONIZERS TO CORPORATOCRATS: THE EVOLUTION OF ELITE CAPTURE

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It turns out that elite capture, when the key players of politics and the economy decide to grab all the biscuits and lock the cookie jar, is not a new idea. Technocratic capture has remained pervasive through the ages, from the ancient world till today's democracies, perpetuating elite capture and successfully sowing seeds of corrosion to democratic institutions, concentrating powers and privileges among a select governing elite. Nevertheless, the idea of elite capture has not rejected dynamism; it has consistently been a dynamic concept. In this work, I will try to outline how elitism has progressed from the colonial frame to the contemporary corporatocracy as a means of retaining power and why this has led to further oppression and suppression of democracy. It is only when we trace elite capture within the historical context that we can comprehend how the phenomenon developed later and became more variegated in form and impacted the political and economic dispensation, and the first step towards the construction of a more just and equitable society.

THE COLONIAL ROOTS OF ELITE CAPTURE:

This form of elite capture can be most easily recognized from the colonialist period when European colonies dominated over the colonies and the people. One of the unprecedented aspects of colonialism is that it imposed a structure of power that can be seen today as the prominent form of power – this structure is exploitative and oppressive, and hence it can be concluded that colonialism has had a significant impact on today's power relations. A colonizer received products and cheap manpower from a colonized territory, while citizens of colonized territories benefited from a small amount of

surplus capital and products of their own region. They were used and exploited mainly for their natural resources and labour through a racially and patriarchal lens that portrayed the colonial masters as superior to the colonies. In a manner, which Frantz Fanon elaborated in his book of 1961 'The Wretched of the Earth,' 'The colonial world divides the world into two welfare departments – the native country and the colonial country. . . . Even the colonialist is not satisfied to be a mere colonial. He or she has to Christianize the savages' (Fanon, 1961: 10). This missionary spirit camouflaged the exploitation of colonies and the concentration of inimical imperialism in a few.

Indeed, long lists of colonial exploitation instances can go on and on. The African continent was exploited by European countries such as Britain, France, and Belgium to take resources like gold, diamond, and oil, among others, whereas at the same time forced labor and displacement of African people were promoted. Europeans in America continued to subjugate the native societies and dominated them through forced labour and committed genocide. These historical realities, however, continued to shape the power relations of the contemporary world and have facilitated elite capture and further marginalization of the populace. Exploiting colonial history to analyze the process of how the apparatus of state capture has evolved to an elite level helps to come up with better awareness of power and domination amongst the weak groups.

THE TRANSITION TO NEOLIBERALISM AND CORPORATOCRACY:

The change from the colonial era where elites benefited at the expense of the people to the current period where multinational corporations dominate the world economy owes to the growth of neoliberalism in the second half of the twentieth century. Neoliberalism here according to David Harvey describes the key economic concepts that postulate that human beings can be made to prosper through unleashing individual and venture machining capacities within an architectural context of property rights, free market, and trade liberalization (Harvey, 2005: 16). This ideology appeared in the 70s and 80s when governments started liberalizing industries, selling state-owned businesses, and cutting social spending programs.

New liberal economic reforms paved the way for the corporatocrats to seize economic and political powers and start restructuring the economic and political systems in their favour. The first one, known as deregulation, made it possible for the companies to thrive regardless of the consequences, while the second one, known as privatization, entailed the growth of the companies after they took over the public resources and services. Such a move further cut down the provision of social welfare programs and thus entrenched more power and wealth in a few individuals. These policies were used by corporatocrats in order to further their own agendas and increase their power over other special interest groups through the shrewd manipulation of positions within political organizations and in the media sphere.

The result has been the entrenchment of the corporatocratic polity involving the assimilation of economic and political power, which has led to elite capture. According to Harvey, even though neoliberalism has been the dominant mode of organizing capitalist economies, there is considerable merit in Harvey's argument that neoliberalism is a potent instrument in the reproduction of capitalist class power (Harvey, 2005: 16).

CONTEMPORARY ELITE CAPTURE:

Today, elite capture is performed in different and subtle ways that allow corporatocrats to stay in power and retain their riches. One of the strategies is what is referred to as regulatory capture, whereby corporations have the ability to control and shape the policies made by such regulatory bodies in their own vine. For example, the bankers' lobby interfered with the government decisions, and risky legislation was passed to open up the markets and caused the 2008 meltdown.

Another significant factor is the media, which is controlled and owned by corporatocrats, and hence, it is used to manipulate voters and minimize the effective voices of the citizens. This is well illustrated by the ownership of most newspapers and media houses by

large corporations or multinational media groups, rather than individuals or smaller companies primarily interested in the welfare of society.

Lobbying and finance for campaigns are also skills that are useful in elite capture. Large institutions and the rich, in general, employ their financial amass to control elections and policies that are favorable to them and not in the best interest of the people. This is seen in such large contributors as Big Pharma, Big Oil, and the NRA that have a dominant say in any political debate and policy considerations.

In various sectors of the economy, one can observe the effects of elite capture. As for the financial lessons, the bailout of 2008 showed the performance where corporations nationalized their risks while they enjoyed having the profits. In the context of healthcare, pharmaceutical firms and insurance companies have a massive influence on policy formulation, and their decisions are often swayed by profit motives rather than the needs of the community. In technology, giants like Google, Amazon, and Facebook have centralized immense power and control while amassing billions of dollars to control consumers' data.

CONSEQUENCES AND RESISTANCE:

It is thus clear that this phenomenon has severe repercussions on the very foundations of society's governance. In social terms, it merely consolidates the status of injustice, exclusion, and domination. In economic relationships, it consolidates capital and authority, resulting in economic distortion such as financial collapse, scarcity, and oppression. Economically, it is exploitative, providing no benefits to consumers and ultimately harming the economy; socially, it isolates and corrupts, perpetuating a duopoly of privilege, eroding fairness, and freedoms. It must be noted in this regard what Naomi Klein describes in her book "The Shock Doctrine": neoliberalism has resulted in 'a massive transfer of wealth and power from the public to the private domain' (Klein, 2007, p. 16).

Nevertheless, it is also important to understand the processes that can disrupt elite capture and become a basis for solutions. Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, and Global Climate Strike are some examples of mobilized groups and causes that force people to talk about injustice, racism, and climate change. Modern liberal leaders and governments are putting forward policies such as taxes on the rich, workers' cooperation, and state-owned enterprises to deal with economic injustice and bring about a more just economy.

Insofar, as elite capture limits the scope of policy measures, it is necessary to create a large-scale social movement that would not only challenge the rhetoric and practice of the elites. This entails embracing the fundamental features of our democracy, embracing activism, and being ready to challenge and fight the system. Understanding the ramifications of elite

capture and trying to find ways to solve this societal ill shall help one start constructing a more ethically well-off society.

Therefore, the modes of elite capture of power circles that were fashioned during colonial rule and preserved by corporatocracy up to this date are exploitative, undemocratic, and have served to enrich a few at the expense of the many. They show how elite capture developed from the colonial prerogatives of loot and pillage in native countries to oppression through internationally backed reckless neoliberal policies leading to corporatocratic domination in new milieus. So, with this, they have not been mere spectators to the outcome. The narrative of this cookbook is not one of docile acceptance but of struggle and complicity. Some of the arguments presented here offer conclusions that need to be addressed, and with their help, we can start to understand how to fight against elite capture and thus protect and improve society. It is up to us to critically engage with the issues, become active citizens, and work towards change to eliminate exploitative elite capture and build a world that is characterised by the equitable distribution of power and resources.

REFERENCES

- Fanon (1961) - Referring to Frantz Fanon's book "The Wretched of the Earth" published in 1961.
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- Klein (2007) - Referring to Naomi Klein's book "The Shock Doctrine" published in 2007.

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