

Plasticity of Contemporary Racism: Postcolonial Model Anomalies and Emergence of Castles-Kosack 1973 Analysis

Antonio Cansinos

Ph. D. research, Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, University of Deusto,
Avenida Universidades, 24, Bilbao, Bizkaia, 48007 (Spain).

E-mail: antonio.cansinos@opendeusto.es

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Abstract

Although contemporary racism has been interpreted from a large number of perspectives, since the end of World War II, its nature was associated with Colonialism, a type of analysis based on the approach of race relations and complemented by the approach of the world-system. The present study develops a comparative analysis between the postcolonial model and the model generated by Stephen Castles and Godula Kosack in 1973 (occasionally Migrant labor theory or Political economy of migration theory). The conclusions of our research suggest that the second model supports an adequate investigative capacity in its analysis, by focusing its explanations on the mobility of the massive flows of the non-spontaneous labor force (large masses of reserve workers) that arise from the capitalist needs. In this way, this paper offers guidelines that can help future research on explanatory models of contemporary racism.

Keywords: Racism, Colonialism, Postcolonial, Labor, Workers, Immigration, Plasticity

1. Introduction

During the second half of the 20th century, various historical events suggested that racism, as an ancient social aversion, would be gradually overcome. There was a consensus from different sources, which foresaw its disappearance after the *sensu lato* decolonization of 1943, the end of World War II, and its international *de jure* ban in 1948. However, during the last part of the previous century, prominent research rejected the assumption that racism had subsided (Castles & Kosack, 1972, 1973; Miles & Phizacklea, 1977a, 1977b; Barker, 1981; Jacobson, 1985; Gilroy, 1990; Solomos & Back, 1995). Instead, in the first decades of the

new century, modern research concluded that racism had been recontextualized, becoming a new “symbolic,” “invisible,” “hegemonic,” or simply “neo-racism” (Hunt, 2019; Lewis, Hagerman & Forman, 2019; Taylor & Bernstein, 2019).

Today, a large number of theoretical frameworks capable of interpreting contemporary racism coexist. However, the present study develops a comparative analysis between the two predominant theoretical models: the postcolonial model, occasionally called simply the colonial model or paradigm, and the so-called Castles-Kosak 1973 model or paradigm (occasionally Migrant labor theory or Political economy of migration theory). Both theoretical models share analytical principles such as, for example, their nature as explanatory frameworks that consider the existence of social construction. They make material explanations based on human interaction predominate instead of idealistic interpretations based on mental cognition. Also, both are critical with the acquiescence of the status quo, reject the assumption that racism has been overcome and emphasizes the role of capitalism as a basic form of racial reproduction.

2. Theoretical Background and Literature Review

The postcolonial model emerged in the 1950s, shortly after the end of World War II, and received late contributions that reached the last quarter of the 20th century (Cesaire 1950; Fanon 1952, 1961; Memmi, 1957/1973; Said 1978). The model is inevitably linked to the race relations approach, whose first literary manifestations arose with the works of Booker T. Washington (1896, 1901, 1909). The proposal had its formal academic birth, however, in the second decade of the 20th century (see Park & Washington, 1912), as well as its common birth with the creation of the Chicago Commission on Race Relations in 1919 after racist riots occurred. The perspective of race relations lay on the idea that the racialized agent assimilated racialization, a subsequent process to the competition, conflict, and accommodation (Park & Burgess, 1921, p. 220, 525, 734; see a complete review in Richeson & Sommers, 2016).

In addition to the race relations approach, the postcolonial model interacted with Max Weber's micro-sociology of social action (see 1921-1922/1968), as well as with Oliver Cox's ideas (1948) and Michael Banton's suggestions on racialization within race relations (see 1967, 1970, 1977, 2008). In the modern period, the postcolonial model was complemented by the world-system approach (Wallerstein, 1974, p. 339; see also 1979; Szymanski, 1985; Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991; Genovese, 1995), whose ideas could be summarized as follows: The nationalists saw the reality in which they lived as a “colonial situation,” that is, one in which both their social action and that of the Europeans living side by side with them as administrators, missionaries, teachers, and merchants were determined by the constraints of a single legal and social entity. They saw further that the political machinery was based on a caste system in which rank and hence reward was accorded on the basis of race. (Wallerstein, 1974, p. 4).

The Castles-Kosack 1973 model, meanwhile, was suggested as early as 1972 and exposed in their magnum opus of 1973. And unlike the postcolonial model, dispersed in a large number of unsystematic works, it has continued its development until today (see 2012, 2017; Castles, de Haas & Miller, 2014). The ideas of Castles and Kosack indicated that the working class,

the vast masses of reserve workers and immigration had an essential role in the development of capitalism, both in its reproduction and in its disorganization. To demonstrate this, both scholars relied on the ideas in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* by Friedrich Engels in 1845, the first volume of Karl Marx's *Capital* of 1867, and the Lenin's work *Imperialism —the Highest Stage of Capitalism* published in 1917.

The ideas of Castles and Kosack, based on the labor force under *spurious* capitalist interests, had already been denounced during their time (Thompson, 1963; Pfahmann, 1968; Becker, Dörr, & Tjaden, 1971), and were also exposed through relevant case studies (Kindleberger, 1967; Hepple, 1968; Salowsky, 1972). Also, their work was well-received during the period after its publication (Sivanandan 1982, 1990; Miles 1993) and later during the beginning of the new millennium (Miles & Brown, 2003; Cohen, 2006; Bisley, 2007). They expressed that: But few British social scientists have paid any attention to the immigrants in the far closer countries of continental Western Europe. In these countries there are about eight million immigrants. At the most two million of them can be considered as being racially distinct from the indigenous population. Yet [...] the problems experienced by all immigrants to Europe and their impact upon society are very similar to those of coloured immigrants in Britain. If that is the case, race and racialism cannot be regarded as the determinants of immigrants' social position. Instead, we shall argue, the basic determinant is the function which immigrants have [...] not only on economic and social developments, but also on the political situation, and hence on [...] class consciousness, and class conflict. (Castles & Kosack, 1973, p. 2).

3. Discussion

This discussion will address three highlights of the postcolonial model. Also, through a point-by-point analysis, the improvements arising from the Castles-Kosack 1973 approach will be presented. First, the relative importance that the postcolonial model attaches to cognitivism will be addressed. Second, the political orientation of the first model will be discussed by comparing it with Castles-Kosack's model. Finally, the consideration of the existence of a Eurocentric character of racism (based on the idea of centers and peripheries from the world-system approach) supported by the postcolonial model and rejected by Castles and Kosack will be addressed.

3.1 *Cognitivist orientation*

First, following the ideas of the postcolonial model, it can be argued that even though it maintains a disposition based on the variability of interactions; however, it develops a strong orientation based on cognitivism. The postcolonial model states that the colonial mindset had expanded and reproduced, legitimizing or socially accommodating injustices among different human societies (see Cesaire, 1950, §5; Fanon, 1952, p. 87, 102; 1961, p. 10, 137; Said, 1978, pp. 50-52).

The model considers that there is an absolute objective reality capable of affecting human consciousness. This reality is presented as a static and historical entity that, however, is only mentally dynamic when psychologically reproducing the feeling of inferiority. This perspective of the unconscious racism has been referred to as “subordinate knowledge” or “mind-in-context pattern” (see Brickman, 2018; Salter, Adams, & Perez, 2018; Vaughn, 2019), and it has been verified in recent investigations concerning racism (Bartels, Eckstein,

Waller, & Wiemann, 2019).

However, these ideas have been rejected by the Castles-Kosack 1973 model on the understanding that there are escalations of racist movements —generated and supported by material conditions— that appear socially only under certain particular political circumstances. Likewise, the postcolonial model conceives racial prejudices as unconscious and inevitable. The colonial mindset is an automatic and uncontrollable cognitive response. Thus, there is a homogeneous vision of racial feelings sustained between different social groups (see Holroyd & Sweetman, 2016; Holroyd, Scaife, & Stafford, 2017), and always considering the logical reaction of the previously colonized individual in a pessimistic way.

This view of racism radically considers an innate division between the self/other (native/alien), that is, a generalized antagonism that has occasionally been represented by the contradiction of the instincts of *Θάνατος* (Thanatos, “death”) and the *Ἔρως* (Eros, “desire”), also called drives of violence and peace. In this sense, the response of the Castles-Kosack approach was expanded by Robert Miles’s ideas on the plasticity of racism. Miles’s insight criticized the alignment of racism and colonialism because a single historical process could not expose the social mechanisms that reinforce or mitigate racial feelings over time (see Castles & Kosack, 1973, p. 7-8, 11, 15; Miles & Brown, 2003, p. 121-122, 150). Also, colonialism could not explain the promotion or favor of those racial feelings based on the needs of certain historical situations (Ehrkamp, 2019; White, 2019; Zerilli, 2019). Indeed, social manifestations based on racial aversion have commonly focused human groups occasionally not previously colonized, such as the Gypsies, Poles, Irish or Jews (Bock & Leavitt, 2019, p. 62; Bonilla-Silva, 2019, p. 8, 15; Little, 2019, p. 264), as well as spontaneous uprisings, riots and the specific political use of certain disadvantaged groups.

3.2 Political Orientation

Second, the postcolonial model has a political orientation that determines the vast majority of racial events linking them to nationalist interests. Thus, it appreciates centrally how political decisions affect ways of life through racialization (Memmi, 1957/1973, p. 60, 71; Fanon, 1961, p. 172, 192; Said, 1978, p. 11, 35). This vision generates an understanding of racialization not contextualized by the economic, systemic periods of crisis, and the non-spontaneous needs of capitalism. Besides, this vision does not include the anomalies of the labor market and the racism suffered by the vast masses of displaced workers (see Campbell, Allen, & McLroy, 2010). The Castles-Kosack 1973 model rejects the mainly political determination of racism, as well as the factors that make ideological explanations prevail. As it has been reviewed, they centrally consider the labor explanations. Consequently, they present different case studies in which they show that the negative racial experiences lived by different human groups were not related to their condition as immigrants, natives of former colonies, or based on their phenotype. Instead, Castles and Kosack demonstrate that: the Irish who had traditionally migrated to England in the early 20th century suffered from racism, as the colonized Afro-Caribbean “French” from Guadeloupe, Martinique and Reunion who emigrated to France in the late 1950s, as well as the inhabitants of the German Democratic Republic who took refuge in the German Federal Republic between 1961 and 1989. In the case of the Irish, until their independence in 1922, they were *de facto* and internationally recognized as British, in addition to being phenotypically similar. In the case

of the colonized Caribbean “French,” they were phenotypically different but French citizens for all purposes (as they still are today); in the case of East Germans, they were phenotypically identical to those of the West and shared the same cultural tradition.

So why were they all commonly treated as immigrants and suffered racialistic experiences? The Castles-Kosack 1973 model responds that in the three cases presented, regardless of the political-historical factors of the first, colonial of the second and ideological of the third, there was always the same common factor: all were labor migrants (Castles & Kosack, 1973, p. 11). In this sense, it can be understood that racism was generally a necessary consequence of productive subjugation, that is, an essential characteristic of the labor economy exerted on specific groups of workers (Lunn, 1986; Miles y Kay, 1994, p. 21; Evans, 2019). Immigrants on native soil were blamed for domestic problems in the host region, especially unemployment and crime. And generally, phenotypic circumstances accompanied social ones, so that racism could be accommodated politically with immigration. For this, one can think of the situation in the United Kingdom before and after the Second World War. Until 1945, the “natural foreign subject” who landed in the United Kingdom was commonly European, however, between 1945 and 1951, it became a migrant from a former colony, so that hostility against immigrants could be sustained in the circumstances such as skin color, accent, or cultural traditions. Regardless of the particular circumstances of each migratory group, it seems to be evident that there was always a feeling, from the native’s point of view, that immigration (the “guest-workers”) would generate economic imbalances and interferences on the dynamics of production. This vision was, in turn, an acceptable loophole for governments and business people (Duffield, 1986; Sherwood, 1986; Miles, 1993, p. 168; Cohen, 2006, p. 13-17, 22-26, 154-158; Davidson, 2015, p. 14, 58-64, 70; Castles, 2018, p. 239).

3.3 Center-periphery Orientation

Third, the postcolonial model centrally considers both Eurocentrism and the existence of centers and peripheries (including semi-peripheries) in shaping racism. The postcolonial paradigm formally emerged between 1950 and 1978. In parallel, the model subsumed within the world-system approach defined from 1974, after some decades of theoretical improvements. Among those academic improvements were the Raul Prebisch’s (1950, pp. 8-14) contribution on the economic peripheries, which, together with Hans Singer (see 1949), developed the Prebisch-Singer hypothesis in the 1950s. Thus, the emergence of Dependency Theory in the 1960s (Frank, 1966, p. 18) and the general contributions of the *École des Annales* (Annales school) and other authors. The hierarchical model based on centers, semi-peripheries, and peripheries, was systematically developed for the first time, along with the idea of “eurocentrism” introduced by Samir Amin (1988).

This analysis of the postcolonial model found different shreds of evidence capable of assuming the existence of centers and peripheries. The model commonly assumes (from Edward Said understanding “orientalism” as equivalent to “non-European”) that “the Orient then seems to be [for the West], not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe” (Said, 1978, p. 63). Said also maintains that “for the Orient (“out there” towards the East) is corrected, even penalized, for lying outside the boundaries of European society, “our” world; the Orient is thus *Orientalized* [...]” (Said, 1978, p. 67) because the European center becomes more and more

prophetic, a “transpersonal ego identifying itself in power and consciousness with the whole of Europe” (Said, 1978, p. 178-179). Fanon, similarly, argued that the western periphery promoted “the negation of the national reality” because “the new legal relationships introduced by the occupying power, the rejection on the periphery by the colonial society of the natives and their customs, the expropriation, the systematized enslavement of men and women make this cultural obliteration possible” (Fanon, 1961, p. 225).

However, although the nature of the arguments of the postcolonial model is satisfactory, there are explanatory gaps that make it challenging to globalize its conclusions. It is difficult to argue that all or at least most racial events can be aligned or explained by the idea of centers and periphery. Among some other examples, the 1994 Rwandan genocide against the Tutsi people, the 1995 Bosnian genocide against Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats, or the continued genocide in Darfur since 2003 do not seem to be explained, at least fully, by the dynamics center-periphery or eurocentrism. When contemporary racism is analyzed through a labor perspective, it is observed that racialization was not a consequence of the affinity or lack of sympathy between colonists and colonized subjects.

We find that the feudal demarcation that the European states inherited during modernity, aligned to the capitalist productive needs, explains more convincingly the dynamics between one and the other. The post-1945 status of a natural subject of civil law in the United Kingdom, acquired through the regulation of citizenship and work, was based on the feudal principle of duality “subject” / “aliens” (similar to *peregrinus* or *advenus*).

For example, Indian migrants on British soil after independence in 1947 did not have advantageous conditions of residence. However, Indian immigrants obtained their residence permit soon after, when the UK was “forced” to reorganize its labor market because the Canadian government, for its part, decided to grant citizenship to immigrants within its territory without UK permission. This circumstance evidenced that the status of immigrant Indians on British soil, and their consequent racialization, depended on a “chain reaction” on political decisions based on labor issues (Poliakov, 1974; Hoffmann, 2018; Schaffer, 2018).

The conception of racism as a “modular” phenomenon, based on expansion from the center to the periphery, cannot explain racial recontextualization. The current transnationality of ethnicity, as a consequence of large-scale globalized migratory flows, cannot solve all the internal racial perspectives of nation-states. This anomaly has often been termed “evasion of the prism of race” (Mann, 2010; Virdee, 2014; Smith, 2017; see also Shannon, 2018, p. 155). Likewise, the model cannot expose the nature of politically induced refugee movements, which act as a forced labor force in the modern world after 1945—neither the internal racism of nation-states, intermittent or internally induced migrations—. From a formalized historiographical perspective, refugee movements from the Netherlands-Oost-Indië to the Netherlands in the 1950s, by Indo-South Asian Ugandan people to the United Kingdom in the 1960s, by Vietnamese towards western Europe in the 1970s or Turks over central Europe in the 1980s cannot be systematically explained without assuming some variability (Leiman, 2010, p. 10; Brass, 2013, p. 192; 2015, p. 153).

4. Conclusions

The findings presented by various theoretical frameworks that analyze contemporary racism

consider it as a consequence of the colonial mentality and decolonization. This consideration of racism has provided highly valuable theoretical assumptions (see Hund, 2014; Go, 2014; Morris, 2015; Meer, 2018). The postcolonial model has provided several innovations. For example, the model has reviewed the capacity of emotional biases and prejudices about racialization, the role of history-based personal beliefs when stereotypes are generated, as well as the enormous function of institutions to create discursive ideologies. Likewise, thanks to postcolonial research, the atrocities caused by colonial expansionism and its inherently racist nature have been evidenced. However, the postcolonial model presents certain anomalies. Probably its explanatory problems arise from excessive determinism and for the consideration of Colonialism, as a historical process, as a unit of analysis capable of offering all-encompassing results.

The postcolonial model uses a historiographical heuristic based on a constant correlation “Europe” and everything else, as well as “center” and everything else. This disposition is associated only with large-scale, Eurocentric, and Western historical perceptions, and it is based on the simplified dichotomy of race relations, based on the black/white, first/third world, center/periphery, or north/south divisions. Its critical deficiencies commonly emanate from its sociological functionalism, inherited from the paradigm of race relations. Its tendency to reduce racial phenomena to expansionism and imperialism does not allow the model to explain non-colonial racial manifestations, such as anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, or Slavophobia.

Thus, nor can address racism emanating from geographically localized conflicts, such as racialization between Germans and Turks in the 16th-17th centuries, Scottish and English in the 18th century, English and Irish in the 19th century or Albanians and Greeks in the 20th century. By considering racism as a mostly colonial social phenomenon, the postcolonial model is unable to identify the rapid processes of historical cognitive reassignment. It cannot explain the specific racial events that are punctually emphasized by authority and symbolic reinforcement, as well as the fast displacement of hostility against assimilated migrants, migrants “in transit,” re-migrants (*transient labor*), or refugees.

Although there are common theoretical elements between the postcolonial model and the Castles-Kosack 1973 model, such as the assumption of the sociology of conflict behind racism, the influence of expansionism, or the favorable consideration of macro-sociological interpretations, nevertheless, the explanatory capacity of the second model offers significantly more relevant results. Probably the reasons why Castles-Kosack’s model became predominant, along with the contributions of Robert Miles and other scholars, was due to the combination of a materialized historical situation regarding the racial organization that accompanied its theorization. The first oil crisis of 1973 paralyzed the contracts for temporary immigrant workers (“guest-workers”) in Western Europe and marked the beginning of constant processes of recession. These economic and labor circumstances made clear, for the first time in the post-war West, the need to use racialization, a form of social aversion, as a tool for reproducing the system. Labor immigrants became around 1973 (there had been much evidence of this before) in a “supplementary workforce” that could be easily blamed for the constant economic crises. Its new function required a new explanatory model strongly related to the nature of new large-scale labor movements (Davidson, 2015; Geddes

& Scholten, 2016; Alexander, 2017; Smith, 2017; Piper, 2018).

The Castles-Kosack 1973 model is capable of solving problems that other models cannot explain. A model based on labor problematization is capable of explaining racism through the mismatches of the labor market within the needs of a particular phase of productive capitalist development. Other models of analysis have used the economy as a determining factor of modern racism. However, none used the economy as the causal element of the variability and plasticity capable of determining the processes of racialization, the ethnic vision of a society, or its position. They are disadvantaged through racism as an available cultural artifact. As various authors have shown, post-1945 racism has developed through a provoked, not spontaneous, disorganization of capitalist production models based on needs, that is, contradictions, between the primitive accumulation of wealth and the unfree labor or coercive work (Brass, 2011, 2015; Bernards, 2018; LeBaron & Phillips, 2019). When it is understood in this way, units of analysis such as “ethnicity,” “social classes,” or “nation-states” constitute *principiis medium* (intermediate principles) between the macro-sociology of the forces of capitalist production and the micro-sociology of individual human cognition. The postcolonial model, given its idiosyncrasy, cannot explain racism not aligned with the cognitive subject, that is, with the innate mental schemas of stereotypes and fixist categories shaped by colonial history, because it does not centrally consider the dynamism of social practice as the cause of racism—at the same time, the postcolonial model holds contradictions as simple as that racism has a pre-capitalist origin, therefore also pre-colonial—.

This situation occurs because it is not interpreted from the variability of the referred *principiis medium* (see Allport, 1954; Haslanger, 2017; Holroyd, Scaife, & Stafford, 2017; Jackson, 2017)—The principle constitutes a contradiction between the labor needs of the phase of the universal mode of production and the general period of capitalist development in the region—.

The present research suggests that given the nature of the post-1945 internationalized labor market, which redefined sociological circumstances on both large and small scales, any explanatory model of static racism should be rejected. Including and especially taking the postcolonial model, we suggest that it cannot explain the role of postcolonial states after 1945 when an unusual and unknown balkanization of global labor markets emerged (Miles, 1987; Brass, 2015, pp. 173-174; Davidson, 2015, pp. 70-71; Tilly, 2019, p. 171).

We suggest that the new accelerated, imprecise, and volatile models of capitalist production have developed since 1945, intermittent, displaceable, and extraordinarily plastic racial prejudices. We also suggest that while classical racism unfolded within traditionalist societies with slow historical development, low migratory mobility, and reduced labor dispersion, modern forms of racism, given the new postbellum sociological conditions, are characterized by their speed. In this way, contemporary racial manifestations are reproduced through economic opposition and the needs of job survival, emphasized by the constant crises of political affection existing in the West, the recurring financial globalization of the North Atlantic, the free movement of European citizens since 1968, the internal labor demand of non-EU immigrants and the fragmentation of an internationalized market for labor activities.

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