

THE UTILIZATION OF IDEOLOGY AS DEFENSIVE FACTORS TOWARDS SOCIAL IMPERIALISM IN THE NOVEL *HEART OF DARKNESS* BY JOSEPH CONRAD

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Abstract	Article Information
<p><i>This study examines the use of ideology as a defensive factor towards social imperialism in the novel Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad. In this novel, there are many tense situations between the local population, workers, and European merchant colonizers. The research has two primary objectives: 1) to identify the forms of social imperialism presented in the novel, and 2) to describe how ideology is utilized as a defensive factor against social imperialism. Utilizing a sociology of literature approach, this study draws on Vladimir Lenin's theory of imperialism and Marxist ideology as developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The research employs a qualitative methodology, with data collected from textual excerpts of characters and situations in the novel. The analysis identifies four forms of social imperialism: monopoly capitalism, export of capital, division of the world, and economic motive. Additionally, three ideological responses are found to act as defensive factors towards social imperialism: the inevitability of revolution, the abolition of private property, and international worker solidarity. The inevitability of revolution is the most prominent playing a central role in countering social imperialism in the narrative.</i></p> <p>Keywords: Utilization of Ideology, Social Imperialism, Defensive Factor, Novel Heart of Darkness</p>	<p><i>Received:</i> 23/10/2024</p> <p><i>Revised:</i> 01/11/2024</p> <p><i>Accepted:</i> 11/11/2024</p>

INTRODUCTION

Ideology acts as a factor that can be used as a defensive factor against social imperialism that occurs in African countries. Research focusing on social imperialism, where ideology is used as a defensive factor, is relatively scarce. Ideology can serve as a powerful tool in resisting imperialism, particularly in African countries where imperialism, alongside racism and capitalism, became deeply entrenched during European colonization. As highlighted by

Walter Rodney in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972), European colonization did not lead to Africa's development but rather perpetuated its underdevelopment. Rodney asserts that the history of Europe's interaction with Africa is a history of economic exploitation, where resources were extracted for the benefit of Europe, leaving Africa impoverished and socially fragmented.

Similarly, Claude Meillassoux, in *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa* (1971), emphasizes how colonial domination disrupted African economies by disarticulating indigenous structures and redirecting resources toward European economic interests. This disruption stifled the growth of African markets and contributed to a cycle of exploitation that benefitted European capitalism and imperialism. These scholarly views illustrate how colonialism not only sought to dominate politically but also imposed economic systems that hampered Africa's transformation.

Vladimir Lenin, in *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), describes imperialism as a necessary result of the accumulation logic in late-stage capitalism. Imperialism, according to Lenin, is driven by monopoly-financial capital and represents the pursuit of profit through global exploitation. This view aligns with how European colonial powers pursued economic gains by establishing control over African territories, particularly for resources such as ivory, as depicted in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Imperialism and colonialism, in this sense, were propelled by economic motives, but they were also justified and facilitated by ideological constructs that portrayed certain peoples and territories as in need of domination.

The primary goal of imperialism was to extract raw materials and exploit local labour to serve the industrial needs of the colonizing nations. Lenin describes imperialism as a policy of extending power through colonization or other means, particularly for the purpose of securing raw materials and markets. This exploitation, particularly in Africa, led to widespread resentment among the indigenous populations, as their labour and resources were used to enrich European powers without any corresponding benefits for the colonized regions. Rodney (1972) further notes that colonialism generated wealth for Europe at the expense of African development,

The dehumanizing effects of imperialism are vividly portrayed through the European colonization of Congo. The novel illustrates how African natives were viewed as mere instruments of trade, stripped of their humanity. This objectification, as shown in various passages, reflects the broader colonial mindset that justified the exploitation of African people for economic gain. The novel presents imperialism as a destructive force that undermines the social, economic, and cultural fabric of colonized societies.

The concept of social imperialism, as explored in this research, refers to the broader social, cultural, and ideological domination that accompanies economic exploitation. Ideology, in this context, plays a critical role in either supporting or resisting imperialism. Ideologies, as outlined by thinkers like Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, provide a framework for understanding and challenging the oppressive systems created by imperialist powers. Marxist

ideology, in particular, offers tools to critique and transform societies characterized by economic and social injustice.

Ideology, as defined by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, is a set of beliefs and ideas that serves to protect the interests of a particular class or social group. In the context of imperialism, Marxist ideology offers a critique of the economic and social injustices perpetrated by capitalist societies. Marx and Engels argue that ideology can serve as a defensive factor against imperialism by fostering class consciousness and encouraging resistance to capitalist exploitation.

Marxist ideology, in particular, focuses on the inevitability of revolution and the abolition of private property as means of resisting imperialism. In *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), Marx and Engels argue that “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (p. 47). This struggle is not only between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat but also between colonizers and the colonized. By raising awareness of the exploitative nature of imperialism, Marxist ideology can inspire collective resistance among oppressed populations.

Social Imperialism, as depicted in *Heart of Darkness*, is a brutal and dehumanizing process that strips African people of their humanity and reduces them to mere instruments of European profit. The European colonizers, representing the capitalist bourgeoisie, exploit the labour and resources of the African proletariat. However, the novel also suggests that ideological resistance is possible, particularly through the recognition of the injustices perpetrated by imperialism. As Marlow becomes increasingly disillusioned with the imperial project, the novel hints at the possibility of ideological awakening and resistance.

However, the novel also suggests that ideology can serve as a defensive factors towards social imperialism. Drawing on Marxist theory, this research explores how ideology can be used to resist the exploitative forces of imperialism. By raising awareness of the economic and social injustices perpetrated by imperialist powers, ideology can inspire collective resistance and challenge the systems of domination that have historically oppressed African nations. Through a combination of literary analysis and Marxist critique, this study sheds light on the complex relationship between imperialism, ideology, and resistance in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*.

The ideological struggles are evident as the novel delves into the moral darkness of imperialism and the dehumanization it brings. This study, therefore, aims to examine the forms of social imperialism depicted in the novel and explore how ideology uses as a defensive factors towards social imperialism. By employing Lenin’s theory of imperialism and Marxist Ideology theory, this research seeks to uncover the ways in which ideology is utilized to resist the forces of imperialism in the African context depicted in Conrad’s work.

The qualitative descriptive methodology used in this research allows for a detailed examination of the novel’s text, focusing on key themes such as exploitation, injustice, and the ideological resistance to imperialism. By analyzing *Heart of Darkness*, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the socio-political and economic implications of social

imperialism in African countries and how ideology can serve as a tool for both oppression and resistance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Imperialism

Lenin's theory of imperialism remains a pivotal framework in understanding the dynamics of global capitalism and the expansion of empires. In his seminal work *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917), Lenin argues that imperialism is not merely an isolated political or military phenomenon but is intrinsically linked to the nature of capitalism itself. His analysis was deeply influenced by the economic transformations that occurred in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, marked by the emergence of monopolistic corporations and the centralization of financial capital. According to Lenin, imperialism represents the final stage of capitalism, wherein the economic system's internal contradictions compel capitalist nations to seek expansion abroad for markets, resources, and investment opportunities. This literature review will explore the core aspects of Lenin's theory of imperialism, focusing on monopoly capitalism, the export of capital, the division of the world, and the economic motives driving imperialist expansion.

Monopoly capitalism is the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of monopolies also exacerbates social inequality, both within capitalist countries and globally. Wealth becomes increasingly concentrated among a small elite, while the working class and colonized populations are subjected to exploitation and subjugation. The monopolies, in their quest for profits, seek to control not only markets but also natural resources, labor, and capital in less developed regions, setting the stage for imperial expansion.

Export of capital serves multiple purposes for the imperialist powers, it allows them to exploit cheap labor and abundant natural resources in less developed regions, thereby maximizing profits.

Division of the world is the entities that seek to secure exclusive access to the resources and markets of the colonized regions, often through direct control of territories or through economic dominance. This leads to a situation where imperialist powers are in constant competition with one another, not only for economic gain but also for geopolitical dominance.

Economic motives behind imperialism are evident in the way imperialist powers prioritize the extraction of resources, access to cheap labor, and control of markets in the colonized regions. These priorities are driven by the need to maintain capitalist growth and ensure the profitability of monopolistic corporations. In this sense, imperialism is a continuation of the capitalist system's inherent drive for expansion, as the search for new sources of wealth becomes increasingly urgent in a world where domestic markets are no longer sufficient to sustain growth.

Marxist Ideology

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' theory of ideology is a fundamental part of their larger critique of capitalism and their vision for revolutionary social change. Marxist ideology, rooted in historical materialism, serves as a powerful intellectual tool for the working class to understand, challenge, and ultimately overthrow the capitalist system. The concept of ideology in Marxist thought is not simply a collection of ideas or a belief system; it is deeply intertwined with the material conditions of society, class relations, and the structures of power and exploitation. This literature review explores the core elements of Marxist ideology, its role in class struggle, and its broader implications for understanding capitalist exploitation and envisioning a communist society.

Ideology as a Defensive Factor

Marxist ideology is not only a critique of capitalism but also a defensive weapon for the working class in their struggle against exploitation. It provides a political and intellectual framework that allows workers to understand the true nature of their oppression and the capitalist system that sustains it. By revealing the underlying class dynamics and the exploitative relationships that characterize capitalism, Marxist ideology empowers the working class to challenge the status quo and envision an alternative future.

A crucial component of Marxist ideology is its emphasis on the inevitability of revolution. Marx and Engels believed that capitalism's internal contradictions would eventually lead to its collapse. The proletariat, through class struggle, would overthrow the capitalist system and replace it with a communist society, where the means of production are collectively owned, and class divisions no longer exist. This revolutionary vision is a central tenet of Marxist ideology, providing a sense of purpose and direction for the working class.

In addition to its revolutionary aspirations, Marxist ideology also emphasizes the importance of international worker solidarity. The famous slogan from *The Communist Manifesto*—"Proletarians of all countries, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!" (Marx & Engels, 1848, p. 26)—reflects the idea that the working class, regardless of nationality, shares a common enemy in the capitalist class. This internationalist perspective is a crucial aspect of Marxist ideology, as it calls for workers across the world to unite in their struggle against capitalist exploitation. Marx and Engels argued that capitalism is a global system, and therefore, the fight to overthrow it must also be global.

Several key concepts define Marxist ideology and its critique of capitalism. These concepts are not only theoretical but also serve as practical guides for revolutionary action:

Inevitability of Revolution: Marx and Engels predicted that the contradictions of capitalism would lead to its eventual downfall, with the proletariat rising up to overthrow the bourgeoisie. This revolution would establish a classless society, free from exploitation and oppression.

Abolition of Private Property: Central to Marxist ideology is the idea that private ownership of the means of production is the root cause of inequality and exploitation. The

abolition of private property, and the establishment of collective ownership, is seen as a necessary step toward achieving a classless society.

International Worker Solidarity: Marxist ideology emphasizes the need for workers across the world to unite in their struggle against capitalism. Similarly, the working class must unite to challenge this system and bring about revolutionary change.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. The object of this research is the Novel *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad. This research focuses on the analysis of social imperialism and ideology within the novel. To guide the analysis, the researcher utilizes two key theoretical frameworks: Vladimir Lenin's theory of imperialism and Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' theory of ideology, and this research uses a literary sociological approach. The purpose of this research is to know the forms of social imperialism and to know how the ideology utilizes as a defensive factor toward social imperialism in The Novel *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Forms of Social Imperialism

Various forms of imperialism reflect different strategies and methods used by imperialist countries to expand their power and exploit other nations or societies. The researcher found four forms of social imperialism, namely Monopoly Capitalism, Export of Capital, Division of the World, and Economic Motive.

1. Monopoly Capitalism

Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair. Another mine on the cliff went off, followed by a slight shudder of the soil under my feet. The work was going on. The work !! And this was the place where some of the helpers had withdrawn to die. (Conrad, 1899, pg. 25)

This expression illustrates the extreme exploitation of labor under monopoly capitalism. Labors are treated as tools of production that can be used until they are exhausted, with no regard for their physical or mental well-being. Monopoly capitalism allows companies to exploit labor to the point of destruction, without considering human rights. This reflects how monopoly capitalism exploits labor without concern for their welfare or lives. Labors are forced to continue working in terrible conditions, even when it leads to their death. This reflects the characteristics of monopoly capitalism, where companies dominate labor entirely without protection mechanisms or competition.

2. Export of Capital

No one, as far as I know, unless a species of wandering trader – a pestilential fellow, snapping ivory from the natives. (Conrad, 1899, pg. 52)

This shows the export of capital where the rulers slowly took over the ivory from the natives, where traders opportunistically take ivory from the locals as the focus of their trade, because they feel that they control the area, so they take valuable goods such as ivory from the locals. This shows an example of how foreigners dominate the local economy. Export of capital allows companies to establish economic operations that marginalize local communities.

3. Division of the World

The population had cleared out a long time ago. Well, if a lot of mysterious niggers armed with all kinds of fearful weapons suddenly took to traveling on the road between Deal and Gravesend, catching the yokels right and cottage thereabouts would get empty very soon. (Conrad, 1899, pg. 30)

Colonial powers and large companies can lead to the depopulation of areas previously inhabited by local people, as well as the process of territorial division and takeover by larger colonial forces. This results in the emptying of local areas and profound changes in the social and economic structure. This reveals that the displacement and eviction of the local population resulted from the expropriation of land and resources that forced the natives to leave their homes. The division of the world reflects the imperial power in controlling, dominating, and exploiting new territories.

4. Economic Motive

I couldn't help asking him once what he meant by coming there at all. "To make money, of course. What do you think?" he said, scornfully. (Conrad, 1899, pg. 31)

It clearly shows that the main purpose of the colonialist presence in the region is to seek economic gains, where economic interests are the main driver of colonial activity. This phrase describes how the practice of imperialism in an economic system driven by economic profits makes large companies often look for opportunities to make profits from their colonies.

The Utilization of Ideology Towards Social Imperialism

The use of ideology as a defensive factor towards social imperialism, the researcher uses three main concepts in Marxist ideology, namely Inevitability of Revolution, Abolition of Private Property, and International Worker Solidarity.

1. Inevitability of Revolution

It appears the Company had received news that one of their captains had been killed in a scuffle with the natives. (Conrad, 1899, pg. 11)

This shows the inevitability of revolution where workers use their ideology to be able to rebel. The uprising as a revolution of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, they showed that the proletariat felt oppressed and exploited. This reflects the reaction or resistance of the local community to the presence and dominance of the colonial. It can be seen in this quote that they use a form of ideology; inevitability of revolution by violent means to fight the exploitation of natural resources and labor.

2. Abolition of Private Property

Thus he could see and enjoy as long as he could see, because the appreciation of this favor had remained with him to the last. You should have heard him say, 'My Ivory.' Oh yes, I heard him. 'My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my—everything belonged to him. (Conrad, 1899, pg. 80)

This quote points to Kurtz's obsession with controlling the natural resource like ivory and making the ivory his personal property. The control of ivory, trading stations, and rivers shows how large individuals or corporations claim exclusive rights to natural resources and territories that should belong to the collective of local communities. To take over their resources, communities use the concept of the elimination of private ownership with the aim of eliminating exclusive claims to ivory and other resources, ensuring that natural resources are used for the common good and are not exploited by specific individuals or companies.

3. International Worker Solidarity

I went forward, and ordered the chain to be hauled in short, so as to be ready to trip the anchor and move the steamboat at once if necessary. 'Will they attack?' whispered an awed voice. We will be all butchered in this fog, murmured another. The faces twitched with the strain, the hands trembled slightly, the eyes forgot to wink. It was very curious to see the contrast of expressions of the white men and of the black fellows of our crew, who were as much strangers to that part of the river as we, though their homes were only eight hundred miles away. (Conrad, 1899, pg. 65)

The proletariat has united against the bourgeoisie, they have begun to show their courage, they are pulling the chains of the ships used by the bourgeoisie and making the bourgeoisie fear their presence. This shows worker solidarity, where workers unite against the bourgeoisie in order to restore their territory. Solidarity includes not only the moral support of workers between countries, but also solidarity in one area of work in action to fight for work rights such as humane working conditions.

CONCLUSION

Monopoly capitalism's dominance is evident in the high level of exploitation it entails. The novel depicts extreme exploitation of workers, poor living conditions, and inade-

quate wages, illustrating the dehumanizing impact of capitalist control over labor. Additionally, the extraction and overexploitation of natural resources, such as ivory, and the forceful displacement of local populations for the expansion of trade, further highlight the oppressive nature of this form of social imperialism. Monopoly capitalism's ability to control strategic economic sectors through a small number of powerful corporations allows imperialist nations to effectively dominate global markets, resources, and labor. This concentrated control makes monopoly capitalism the most expansive and deeply rooted tool of imperialist economic domination. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that monopoly capitalism does not function in isolation; it utilizes other forms of social imperialism—such as export of capital, division of the world, and economic motive—to sustain its dominance. In response to the oppressive mechanisms of imperialism, ideology plays a critical role in empowering oppressed groups to resist and challenge capitalist exploitation. Marxist ideologies such as the inevitability of revolution, the abolition of private property, and international workers' solidarity provide a robust framework for opposing imperialist forces. These ideologies not only serve as tools of resistance but also offer strategic visions for dismantling social imperialism and transforming the economic-political systems that perpetuate monopoly capitalism. Through ideological resistance, the oppressed are motivated to unite, fight for their rights, and strive for a world free from the exploitation and domination imposed by global imperialist powers.

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