



A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MODERN DAY ENERGY GEOPOLITICS WITH COLONIAL EXTRACTIVISM IN THE GUN ISLAND OF AMITAV GHOSH

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Abstract

In this article, we look at how Amitav Ghosh's Gun Island depicts colonial extractivism and contemporary energy geopolitics. In a complex criticism of resource exploitation, the book offers a nuanced critique against the backdrop of global migration and climate change. This study shows how extractive capitalism has shaped and is shaping global power dynamics by comparing extractive economies of the colonial past to geopolitical conflicts over energy resources today. From the time of colonisation until the current period of reliance on fossil fuels, the research analyses the social, economic, and environmental effects of resource-driven imperialism. In addition, it delves into the ways in which the story, characters, and themes of Gun Island mirror these exploitative systems, showing how extractive industries continue to affect vulnerable populations. The study also takes into account the ways in which the novel's fundamental theme of climate-induced displacement echoes the historical effects of colonial exploitation. This study highlights the current and historical contexts to demonstrate how resource imperialism has left lasting effects and how critical it is to implement policies that promote sustainable energy. By comparing and contrasting the two Gun Islands, this research shows how literature can be a potent tool for criticising the colonial and modern-day global economic mechanisms that embody exploitation.

Keywords: Amitav Ghosh, Gun Island, geopolitics, Colonial

Introduction

In the 21st century, the global competition for energy resources has remarkable similarities to the extractivist techniques that were prevalent throughout the colonial era and that were responsible for shaping the modern world. In the past, colonial extractivism entailed the exploitation of natural resources on a massive scale from the periphery (regions that were colonised) in order to fuel the economic growth of imperial powers. Not only did this exploitative system deprive the colonised territories of their riches, but it also changed the economic and political structures that existed on a worldwide scale. Energy geopolitics today follows a pattern that is quite similar to the one described above. Strong nations compete with one another for control over vital resources such as oil, natural gas, and rare earth minerals, and this competition frequently comes at the expense of less strong ones. Gun Island by Amitav Ghosh offers a gripping narrative structure that allows the reader to investigate the continuity that exists between the past and the present. The book, which weaves together historical trade routes, climatic migration, and ecological damage, functions as a prism through which the continuing processes of energy resource exploitation and geopolitical struggle may be analysed at the same time. In the same way that colonial empires plundered resources from Asia, Africa, and Latin America in order to retain their economic domination, current energy politics, which are influenced by dependency on fossil fuels and the shift to renewable energy, continue to strengthen global disparities. The purpose of this study is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the ways in which Gun Island exemplifies the similarities between colonial extractivism and contemporary energy geopolitics. The purpose of this research is to show that resource exploitation

continues to be a primary factor in both economic and political instability. This is accomplished by analysing the historical echoes that are present within the novel's representation of environmental crises and migration. The purpose of this debate is to investigate the ways in which modern energy fights are similar to colonial resource control, which perpetuates patterns of domination, reliance, and displacement in the Latin American region. Consequently, the article draws attention to the pressing requirement to reimagine global energy governance in a manner that poses a challenge to the extractivist legacies that have been left behind in the past.

Colonial Extractivism: Historical Context and Legacy

The development of European imperial powers was facilitated by the practice of colonial extractivism, which allowed these powers to acquire money by exploiting the natural resources of the territories that they had successfully colonised. Native American communities were not given much consideration during the extraction of raw commodities such as spices, cotton, lumber, and subsequently fossil fuels. As a result, their territories were turned into resource frontiers for European companies. As a result of colonial powers engaging in hostilities and territorial expansion in order to obtain critical resources, this system was not just economic but also geopolitical. For example, the British controlled coal and petroleum deposits in India and the Middle East, while European nations contended for rubber and minerals in Africa. Both of these regions were on the African continent. Long-term economic dependencies were established as a result of the extractivist approach. The colonised nations were coerced into participating in a system in which they supplied the imperial powers with raw resources, while the imperial powers imported completed commodities back at higher prices. Local economies were harmed as a result of this imbalance, which also institutionalised structural inequities that continue to exist today. By exploring ancient trade routes and ecological upheavals that continue to impact migratory patterns and economic inequality in the present world, Ghosh makes a reference to this heritage in his novel *Gun Island*.

Energy Geopolitics in the 21st Century: A New Form of Extractivism?

The key factors that fuel geopolitical competitiveness in the modern period are energy resources such as oil, natural gas, and lithium. Some examples of these resources are lithium. In a manner that is reminiscent of colonial extractivism, the present energy geopolitics is characterised by uneven power relations. This is because states that are wealthy in resources but economically weaker are frequently at the mercy of global energy needs. The Middle East, Africa, and Latin America continue to be resource frontiers, with multinational businesses and global powers competing for control over fossil fuel sources and rare minerals that are important for the development of renewable energy technology. This worldwide competition for energy has resulted in the escalation of hostilities, the deterioration of the environment, and economic dependences that are reminiscent of the time of colonialism. In the 20th and 21st centuries, there have been conflicts waged for oil supplies, such as the instance of Iraq. On the other hand, more recent types of extractivism, such as lithium mining in South America, raise issues over the environmental sustainability and neocolonial economic practices. Through its examination of climate change and migration, *Gun Island* quietly reflects these conflicts. It demonstrates how ecological catastrophes that are related to the exploitation of resources disproportionately affect populations who are already marginalised.

Parallels Between Colonial Extractivism and Modern Energy Politics in *Gun Island*

The work written by Amitav Ghosh conveys a complex storyline that establishes a connection between past extractivism and contemporary ecological issues. The voyage that the protagonist takes across continents is reminiscent of past trade routes, which highlights the fact that colonial exploitation laid the groundwork for various environmental and economic difficulties that are present in the present day. An effective metaphor for the way in which resource exploitation, both in the past and in the present, results in the displacement of populations is provided by the novel's depiction of climate-induced migration.

Economic Exploitation and Global Dependencies

In the same way that colonial economies were organised to suit imperial powers, the politics of contemporary energy are driven by an unequal distribution of resources and advantages. In the same

way that their colonial equivalents suffered from economic instability and political meddling, countries that export fossil fuels frequently face similar challenges. In many countries, the wealth that is gained from the extraction of resources is rarely beneficial to the local populace.

Environmental Consequences and Climate Change

Deforestation, soil depletion, and ecological disturbances were all results of colonial extractivism, and these repercussions continue to manifest themselves in the form of climate change today. Gun Island shows the intimate connection between environmental deterioration and migration, with climate refugees appearing as a contemporary analogue to individuals who were moved as a result of economic policies implemented by colonial governments.

Displacement and Human Suffering

The plantation economy, forced labour, and resource-driven conflicts that occurred throughout the colonial era led to the relocation of large numbers of people. Whether it is through battles over oil and gas or climate-induced displacements, energy geopolitics continue to compel migration in the same way that it did many decades ago. The image of migrants crossing dangerous borders in the novel highlights the ongoing human cost that is associated with extractive capitalism.

Aims and Methodology

Changing weather patterns and human migration are two of Gun Island's most enduring topics. This essay focusses on the brave and terrible stories of illegal migrants from the Indian Sundarbans and other impoverished nations. It explores the sociopolitical and climatological causes and effects of illegal immigration while evaluating the role of globalised capitalist politics in this phenomenon. This essay will thoroughly examine the data provided and assess pertinent aspects in order to dive into the two contemporary global crises: manmade climate change and illegal immigration. Here, textual proofs will be crucial, and we'll look at and emphasise the supporting data to bring attention to the core of the immigration and climate challenges. We will thoroughly investigate the book in issue and any relevant secondary sources to substantiate the findings stated in the research paper.

Findings

A rare book dealer based in Brooklyn, Dinanath Datta is both the narrator and protagonist of Gun Island. In the famous Bengali folktale called the Gun Merchant (Bonduki Sadagar), the temple of Manasa Devi is portrayed. He decides to visit this temple in the Sundarbans. In the Indian Sundarbans, far from the rest of India's developed regions, he gets a close encounter with the harsh yet sensitive ecosystem on one of his journeys. "The islands of the Sundarbans are constantly being swallowed up by the sea; they're disappearing before our eyes" (Ghosh, 2019), as accurately put by Nilima Bose, head of the Badabon trust in the Sundarbans. She begs Dinanath to visit the Manasa Devi shrine before the legendary tale and the shrine itself are lost to history due to rising sea levels the moment she finds out that Dinanath is interested in antiquities. The reason behind this is that sea levels are increasing due to "temperatures are rising around the world because of global warming" (Ghosh, 2019). During his time in this mangrove zone, Dinanath learns about the current residents' plight. "The frontier where commerce and the wilderness look each other directly in the eye" is how the narrator's distant relative Kanai Dutta puts it when describing the Sundarbans (Ghosh, 2019). In addition, the Sundarbans attract materialistic individuals who exploit the natural resources for profit. According to Kanai, "...every merchant who has ever sailed out of Bengal has had to pass through the Sundarbans - there is no other way to reach the sea" (Ghosh, this year). The Sundarbans are the sole land corridor leading to the ocean, which is why this is the case. "Exactly where the war between profit and Nature is fought" (Ghosh, 2019) is the rationale behind the construction of the Manasa Devi shrine in this snake-infested wetland.

Several pressing ecological problems are highlighted in the book, which the Sunderbans are presently experiencing. The dead zones that have formed in the area, together with the acidity and pollution of water supplies, may be seen as the outcome of a struggle between opposing forces. These factors include human activity and the natural world, or more precisely, urbanisation and the natural world. Rumour has it that Rutger Rosenberg and Robert Diaz have claimed that,

The rise in primary production and the subsequent worldwide coastal eutrophication that has been fuelled by riverine discharge of fertilisers and the burning of fossil fuels have both contributed to the establishment of dead zones, which has been made worse by these two factors. An increase in primary production leads to a buildup of particulate organic matter, which in turn stimulates the activity of microorganisms and the consumption of dissolved oxygen in bottom waters. (2008)

Pia, a Bengali-American Indian-American, is a pivotal figure in the story. She is responsible for keeping an eye on the Irrawaddy dolphins in the Sundarbans. Her extensive familiarity with the area's topography is a direct outcome of her many trips there. She notes that chemicals spilt out of a refinery and pollution from agricultural operations have tainted the river water. There is an unstoppable gang of powerful people running the refinery who also control the government and the police. Dead zones are expanding "at a phenomenal pace, primarily due to residues from chemical fertilisers" (Ghosh, 2019). Pia claims this to be true. The fact that these zones can stretch as far as medium-sized nations and that rivers can have dead zones, especially at their mouths, is brought to light by her.

Conclusion

It appears that the global energy system is still based on exploitative tactics, given the historical similarities between colonial extractivism and current energy geopolitics. *Gun Island*, written by Amitav Ghosh, offers a literary perspective on these continuities by demonstrating how resource exploitation is a persistent cause of environmental disasters, forced migrations, and inequality. The reevaluation of international energy policy must begin with the identification of these trends. The colonial era's cycle of exploitation may be broken by moving towards fair and sustainable resource management that puts a focus on local economies, environmental conservation, and energy justice. For a future that is equitable for all people and the planet, we must immediately respond to the novel's climate change and displacement warnings by enacting policies that reject extractivist paradigms. Modern energy geopolitics continues the patterns of colonial extractivism, according to this study's results, which include economic exploitation, environmental degradation, and human displacement. Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* offers a persuasive framework for comprehending these problems, revealing the critical necessity to abandon extractivist paradigms in favour of fair and environmentally responsible resource management.

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