

Dimensions Of Eurocentrism In Geography: A World View

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Prologue

The global history has been shaped by diverse perspectives, one of the most influential being Eurocentrism. Simply stated, it is the tendency to view the world from a European standpoint. It is recognized as a worldview that frames the West as the apex of human progress, based particularly on European experiences as universal standards. This often marginalizes non-European cultures and histories. Eurocentric accounts ignore or downplay non-Western achievements, reinforce colonial power structures and create distorted understandings of global development, cultural diversity and mapping. This viewpoint emerged alongside colonialism and imperialism, often overlooking the negative aspects of European history. In geography, Eurocentrism has led to the imposition of Western-centric models of development penetrating deep in its various fields of learning. This has alienated indigenous knowledge and communities. Decades of post-colonial and critical geographic scholarship have sought to dismantle these perspectives by highlighting alternative narratives. The present paper focusses primarily on the dimensions of Eurocentrism in Geography. The historical, Epistemological, Cultural, Social, Political, Economic and Cartographic dimensions are discussed sumptuously. This paper explores how Eurocentrism impacts the division of knowledge in global studies, examining its past roots and contemporary significance. The paper also reviews the definitions, origins and geographical implications of Eurocentrism and its subdivisions. It lastly describes the counter-Eurocentrism movement, discussing its Critique, Challenges and Responses. The author is highly indebted to NASSDOC (National Social Science Documentation Centre) for preparing an elaborate bibliography on the subject. A gratitude is also due to RTL (Ratan Tata Library) for laying at disposal the relevant study material. The information acquired from internet sources is duly acknowledged.

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I. Introduction

Usage of the terms Eurocentrism, Eurocentris, and Euroseptic in the social sciences has increased since the 1990s, within the West and in areas that were formally part of the overseas colonial empires of European powers. Eurocentrism (or Western-centrism) refers to viewing the West as the center of world events or superior to other cultures¹. The exact scope of Eurocentrism varies from the entire Western world to just the continent of Europe or even more narrowly, to Western Europe (especially during the Cold War²). The term is applied in reference to the presentation of the European perspective on history as objective or absolute, or to an apologetic stance toward European colonialism and other forms of imperialism³. Eurocentrism in the field geography has had a profound impact, particularly on cartographic representations and the very theories used to understand the world. In general, it has led to the distortion of spatial concepts. The geography curriculum often privileges Eurocentric ways of knowing and being, leading to the under-representation of non-European perspectives and reinforcing unequal cultural recognition and political representation. Correcting this involves decolonizing the curriculum, using collaborative approaches and recognizing the validity of diverse epistemologies.

Definition

There are three interrelated definitions of Eurocentrism. However, it is the third and last definition that reflects by far the most common usage of the term. Firstly, in Britain, a Eurocentric or Eurocentrism is a person who supports European integration or the concept or workings of the European Union. The opposite of a Eurocentric is a Euroseptic. Secondly, the term is sometimes used to convey the perspective of North Americans (the United States and Canada) and may occasionally be defined as the viewpoint of North Americans of European origin. Thirdly and finally, the term is commonly defined and recognized as a “cultural phenomenon that views the histories and cultures of non-Western societies from a European or Western perspective”⁴. The “European” here is more specifically referring to Western Europe, where it presents the superiority of European ideology as well as its traditional cultural values compared to non-European societies. The Eurocentrism entails a Western-

centric View, i.e. a conceptual framework that places Europe and its values, cultures, and concerns at the centre of world events and narratives, often framing European progress as the universal model for development; Eurocentrism contrasts greatly with Indigenous worldviews. It is a conflict between natural and artificial contexts."⁵. Thus, the key aspects of Eurocentrism include:

- i. Centrality of Europe: Eurocentrism views Europe as the primary engine of history and development, and the source of universal values and progress.
- ii. Discrediting Non-Western Cultures: It often diminishes the achievements and contributions of non-European societies while presenting European culture as a model.
- iii. Justification of Colonialism: Eurocentric narratives were crucial in justifying colonial rule by framing European superiority as a natural and acceptable state.
- iv. Creation of Knowledge Hierarchies: It establishes a scientific language and framework that positions European knowledge as a universal standard, making other cultures seem "unknowable" or deficient.

Roots

To fully understand the impact of Eurocentrism, it's crucial to look at its historical context. The period of European colonial expansion from the 15th to the 20th century saw European powers establish control over vast regions of Africa, Asia, and the Americas. During this time, European scholars developed theories and narratives that portrayed Europe as the epitome of human civilization. These ideas were central to justifying colonialism, as Europeans believed that they had a "civilizing mission" to the "primitive" societies they colonized. Eurocentrism, historically, is viewing the world through a European lens, seeing European culture as superior and the standard for all others, a perspective deeply rooted in colonialism to justify dominance by portraying non-Europeans as inferior or needing European "modernization" (progress, science, order). As European empires expanded (15th-20th centuries), Eurocentrism provided an ideological framework, claiming superiority in civilization, rationality, and governance to justify conquest, exploitation, and cultural destruction in colonized lands. The idea of European superiority became entrenched through the colonial expansion of European powers, which sought to justify the subjugation of non-European societies. Hence, the roots of Eurocentrism can be traced back to the colonial era, when European powers expanded their empires across the globe. During this period, Europeans justified their dominance through a belief in their cultural and civilizational superiority. This worldview became deeply embedded in the intellectual traditions of the time, influencing everything from philosophy and science to political theory and economics. During the European colonial era, encyclopaedias often sought to give a rationale for the predominance of European rule during the colonial period by referring to a special position taken by Europe compared to the other continents.

European, thus, grew out of the Great Divergence of the Early Modern period, due to the combined effects of the Scientific Revolution, the Commercial Revolution, and the rise of colonial empires, the Industrial Revolution and a Second European colonization wave. The European miracle, a term coined by Eric Jones in 1981⁶, refers to the surprising rise of Europe during the Early Modern period. During the 15th to 18th centuries, a great divergence took place, comprising the European Renaissance, the European Age of Discovery, the formation of European colonial empires, the Age of Reason, and the associated leap forward in technology and the development of capitalism and early industrialization. As a result, by the 19th century European powers dominated world trade and world politics.

Eurocentrism can trace its roots back to the Age of Exploration and the rise of European colonial empires. During this period, European powers—such as Britain, France, Spain, and Portugal—sought to expand their influence across the globe. In the process, they encountered diverse cultures, many of which had rich histories and sophisticated systems of governance, science, and philosophy. However, European colonizers often dismissed these cultures as inferior and barbaric, viewing them through a lens of racial hierarchy that positioned Europeans at the top.

Today, Eurocentrism continues to shape international relations by privileging European perspectives in the global knowledge systems, political structures, and economic systems. Even in the 19th century, anticolonial movements had developed claims about national traditions and values that were set against those of Europe in Africa and India. In some cases, as China, where local ideology was even more exclusionist than the Eurocentric one, Westernization did not overwhelm longstanding Chinese attitudes to its own cultural centrality.⁷ Orientalism developed in the late 18th century as a disproportionate Western interest in and idealization of Eastern (i.e. Asian) cultures. By the early 20th century, some historians, such as Arnold J. Toynbee, were attempting to construct multifocal models of world civilizations. Toynbee also drew attention in Europe to non-European historians, such as the medieval Tunisian scholar Ibn Khaldun. He also established links with Asian thinkers, such as through his dialogues with Daisaku Ikeda of Soka Gakkai International.

The term "Eurocentrism" emerged to analyse Western dominance in development aid, historical chronicles and scholarship. However, as far as the term itself is concerned, it was coined in the 1970s by the Egyptian Marxian economist, Samir Amin, then director of the African Institute for Economic Development and

Planning of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Amin used the term in the context of a global, core-periphery or dependency model of capitalist development. Although, the term dates back to the late 1970s but it did not become prevalent until the 1990s, when it rose in prominence as a way to analyse the involvement industrialized nations had in the development of their previous colonies and their decolonization process⁸. The term has since been used to critique Western accounts of progress and Western scholars for their downplaying of non-Western intellectual contributions to the world. Thus, Eurocentrism as an ideology existed prior to the actual term's creation. During Europe's era of colonization, academics justified Europe's actions by writing about the continent's increased significance and the inhabitants' superiority⁹. Therefore, while the actual term was introduced within the last 100 years, Eurocentrism itself has been practiced for centuries longer.

During the European colonial era, encyclopaedias often sought to give a rationale for the predominance of European rule by referring to a special position taken by Europe compared to other continents. It's been stated that "even though Europe is the smallest of the world's four continents, it has for various reasons a position that places it before all others. This expresses an ostensibly Eurocentric approach claiming about Europe that "its geographical situation and its cultural and political significance is clearly the most important of the five continents, over which it has gained an influential government both in material and even more so in cultural aspects"¹⁰

Alina Sajed and John Hobson (2017)¹¹ point to the emergence of a *critical* eurocentrism,—by which Western agency is reified at the expense of non-Western agency. Expanding on their work, Audrey Alejandro¹² has put forward the idea of a *postcolonial* eurocentrism, understood as an emerging form of Eurocentrism that follows the criteria of Eurocentrism commonly mentioned in the literature – denial of 'non-Western' agency, teleological narrative centred on the 'West' and idealization of the 'West' as normative referent—but whose system of value is the complete opposite of the one embodied by traditional Eurocentrism: With postcolonial Eurocentrism, Europe is still considered to be the primary "proactive" subject of world politics—but, in this case, by being described as the leading edge of global oppression, not progress. Indeed, according to postcolonial Eurocentrism, European capacity to homogenise the world according to its own standards of unification is considered to be a malevolent process (i.e. the destruction of diversity) rather than a benevolent one (i.e. a show of positive leadership). In both forms of Eurocentrism, the discourse performs "the West" as the main actor capable of organising the world in its image. European exceptionalism remains the same—although, from the postcolonial Eurocentric view, Europe is not considered to be the best actor ever, but the worst.

Although this Eurocentric phenomenon originated in Europe, “as a thought style it is not confined to Europeans or those in the West”¹³. This notion of Eurocentricity, for example, is as much rooted in non-Western people as it is in Europeans. Because of the ‘modernity’ imposed on them by Eurocentrism, many non-Western people subconsciously promote many western perspectives and defend them as modern and advanced. Political economist Samir Amin sees Eurocentrism as a modern culturalist phenomenon. In his opinion, Eurocentrism's root lies in the Renaissance period and “which did not flourish until the nineteenth century”¹⁴. Despite the different emphases point of the concept of Eurocentrism, the common perception of the idea of Eurocentric is how it showed and implied the superiority of West Europe society over the other non-Europeans.

Eurocentrism as an ideology existed long before the term, used during colonization to portray European power and culture as superior, justifying imperial expansion and establishing European norms as global standards. Early ideas of European distinctiveness emerged from interactions with civilizations like the Islamic world (e.g., Crusades), defining Europe in opposition to "the other". According to historian Enrique Dussel, Eurocentrism has its roots in Heliocentrism.¹⁵ Art historian and critic Christopher Allen points out that since antiquity, the outward-looking spirit of Western civilization has been more curious about other peoples and more open about learning about them than any other: Herodotus and Strabo travelled through Ancient Egypt and wrote about it in detail; Western explorers mapped the whole surface of the globe; Western scholars carried out fundamental research into all the languages of the world and established the sciences of archaeology and anthropology.¹⁶ This colonial mindset was not just a product of political or economic domination but was also deeply embedded in the intellectual culture of the time. The European Enlightenment, which championed reason, science, and individual liberty, became a powerful tool for promoting Eurocentric views of the world. Thinkers like Immanuel Kant, Hegel, and John Locke argued that European civilization was the highest expression of human development, while non-European societies were seen as existing on a lower rung of civilization. This intellectual framework became institutionalized in Western education systems, shaping how history, politics, and society were taught and understood across the world.

The racialized ideas of Eurocentrism about the world were then translated into academic and intellectual traditions. Scholars from Europe began framing knowledge in ways that aligned with these hierarchical structures. For instance, European scholars classified non-European societies in ways that emphasized their supposed “backwardness” or “primitivism,” which served to justify colonial domination and the exploitation of non-European peoples. This academic framework not only shaped how European societies viewed the rest of the world but also reinforced their sense of superiority and entitlement. The idea that modernity, science, and

progress diffused outwards from Europe became central, reinforcing the belief that non-European societies were stagnant or backward and needed European intervention. European histories, literature, and philosophies became the default in curricula globally, marginalizing non-Western traditions and presenting a singular, often distorted, view of world history.

II. Dimensions

The dimensions of Eurocentrism manifest in several ways, seeing Europe as the driver of progress. These dimensions view Europe as the pinnacle of history and culture, judging others by Western standards, marginalizing non-Western thought and imposing Western models (democracy, capitalism, nation-state) where the "West" is the norm. This often ignores global interdependencies and non-Western contributions. Key dimensions of Eurocentrism are Historical, Epistemological, Cultural & Social, Political, Economic and Cartographic. These dimensions work together to establish a worldview where European experiences and values are the default, masking underlying power imbalances and creating a biased understanding of the world.

Historical Narratives:

Europe is portrayed as the sole engine of modern progress. It framing history as the primary agent of change. The view interprets global history as a linear path of Europeanization or Westernization, with experiences of different world regions, particularly Africa, Asia and Americas, in this context.¹⁷

What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Underdeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature.¹⁸ Since most African societies used oral tradition to record their history, there was little written history of the continent prior to the colonial period. Colonial histories focussed on the exploits of soldiers, colonial administrators, and "colonial figures", using limited sources and written from an entirely European perspective, ignoring the viewpoint of the colonised under the pretence of white supremacism. Colonial historians considered Africans racially inferior, uncivilised, exotic, and historically static, viewing their colonial conquest as proof of Europe's claims to superiority. Colonisers considered only "Hamitic Africans"¹⁹ to be "civilisation", and by extension all major advances and innovations in Africa were thought to derive from them. Oral sources were deprecated and dismissed by most historians, who claimed that Africa had no history other than that of Europeans in Africa. African historiography became organised at the academic level in the mid 20th century.

Eurocentrism affected Latin America through colonial domination and expansion. This occurred through the application of new criteria meant to "impose a new social classification of the world population on a global scale". Based on this occurrence, a new social-historic identities were newly produced, some of these names being, for instance, 'Whites', 'Negroes', 'Blacks', 'Yellows', 'Olives', 'Indians', and 'Mestizos'. With the advantage of being located in the Atlantic basin, 'Whites' were in a privileged to control gold and silver production. The work which created the product was by 'Indians' and 'Negroes'. With the control of commercial capital from 'White' workers, Europe or Western Europe emerged as the central place of new patterns and capitalist power²⁰.

There are several examples of Islamic contribution to knowledge. For instance, scholars such as Muhammad, Zakriyya Razi, Avicenna, Al-Biruni, Alhazen, Nasir and Omar Khayyam played a key role in the expansion of rationalism²⁰. Avicenna's Canon of Medicine remained a medical textbook for centuries, Razi became authoritative in medicine and pharmacology, and Biruni, through measurement and observation, came close to a scientific method²¹. Ibn al-Haytham (Alhazen), who with his research on optics laid the foundation of the experimental method²²; Al-Khwarizmi gave us algebra and the "algorithm"²³ (.), Nasir al-Din al-Tusi with his innovations in astronomy that later influenced Copernicus²⁴, and Omar Khayyam, who reformed the Jalali calendar and solved cubic equations²⁴. The European Church treated these works selectively. In Toledo, in the 12th and 13th centuries, hundreds of Arabic texts were translated into Latin. Translators (such as Gerard of Cremona²⁵) often obscured or altered the identity of the authors, and in Europe they were generally referred to simply as "Arab philosophers"²⁶. Due to such policies as bans, selective translations, anonymization of authors, etc, the role of Muslim thinkers was reduced to that of "transmitters", not innovators²⁷. This narrative was partially corrected in academic scholarship of the 20th and 21st centuries, but in school curricula in Europe and the United States the old model still dominates. Names such as Biruni, Razi, Al-Khwarizmi or Al-Tusi are often absent. As a result, a one-sided view persists that modernity is purely a European product, while the real history of science was multi-layered and international²⁸.

Eurocentrism's reach has not only affected the perception of the cultures and civilizations of the Islamic world, but also the aspects and ideas of Orientalism, a cultural idea that distinguished the "Orient" of the East from the "Occidental" Western societies of Europe and North America, and which was originally created so that the social and cultural milestones of the Islamic and Oriental world would be recognised. Stemming from Eurocentrism's innate bias towards Western civilization came the creation of the concept of the "European Society," which favoured the components (mainly Christianity) of European civilization and allowed eurocentrists to brand diverging societies and cultures as "uncivilized"²⁹. This effect began to take place during the

nineteenth century when the Orientalist ideals were distilled and shifted from topics of sensuality and deviating mentalities to what is described by Edward Said as "unchallenged coherence". Along with this shift came the creation of two types of orientalism: latent, which covered the Orient's constant durability through history, and manifest, a more dynamic orientalism that changes with the new discovery of information (Said,. The Eurocentric influence is shown in the latter, as the nature of manifest Orientalism is to be altered with new findings, which leaves it vulnerable to the warping of its refiner's ideals and principles. In this state, eurocentrism has used orientalism to portray the Orient as "backwards" and bolster the superiority of the Western world and continue the undermining of their cultures to further the agenda of racial inequality³⁰.

Epistemological/Knowledge Bias:

Eurocentric thought exists in almost all aspects of academia, especially in the humanities³¹. It continues to influence and creating challenges for diverse perspectives in knowledge production today. It considers two kinds of knowledge valid within the discipline of geography, viz. (1) Marginalization of Non-Western Knowledge: privileging European ways of knowing (epistemologies) as universal, treating non-Western knowledge systems as lesser; and (2) Institutional Bias permitting the dominance of Anglo-American institutions and journals in publishing and citation patterns making it difficult for scholars from non-Western regions to gain recognition unless they engage with Western scholarship. Eurocentrism promotes European philosophies, sciences, and theories as universal truths,, while framing non-Western traditions as primitive, fragmented, or needing "development" (e.g., Orientalism). This creates a white, progressive, modern and civilised European identity against a " black/indigenous, underdeveloped, traditional and barbarian Other. This dominance stems from colonial legacies, privileging Western empiricism and English as the global scholarly language, leading to non-Western scholars often needing to justify their perspectives while Western theories are globally applied. Decolonization efforts aim to challenge this by integrating diverse epistemologies and addressing historical power imbalances in education. It manifests as an implicit belief in European superiority, ignoring colonialism's impact and hindering a complete understanding of global development and knowledge systems. The key aspects of Epistemological dimension include, for instance:

- i. Curriculum Bias: Textbooks and syllabi disproportionately focus on European achievements, naturalizing colonialism and racism.
- ii. Epistemic Supremacy: Western empiricism and methods are often seen as the only valid ways of knowing, dismissing other traditions as "backward".
- iii. Language Dominance: English functions as the lingua franca, giving inherent advantage to Global North scholars and perpetuating colonial structures of knowledge.
- iv. Discipline-Specific Criticism: Sociology, anthropology, and international law are frequently cited as heavily influenced by Eurocentric frameworks, reflecting colonial power dynamics.
- v. Knowledge Colonialism: Students and scholars in the Global South are often trained with Western materials, reinforcing dependency on Northern knowledge systems.
- vi. Imperial Amnesia: A tendency to forget or downplay Europe's colonial past and its ongoing impact on other regions.

Thus, one of the most profound consequences of Eurocentrism is the division of knowledge. It is typically organised into two broad categories: "High" or "Scientific" knowledge, which is often associated with Western traditions, and "Low" or "Folk" knowledge is often attributed to non-Western societies. Western knowledge systems, including science, philosophy, history, and politics, have historically been viewed as the standard by which all other knowledge systems should be measured. This is evident in many aspects of modern academic thought, including the dominance of Western theories of governance, economics, and even social relations. For example, political ideologies like liberal democracy and capitalism are often presented as the pinnacle of human development, with little regard for the complexities of non-Western political systems. Even in fields like history and anthropology, Eurocentric scholars have often framed non-Western societies as "exotic" or "underdeveloped," treating their histories as secondary or irrelevant to the narrative of human progress. As a result, much of the global narrative has been shaped by the values, beliefs, and priorities of Western powers, sidelining the contributions and experiences of non-Western societies.

The division of knowledge into Western and non-Western categories has had a lasting impact on how non-Western societies and cultures are represented in academic discourse. Non-Western knowledge systems, including indigenous practices, oral traditions, and alternative forms of governance, are often dismissed as primitive, irrational, or irrelevant. This marginalization can be seen in many areas of global studies, including the portrayal of non-Western religions, philosophies and cultural practices. For instance, the field of anthropology—traditionally a discipline that sought to study and understand the cultures of non-Western societies—has long been criticized for perpetuating Eurocentric biases. Anthropologists often framed non-Western cultures as "other," constructing narratives that emphasized their supposed inferiority or lack of sophistication. These biased representations were then institutionalized in academic and public discourse, reinforcing the perception that non-

Western cultures were inherently inferior to Western ones. Eurocentrism, thus, has had a profound influence on global academic perspectives, shaping the way scholars study and understand the world.

Education systems around the world, particularly in former colonial powers, have played a significant role in perpetuating Eurocentric knowledge. In many countries, the teaching of history, science and literature has been dominated by Western perspectives, with little attention given to the contributions of non-Western societies. This educational bias reinforces the idea that Western culture and knowledge are universal and superior, while non-Western cultures are relegated to the margins. Even in contemporary global studies programs, Eurocentrism often remains a dominant force. Scholars who seek to challenge Eurocentric frameworks may find their work marginalized or ignored, while those who reinforce Eurocentric ideas are often given greater prominence and funding. This limits the potential for more inclusive and diverse approaches to global studies. The impact of Eurocentrism on the division of knowledge in global studies is profound and far-reaching. By privileging Western knowledge and marginalizing non-Western perspectives, Eurocentrism has contributed to a skewed understanding of global history, culture, and society. However, scholars like Sujata Patel remind us of the importance of challenging these Eurocentric frameworks and recognizing the richness and diversity of non-Western cultures and knowledge systems.³² As global studies continues to evolve, it is essential that we move beyond Eurocentric perspectives and embrace more inclusive, diverse, and nuanced approaches to understanding the world. By doing so, we can create a more equitable and accurate representation of global history, one that values the contributions and perspectives of all cultures, not just those of the West.

In academia, there is currently a push to decolonize curriculums at upper-level institutions, as the pre-existing idea of non-European inferiority and the belief that non-European countries played no contribution in human development has led to European scholars and ideas dominating the field and, subsequently, education. Eurocentric narratives in history textbooks, the “main pedagogic resource used in classroom instruction,” allow for the “naturalization of processes such as colonialism, slavery, and racism.”³³ In addition, the social sciences in particular have faced criticism for their Eurocentrism, with a prominent example being sociology. A critique of sociology describes it as “a product of the intersection of science and Europe imperialism,”³⁴ and Black sociology, which is both a political movement and theoretical perspective by Black scholars, argues that American sociology is actually “a White sociology that constitutes the scientific reflection of American racism.”

Eurocentrism has been a particularly important concept in development studies³⁵. It is argued that Eurocentrism “perpetuated intellectual dependence on a restricted group of prestigious Western academic institutions that determine the subject matter and methods of research. Therefore, because much of the basis of academia is Eurocentric, decolonizing it requires careful analysis and a complete re-evaluation of the way education is structured.

Eurocentrism popularized the distinction between “great traditions” and “little traditions” in the mid-20th century³⁶. According to this framework, “great traditions” referred to the organized, scriptural religions practiced by elites, such as Hinduism and Buddhism in India, while “little traditions” referred to folk religions, rituals, and beliefs practiced by common people. This binary division reflected a Eurocentric bias that viewed organized, institutionalized religions as more sophisticated and “advanced” than localized, indigenous forms of religious practice. Eurocentric frameworks, like the great tradition/little tradition dichotomy, serve to homogenize knowledge and experiences, making diverse cultures seem monolithic and static. By imposing Western categories on non-Western cultures, scholars often obscure the richness and complexity of those cultures, reducing them to simplistic stereotypes. This process of homogenization not only distorts the reality of non-Western societies but also reinforces the power dynamics that underlie Eurocentrism.

Cultural & Social Norms

Perhaps the most common form of Eurocentrism is the division of the Eurasian landmass into the “continents” of Europe and Asia at the Ural Mountains—although there is no objective basis for this separation. Indeed, this long-accepted division was the invention of *Vasilli Tatischev*, an 18th-century geographer for Peter the Great, who used it as part of the Russian elite's attempt to differentiate Europe from Asia as meaningful entities.³⁷ By this definition, Europe becomes the only “continent” or major world cultural region that is not separated by water from other so-called continents. Geography, in a colonial context, was used as a tool to impose European control. European powers drew arbitrary borders that disregarded local cultural and linguistic contexts, and these boundaries were solidified on maps that reinforced colonial dominance. Edward Said's analysis of Orientalism, which described the West's construction of the “Orient” as inferior, has been highly influential in criticizing this aspect of geography.³⁸

Stemming from Eurocentrism's innate bias towards Western civilization came the creation of the concept of the “European Society,” which favoured the components (mainly Christianity) of European civilization and allowed euro centrists to brand diverging societies and cultures as “uncivilized”³⁹. Prevalent during the nineteenth century, the labelling of uncivilized in the eyes of euro centrists enabled Western countries to classify non-

European and non-white countries as inferior, and limit their inclusion and contribution in actions like international law.

The cultural milestones of the oriental world effect began to be identified during the nineteenth century and later when the Orientalist ideals were distilled and shifted from topics of sensuality and deviating mentalities to what is described by Edward Said as "unchallenged coherence"⁴⁰. Along with this shift came the creation of two types of orientalism: *latent*, which covered the Orient's constant durability through history, and *manifest*, a more dynamic orientalism that changes with the new discovery of information. The Eurocentric influence is shown in the latter, as the nature of manifest Orientalism is to be altered with new findings, which leaves it vulnerable to the warping of its refiner's ideals and principles. In this state, eurocentrism has used orientalism to portray the Orient as "backwards" and bolster the superiority of the Western world and continue the undermining of their cultures to further the agenda of racial inequality. In some cases, as China, where local ideology was even more exclusionist than the Eurocentric one, Westernization did not overwhelm longstanding Chinese attitudes to its own cultural centrality. Orientalism developed in the late 18th century as a disproportionate Western interest in and idealization of Eastern (i.e. Asian) cultures.

Colonial-era ideas about racial "otherness" and physical difference were embedded in European art. In the field of art, Eurocentrism is closely linked and presented not just in its history but also in its aesthetic standards⁴¹. This Eurocentric view could be further defined as a "conceptual apparatus that frames Europe as the bearer of universal values and reason, and the pinnacle and therefore the model of progress and development."⁴² Museums, the fundamental way of displaying and storing art collections, contain visual biases that are "distinctly Western or Eurocentric in origin" at their very core⁴³. Eurocentrism in Art treats European art as the universal standard, marginalizing non-Western traditions by viewing them through a Western lens, often deeming them "primitive" or less significant, a bias rooted in colonialism that art history and institutions are now challenged to overcome by promoting global, diverse perspectives and valuing art in its cultural context. This focus historically prioritized realism and formal aesthetics (Greek/Renaissance ideals) over other cultural values, ignoring rich, diverse artistic histories worldwide, a trend actively being countered by contemporary artists and scholars seeking to decolonize art history. Eurocentrism in Art is the biased focus on European art, viewing it as the universal standard, thereby marginalizing artistic traditions from Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Oceania, often by presenting Western art history as *the* history and defining "great art" by European ideals like realism or specific museum display practices. This framework elevates European artists (like Michelangelo, Van Gogh) while ignoring equally important non-Western artists, creating an incomplete global art narrative that critics now challenge by advocating for broader, decolonial perspectives that recognize diverse cultural values and artistic expressions. Key Aspects of Eurocentrism in Art include the following:

- i. Universal Standard: European art, particularly from the Renaissance onward, is presented as the pinnacle and default model for "true" art.
- ii. Marginalization: Non-Western art (African, Asian, Indigenous American, etc.) is often relegated to separate, less prominent museum sections (like "primitive art") or ignored in general art history.
- iii. Ethnocentric Bias: Art from other cultures is judged by Western criteria (realism, technique, aesthetics) rather than its own cultural meaning and purpose.
- iv. Colonial Legacy: This dominance stems from colonial power structures that deemed European culture superior, influencing education and media globally.
- v. Dominance of Western Canon: Art history curricula often prioritize Greco-Roman, Renaissance, and modern European art as the pinnacle of achievement, making it seem like the default. Art from other continents is often treated as "other," exotic, or less technically sophisticated, ignoring rich histories and complex contexts, as seen with African masks or Indonesian Batik.
- vi. Idealization of European Standards: Concepts like realism, perspective, and the "masterpiece" status of works like the *Mona Lisa* become universal measures, side-lining different artistic goals from other cultures.
- vii. Museum Bias: Major Western museums often reflect this bias in their collections and narratives, reinforcing the idea that European art is the most significant.

Art history textbooks and exhibitions traditionally focus on a few European masters while overlooking countless others from different regions. A narrow definition of art, often linked to Western philosophical traditions, overshadows diverse global expressions. Eurocentrism in Art is the biased focus on European art, viewing it as the universal standard, thereby marginalizing artistic traditions from Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Oceania, often by presenting Western art history as *the* history and defining "great art" by European ideals like realism or specific museum display practices.

Political & Institutional Imposition

Eurocentrism in international politics is a worldview prioritizing European ideas (nation-state, sovereignty, democracy, etc.), IR⁴⁴ and toponyms as universal, often marginalizing non-Western experiences and creating biased theories and institutions that favour Western powers. This has impacted global governance,

economic systems, and conflict analysis by shaping policies that don't fit local contexts, leading to inequalities and critiques from the Global South⁴⁵. At its core, Eurocentrism reflects the belief that European culture, progress, and achievements represent the pinnacle of human development. This ideology has permeated various academic disciplines, including International Relations Theory (IRT), positioning Europe as the universal standard by which all other cultures and civilizations are measured.

In the field of International Relations (IR), Eurocentrism is particularly significant because it shapes how scholars and policymakers understand global power, governance and conflict. Early IR theories, especially those developed in the 19th and 20th centuries, were heavily influenced by European experiences and ideas. Concepts like the "nation-state," "sovereignty," and "international law" were based on European political structures and were often assumed to be universally applicable. Similarly, the ideas of Western thinkers like Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Max Weber were foundational to the development of modern political science and international relations. One of the key characteristics of Eurocentrism in IR is the assumption that European experiences are universal and should be applied to other regions of the world. This view of global politics often overlooks the experiences and contributions of non-European countries. For example, in traditional IR theory, the history of colonialism is often framed as a "civilizing" process, where European powers brought order and development to the "chaotic" regions of the world. In this narrative, the impact of colonialism on indigenous populations, their cultures, and their political systems is often downplayed or ignored. The Industrial Revolution and subsequent global power cemented Europe's perceived centrality, making its perspective seem the default for understanding world history.

Eurocentrism is a characteristic feature of the expression surrounding international relations and politics because it is prevalent in the language used to communicate how countries and territories are related to one another, particularly with the construction of the "West" versus the "Non-West." At the foundation of Western hegemony in international politics is the erasure of non-Western history by establishing the "non-West" as "unknowable," proliferating the temporal dichotomy. Scholarly opposition to Eurocentrism also criticizes the dismissal of territories that rely on cultural traits to inform national identity and policy⁵⁴. Eurocentrism posits that Europe is the origin point for modern developments like democracy, sovereignty, and human rights, aspects of society that constitute a modern, developed state within Eurocentric ideology. In its current manifestation, Eurocentrism ignores the fact that certain territories in the non-West are different from the West as a result of colonialism.

Eurocentrism has profound implications for global politics. This is particularly evident in the global economic system, where European and American countries have historically dominated international institutions like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the United Nations Security Council. These institutions often promote policies that reflect the interests of Western powers and fail to address the needs and concerns of the Global South. Furthermore, Eurocentrism also shapes the way global conflicts are understood and addressed. For example, conflicts in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America are often framed in terms of Western ideas of democracy, human rights, and development, without considering the local histories and political contexts that shape these conflicts. This leads to policies that may be ill-suited to the realities of the regions they are meant to help and can often exacerbate existing tensions and inequalities.

In political milieu, toponyms or place names also show a particularly strong Eurocentric resilience. For example, the use of the term *Middle East* (French: *Moyen Orient*) is acceptable only if one assumes that the user of the term is located to the west of this region. Such a term makes the *Far East* (French: *L'extrême-Orient*) another Eurocentric toponym; a region is in the Far East only if one is located in the "West." In contrast, Arab geography divides Western Asia into distinct geographical and cultural areas and has never viewed the entire region as a culturally homogeneous region. Within political geography, the application of the terms *the West* or *the Western world* is Eurocentric in that they imply a certain political and cultural territorial construct rather than the physical reality. The chronologically and spatially fluid terms *the West* and *the Western world* are often perceived as referring to North America, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan.

Key Manifestations of the dimension are given below:

- i. Foundational IR Theories: Concepts like the Westphalian state system and sovereignty are rooted in European history, presented as universally applicable despite different non-Western political structures.
- ii. Global Institutions: International bodies (UN, World Bank, IMF) often reflect Western interests, marginalizing Global South voices and promoting policies that may not suit local realities.
- iii. Knowledge Production: Eurocentrism defines what counts as "knowledge," often side-lining non-Western histories, philosophies, and political economies, creating a "monoculture" of theory.
- iv. Foreign Policy & Conflict Analysis: European foreign policies and peace efforts often use biased lenses, leading to selective interventions and a failure to understand conflicts in their unique local contexts.

Consequences:

- i. Marginalization: Non-Western actors' perspectives and interests are often ignored or misunderstood.
- ii. Perpetuation of Inequality: Reinforces existing global power imbalances in economic and political spheres.
- iii. Inadequate Policies: Policies based on Eurocentric assumptions can worsen tensions in regions like the Middle East or Africa.
- iv. Erosion of Credibility: Double standards in applying principles undermine the legitimacy of Western-led global initiatives.

Economic Frameworks:

Eurocentrism's economic dimensions involve viewing European systems as capitalism, democracy, modernity, as universal standards, justifying colonial exploitation and embedding Western economic models as default. This has led to global inequality where the "Global North"⁴⁶ benefits from policies protecting its interests while disadvantaging the "Global South" through trade, knowledge structures and development ideas that ignore diverse local contexts and histories. It frames non-Western societies as lacking, needing "development," and perpetuates unequal power in international institutions and knowledge production. Seeing global economic development primarily as a process of "Westernization," where non-Western economies are defined by their integration (often exploitative) into a system originating in Europe, it underpins global capitalist systems and economic exploitation, linking knowledge to power. The view influences international aid, decision-making, and perceptions of development. Geographical work on underdevelopment conforms largely to the Eurocentrism of development studies.⁴⁷

Examples in Practice:

- i. International Trade: Trade agreements often protect Northern interests, perpetuating exploitative North-South dynamics.
- ii. Sustainability: Defining sustainability through Western metrics (like carbon footprints) can overlook non-Western ecological wisdom and historical responsibilities.
- iii. Social Sciences: Treating Western theories as universal, failing to engage with non-Western political economy, and creating biased curricula.

Key Aspects:

- i. Colonial Legacy & Global Inequality: Eurocentrism historically justified colonialism by claiming European superiority, a mindset that continues to structure unequal global economic relations (North-South divide) through trade, finance, and resource extraction.
- ii. Universalization of Western Models: Concepts like private property, nation-states, and specific paths to economic growth (industrialization, capitalism) are presented as natural or superior, ignoring their specific European origins and impacts elsewhere.
- iii. Knowledge Production: It shapes what counts as valid economic and social science, marginalizing non-Western theories (like those from the Modernidad/Colonialidad school) and perpetuating a "monoculture" of Western thought in academia and policy.
- iv. Development & Aid Discourse: Eurocentric views frame the Global South as "underdeveloped," needing technical fixes or financial aid, often tied to policies (like structural adjustment) that benefit Northern economies, rather than supporting indigenous solutions.
- v. Critique of Capitalism & Modernity: Scholars argue that modernity and capitalism are inseparable from colonial violence, with "modern" institutions often entrenching colonial power structures, making European "progress" contingent on the exploitation of others.

Eurocentrism has been fundamental in constructing narratives of "progress" and "modernity" as uniquely European phenomena. "Developed" vs. "Underdeveloped": It established a binary division between "developed" and "underdeveloped" nations, positioning the West as the present and future, and other regions as the past or "traditional". This framework justifies external intervention and management of non-Western economies and societies. Eurocentric narratives often overlook the historical contributions of non-European societies to global development, such as Chinese innovations that preceded the European Industrial Revolution.

Cartographic Bias

Examples of topographical, land-use and vegetation maps from different parts of the World indicate the prevalence of Eurocentric perceptions in cartography. Eurocentrism has led to distortions of world maps, as the modern world maps are most commonly based on the Mercator projection. While the projection preserves angles and directions, making it useful for navigation, it significantly deforms relative sizes of landmasses.

The Mercator projection, developed by the Flemish cartographer Gerardus Mercator in 1569, visually over-emphasizes and inflates Europe and North America, symbolically diminishing the Global South. It distorts

the equatorial regions and exaggerates the sizes of polar regions, giving the impression that European nations are larger in areal size (and therefore more important) than countries located nearer the equator. Regions near the poles, such as Europe and North America, appear far larger than they actually are, while equatorial regions, including the Middle East and Africa, are visually minimized⁴⁸. For example, Greenland is shown as roughly comparable in size to Africa, when in reality Africa is about fourteen times larger⁴⁹. Such projections exert a subtle psychological effect, encouraging what has been described as an implicit “self-aggrandizement” of the West⁵⁰. This visual imbalance has been criticized as reinforcing a Eurocentric worldview, granting Europe and North America disproportionate symbolic weight on the map, while diminishing the apparent importance of Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America⁵¹. As a result, calls have been made to employ alternative projections—such as the Gall–Peters projection—which more accurately represent land area, in order to counteract the Eurocentric bias embedded in traditional world maps⁵². Thus, Eurocentrism in mapping means viewing the world from a European perspective, placing Europe at the centre, often exaggerating its size, distorting other continents, and prioritizing European histories/names over Indigenous ones. Key characteristics of Eurocentric maps include the following:

- i. Centrality of Europe: Maps frequently position Europe in the middle, making it seem like the focal point of the world.
- ii. Distorted Scale: Projections like Mercator make landmasses further from the equator (like Greenland) appear disproportionately large compared to actual size, inflating Europe's perceived importance.
- iii. Omission of Indigenous Knowledge: They often ignore or misrepresent Indigenous place names, territories, and cultural landmarks, privileging colonial nomenclature.
- iv. Colonial Narrative: Maps visually reinforce European dominance and history, sometimes showing non-Europeans providing riches to a personified Europe, as seen in historical examples from Ortelius.

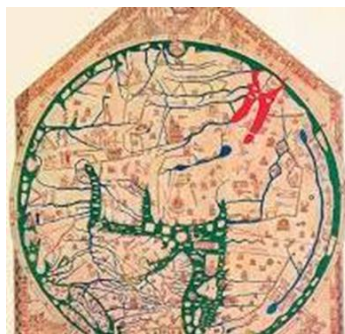
Eurocentric Maps: A History of Bias and Exploration

Eurocentric maps have a long history. Since the Renaissance, European exploration, colonialism, and the spread of cartographic knowledge heavily influenced Eurocentric maps. These maps position Europe at the world's core, revealing geographical, cultural, political, and economic preferences. The beginnings lie in Medieval Europe. Medieval Europe primarily used "Mappa Mundi" as world maps.



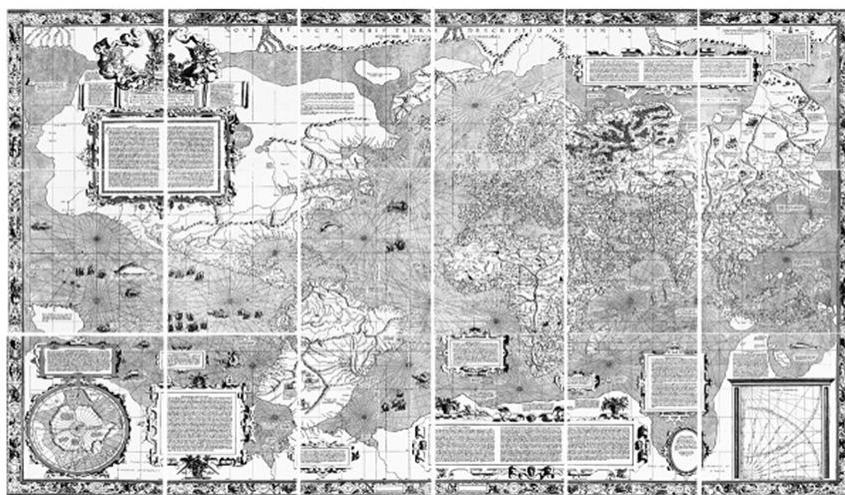
(Figure-1: Mappa Mundi: The greatest medieval map in the world)

These maps depict the known world as it was understood in the Middle Ages. They blend geography with history, mythology, and religious beliefs, often centring on Jerusalem and incorporating biblical events, exotic lands, and legendary creatures. Typically drawn on large sheets of parchment, these maps reflect the medieval worldview rather than precise geographical accuracy, showcasing how people at the time visualized the world's shape and features. The Hereford Mappa Mundi (Figure-2), created around 1300, is one of the most famous examples, illustrating a vast array of locations, peoples, and mythical elements. Mappa Mundi are valued not only as cartographic tools but also as cultural artifacts that provide insight into medieval thought and cosmology.



(Figure-2: Hereford Mappa Mundi Map)

The major development to follow in Cartography was introduction of Mercator's projection, aimed at navigation (Figure-3). Gerardus Mercator (1512–1594) was a Flemish geographer, cartographer, and mathematician who revolutionized mapmaking with his development of the Mercator projection in 1569. It quickly became the go-to map in maritime contexts. Despite its popularity, the projection faced criticism for distorting areas, making polar countries seem bigger. As a result, European nations appeared larger in land area, emphasizing a Eurocentric view that prioritized Europe and its culture, politics, and economy. This projection enabled sailors to navigate more easily by representing lines of constant compass bearing as straight lines, despite distorting landmasses near the poles. Mercator's innovation made nautical navigation safer and more reliable during the Age of Exploration.



The Mercator World Map circa 1569

Figure-3

(Source: Craig A Lockard,201,1p. xxviii)

Subsequently, maps from colonial period frequently showcased the extent and prominence of European colonies, using symbols and colour schemes to highlight colonial territories and trade routes, often at the expense of accurately representing indigenous lands and communities. Colonialism and imperialism expanded the Eurocentric worldview by imposing European control and ideology over diverse regions.

European powers partitioned the globe, often drawing arbitrary borders that disregarded local cultural, linguistic, and historical contexts. These boundaries were solidified on maps that served both administrative and propagandist purposes, reinforcing the dominance of colonial powers.

Indigenous cultures, traditions, and geographical knowledge were typically marginalized or omitted, reinforcing European dominance and diminishing the visibility and significance of native societies. This cartographic approach not only facilitated colonial administration but also contributed to a global perception that prioritized European interests and perspectives, often erasing or distorting the diverse realities of the colonized regions.

The legacy of Eurocentric mapping persists into the 20th and 21st centuries.

Although, from the 20th Century onwards various map projections and global perspectives are now available, many maps still predominantly feature Europe at the centre. However, this trend is gradually evolving. Awareness of traditional cartography's biases has spurred efforts to develop more inclusive maps that reflect a global viewpoint. Eurocentric maps, rooted in the era of European exploration and colonialism, elevate Europe's significance by centralizing it in the world's narrative. While these maps were essential for navigation and governance, they are increasingly criticized for perpetuating colonial prejudices. As awareness of these issues grows, there is a concerted effort to create more equitable and diverse cartographic representations that honour the complexity and richness of all regions. The shift away from Mercator projections towards equal area maps like the *Peters projection* reflects a growing awareness of the distortions inherent in different map projections and a desire for more accurate representations of geographical reality. Mercator projection developed in the 16th century, accurately preserves angles and shapes, making them invaluable for navigation.

However, this projection significantly distorts the sizes of landmasses as they move away from the equator, exaggerating the sizes of regions near the poles (like Greenland) and minimizing the sizes of equatorial regions (like Africa).

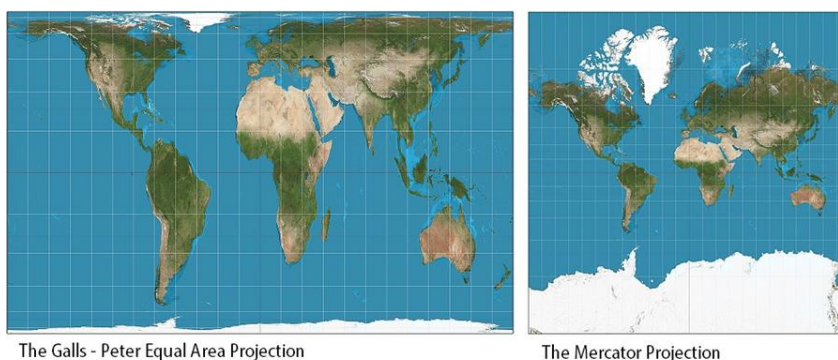


Figure-4: A Comparative presentation (Source: Snyder, John P.,1993, p. 65)

In contrast, equal area maps, such as the Peters projection, aim to accurately represent the relative sizes of landmasses (Figure-4). They sacrifice some degree of shape and angle accuracy in order to provide a more faithful representation of areas on the Earth's surface. This shift is driven by a desire for fairness and accuracy in how different regions are depicted on maps, particularly in educational contexts where traditional maps may have inadvertently reinforced perceptions of Western superiority or minimized the scale of continents like Africa and South America. Moreover, as global awareness of social justice and decolonization efforts has increased, there has been a broader push to use map projections that do not distort the relative importance or size of different cultures and regions. The Peters projection, first introduced in the 1970s, has been part of this movement towards more equitable cartographic representation, challenging long-standing Eurocentric biases in map making and promoting a more balanced understanding of global geography.

Impact

Eurocentrism has had a major impact on geography, primarily with negative consequences. While some might point to a perceived "positive" impact, this view is heavily criticized for being based on a foundation of colonial power and a biased, linear view of progress that diminishes the value of other cultures and knowledge systems.

Negative impacts

Eurocentrism in geography emerged in a narrowed view of the world, overlooking the contributions of non-Western cultures and enforcing an often flawed model of progress and success. Here are the major negative impacts of Eurocentrism in geography:

- i. Perpetuates power imbalances: By setting Western standards as the norm, Eurocentrism maintains existing power structures and continues to undermine the autonomy of non-Western societies.
- ii. Promotes bias and stereotypes: It leads to the exclusion, discrimination, and marginalization of societies that don't share Western ideologies, often fostering stereotypes and the idea that non-European cultures need "saving" by Western values. This has led to a biased representation of non-European societies, often portraying them as underdeveloped, lacking in agency, or defined by "negative" aspects like poverty or disease.
- iii. Marginalization of non-European knowledge: Indigenous geographical knowledge, cultural practices, and local histories were frequently ignored or devalued in favour of European perspectives, creating a biased academic and public understanding of the world. It overlooks and devalues the rich understanding of local environments and sustainable practices held by indigenous peoples, leading to ineffective and sometimes damaging development initiatives.
- iv. Fostering intellectual dependence: Eurocentrism created a system where non-European researchers became intellectually dependent on Western academic institutions, which determined the research agendas and methods considered legitimate. Eurocentric perspectives tend to ignore or obscure the intellectual and cultural achievements of non-Western societies, presenting a distorted view of global history and human progress.
- v. Justifying colonialism and oppression: Eurocentrism provides the intellectual framework that makes colonial violence and exploitation acceptable by establishing a perceived inherent superiority of European

culture and civilization. Eurocentrism promotes the idea of a singular path to progress, which has been used to justify colonialism and its harmful legacies.

- vi. Promoting a distorted view of progress: It enforces a singular, often misleading, notion of progress and success, typically defined by Western economic and political models like the capitalist market and the nation-state, making it seem like these are natural or universal forms of development.
- vii. Biased understanding of history and development: Eurocentric models present Europe as the origin point of modernity, capitalism, democracy, and other innovations, often explaining this "rise" through internal European qualities rather than historical interconnections.
- viii. Prioritizing Western values: By setting out certain Western values like change and economic growth, Eurocentrism neglects other crucial aspects of human life such as community, continuity, and the search for protection, which are vital in other cultural contexts.
- ix. Reinforcement of inequality: By framing development in a linear, modern/traditional hierarchy where Europe is the benchmark for progress, Eurocentrism obscures the complex and entangled histories that have shaped global development.
- x. Distortion of spatial concepts: Geographical terms and concepts, like "the Far East," are defined from a European perspective, implying a center-periphery relationship. The very idea of "The West" is a Eurocentric political and cultural construct.
- xi. Creating deformed maps and representations: Colonial maps, for example, were often created with political and administrative purposes in mind, reinforcing European dominance and disregarding local.
- xii. Curriculum Bias: Educational systems, particularly in subjects like Geography, may adopt Eurocentric narratives that present European history and development as the primary standard, potentially alienating students from diverse backgrounds.

Positive views

Although criticized, Eurocentrism does perpetuate certain positive views as well. While the dominant view critiques Eurocentrism for its inherent bias and role in colonial justifications, some argue that it can have positive outcomes by promoting the spread of certain progressive values or by creating a framework for analysing and understanding the development of the modern world through a familiar, albeit biased, lens. However, these "positive" aspects are often inseparable from the negative dimensions of dominance and exploitation that characterize Eurocentric thought.

Positive Aspects:

- i. Spread of Progressive Values: Eurocentric narratives often highlight the spread of concepts like democracy, human rights, and scientific advancements from Europe to the rest of the world, presenting this diffusion as a positive and desirable development.
- ii. Development of Modern Systems: Eurocentric views emphasize Europe's role as the "engineer and architect" of modern economic, cultural, and political systems, such as capitalism and industrialization, which are then presented as models for global development.
- iii. A Familiar Framework for Analysis: For some scholars, Eurocentrism offers a consistent, albeit biased, framework for analysing history and development, allowing for a coherent narrative of how modern global systems came to be.
- iv. Motivation for Positive Behaviour: In a broader, individualistic sense, some proponents suggest that a pride in European heritage, stemming from Eurocentric ideas, can inspire positive behaviour and cultural initiatives.
- v. Spreading standardized system: One can argue that the spread of European systems of measurement, administration, and mapping led to a certain standardization that some may view as positive for global trade and communication, but this came at a significant cost to local systems and knowledge.
- vi. Laying Foundation for modern geographical science: The development of modern scientific geography was heavily influenced by European perspectives during the age of exploration and colonialism. However, this "positive" foundation is deeply faulty because it was built on a Eurocentric foundation that often ignored or actively suppressed non-European contributions to geography and cartography.
- vii. Enabling a shared understanding of the world: Some argue that the spread of a more unified "global" map, largely based on European-drawn boundaries, created a shared framework for understanding the world. This is problematic as it largely ignored the diverse and varied ways in which different cultures understood and related to their own landscapes.

III. Critique, Challenges & Responses

Critique

Eurocentrism today is being criticised on its various aspects. The viewpoint faces several challenges and also meets the different form of responses. The current resistance to Eurocentrism is centred around re-examining seminal works that are embedded with Eurocentric ideals as well as decolonizing historical narratives that neglect non-Western knowledge. Scholars from the Global South, including postcolonial theorists, have been at the forefront of critiquing Eurocentrism in IR. They emphasize that the world is not made up of a single, unified experience but is instead characterized by diverse histories and power dynamics that are often overlooked in traditional IR theory. One of the most prominent critiques comes from the postcolonial scholar Sujata Patel⁵³, who highlights how Eurocentrism has shaped the way we understand development, modernity, and progress. Patel argues that the Eurocentric narrative presents Europe as the centre of modernity, while the rest of the world is depicted as being in a constant state of backwardness or underdevelopment. This view, she argues, reinforces Western dominance and ignores the contributions of other civilizations to global knowledge and development. In the 1990s, there was a trend of criticising various geographic terms current in the English language as Eurocentric, such as the traditional division of Eurasia into Europe and Asia⁵⁴ or the term Middle East⁵⁵. Eric Sheppard, in 2005, argued that contemporary Marxism itself has Eurocentric traits (in spite of "Eurocentrism" originating in the vocabulary of Marxian economics), because it supposes that the third world must go through a stage of capitalism before "progressive social formations can be envisioned"⁵⁶. Andre Gunder Frank harshly criticised Eurocentrism. He believed that most scholars were the disciples of the social sciences and history guided by Eurocentrism⁵⁷. He criticised some Western scholars for their ideas that non-Western areas lack outstanding contributions in history, economy, ideology, politics and culture compared with the West⁵⁸ (). These scholars believed that the same contribution made by the West gives Westerners an advantage of endo-genetic momentum which is pushed towards the rest of the world, but Frank believed that the Oriental countries also contributed to the human civilization in their own perspectives. Arnold Toynbee in his *A Study of History* (1987), gave a critical remark on Eurocentrism. He believed that although western capitalism shrouded the world and achieved a political unity based on its economy, the Western countries cannot "westernize" other countries. Toynbee concluded that Eurocentrism is characteristic of three misconceptions manifested by self-centred, the fixed development of Oriental countries and linear progress⁵⁹. Thus, the critiques of Eurocentrism gained significant momentum after World War II, fuelled by anticolonial and anti-imperial movements that challenged Europe's privileged narrative. Critiques also target the ways Eurocentric narratives are perpetuated in educational contexts, including geography curricula, by presenting a narrow view of global history ;and development.

In the 19th century, anticolonial movements had developed claims about national traditions and values that were set against those of Europe in Africa and India. Critics used it to expose how Western historical accounts ignored non-Western innovations (e.g., in science, governance) and framed European achievements as unique, overlooking global interconnections. The concept became a key tool in decolonization efforts, questioning whether European frameworks (like international law or concepts of "civilization") should remain universal.

Debates continue in academia and education about multiculturalism, Afrocentrism, and balancing European contributions with indigenous and diverse global histories. Critiques extend to media, beauty standards, and cultural policies, highlighting the ongoing impact of Eurocentric worldviews.

Critiques of Eurocentrism argue it wrongly presents European history, culture, and values as universal or superior, marginalizing non-Western perspectives and justifying colonialism through narratives of "progress" and "civilization". Key criticisms highlight its embeddedness in power structures, its role in creating racial hierarchies, its influence on knowledge production (like in international law, history, science) that ignores other realities, and its perpetuation through tools like biased maps (Mercator) and beauty standards. The critique calls for decolonizing knowledge and challenging the idea that Western models are the only path to development, promoting more inclusive, alternative worldviews.

Major Arguments:

- Eurocentrism continues to influence how we perceive global development and history, framing Western ideas as universal standards.
- Eurocentrism creates a false sense of the world's layout and diminishes the significance of non-European regions on cartographic representations.
- Perpetuates Coloniality: Mental Maps: Studies show people worldwide often internalize territorial distortions, in the form of Mental maps focussed on and exaggerating Europe.
- Eurocentric perspectives ignore the histories, cultures, and political systems of non-European societies and perpetuate an unequal global order. Historical Distortion: It frames history through a European lens, often naturalizing colonialism, slavery, and racism as necessary steps to modern development, ignoring the exploitation involved. Epistemological Bias: It privileges Western scientific and philosophical paradigms,

creating a "breach" between Western knowledge and Southern societies by ignoring or devaluing non-Western knowledge systems.

- Power & Justification: Eurocentrism makes colonial violence and domination seem acceptable or even justifiable by presenting European ways as inherently superior
- Marginalization: It relegates non-Western cultures to the status of "Other," exotic, or "traditional," hindering genuine understanding and partnership.
- Inbuilt Bias: Even seemingly neutral tools, like the Mercator projection map, visually inflate Europe's size, symbolically diminishing other regions and reinforcing Western centrality.
- Incomplete Emancipation Narrative: It often positions Western liberalism as the ultimate goal, even while acknowledging its oppressive aspects, creating a paradox where it's seen as both oppressor and liberator.
- International Relations & Law: Critiques point to the overrepresentation of European theorists and institutions, perpetuating inequalities against Global South nations.
- Social Sciences: Scholars like Immanuel Wallerstein have shown how Eurocentric approaches create structural inequalities in regional studies.
- Social-Media: Discussions around filters and beauty standards challenge the imposition of European features as universal ideals.

Challenges

Scholars have extensively documented how Eurocentric frameworks are embedded in geographic discourse, leading to biased interpretations of global processes like urbanization and the spread of capitalism. Opponents advocate for challenging the dominance of Western viewpoints and promoting diverse, non-Western epistemologies to create a more complete and equitable understanding of the world. Scholars from non-Western backgrounds and critical theorists, such as the Marxist economist Samir Amin, challenge Eurocentric narratives to highlight their inherent biases and the historical power dynamics involved. Anti-colonial movements and scholars (like Samir Amin, who coined the term in its modern sense) challenged Eurocentrism as a biased, exclusionary narrative. Its being challenged on the following grounds. Geographers have begun to challenge the Eurocentric perspectives by:

- Recognizing that "the West" is a social and political construct rather than a universal standard.
- Working to decolonize the discipline by incorporating non-Western perspectives and challenging the idea that Europe is the origin of all important developments.
- Focusing on the unique agency and history of societies like India, rather than simply framing them through a European lens.
- Decolonization efforts: Scholars advocate for a move away from these biases through methods such as:
 - Developing a more inclusive and pluralistic geography.
 - Adopting collaborative approaches and valuing "situated knowledge" from diverse perspectives.
 - Critically examining institutional structures that perpetuate Eurocentrism.
- Decolonizing Mapping: to create maps that are more inclusive, accurate, and respectful of diverse cultures and histories.
- Promote Plurality: Advocating for multiple perspectives and narratives in cartography, moving beyond a singular, Western-centric view.
- Decolonizing Knowledge: to de-center Europe and incorporate diverse epistemologies, particularly from women of colour and Global South scholars.
- Provincializing Europe: Re-evaluating core IR concepts by engaging with non-Western political thought and history.
- Pushing for more equitable global cooperation and recognition of diverse normative powers.

Responses

- As there is a move toward a more interconnected and multipolar world, it is crucial that this move is beyond Eurocentrism and embrace a more inclusive and diverse understanding of global politics. This means recognizing the contributions and perspectives of non-European societies and questioning the assumptions that have shaped traditional IR theory. By doing so, we can begin to create a more equitable global order that reflects the diverse experiences and aspirations of all people, not just those of the West. In response to Eurocentrism, scholars from the Global South have developed alternative frameworks that emphasize the importance of local histories, cultures, and experiences in shaping global politics. These perspectives seek to decolonize the study of international relations by recognizing the contributions of non-European societies and challenging the assumptions of Western dominance. Efforts in education and academia seek to decentre Europe, incorporate non-Western voices, and create more inclusive, multicultural approaches to history and knowledge.

Key themes in these alternative frameworks include:

- Decolonization of knowledge: The idea that academic disciplines, including IR, should move beyond Western-centred knowledge systems and incorporate perspectives from other parts of the world.
- Non-Western political thought: A recognition that non-European societies have their own rich traditions of political thought, governance, and diplomacy that are often overlooked in traditional IR theories.
- Global South solidarity: The belief in the importance of solidarity among countries in the Global South, which have shared experiences of colonialism, imperialism, and economic exploitation.
- Decolonial Projects: Scholars and institutions are working to dismantle Eurocentric frameworks in art history.
- Global Context: Promoting the study and appreciation of art in a global context, recognizing diverse artistic histories and values.
- Diverse Representation: Seeking out and showcasing art from all cultures, challenging the idea that European art is the sole measure of artistic achievement.

IV. Conclusion

The Eurocentrism entails a Western-centric View that places Europe and its values, cultures and concerns at the centre of world events and narratives, often framing European progress as the universal model for development. This often marginalizes non-European cultures and histories. These Western-centric models of development penetrate deep in its various fields of learning, alienating indigenous knowledge and communities.

Although, the term Eurocentrism was coined in the 1970s, it gained prominence in the 1990s, particularly in post-colonial studies. Since 1990s, the term has been frequently applied in the context of decolonization, development and humanitarian aid that industrialized countries offered to developing countries. In addition, it has been used to critique Western scholars for their downplaying of non-Western intellectual contributions. The roots of Eurocentrism can be traced back to the colonial era, when European powers expanded their empires across the globe. The common perception of this view is how it showed and implied the superiority of West European society over the other non-Europeans. Even though Europe is the smallest of the world's four continents, it has for various reasons a position that places it before all others. This expresses an apparently Eurocentric approach. The European Enlightenment, which championed reason, science and individual liberty, became a powerful tool for promoting Eurocentric views of the world. The idea of European superiority became entrenched through the colonial expansion of European powers, which sought to justify the subjugation of non-European societies.

The viewpoint encompasses several dimensions as historical, spatial, epistemological, cultural, social, political and economic. However, in the field geography Eurocentrism has had a profound impact, particularly on cartographic representations and the very theories used to understand the world, i.e., viewing and mapping the world from a European perspective, placing Europe at the center, often exaggerating its size, distorting other continents. Examples of topographical, land-use and vegetation maps from different parts of the World indicate the prevalence of Eurocentric perceptions in cartography. This has led to distortions of world maps, as the modern world maps are most commonly based on the Mercator projection. While the projection preserves angles and directions, making it useful for navigation, it significantly deforms relative sizes of landmasses. The projection distorts the equatorial regions and exaggerates the sizes of polar regions, giving the impression that European nations are larger in areal size (and therefore more important) than countries located nearer the equator. Colonialism and imperialism expanded the Eurocentric worldview by imposing European control and ideology over diverse regions. European powers partitioned the globe, often drawing arbitrary borders that disregarded local cultural, linguistic, and historical contexts. These boundaries were solidified on maps that served both administrative and propagandist purposes, reinforcing the dominance of colonial powers. This visual imbalance has been criticized as reinforcing a Eurocentric worldview, granting Europe and North America disproportionate symbolic weight on the map, while diminishing the apparent importance of Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. As a result, calls have been made to employ alternative projections. The legacy of Eurocentric mapping persists into the 20th and 21st centuries. Although, from the 20th Century onwards various map projections and global perspectives are now available, many maps still predominantly feature Europe at the centre. European powers drew arbitrary borders that disregarded local cultural and linguistic contexts, and these boundaries were solidified on maps that reinforced colonial dominance.

Among other dimensions, the view interprets global history as a linear path of Europeanization or Westernization, with experiences of different world regions, particularly Africa, Asia and Latin America. Since most African societies used oral tradition to record their history, there is little written history of the continent prior to the colonial period. Oral sources were deprecated and dismissed by most historians, who claimed that Africa had no history other than that of Europeans and Hamitic Africans living here. Eurocentrism affected Asia and Latin America through colonial domination and expansion. This imposed a new social classification of the world population on a global scale, introducing the new social-historic identities as Whites', Negroes, Blacks, Yellows, Olives, Indians, and Mestizos. As examples of Islamic contribution to knowledge, hundreds of Arabic texts were

translated into Latin, but the translators often obscured or altered the identity of the authors, reducing the role of Muslim thinkers to that of transmitters, not innovators. Eurocentrism's reach has not only affected the perception of the cultures and civilizations of the Islamic world, but also the aspects and ideas that distinguished the Orient or the East from the Western societies of Europe and North America. Arising from Eurocentrism's inherent bias towards Western civilization came the creation of the concept of the European Society, which favoured the components mainly Christianity) of European civilization and allowed euro-centrists to brand diverging societies and cultures as uncivilized.

Eurocentric thought exists in almost all aspects of academia, considering two kinds of knowledge valid within the discipline of geography, viz. Marginalization of Non-Western Knowledge privileging European epistemologies as universal and Institutional Bias permitting the dominance of Anglo-American institutions and journals. This dominance stems from colonial legacies, enabling Western empiricism and English as the global scholarly language. Thus, one of the most profound consequences of Eurocentrism is the division of knowledge into Western and non-Western categories. The high or scientific knowledge is often associated with Western traditions, and the low or folk knowledge is attributed to non-Western societies. Western knowledge systems, including science, philosophy, history, and politics, have historically been viewed as the standard by which all other knowledge systems should be measured. The impact of Eurocentrism on the division of knowledge in global studies is far-reaching in academic discourse. By empowering Western knowledge and disparaging non-Western perspectives, Eurocentrism has contributed to a skewed understanding of global history, culture, and society. However, in academia, there is currently a push to decolonize curriculums at upper-level institutions.

Europe becomes the only "continent" or major world cultural region that is not separated by water from other so-called continents. Geography, in a colonial context, was used as a tool to impose European control. Eurocentrism popularized the distinction between Great Traditions and Little Traditions. Accordingly, the former referred to the organized, scriptural religions practiced by elites, such as Hinduism and Buddhism in India, while the latter referred to folk religions, rituals, and beliefs practiced by common people. This binary division reflected a Eurocentric bias that viewed organized, institutionalized religions as more sophisticated and "advanced" than localized, indigenous forms of religious practice. Another bias rooted in Eurocentrism is related to Art. In the field of art, Eurocentrism is closely linked and presented not just in its history but also in its aesthetic standards. Museums, the fundamental way of displaying and storing art collections, contain visual biases that are distinctly Western or Eurocentric in origin at their very core. Eurocentrism in Art treats European art as the universal standard, marginalizing non-Western traditions by viewing them as primitive or less significant. A narrow definition of art, often linked to Western philosophical traditions, overshadows diverse global expressions.

Eurocentrism in international politics is a worldview prioritizing European ideas, IR and toponyms as universal, creating biased theories and institutions that favour Western powers. This has impacted global governance, economic systems, and conflict analysis by shaping policies that don't fit local contexts, leading to inequalities. In the field of International Relations (IR), Eurocentrism is particularly significant because it shapes how scholars and policymakers understand global power, governance and conflict. Concepts like the Nation-State, Sovereignty and International Law are based on European political structures and are often assumed to be universally applicable. Eurocentrism is a characteristic feature of the expression surrounding international relations and politics because it is prevalent in the language used to communicate how countries and territories are related to one another, particularly with the construction of the West versus the Non-West. Eurocentrism posits that Europe is the origin point for modern developments like democracy, sovereignty, and human rights, aspects of society that constitute a modern, developed state within Eurocentric ideology. Eurocentrism has deep implications for global politics. This is particularly evident in the global economic system, where European and American countries have historically dominated international institutions like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the United Nations Security Council. In political milieu, several toponyms or place names (West, Orient, Middle East, Far East, etc.) also show a strong Eurocentric persistence.

Eurocentrism's economic dimensions involve viewing European systems as capitalism, democracy, modernity, as universal standards, justifying colonial exploitation and embedding Western economic models as default. This has led to global inequality where the Global North benefits from policies protecting its interests while disadvantaging the Global South through trade, knowledge structures and development ideas that ignore diverse local contexts and histories. Eurocentrism has been fundamental in constructing narratives of progress and modernity as uniquely European phenomena. Developed versus Underdeveloped It established a binary division between developed and underdeveloped nations, positioning the West as the present and future, and other regions as the past or traditional.

Eurocentrism has had a major impact on geography, primarily with negative consequences. This view is heavily criticized for being based on a foundation of colonial power and a biased, linear view of progress that diminishes the value of other cultures and knowledge systems. Although criticized, Eurocentrism does perpetuate certain positive views as well. While the dominant view critiques Eurocentrism for its inherent bias and role in colonial justifications, some argue that it has positive outcomes by promoting the spread of certain progressive

values or by creating a framework for analysing and understanding the development of the modern world through a familiar, albeit biased, lens. Eurocentrism today is being criticised on its various aspects. The viewpoint faces several challenges and also meets the different form of responses. The current resistance to Eurocentrism is centred around re-examining seminal works that are embedded with Eurocentric ideals as well as decolonizing historical narratives that neglect non-Western knowledge. As part of

trend of criticising various terms current in the English language as Eurocentric, such as the traditional division of Eurasia into Europe and Asia or the term Middle East, have been criticised. The critiques of Eurocentrism gained significant momentum after World War II, fuelled by anticolonial and anti-imperial movements that challenged Europe's privileged narrative. Critiques also target the ways Eurocentric narratives are perpetuated in educational contexts, including geography curricula, by presenting a narrow view of global history and development. Critiques of Eurocentrism argue it wrongly presents European history, culture, and values as universal or superior, marginalizing non-Western perspectives and justifying colonialism through narratives of progress and civilization. Key criticisms highlight its embeddedness in power structures, its role in creating racial hierarchies, its influence on knowledge production (like in international law, history, science) that ignores other realities, and its perpetuation through tools like biased maps and beauty standards. The critique calls for decolonizing knowledge and challenging the idea that Western models are the only path to development, promoting more inclusive, alternative worldviews.

Scholars have extensively documented how Eurocentric frameworks are embedded in geographic discourse, leading to biased interpretations of global processes like urbanization and the spread of capitalism. Opponents advocate for challenging the dominance of Western viewpoints and promoting diverse, non-Western epistemologies to create a more complete and equitable understanding of the world. Scholars from non-Western backgrounds and critical theorists challenge Eurocentric narratives to highlight their inherent biases and the historical power dynamics involved. Anti-colonial movements and scholars (like Samir Amin, who coined the term in its modern sense) challenged Eurocentrism as a biased, exclusionary narrative.

As there is a move toward a more interconnected and multipolar world, it is crucial that this move is beyond Eurocentrism and embrace a more inclusive and diverse understanding of global politics. This means recognizing the contributions and perspectives of non-European societies and questioning the assumptions that have shaped traditional IR theory. By doing so, we can begin to create a more equitable global order that reflects the diverse experiences and aspirations of all people, not just those of the West. In response to Eurocentrism, scholars from the Global South have developed alternative frameworks that emphasize the importance of local histories, cultures, and experiences in shaping global politics. These perspectives seek to decolonize the study of international relations by recognizing the contributions of non-European societies and challenging the assumptions of Western dominance. Efforts in education and academia seek to decentre Europe, incorporate non-Western voices, and create more inclusive, multicultural approaches to history and knowledge.

Notes

1. Hobson, John, 2012.
2. The Cold War was a period of international geopolitical rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies, the capitalist Western Bloc and communist Eastern Bloc, which began in the aftermath of the Second World War and ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.
3. 'Eurocentrism and its discontents'; Hoskins, Linus, 1992; Schipper, Mineke, 2008.
4. Sheppard, Eric, 2005, pp:956-62; Payne, Anthony, 2005, pp:231-47; Deen K. Chatterjee, 2011, pp:321-25.
5. *Youngblood Henderson, James (Sákéj)*, 2011, pp. 259–261]
6. Jones, Eric ,2003.
7. Cambridge History of China, CUP, 1988.
8. John Brohman, 1995, pp: 121-40.
9. Laxman D. Satya, 2005, pp:2051-55.
10. *The Brockhaus Enzyklopädie (Conversations-Lexicon)* of 1847.
11. Hobson, John M.; Sajed, Alina (2017).
12. Audrey Alejandro, 2017, pp:5-20.
13. "Eurocentrism – Sociology of Race," *Sociology*, 2017
14. Deen K. Chatterjee, 2011.
15. Dussel, Enrique, 2011, p:11.
16. Christopher Allen, 2024, pp:18-19.
17. Brizuela-Garcia, Esperanza (2018).
18. Alagoa, Ebiegberi J. ,2006.
19. "Hamitic Africans" refers to an outdated and debunked racial theory, originating from European colonialism, that falsely classified certain North and East African peoples (like Egyptians, Berbers, Tutsi) as a lighter-skinned, "superior" "Hamitic race," supposedly descendants of Noah's son Ham, distinct from "Black"

Africans and responsible for advanced African cultures, a concept now replaced by understanding Afroasiatic languages and diverse African ethnicities.

20. Nasr, Seyyed , 1996 p. 214.
21. Sarton, George,1927, p:148
22. Al-Khalili, Jim, 2011.p:75.
23. Heath, Thomas,1932, p:312
24. Saliba, George ,2007, p:201.
25. Gerard of Cremona (1114-87)was an Italian translator of scientific books from Arabic into Latin. He worked in Toledo, Kingdom of Castile and obtained the Arabic books in the libraries at Toledo.
26. Arberry, A. J.,193, p:45.
27. Huff, Toby E.,2003, p:88
28. Morgan, Michael Hamilton, 2007, p:9.
29. Heraclides, Alexis,2015,p:31.
30. Edward, 2000, pp:111-12
31. ("Eurocentrism and Academic Imperialism", 2015)
32. Sujata Patel(2020)
33. Marta Araújo and Silvia Rodríguez Maeso, 2012, pp: 1266–86.
34. William Jamal Richardson (2017
35. Brohman, John, 1995,pp:121-40
36. Robert Redfield (1956)
37. Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen,1997.
38. Said, Edward (2000).
39. Burney, Shehla, *op.cit*
40. Cambridge History of China CUP,1988
41. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann,1999, pp:35-42
42. J. Sundberg ,2009, pp:638–43
43. J. Sundberg ,2009, pp:638–43
44. IR stands for International Relations, a major field studying interactions between nations, states, and non-state actors (like NGOs, MNCs) focusing on war, diplomacy, trade, human rights, global governance, and power dynamics, using theories (Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism) to analyse world politics, security, cooperation, and major global issues like climate change and terrorism.
45. The Global South is a term for countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania that are often characterized by lower income, less industrialization, and historical experiences of colonialism, but it's a political/economic grouping, not strictly geographical, including Northern Hemisphere nations like China and India. It signifies nations seeking greater influence in global politics, pushing back against Western-centric systems, and collectively advocating for their shared interests in areas like trade, climate, and governance, representing a significant shift in geopolitical power.
46. The Global North refers to wealthy, industrialized, and technologically advanced countries, primarily in the Northern Hemisphere (like North America, Europe, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand), that historically dominate the global economy, while the Global South comprises less developed, often formerly colonized nations.
47. Cannon TG,1975,Vol.7, Issue-3, pp:212-16).
48. Snyder, John P.,1993, p:65
49. Monmonier, Mark,1991
50. Harley, J. B.,2001, p:169
51. Wood, Denis, 986
52. Peters, Arno,1983, p. 10
53. Sujata Patel(2020),
54. Martin Lewis and Kären Wigen,1997
55. Hanafi, Hassa,2000,pp:1-9
56. Sheppard, Eric, 2005,pp:956-62
57. Payne, Anthony,2005,pp:231-47
58. Frank, Andre Gunder,1998
59. Lang, Michael,2011,pp:747-83.

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