

History of Post Modernism

Phanidhar Mech

Associate Professor, Department of History, B.H.B. college, Sarupeta, Assam

OVERVIEW

The first challenge in discussing 'postmodernism' is that it is a highly imprecise term that might signify multiple things depending on the context. It makes sense to think of it as the "post-" of "modernism"—something that comes after modernism in general. These days, the term "modernism" only describes a collection of literary and artistic movements and advancements, including writers like Joyce, Proust, and Eliot, as well as movements like surrealism and cubism. There is much more to the phrase postmodernism than that. It is even more commonly attributed to a number of philosophers—Lyotard, Foucault, and Derrida are among the most well-known—whose struggle is with the Enlightenment and its main legacies, particularly Marxism, rather than with Modernism, as all of them value modernist art.

The problem of postmodernism in literature and art can be disregarded. Philosophical postmodernism is more significant since it presents itself as a completely new (or "Post-Marxist") political practice in addition to being a philosophical alternative to Marxism. The political ramifications of postmodernism's philosophical and theoretical stances should be our primary concern.

Furthermore, "postmodernism" is also associated with concepts such as "the Postmodern Age" (as coined by American sociologist C. Wright Mills in 1959), "Postmodern Condition" (the title of Lyotard's highly influential 1979 book), and "Postmodernity" (as in David Harvey's excellent 1989 book, *The Condition of Postmodernity*). 'Modernity' and 'Postmodernity' are used to refer to different periods of real history in all of these contexts. The term "modernity" generally refers to the types of states, political structures, industrial economies, bourgeois societies, philosophies, and revolutionary ideologies that emerged specifically in Europe and its North American offshoots as a result of (a) the influence of the Enlightenment on contemporary thought, (b) the political impact of the French Revolution, and (c) the socio-economic changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution or revolutions. The idea of "postmodernity" is based on the idea that capitalism itself underwent a significant transformation during World War II, changing both the nature of capitalist society and the politics suitable for these kinds of communities. The main focus of this type of postmodernist discourse was on technological, social, and economic shifts that had significant ramifications for contemporary political systems.

POST MODERNISM IN THE GLOBAL SETTING

We should start by providing a thorough explanation of the specific historical setting in which these concepts originated, initially in the US and then in France, prior to their widespread adoption. There is no doubt that many philosophical concepts have a somewhat independent past. The majority of Derrida's philosophy, for example, could easily be interpreted as a critique of Cartesian rationalism and left at that. However, in addition to writing a book on Marx, Derrida frequently makes political statements. In general, postmodernism is like this. A solid grasp of the background becomes crucial in order to comprehend the political origin and nature of such concepts. During the 1950s, a time of extraordinary capitalist stability and prosperity, postmodernism emerged in the US. Ten years after the French labour movement and the wider left were decisively defeated, it emerged in France and was

heavily influenced by American postmodernist concepts. Although those concepts were later globalised with transhistorical assertions, their unique national origins aid in explaining their nature.

The majority of us believe that the word "postmodernism" is relatively new, and alludes to a collection of French concepts. A group of American sociologists and their colleagues gave the term its core meanings in the 1950s, the first decade of the Cold War, specifically to refute Marxism and the concept of class struggle as such. In reality, the term has been around since at least the 1870s, both in Britain and Latin America, but with very different meanings that we shall ignore. After the left-wing revival of the 1967–1969 period had been fought back across Europe, a handful of French intellectuals adopted these American ideals. After being appropriately reformulated in the language of French philosophy, these concepts were brought back to the Anglo-Saxon nations, took control of their universities, and spread from there to nations such as India.

What was the setting for the assembly of those American concepts? With full employment, massive wartime technological advancements (such as the atomic bomb, the computer, and significant advancements in telecommunications, aviation, etc.), historically unmatched financial resources, and the capacity to rule over almost the entire world, including Western Europe, the US had emerged from World War II as the preeminent power in the world. In order to generate ideas for the global bourgeoisie as a whole, the US appeared to have the most potent university system in history during the ensuing 20 years. Most significantly, the US-led global capitalism went through its longest historical period of affluence and its fastest rates of continuous expansion, which did, in fact, result in significant changes to the structures of communication, management, and production. In contrast to continental Europe, the United States never had a strong communist movement or a Marxist culture. The US was riding a wave of prosperity that was to create what was variously referred to as the Active Society, Postmodern Society, Post-Industrial Society and Information Society, Mass Culture, Affluent Society, and so on. At home, the country was politically apathetic and conservative, but it was also incredibly optimistic about its own future. 'Postmodern' was distinctly American long before it became French, but one forgets that now.

There were two sides to the term's use in America. A significant portion of it was related to the arts, literature, and culture. We will disregard everything here. The remaining portion dealt with social organisation, economic production methods, and science and technology. A hero—the computer—was at the heart of this other story. Sociologists, cybernetics experts, and popular science authors were the most prominent people to tell the story of this hero's adventures. And a fundamental conviction: capitalism had finally brought about the wealth it had always promised, thanks to the latest technological advancements; this prosperity was here to stay, and it was only a matter of time until the poor also received a piece of it. A particular entity, the advanced-capitalist welfare state, was in charge of this idea during a period of unparalleled prosperity in which the middle class had grown significantly. Across the social sciences, it was asserted that the US was essentially a middle class nation and that the working class had joined it by owning homes and personal cars. Then, it was asserted that communist ideas became obsolete as an increasing number of workers achieved middle-class wages due to a combination of fast economic growth, full employment and Keynesian redistributive processes, and a new agreement between capital and labour that resulted in increased salaries as a result of productivity improvements.

In the 1950s and 1960s, what Lyotard would later refer to as the "computerisation of society" was already being hailed in the United States as bringing about a revolutionary change in the history of capitalism. Information technologies were said to be bringing about an equally epochal shift from "production society" to "information society" and from the industrial to the post-industrial era, just as the European economy had previously undergone fundamental changes from agriculture to simple manufacture and from simple manufacture to modern industry in the proper sense. The sociological theory of postmodernity has its true roots in the earlier theories of post-Fordist production and post-industrial society, regardless of the philosophical stances that have since been linked to it and what the term has ultimately come to imply in the realm of art and aesthetics.

Following Fordism, the massive system of centralised factory production was being divided into smaller units that focused on specific production aspects, and eventually into a production system that was so distributed and "flexible" that parts could be produced at a dozen different locations, and the major Detroit auto centres were only required to put entire cars together using those parts. The multinational firm and its numerous subsidiaries then globalised this system. It was claimed that the industrial working class was not only dwindling in comparison to white-collar workers in the office and information sectors, but that it was also dispersed throughout the nation and even continents, rather than concentrated in specific cities or regions with their massive manufacturing plants.

The term "post-industrial" had several diverse meanings. First, there was a change in the emphasis from production to consumption. Instead of being driven by the whims and choices of specific capitalists, industrial plants now grew in response to effective demand, which was generated by full employment, credit expansion to encourage excessive consumption, and advertising to continuously open up new markets for new goods. Second, it meant that information technology played a far more important role than only production technology in the planning of the entire production-consumption chain. Thirdly, it signified the changing proportion of jobs in services compared to industrial employment. Fourth, fewer and fewer workers were required to produce more and more commodities due to computerisation, robotization, and rising productivity increases brought about by ongoing technological innovation. Presumably, these fewer workers might then be paid enough to become 'middle class'. Fifth, it was also suggested that the dominance of multinational corporations, whose funding came from the open market sale of shares, had changed the essence of modern capital so that it was owned by all shareholders rather than just a small group of capitalists. This was referred to as a capitalist socialisation of capital. Furthermore, a techno-managerial elite that was chosen based on merit and ability rather than family heritage made corporate choices rather than capitalists. Meritocracy had so supplanted the capitalist class in post-industrial economies. Therefore, it was said that Marxism had become merely obsolete as postmodern capitalism lacked the production system, working class, and even capitalist class that Marx had described.

Yet, there were disparate tones within this broader study.

The most euphoric were usually those who popularised science and medicine, like Marshall McLuhan or Alvin Toffler, and some of the more contemporary cultural critics, like Leslie Fiedler; the world of limitless communication and consumption, a global village of play and plenty, was at their fingertips. Former Trotskyites Irwing Howe and Daniel Bell, who had adapted to a mix of cultural elitism and mildly democratic politics, lamented the massification of culture and consumerism, praised the world of plenty, and painted a generally dismal picture of a society that was, in Irving Howe's words, "part welfare, part garrison." The postmodern was 'the spending society,' which was initially established by the credit system of the 1930s, where you could just borrow and spend what you did not have (e.g., housing purchased on mortgage, cars on credit). Daniel Bell added a new twist to all of this: the modern was 'the saving society' of Weberian Protestant Ethic, where you saved before you spent. The narcissistic and wasteful postmodern reflected a fundamental change in capitalist society from "production" to "consumption" as the primary driver of growth. He saw this consumerist frenzy as an indication of societal decline and a departure from the ideals of high-bourgeoisie.

society of geois. The notion that prosperity brought about by technology had resulted in social decay would recur repeatedly on both sides of the Atlantic, with the notable distinction that French postmodernists viewed the end of Enlightenment values as a joyful release from the restraints of rational behaviour and normative values, whereas American critics saw it as a tragedy. Because the working class no longer played a revolutionary role, no revolutionary historical change was in any way imaginable for this diverse group of writers. The Post-Industrial Society's birth certificate bore the phrase "End of Ideology." The assertion that all potential alternatives to liberal capitalism had now been decisively defeated and that the only thing left was the globalisation of this liberal capitalism, which was now underway, was reformulated by Fukuyama in his End of History thesis some forty years later, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The sheer number of postmodernist intellectuals is quite astounding.

were either still Marxists or had previously been Marxists. Former Trotskyites Daniel Bell and Irving Howe have already been mentioned. Herbert Marcuse, a member of the Frankfurt School who immigrated to the US following World War II and made the US his permanent home, was another significant player in the 1960s. He wrote *One-Dimensional Man*, which is arguably the most well-known book that disproves the culture of mindless consumerism. However, he also preached a hedonistic form of Marxism (Marx plus Freud, the sexual revolution), characterising the proletariat as a dwindling, reformist class and placing his hopes for regeneration in the inner-city students and lumpen proletariat. These ideas directly mirrored the nature of the anti-war demonstrations and slums in the 1960s in the United States. Thus, the critique of capitalist society moved away from any strict sense of class politics and towards the theories of alienation, sexual repression, cultural revolt, minority rights student radicalism, localised revolts, and so forth among those who continued to declare allegiance to some form of Marxism but were to serve as a bridge between the American 'New Left' and the thesis of the working class's demise as a revolutionary agent, such as Marcuse. Particularly among the white middle classes, the class-cultural transformations were becoming a widespread phenomena among the youth organisations that emerged in the 1960s, and the issues with capitalism itself were perceived more in terms of unequal distribution and social alienation than regarding exploitation at the producing site.

Overall, there were two notable aspects of those 1960s uprisings that served as a kind of precursor to more contemporary postmodern political movements. One was that the organised working class remained passive, uninterested, and under the influence of the dominant welfarist politics because the social base of student radicalism was so heavily middle class. This, in turn, only served to support the widely held belief that the pro-letariat was no longer revolutionary and that the responsibility for bringing about revolutionary social change could now be transferred to other, more dispersed social groups. This working-class temptation was to become a recurring theme in postmodern politics. Aside from the opposition to the Vietnam War, which naturally sparked a broader anti-war sentiment, the second notable aspect of that radicalism was its cultural focus. It encompassed a wide range of topics, from pop music to sexuality, from drugs to dress codes, from ethnic identities to religious cults. It was a broad revolt against the repressive aspect of bourgeois society, but it also sought the most fundamental forms of bourgeois individuation, self-fashioning, and even self-consuming. In what is known as "the Philosophy of Desire," French postmodernism carefully adopted these trends in young culture. 'Care of the Self' and 'Aesthetics of Existence', for instance, were ecstatically expounded by Foucault, who shifted the focus from communal political action to individual self-satisfaction.

II

What historical period in French history saw the emergence of postmodernism after 1968?

France had experienced the advanced-capitalist type of socio-economic changes later, but much more drastically. By the end of the 19th century, the United States was a significant industrial power, and during World War I, it emerged as the world's largest financial power. In contrast, France had remained a largely agricultural society until the end of World War II. In contrast to the United States, however, it had such a strong working class movement that, with 26% of the vote, the French Communist Party (PCF) was the largest party at the end of the war. These two facts were to undergo significant change during the course of the following 20 years, as the most rapid expansion of the productive forces in European capitalism's history transformed the character of Western Europe, in part due to the infusion of American funds through the Marshall Plan. France lost two major colonial wars, in Algeria and Indochina, respectively, during the same decade that the groundwork was being laid for the economic and social embarrassment of a very large portion of the population. The resulting sense of national humiliation made right-wing opinion in the country much more prevalent and aggressive. The brutality of France's colonial wars and the Marshall Plan had both been criticised by the Left. Both the Marshall Plan beneficiaries and the national-chauvinist wave that emerged in France after the wars were lost released a great deal of rage against the Left.

Not only that, but the class structure itself underwent revolutionary changes. A The peasantry, which made up the majority of the population in 1945, only made up 14% of the French population by 1968. Meanwhile, the nation's cultural and academic complexes expanded rapidly, the number of college students tripled from 200,000 to 600,000 between 1960 and 1968 alone, with over 40% of them being women and more than one-third concentrated in Paris alone. These developments, along with new consumption goods industries, American-style urban development, and the rapid growth in car ownership and other similar goods, changed the rhythms of French life within a single generation. The fact that the 1968 student uprisings were sparked by the university infrastructures' inability to meet the academic demands of students and the rebellious impulses of a large number of first-generation students entering what was arguably the most hierarchical and snobbish university system in the world, rather than by fear of unemployment—since the economy was still growing at a very rapid pace—is indicative of the contradictions inherent in this new prosperity. In actuality, what they wanted was for France's extremely aristocratic elite educational institutions to recognise their own value and modernise their institutions more quickly. In actuality, the reforms that followed the student uprisings restructured the French university system to more closely resemble the competitive American model.

Meanwhile, the swift expansion of capitalism resulted in a relative lack of political participation in the working class's higher-paid segments. Additionally, during this time, a new class of petty bourgeois strata with less was far more receptive to the growing globalised American culture while maintaining continuity with traditional France. More broadly, an intellectual climate predominated, with capitalism, supported by a sophisticated social democratic state, appearing to be fulfilling its promises of steady and growing wealth for those who had access to more sophisticated forms of education and culture. This intoxication of commodities was best summed up by Lyotard, arguably the most famous of French postmodernists (and a former Luxemburgist himself): "The age of scarcity is over, the age of goods and services has arrived!" The phalanxes of the upwardly mobile looked to be more interested in culture than in class, and in surrealism as opposed to conventional Marxism. The plodding rhythms of working class politics bored the political elite of these newly wealthy strata. It dreamed of distance instead. associations with Guevarism, Maoism, or just anarchism.

Therefore, the French radical youth of the 1960s who attended universities was more than typically open to the ideas coming from the U.S. from the elite sociologists and the white middle class anti-war radicals, mostly because those ideas aligned with a lot of their own experiences; they were also raised on computers and Coca-Cola.

For the first time in two centuries, the French intellectual elite was turning to the United States for ideas and markets due to the influence of American capitalism and the Cold War. The United States, the world's preeminent imperialist state, had developed into the intellectual and artistic hub of the empire. Key intellectual factions in France now looked up to the new imperial capital after losing its own empire. At the forefront of French cinema, the young directors aspired to be like Hitchcock. Daniel Bell was a source of inspiration for prominent sociologists and philosophers of the new generation. It was only after its spectacular marketing, repackaging, and extended reproduction in the United States that French postmodernism itself would emerge from this milieu as a globally dominant intellectual current.

The narrative of the 1968 French revolutions, as revised by a combination of postmodernists and liberals, focusses nearly exclusively on student uprisings. According to the facts, this year also saw the biggest general strike in European history, with a proletariat insurrection at its centre. President De Gaulle responded by making plans to summon the NATO forces.

The PCF and CGT were well aware that a revolutionary victory in a crucial European nation such as France would not be permitted by the United States. When the working class faced the possibility of real intervention, they planned a well-organised withdrawal. The religion of spontaneity, the desire for upward mobility, sexual revolution, and American sociology, on the other hand, were all oddly combined in the ideology of the 1968 student uprisings in Paris. One of the main student leaders, Cohn-Bendit, summed up the belief of those who would subsequently blame the PCF and the French working class so vehemently for "betraying the revolution" in this way: "On May 11, people weren't

looking for a confirmation." The original plan was to host a large gathering in the courtyard of the Sorbonne. On their own, the barricades were erected. Communists were accused of reformism, bureaucratism, betrayal, Stalinism, and other things when they attempted to remind them that not only the French army but also the two hundred thousand American soldiers stationed in West Germany were unlikely to abandon their arsenal to join this "big party in the Sorbonne courtyard." The French intelligentsia's upper class was now prepared to reject the working class movement with firmness. Most radicals from the past took lucrative positions in the state's expanding cultural apparatuses as the dust settled from 1968 and French capitalism resumed its expansion with renewed vigour. This was especially true after the Socialist Party abandoned the Common Programme it had developed with the PCF and came to power without the communists. This was the environment in which French postmodernism emerged as the dominant movement, with North America serving as its most influential constituency.

III

Now, let's discuss some ironies and paradoxes that are present in postmodern philosophy.

The first contradiction that comes to mind is how well-liked it is in nations like China and India. The structures of advanced capitalism are mentioned in all of the core tenets of postmodern social and economic analysis. It appears improbable that postmodernist assessments could be applied to societies that are not modern, even by the standards of 19th-century Britain, France, or Germany, when considering items from India. Additionally, societies that are mostly agrarian cannot be postindustrial.

A fundamental principle of postmodernism is the definitive fall of the industrial working class. This is also not applicable. China's industrial proletariat has grown more in just three decades than possibly all of Europe did during its industrial revolutions, owing to the country's large population and recent fast industrialisation. During the half-century that has seen the rise of postmodern ideas in higher education, a small number of countries—East and South East Asian nations, as well as, let's say, India, Brazil, and Argentina—have undergone a demographically much larger process of proletarianisation than the West did in its entire history.

Regarding the widespread prosperity and widespread ownership of homes and consumer goods that capitalism is supposed to have brought about, the truth is that (a) the great majority of people outside of the Euro-American zones never experienced anything of the sort, and (b) the capitalist class's current offensives throughout Europe and North America are exactly what are destroying that kind of prosperity, including homeownership for the working classes. And if the credit system was the primary force behind the creation of the "consumer society," "affluent society," etc., then the amount of private and public debt is what is ending that entire period of American prosperity right in front of our eyes.

The ludicrous notion that the capitalist class in the US is extinct will be disregarded here. However, the opposing thesis—that of the working class—needs to be discussed. The actual and historically exceptional growth of the proletariat in several Third World nations during the past 50 years has already been mentioned. Furthermore, the sharp fall in the US industrial working class is a reflection of the overall decrease in manufacturing in the US economy, which is turning out to be the primary factor behind the country's overall economic downturn rather than a sign of prosperity. That is unquestionably untrue in Germany, the most powerful economy in Europe, where the industrial working class still holds a significantly larger social influence. As early as the 1970s, when notions of the working class's demise were circulating on both sides of the Atlantic, Harry Braverman showed in his brilliant book *Labour and Monopoly Capital* that approximately 90% of Americans did not own any property that generated income and were solely dependent on

The economy of wages and salaries. Then, a sectoral analysis of earnings and employment revealed a high level of proletarianisation.

Communists, on the other hand, have never assumed that the industrial working class is the only type of working class that exists or that it will inevitably make up the majority of the population or be the sole force behind revolutionary change since at least the time of Lenin. The proletariat has long been

seen as the main force behind a revolutionary movement, but it will inevitably need the support and cooperation of other oppressed groups, including the peasantry, the rural proletariat, the large number of workers in industries other than manufacturing, and many other social classes. Since the industrial proletariat only makes up a small portion of the population and even the proletarianised masses, postmodernists believe that communism has somehow lost its relevance. This is in contrast to communist concepts of the industrial proletariat.

Therefore, as far as the social and economic evaluations are concerned, As far as postmodernism is concerned, we can view this section of the ideology as essentially reflecting a specific period of Western wealth, particularly that which is assumed to be permanent. Furthermore, during the Golden Age of capitalism, which lasted from 1945 to 1973, the ideology accurately reflects the class position of the new and affluent middle class, which is a byproduct of the imperialist core of modern capitalism. In fact, this class has benefited throughout the Bubble Economy, which speculative capital was able to maintain even after the recessionary patterns that emerged after 1973. Furthermore, even when they originate from the Third World, the main producers of such ideologies are typically centred in those nations' higher education and cultural management organisations. Furthermore, this extremely Westocentric ideology was promoted as a universalist one, i.e., as though Western conditions were somehow universal and concepts created in particular contexts were universally legitimate.

Lastly, there is a fundamental distinction between the American proposal and elements of French postmodernism and others. Although some of the American proponents were former communists or Trotskyites, the US generally lacks a strong tradition of communist politics or Marxist theory. Instead, liberal-Hegemonic has been ism. It was easy for these postmodernists to fit in with that liberal tradition, defending capitalism, singing the praises of emerging democracy, and so on. The situation in France was different. Additionally, Maris believed that communist politics had a very strong current. Furthermore, postmodernists in France asserted that they were the heirs of the 1968 radicalism. Perhaps because she was a White Russian émigré from Bulgaria rather than French, Kristeva was one of the few people who fully embraced Anglo-Saxon liberalism after having been a Maoist. Before joining the more right-wing branch of the Socialist Party, Lyotard was more Luxemburgist than Trotskyite and came from an ultra-Left background. Foucault had been so close to the PCF during his adolescence that it is still unclear if he was a member. Derrida produced a book praising Marx (interpreting him in a way that no Marxist could agree with) and claimed that Deconstruction, his unique postmodernist philosophy, was nothing more than a "radicalisation of Marxism." The majority of them viewed themselves as more radical than Marxism, hated liberalism, and borrowed heavily from theoretical anarchism. They are the source of the postmodernist generalisation of revolutionary radicalism in India and around the world, which holds that communism is insufficiently revolutionary and that a new form of politics is now required for fundamental social change.

IV

Now, let's discuss some particular concepts that were primarily established in France but have strong connections to developments in the US. I will limit myself to specific formulations by the three most prominent French postmodernists—Lyotard, Foucault, and Derrida—for the sake of conciseness.

Since Lyotard's writings address every major issue pertinent to postmodern, anti-Marxist politics today, he might be considered a representative figure in some respects. Lyotard defines postmodernism as a rejection of three fundamental legacies of the Enlightenment: Dialectics (associated with Hegel), Reason (associated with Descartes and Kant, respectively), and the notion that political economy was the foundation of all social organisation (associated with Marx) in his *Introduction The Postmodern Condition* (1979), his most widely influential book. He also dismisses as merely "Enlightenment optimism" the notion that people could endeavour to achieve its own liberation via working-class revolution (Marx) and logical thought (Kant).

Later in the book, he also discusses "the severe reexamination that postmodernity imposes on the thought of the Enlightenment, on the idea of a unitary end of history and of a subject." By "unitary end of history," Lyotard refers to both the Marxist notion that real universal History can only begin and the

prehistory of humanity can end once capitalism is overthrown and replaced by socialism and communism, as well as the Hegelian idea that the true purpose of history is the pursuit of universal liberty. By "the idea..." of a working subject," he alludes to the Marxist idea that the proletariat is the primary social class ('the subject' of history) for evolutionary change and that class conflict is the driving force of history. In a similar vein, he disagrees with Marx's theory that the governing class in any capitalist society is the capitalist class as a whole. Instead, he suggests:

"The class of decision-makers is and will remain the ruling class." "Politics of attraction represented by nation-states, parties, professions, institutions, and historical traditions are losing their appeal." This definition of the new ruling class is directly taken from American politics and is still in place today, but it is made up of a composite layer of corporate leaders, high-level administrators, and the heads of major professional, labour, political, and religious organisations.

literary sociology of the 1950s, but he also adds the notion that nation-states and political parties are becoming less important in the new, postmodern form of politics. This notion will become widely prevalent in the years that follow in the discourse surrounding globalisation, the rise of non-governmental organisations, so-called social movements, various forms of identity politics, and more.

Here are Lyotard's approving remarks on the changing situation, which show his growing enthusiasm for neoliberal policies. Lyotard published his famous book in 1979, just as the Deng reforms were being implemented in China, after Pinochet and Margaret Thatcher had started neoliberal policies in Chile and Britain, and the year before Reagan took office in the US. Mitterand, who had won the French elections the year before, had broken with the PCF and the Common Programme and was soon to become a close ally of Reagan in the neoliberal offensive.

Neoliberal principles and practices:

"At the end of the 1970s, states are already getting ready for a serious reappraisal of the role they have been used to playing since the 1930s, that of guiding and even directing investments, thanks to a number of factors, including the reopening of the world market, a return to fierce economic competition, the breakdown of the hegemony of American capitalism, the decline of the socialist alternative, and the likely opening of the Chinese market."

Furthermore, to be even clearer:

... the development of methods and technology since World War II. might also be viewed as a result of advanced liberal capitalism's redeployment following its retreat under Keynesianism's protection between 1930 and 1960. This renewal eradicated the communist alternative and placed a premium on the individual's pleasure of products and services.

'Renewal' is the important word in the last paragraph. Following decades of Keynesian regulation, "the redeployment of advanced liberal capitalism" was a "renewal" of capitalism in general that "eliminated the communist alternative." Thus, even before Reagan took office in the United States, Lyotard was a neoliberal at the very beginning of the neoliberal phase with his most current French philosophical postmodernism.

V

Let me say a little bit about Foucault. He is less interested in active politics and more of a philosopher than a historian. Like Lyotard, he disagreed with the core ideas of Marxist philosophy, although he had nothing to do with neoliberalism. A succinct but defining statement of his divergence from Marxism, "no narrative of history can be assembled from the twin sites of political economy and the state," exemplifies his rejection to the ideology. What does this mean? First of all, the state is only one social actor among many others; economic power is only one type of power; and classes are not the basic units of society. To abolish one type of state (such as the capitalist state) and replace it with another type of state (such as the proletarian state) is merely to replace one type of power over the populace with another type of power.

Second, society is made up of innumerable power structures and complexes, such as the family, the prison system, the educational system, the medical system, sexuality management technologies, and so forth. Each must be discussed on its own terms rather than within the context of class conflict as a whole.

These concepts therefore result in a very limited understanding of the types of politics that may be acceptable. No one can truly represent anyone else without having a coercive relationship with the people they are representing, according to one of Foucault's central political theories. In the social sphere, all you can do is work to strengthen people's ability to advocate for themselves. You need what Foucault refers to as "micro-politics," which are local, issue-based, and time-bound. Since self-representation is the only authentic type of representation, you attempt to avoid trying to represent others, even if you are able to assist them.

Foucault's concept of "micro-politics," which is issue-based and local, and particularly the rhetoric of "empowering" without organising politically, does authorise the type of politics that are now practiced on such a large scale by NGOs and so-called social movements. His argument that (a) every society is made up of numerous institutions and centres of power, and (b) what is needed is not a single political party but a multitude of agents addressing those multiple centres of power, resonates well with the structure of postmodern politics that have emerged in our times, particularly identity politics. This type of politics, despite its extreme claims, is entirely acceptable to Anglo-Saxon liberal statecraft, which has always recognised that capitalist state power is most vulnerable when it must contend with a united opposition to its rule and is safest when it can divide the opposition into various claimants vying for a piece of the national revenue. This atomisation of politics in the form of 'identity politics' has always been the main weapon against class politics, as Marxist historians like Mike Davis have demonstrated in extensive documentation. This is especially true in immigrant societies like the United States, where the population is made up of diverse social groups that are distinguished by things like race, religion, and country of origin. With the high intellectual rhetoric taken from French postmodernism, this politics of ethnic identity became state policy by the end of the 1960s, not only in the US but also in Canada as "multiculturalism" and in Britain as "race relations." This Anglo- The Ford Foundation and its supported scientists, institutes, publications, and seminars even gave the concept "ethnicity" to Indian social science. Saxon tactics were then brought to India, frequently with postmodernist authors.

Very few Indian social scientists utilised this term until the 1970s.

VI

Derrida's case is more intricate. He never completely split with intellectual Marxism, unlike Lyotard, and he even expressly identified with what he refers to as a "certain spirit of Marxism," unlike Foucault. However, issues emerge when we start to look at what this "certain spirit" is and the type of politics he draws from it. He goes so far as to say that his own ideology, "Deconstruction," is a "radicalisation of Marxism" in and of itself and is therefore indebted to it. That assertion is obviously exaggerated. In its most basic form, deconstruction is a method of reading literary and philosophical texts. Regardless of its other forms, Marxism is not merely a method of reading; rather, it is a comprehensive critique of the capitalist mode of production and a political science that aims to overthrow it and advance towards socialism and communism. Derrida's assertion that he has always been interested in "radicalising" Marxism would then need to be political in nature—not about reading, but about political action—in order to have any real significance.

In doing so, Derrida is just as critical of communism and capitalism as as disdainful of Reason and class conflict as Lyotard, and as opposed to political parties and organisations as Foucault. In his well-known book on Marx, he not only criticises the entire history of communist revolutions and parties, but he also suggests a new "International," which he defines as follows:

"It [the 'new International'] is hardly public, even if it is not clandestine, and it has no name or title." Without co-citizenship, a sense of belonging to a class, coordination, a party, and a national community (international before, across, and beyond any national determination). An institution-free

partnership... in order to build a new, tangible, and genuine coalition, even if it no longer manifests as a workers' organisation or a party, but rather... criticism

Regarding international law's current status, the ideas of state and nation, etc.

With its implied but unavoidable opposition to and rejection of the Third International (as well as the Second and the Fourth), Derrida's usage of the term 'new International' was intentional. Furthermore, although frequently mentioning Marx, he disavows all of the political teachings and practices that Marx himself advocated. His position closely resembles theoretical anarchism in its conceptual underpinnings, and its practical recommendations do align with the type of radical non-communist protest that we have seen in recent decades. This type of protest is typically made up of individuals (often mobilised via the Internet), locally active micro-political groups, broader social movements, networks of these movements, and a periodic aggregation of a cross-section of these individuals, movements, and networks, as in the case of the IMF anti-globalization protests, the G-20 Summits, the Davos Economic Forum, and other events. The World Social Forum would, in fact, be the distinctive shape that corresponds to Derrida's idea of the "new International": a festival of politics devoid of a political agenda.

VII

To sum up:

It would be challenging to present postmodernism as a cohesive body of thinking because it is made up of so many distinct threads. However, some characteristics do stick out:

It almost entirely reflects the conditions that exist in the developed West and its own perception of those conditions. This Westocentric aspect is evident enough in its economic analyses, and it would become even more apparent if we paid close attention to its purely philosophical side. This aspect has been left out of this discussion for space reasons, but it is actually a lengthy discussion of the lineages of Cartesian Reason in contemporary European philosophy.

- All of postmodernism's political philosophies aim to distance themselves from communist politics and Marxism, but in rather different ways.

Possessive individualism and liberalism have been the main pillars of the American version. While the bulk of French postmodernists do not follow that path, a small minority do, particularly Kristeva and Lyotard. These others would seem to be orbiting classical anarchism in different degrees. It is important to keep in mind that anarchism was Marxism's primary rival on the Left during his lifetime, and this situation persisted in some regions of Europe until the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s. As demonstrated, for instance, by the prominence of Noam Chomsky (the greatest theorist of our time) in the US and abroad, it would seem reasonable that anarchism would experience some sort of comeback given the large number of radicals departing from Marxism.

The atomisation of politics, the replacement of class politics by an ill-defined entity known as "culture," the further displacement of the politics of equality by the politics of identity, and the disintegration of the unity of the oppressed and exploited into innumerable claims of opposition have been the most extensive effects of postmodernism in practical politics. As a result, resistance appears to be everywhere but nowhere in particular.

We have demonstrated that, prior to its Frenchization, postmodernism was distinctly American. The internationalisation of postmodernist concepts and political structures, frequently supported by various types of state and corporate sponsorship, is another effect of American cultural hegemony. For example, neoliberalism's mandate that the state retreat from both public enterprise and social welfare has resulted in a growing role for funded NGOs and social movements in areas where the state has abdicated its responsibility, which is further justified by postmodern concepts.

Many facets of knowledge production in India are currently heavily influenced by postmodern concepts, particularly in the social sciences. This topic is covered in a supplementary note, but we haven't gone into detail about it here.