

Global Marxism: Decolonisation and Revolutionary Politics

Simin Fadaee, *Global Marxism: Decolonisation and Revolutionary Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2024), 276.

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“It is Eurocentric to claim that Marxism is Eurocentric.” With this statement in the introductory chapter of *Global Marxism: Decolonisation and Revolutionary Politics*, Simin Fadaee lays the foundation of the book’s central theme on the lasting relevance of Marxist ideas for decolonisation and revolutionary politics in the Global South. Fadaee’s primary concern in this book is to counter the post-colonial critique that dismisses Marxism as a Eurocentric philosophy and to demonstrate that Marxist thought has played a central role in revolutionary and anticolonial movements across the Global South.

Fadaee highlights her thesis by providing historical and qualitative analyses through biographical accounts of nine anti-colonial and anti-imperial leaders of the Global South: Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Hồ Chí Minh of Vietnam, Mao Zedong of China, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Amílcar Cabral of Bissau-Guinea and Cape Verde, Frantz Fanon of Martinique, Ernesto Che Guevara of Argentina, Ali Shariati of Iran, and Subcomandante Marcos of Mexico. This diverse selection of leaders from East Asia to Africa and from Latin America

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to South Asia allows for a broad comparative analysis, highlighting how Marxist thought was adapted in different political and cultural contexts without losing its core revolutionary essence.

A seminal strength of the book lies in its illustration of Marxism's adaptability as a framework of praxis for revolutionary action against the subjugation of the peoples of the Global South by capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism. Fadaee posits that the adaptation of Marxist concepts by the cultural, ideological, social, political, economic, and religious realities of a particular state, society, or nation can be found across revolutionary and anticolonial movements throughout the colonised world in the 20th century.

This prevalence of Marxist ideas arises from the egalitarian nature of Marx's vision of a classless society and its attraction for revolutionary leaders. To establish the relevance of Marxism for anticolonial movements, Fadaee highlights the interdependence between capitalism and imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism by connecting Marxism to Leninism and the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia. It transformed European Marxism into a global movement.

Another rising point of the book is the effective relay of the assimilated Marxist thoughts adapted by the leaders in various regions. Consequently, resulting in a unique 'hybridisation' of the principles, into their struggles against the oppressive and exploitative structures of capitalism and imperialism.

By dedicating one chapter to each leader, further dividing each into three subsections investigating the personality's revolutionary trajectory, approach to Marxism, and enduring legacy of Marxist and revolutionary movements beyond their home countries, Fadaee

effectively highlights how Marxism influenced the revolutionary thought, ideology, and action of each leader.

This categorisation allows for comparative analysis. The reader is facilitated to identify the similarities and differences in how Marxist ideas were adapted within their contexts. This not only highlights the adaptive nature of the Marxist framework but also illustrates the universality of the basic foundations of Marxist analysis, such as the interconnectedness of the economic base and superstructure.

Furthermore, this comparative analysis also brings into focus certain commonalities in each leader's approach to Marxism. The shared values across different societies in the Global South are recognised. One such commonality is the focus on indigenous communal values across diverse societies.

The communal organisation of the Indian family and societal structure, the concept of Great Harmony in Confucian philosophy and its influence in China and Vietnam, egalitarian communalist values in traditional African societies, principles of social justice and egalitarianism under Shiism as understood by Shariati, and its influence in Iran, and the communal nature of indigenous Mayans' way of living off the land in Mexico, all reinforce the notion that a consistent tradition of communal ownership facilitated the adoption of Marxist ideas.

Moreover, an important role of the peasantry in resistance against colonial and neo-colonial rule emerges as a recurring theme in the Global South. It diverges from a classical Marxist perspective, having the peasantry lacking awareness and the will to unite for their collective interest. This aspect exemplifies the difference in the

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modes of economic production in the industrialised colonial powers. Those are compared with the more agrarian colonised states, underscoring the necessity for contextual adaptations to make the Marxist framework fit in different socio-economic contexts. Initially, it was designed for industrial societies.

While the book aptly showcases the adaptability of Marxism, it does not address the limitations of such adaptations. To what extent can Marxism be modified without undermining its ideological core? It might be assumed that Marx's analysis of the relationship between the economic base and the institutional superstructure, as well as his theory of class struggle and the need for a revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois class by the proletariat class, would remain consistent across different contexts. However, the inclusion of certain figures such as Nehru and Shariati projects that their engagement with Marxist ideas significantly diverged from orthodox interpretations.

Nehru's vision of "evolutionary socialism" advocated for gradual social mobility through economic development in a mixed economy. The *petite* bourgeoisie plays a leading role rather than a proletarian revolution in the mixed economy. Similarly, Shariati is a critique of perceived similarities between the Marxist vision of communism and capitalism. His conception reinterprets socialism as a "philosophy of life" rather than an economic system of collective ownership, as outlined by Marx. Furthermore, it has also been specified that Shariati did not consider himself to be a Marxist. These contradictions prompt the question of how much excessive adjustments or modifications of core Marxist ideology and framework of action can be made before its essence is diluted beyond recognition. The author does not explore this critical concern.

The book is an insightful and engaging, written in a simple and easy-to-read manner, making it accessible to a wide array of readers. Despite some unaddressed questions, the book provides a thought-provoking and unique analysis of the influence of Marxism on the revolutionary thought processes and activities of the personalities being studied.

The book is an important contribution to the literature on postcolonial theory and revolutionary politics. A foundational understanding of Marxist thought is required to fully grasp the central theme. Fadaee's clear and easy stride in writing ensures that even readers without any prior knowledge about anticolonial revolutionary movements and their leaders can engage with this book.

This book is particularly valuable for students of sociology, postcolonial studies, and international affairs, as well as for those interested in learning about Marxism and how it shaped anti-colonial and anti-imperial thought and struggles.■