**Intro to comparative politics - Midterm Exam**

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Neoliberalism, a word that ignites a fire like no other in the hearts of a strong minority that dominates the world as we know it, the socioeconomic elite. A model that’s steadily showing its flawed and biased nature towards the economic destruction and plunder of the state for the benefit of the elite.

Neoliberalism is built upon the concept of the self- regulating market. Based on ideologies defined by these power-hungry elites, neoliberalism flaunts an ideal image of a consumerist free-market world. By carefully using the media and pre-conceived notions and claims of how an individual should act in a society, they promote their version of a single global marketplace to the world. Portraying it as nothing but positives that would lead to the betterment of society, a honey pot trap as we’ll discover later on. Giving credit where it’s due, these are all schemes that have been carefully honed across several years to integrate the idea of the free market in the hearts and minds of every individual as the universal truth. It establishes narratives like the production and exchange of goods as a way of life further favoring their own agenda.

The promise of this utopia alone however isn’t enough to sway all of humanity, for that they offer the idea of individuality. By making people believe that they matter, that every single person’s voice has value, it decentralizes power from the state to smaller localized units. This mode of governance thus builds on the model of the free market as the government policy. While feeding the populus lies of an enhanced society, neoliberalism in reality pursues profits over all else. It encourages short-term thinking that revolves around profit maximization instead of profit optimization where everything is strategically planned to loot the state, a world where your value is judged over a metric of monetary gain. This ideal is now deep-rooted to such an extent where even government officials who once had the betterment of the state and society at heart now only see their purpose to be aligned with their own self interests that holds monetary success over all else. These ideals weren’t even sugarcoated as upon the introduction of neoliberalism, citizens were being referred to as customers and administrators were force-fed a fallacy of entrepreneurial mindset treating even the government itself as a profit-oriented business that favored earning over spending, focusing on the “customers” instead of the bureaucracy and thus inducing a competitive nature to life itself.

Returning to the idea of individuality, we take a look at the LGBTQ community. Dating back to 1924 with the establishment of the society for human rights, the LGBTQ community started gaining recognition and favor from the local populus. It wasn’t until 1977 when the first openly gay man was elected to public office in California.[[1]](#footnote-1) Eventually this led to a snowball effect of recognizing the LGBTQ community where after the Supreme Court’s ruling in Obergefell v, same sex marriage was legalized.[[2]](#footnote-2) MNC’s across the world started bearing the pride flag as a part of their company logos for the entire month of July to show their support. It’s now come to a point where brands that don’t follow this trend are often ostracized and have their reputations affected as consequence, thus further encouraging the competitive nature of neoliberalism having companies compete for who can show the utmost support to a certain movement. From an individual standpoint, the gay man feels included, he feels seen, he feels like his voice matters, his choices matter. From an outsider’s view, they’re shown a world where a community that was once shunned is now recognized as an integral part of society, both obviously alluding to the illusion of individuality, and while the population cheers for the acceptance of these minorities, while they protest against the discrimination brought upon by some sectors that still refuse to accept the LGBT, the socioeconomic elite uses it all as a smokescreen to divert attention from their continued loot and plunder of the state at large.

Another example of a similar situation is the BLM (Black Lives Matter) movement, having its earliest roots in 2014 upon the death of Michael Brown in Missouri[[3]](#footnote-3), BLM peaked during Covid-19 where brands as well as Hollywood elites spoke out in favor of the movement and what the idea stood for , thus marking another instance of focusing on the notion of individual lives mattering to divert attention from the economic crisis brought upon by the pandemic and the neoliberal policy of prevention rather than cure.

The third and final philosophy that solidifies neoliberalism is the concrete set of policies that it entails. The include several rules and regulations put in place by the socioeconomic elite to favor their own self interests. By raising the argument of economic prosperity, this group of individuals are subjected to lower taxes, they free themselves of trade regulations and reduce welfare programs in favor of “workfare”. These elites legitimize their selfish gains and obtain maximum profits by enforcing policies that allow them free reign to carry out their aims without the interference of the government, basically holding the state hostage to its own rules and regulations.

We look towards the political side of neoliberalism, primarily the American formation of neoliberalism, often misunderstood as the spotless version of this spectacle. The conservative movement, which rose during the similar time period also becomes a point of contention for better understanding the political aspect of neoliberalism. Taking a closer look, we try to understand the three pillars of conservatism starting with anticommunism, which faced its decline after the fall of the Soviet Union as there was no longer the immediate threat. Then comes traditionalism which mainly resides on the idea that medieval thinking was in fact correct and that enlightenment was the true villain[[4]](#footnote-4). The major chunk of these individuals belonging to the Christian fundamentalism who believe that morality is the way of life. Finally, the third pillar being libertarianism which has the closets roots shared with neoliberalism, this however is more inclined to the side of the free market as opposed to social liberalism like same sex marriage which is supported in neoliberalism as that clashes with the conservative traditionalism model. Due to their similar goals and ideals, the libertarianism wing of conservatism has deeply engrained itself in research institutes/ think tanks and thus policy making circles which further legitimize the wrongdoings of the socioeconomic elite. This being why although on face value, neoliberalism’s individualistic ideals seem to combat the traditionalist ideas of conservatism, the two factions work closely together behind the scenes. The success of conservative parties in the politics ensures an equal return for the neoliberals who take full advantage of the laws and policies that rob the state blind. A prime example of this being Elon Musk, the founder of Tesla and the current owner of Twitter (rebranded to X), this acquisition also lining up perfectly with what we discuss.

Musk has as of 2024 during Trump’s re-election campaign, spent more than a quarter of a billion dollars to back President-elect Donald Trump and other Republican candidates. He also donated $10 million to the Senate Leadership Fund, which supports Republican Senate candidates.[[5]](#footnote-5) Republicans here as opposed to Democrats, are in favor of conservative ideals. This ties in almost perfectly as one begs the question, why? Why would a trillionaire spend this much money to back a political candidate and the answer now seems plain as day. Having the literal US president reliant on you can bring about fruitful changes for the socioeconomic elite that the state would otherwise have been against, Musk at this point, basically using Trump as a puppet to legitimize further policies for his own financial gain, and while many may criticize him for his endeavors i.e. the purchase of twitter, it now all makes sense. As we are well aware, the effect the media has on the general populus is immense, social media is the perfect example of this and Twitter being one of the most major platforms, if controlled could prove incredibly beneficial. Suffering a decline of over 79% from 2022 when Elon Musk purchased the platform[[6]](#footnote-6), it has been resounded as one of the worst investments costing the tesla trillionaire billions in losses. Despite this, Elon has showed no interest in selling the platform, the reason being that Musk has transformed the platform into an echo chamber fortifying right-leaning causes and most importantly Trump’s electoral campaign.[[7]](#footnote-7) With his advocation of free speech, it has entailed all sorts of traditionalist ideas to invade the cyberspace and thus affect the mindsets of the general populus. This idea of free speech further allowed the world to bear witness to the breakdown of a once beloved musical artist known as Ye, who tweeted statements like "I love Hitler" and "I'm a Nazi."[[8]](#footnote-8), statements that are to this day still up on the platform that boasts an ideal of zero censorship. With fanatics like Kanye and Trump having the media limelight with their controversial takes and opinions, the attention is again diverted for the socioeconomic elite to continue their looting.

Going back to the idea of conservatives in think tanks, neoliberalism centers of persuasion have been established all over, clustered in close proximity to the state, they preach their ideals and gain more and more followers as time goes on. Examples like The Heritage Foundation, The Republican Study Committee and The American Legislative Exchange Council which were established in response to the democratic threat to both conservatism and neoliberalism. The rapid increase of these think tanks in the 1970s gave birth to a lot of preparatory work on strategic projects, projects like the privatization of state-owned industries; a prime example being a process that began in 1997 which looked to enact the transformation of Sallie Mae (Student Loan Marketing Association) to a fully private corporation[[9]](#footnote-9). Other projects incorporated by these think tanks included new tax reforms, tort and welfare policies, trade liberalization etc.

From here we take brief look at the failings of the neoliberalist ideas, starting off with the great depression of the 1920s. A core concept of neoliberalism, profit maximization ended up being the inevitable downfall of the nation itself. During the 1920s, the stock market came to witness unprecedented levels of expansion where investing was no longer limited to the wealthy as ordinary people also began putting their money in, be it their household income or even going as far as mortgaging their properties. This greed, this lust for financial gain, a prime example of what it means to believe in neoliberalism carried in a massive stream of revenue towards investments that everyone believed would only lead to monetary gain. It came to a point where individuals even started taking loans that they could not even think of repaying on their own terms, meaning it banked on their investments’ success.[[10]](#footnote-10) However, it all fell into chaos as in 1929, prices faced an immense decline causing panic selling in vast amounts which further ruined the situation causing a snowball effect leading to the destruction of the stock market. Eventually, the banks had ran out of money and to reinstate them, the American government was forced to sell US treasury bonds with China being the biggest buyer owning up to a trillion dollars of US bonds. China is now selling off these bonds, as of 2024 China has already sold off $400 billion of US treasury bonds in 10 years and replaced it with gold[[11]](#footnote-11), of which it is now the leading producer and consumer, thus enabling the Chinese currency to bloom while the US dollar is in turmoil.

We can also take a more localized look into our own country which has also inevitably engrained itself in the neoliberalism methodology, and thus suffered its consequences. Ever since 1947, the birth of Pakistan also brought upon several issues for the nation, one of these being dealing with the province of Balochistan. The least educated portion of the populus being from here, the most tribal chieftains residing here and the majority of natural resources being from here, the government of Pakistan was put in a chokehold with deciding how to handle this region. Instead of dismantling feudal power structures early on, the government chose to take a back seat to allow the Sardars to carry their pillaging of the province due to the neoliberalist ideals which prioritize deregulation, privatization, and minimal state intervention. Due to this, these Sardars eventually engrained their own ideals into the Balochi population to such an extent that regaining control now has become a state issue. Ever since then, the Sardars have claimed ownership of the land and its resources which in actuality are the state’s property, and any resistance shown by the state was met with violence which bred the insurgence of the BLA (Balochistan Liberation Army). The most recent encounter with this resistance group being on Tuesday, March 11, 2025 where armed militants from the BLA took hostage a train full of innocent civilians as “a direct response to Pakistan’s decades-long colonial occupation of Balochistan and the relentless war crimes committed against the Baloch people”[[12]](#footnote-12). The BLA has also been a constant problem for the country’s strategic assets, particularly the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).[[13]](#footnote-13) The CPEC project would inevitably bring about economic prosperity to the region which would in turn create jobs and incentivize the local population to see the light, to understand that the so called “nationalist” ideals that call for them to serve their sardars out of raw Balochi pride is nothing but an echo chamber of bad ideas that favor the personal gain of these chieftains and hold back the Balochi population as a whole. The sardars being well aware of this thus continue to wage war on any economic development in the area, a problem that could have been long avoided had the state intervened at the earliest stages, as of now the only solution is an inevitable bloodbath.

And so, we beg the question, is it possible to utilize neoliberal principles in such a manner that social stability and economic equity are attained? Judging from the evidence we’ve taken into consideration throughout this paper, the answer would be a resounding no. Everything in the neoliberalism model points to personal gain, to the benefit of the socioeconomic elite, to deprive the population of the much better lifestyles that they could have had under different circumstances and to obviously rob the state blind. Had there been a single example of a sustainable neoliberalist model, my opinion may have been swayed, but one can only dream for so long. The truth of the matter is that every country built on these ideals is now facing the inevitable outcomes of their ways with economies plummeting, the quality of life worsening and the state crumbling as the elites seek to maximize their profits before making a swift exit. The fated and proven solution hence being the succeeding neoconfucianism model and its pioneer, China.

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