

White man's burden

Literature



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White Man's Burden-Discuss the social, religious and cultural excuses that were used to justify imperialism and gunship diplomacy. Are these tactics employed by the West today, if so, how, why, where and against whom? European imperialism of the last few centuries were heavily centered on the perceived moral responsibility of its leaders toward other supposedly backward regions of the world. Also referred to (not without a sense of irony) as the White Man's Burden, this notion of cultural, religious, scientific and administrative superiority over far-off civilizations had led to several negative consequences. Irrespective of the real intentions (some are benign while others are pure snobbery) behind this construction, it has not ceased to exist with the demise of conventional projects of imperialism. Rudyard Kipling, a writer who captured the essence of British imperialism in India, acknowledges the duplicity and hypocrisy that White Man's Burden entails in his poem of the same title. The opening lines of the poem stingingly point out presumptions about cultural superiority by the White folk: " Take up the White Man's burden-; Send forth the best ye breed-; Go bind your sons to exile; To serve your captives' need;; To wait in heavy harness,; On fluttered folk and wild-; Your new-caught, sullen peoples,; Half-devil and half-child.;...." (Kipling, 2005, p. 29) World War II can be said to have brought the curtain on conventional imperialism, where the modus operandi was use of military force. Whilst use of force continues to play a role in geo-political power struggles today, the role of economic might and cultural propaganda are also major factors. This transfigured mode of imperialism manifested in the form of the Cold War, where direct military confrontation was substituted by warfare on the ideological front. Today, in the economic realm, neoliberal capitalist system remains uncontested despite ample evidence of its failings.

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Similarly, the purely materialistic consumerist culture (which goes hand in hand with capitalist ideology) is ceaselessly promoted by the public relations industry headquartered in the United States. In the book titled *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good*, William Easterly points out that most impoverished nations in the world continue to remain as such due to the West's obstinate adherence to the neoliberal project (which gets implemented at the cost of ignoring local realities and priorities). In the book, establishment economists such as Jeffrey Sachs, leading institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, etc are criticized for helping make loans to low-income countries, because the chief consideration for such loans is their profitability to Western Multi-National Corporations (MNCs). Under this framework, local progress and development are incidental to the capitalist cause. (Loungani, 2006, p. 388) Add to this the ongoing American hegemony in the domain of culture and religion, and we get a sophisticated form of imperialism. Talking of religion in particular, the ongoing War on Terror, is projected squarely as a war against 'Islamic' terrorism, with the Arab world being the epicenter of the opposing religious ideology. The implication being that Christianity is somewhat more benign and peace-oriented than the terror-mongering radicalism of Islam. Considering the dubiousness of all such claims, it remains an unfortunate fact that the phenomenon of White Man's Burden continues unabated in the age of post-modernism. The following words sum up this sentiment: " There is reason to be skeptical that we in the West can or will do much to help those in the Rest. That is, without wasting resources and doing more harm than good. The bottom billion needs to put " themselves" on the path to

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prosperity - via Smith's famed peace, easy taxes and a tolerable administration of justice - more than they need a helping hand from us." (Arielle & Storr, 2009, p. 125) WORKS CITED John, Arielle, and Virgil Henry Storr. " Can the West Help the Rest? a Review Essay of Sachs' the End of Poverty and Easterly's the White Man's Burden." Journal of Private Enterprise 25, no. 1 (2009): 125+. Kipling, Rudyard. " The White Man's Burden." Herizons, Fall 2005, 29+. Loungani, Prakash. " The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good." The Cato Journal 26, no. 2 (2006): 382+. Mishra, Pankaj. " The White Man's Burden: While Colonialism Took a Terrible Toll on the Inhabitants of India, They Were Not Its Only Victims. Pankaj Mishra on the Men, Women and Children Whose Lives Were Transformed by Serving Britain Abroad." New Statesman, 19 September 2005, 48+.