

9-6-2012

Geopolitical Fractures: Ideological Critique of Global Neoliberal Capitalism in World Bank Literature

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GEOPOLITICAL FRACTURES: IDEOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF GLOBAL
NEOLIBERAL CAPITALISM IN WORLD BANK LITERATURE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Abdullah Mohammad Lafi Al-Dagamsseh

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August 2012

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Title: Geopolitical Fractures: Ideological Critique of Global Neoliberal Capitalism in World Bank Literature

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This dissertation provides an ideological critique of neoliberalism through an analysis of literary narratives by four contemporary novelists: Nuruddin Farah, Helena Viramontes, Mohsin Hamid, and Aravind Adiga. I argue that just as the global uprisings, social struggles, and economic crises we experience in the 21st century have shattered conventional “doxa” about political freedom and economic stability, these literary counternarratives aim to intervene in the global hegemonic narratives about what is called development, modernity, and freedom. Moreover, each literary work in this study exposes one or more facet of globally hegemonic discourses by exposing the ideological contradictions between the utopian promises of neoliberalism and the material inequities that it produces. The persistent presence of the violent processes of capital accumulation, privatization, commodification, and financial deregulation works in complete contradiction to the falsely ideological, hegemonic narratives. The latter often falsely claim that such policies are designed for alleviating poverty, promoting development, making social and economic progress, empowering women and marginalized people, and producing equality. But in reality, the global neoliberal promises of development and modernity never fulfill themselves in communities where exclusion, marginalization, and violence are the material conditions and practices of such ideals and promises.

This study attempts to place these literary counternarratives from America, Africa, and South Asia in relation to critiques of the broad-ranging International Financial Institutions such as the World Bank and IMF. The specific narratives I study belong to what Amitava Kumar and others have called “World Bank Literature.” WBL integrates specific fictional worlds in local contexts into the global world of history, politics, and economics and seeks to “oppose those regimes of knowledge that would keep literature and culture sealed from the issues of economics and activism” (Kumar, *World Bank* xix). I argue that these authors, like the recent protestors in the streets of cities around the world, insist on the importance of activism and the necessity of imagining alternatives where wealth is distributed more equally, where market values are no longer the only values to define social relations, where political movements construct productive collectivities and solidarity for global justice, and where participatory democracy includes and mobilize people.