The Third World and The North-South Debate

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Abstract

The paper examined the Third World and the North-South Debate. The chasm between the level of prosperity in the third world and the first world was created by an economic process in which the development of one sector of the globe 'the first world countries'- resulted in the stagnation of actual retrogression of dependent areas third world countries. The North refers to the pockets of highly industrialized, capitalist and heavily technological driven countries of Western Europe, Japan and North America Conversely and on the Polar Opposite, is the south. This refers to the rest of us except the now defunct communist countries of Eastern Europe, and China which is the 2nd world following the October 1917 Leninist led Bolshevik revolution. The paper anchor it argument on dependent theory. The paper also employed multidisciplinary approach in gathering data. The findings of the paper revealed that, the North, first world countries had systematically reduced the South or third world countries to economic appendages: indigenous production was diverted to the home market, and new 'semi-societies' were created, dependent on the export of minerals and tropical raw materials, while any indigenous industry potentially competitive with home industry was destroyed; Each country of the North regards parts or substantial parts of the south as its backyard and thus its extension, as a source of raw materials, as a dumping ground for its manufactured goods , as a place to export surplus labour, the colonial background of the south and the arrogance, conceited pride and imperial dominance of the North has produced warped cultural, political and economic relations between the two (i.e. North & South) in spite of the National Sovereignty which much of the south attained in the 1960s.

Keywords: Third World, North—South Debate, Colonialism, Trans-National Corporations (TNCS), polarism

Introduction

The social relations amongst and between the nations of the world otherwise referred to as international Relations are full of, and characterized by, clichés, statements and comments which serve only diversionary functions. Realistically speaking and in terms of structuralism, the North refers to the pockets of highly industrialized, capitalist and heavily technological driven countries of Western Europe, Japan, and North America. It includes the OECD Countries and the extension of Europe in Australia and New Zealand. They are found in the Northern Hemisphere or temperature region of our world and are made up about 1/3 of the world's population and land surface. The average per capita income of these capitalist enclaves' range between 2000 and 2500 Dollars Per Head. They are conventionally referred to as the 1st world – having been liberated politically prior the 1st World War.

Conversely and on the Polar Opposite, is the South. This refers to the rest of us except the now defunct communist countries of Eastern Europe, and China which is the 2nd world following the October 1917 Leninist led Bolshevik revolution. In International Political Economy, the south is called the 3rd World and in contemporary discourses, the Less Development Countries (LCD's). Barring perhaps some Latin American countries, countries of the south are found in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. It is in the Southern Hemisphere South of the Equator, and it constitutes 2/3 of the world's population and land surface(source) ***.

The South, in most part, were once colonies or colonial territories of some of the countries of the rich north. Each country of the North regard's parts or substantial parts of the south as its backyard and thus its extension

- As a source of raw materials
- As a dumping ground for its manufactured goods and up to the closing days of the 1950s
- As a place to export surplus labour

The colonial background of the south and the arrogance, conceited pride and imperial dominance of the North has produced warped cultural, political, and economic relations between the two (i.e., North & South) despite the National Sovereignty which much of the south attained in the 1960s. This warped relationship following the phenomena of what

Samir Amin calls Unequal Exchange (2017) and Essoh's Social Inequality among Nations (2005) gave rise to the discourage that comes on the North-South Dialogue.

Theoretical Framework

The dependent theory propounded by Raul Prebish the theoretical premises of dependency theory are that; Poor states provide natural resources, cheap labour, a destination for obsolete technology and markets to the wealthy nations, without which the latter could not have the standard of living they enjoy. Wealthy nations actively perpetuate a state of dependence by various means. This influence may be multifaceted, involving economics, media control, politics, banking and finance, education, culture, sport, and all spheres of human resource development. Wealthy states actively counter the attempts by dependent nations to resist their influences by means of economic sanctions and/or the use of military force "Dependency theory states that the poverty of the countries in the periphery is not because they are not integrated or fully integrated in the world system as it is often argued by free market economists, but because of how they are integrated into the system. There are two schools of thought with different standpoints on the issue. One of these is the bourgeois school and the second one is radical school of the neo-Marxian political economy" (Arowolo, 2010).

Methodology

This paper adopts historical and analytical approach in the analysis and interpretation of data generated or gathered from written and oral sources. Using the inter-disciplinary approach, the bulk of knowledge from other related discipliners in the Arts. Humanities and Social Science relating to this paper were collected and analyzed using the same approach. This methodology assisted me with information needed.

Third World and North-South Divide

The term third world is used to describe the level of economic and industrial development prevalent in the countries of African, Asia and Latin America. These countries are mainly characterized by low levels of standard of living, high rates of population growth, low levels of per capita income and general economic and technological dependence on the First and Second World (1979). Regardless of the stupendous efforts by bourgeois scholars to prove that Third World development is due to internal factors, abundant weight of evidence suggests the contrary. Development crisis of this group of countries was and is still caused principally by external factors. They include the legacy of foreign conquests, the Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and inappropriate development strategies.

In his now classic work Global Rift, Stavrianos (2019) argues that 'the overseas expansion of European capitalism resulted in the emergence of the Third World through the operation of imperialism.' This is, of course, an argument that draws on a rich Marxist tradition summarized by Karl Marx' famous dictum (articulated in his Grundrisse), according to which capital by its nature has to drive beyond every spatial barrier and conquer the whole earth for its market. Both Rosa Luxemburg's "The Accumulation of Capital" (1913) and "Lenin's Imperialism": The Highest Stage of Capitalism (1917) expanded on this idea. Luxemburg stated that capitalism needed to expand in new areas of the world untouched by capitalist forms of production, in search of natural resources, new markets, and (cheap or free) labour. Callinicos (2020) claims that Luxemburg inaugurated a Marxist tradition that examines the link between capitalist expansion and the violent domination and exploitation of the Global South. Stavrianos draws on this tradition of Marxist thought, which highlights that the very creation of the Third World is intimately connected to processes of capitalist expansion via colonial conquest, in other words, to processes of underdevelopment. The notions of 'underdevelopment' and 'overdevelopment' are crucial to understanding Stavrianos' conception of the Third World. He does not see them as separate, individual, and discrete phenomena, rather they are tied together inseparably: Western nations are overdeveloped to the degree that Third World nations are underdeveloped (Stavrianos, 2019).

Here, Walter Rodney's work on processes of underdevelopment in Africa is especially pertinent: Rodney (1972) states that underdevelopment is not a product of internal factors of Third World societies, but rather the direct consequence of processes of capitalist expansion, and of the integration of these societies within the capitalist world system. The creation of the Third World was not simply about colonial conquest and incorporating these territories into European colonial empires. Rather (and especially), it had also to do with their active 'underdevelopment' by the colonial metropole through the extraction of raw natural resources and labour for the exclusive benefit of the metropole, and with devastating consequences for local economies, polities, and societies. I understand 'underdevelopment' here in the way articulated by dependency theorist A.G. Frank (1969) in his now classic piece 'The Development of Underdevelopment.' Here, Frank identifies underdevelopment as a conscious political action by the colonial metropole whereby resources belonging to the colonial society/periphery are being extracted and used but used in a way which benefits dominant states and not the poorer states in which the resources are found. In that sense, according to dependency theory, Third World countries are not 'behind' or in need of 'catching up' to the richer countries of the world. They are not poor because they lagged the scientific transformations or lacked the Enlightenment values of the European states. They are poor because they were coercively integrated into

the European economic system only as producers of raw materials or to serve as repositories of cheap labour, and were thus denied the opportunity to market their resources in any way that competed with dominant states.

It cannot be emphasized enough thus that the idea of Third World is inseparable from the emergence of global capitalism via colonial conquest and exploitation. The integration of colonial societies into capitalist circuits has permanently changed and restructured local economies with tremendous consequences both for the short term and, more importantly, for the long term. Here the idea of underdevelopment is crucial because it throws light on processes of exploitation and dependence that have begun a couple of centuries ago and are still very much ongoing. Stavrianos (2019) notes, for instance, that one of the distinguishing features of the Third World is the idea of 'economic growth without economic development', which refers to 'growth determined by foreign capital and foreign markets rather than by local needs.' His definition of the Third World is illuminating: it is not a set of countries or statistics, but rather 'a set of relationships – unequal relationships between controlling metropolitan centers and dependent peripheral regions, whether colonies as in the past or neocolonial "independent" states as today' (Stavrianos, 2019:40). To summarize, the idea of Third World is unthinkable without global capitalism and the rise of global hierarchies and inequality it produced. Here Marxist scholarship has made an invaluable contribution by exploring in depth the twin roots of colonial conquest and capitalist expansion behind the idea of Third World (see James, 1938; Bois, 1947; Rodney, 1972; Amin, 1976; Wallerstein, 2019; Wolf, 2010; Davis, 2001; Anievas & Nisançioglu, 2015). It has also brought forward the idea that we cannot think and speak of issues such as poverty, war and conflict, environmental degradation, and political corruption in the Third World/Global South outside of the global structures that produce and condition these phenomena (see Tsing, 2005 & Tilley, 2020).

The North-South Dialogue

The North-South Dialogue refers to the process through which the developing and newly independent nations of the south, predominantly in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, engaged industrialized countries of North America and Western Europe in Negotiations over changes in the international Economic system some decades ago.

Poverty because of underdevelopment cause by the developed countries was the reason for this dialogue. Russett, Starr & Kinsella, (2019) asserted that, in some areas where significant local industry had existed before the colonial era, that industry was stifled. The most famous instance is nineteenth-century India. The British colonial government deliberately destroyed the Indian textile industry; it built a railway system through India

with the express purpose of opening the country so that the textile manufacturers of Lancashire could be sold to the Indian population. Another case is that of the Belgian Congo in the late nineteenth century, where the colonial rulers wanted to use the local population as a labour force in the mines. Streams were poisoned, so that the Africans could not live from fishing. They were then required to pay taxes and they could earn money to pay taxes only by working or very low wages.

Amin, (2017) and Goldstein and Pevehouse (2018) posited that; imperialism was one of the causes of North- South Divide. According to them, the most easily accessible minerals were dug up and shipped away. The best farmland was planted in export crops rather than subsistence crops and was sometimes overworked and eroded. The infrastructure that was built served the purposes of imperialism rather than the local population for instance, railroads going straight from mining areas to ports. The education and skills needed to run the economy were largely limited to whites.

The economic effects were not all negative, however. Colonialism often fostered local economic accumulation (although controlled by whites). Cities grew. Mines were dug and farms established. It was in the colonial administration's interest to foster local cycles of capital accumulation. Much of the infrastructure that exists today in many third world countries was created by colonizers. In some cases, colonization combined disparate communities into a cohesive political unit with a common religion, language, and culture, thus creating more opportunities for economic accumulation. In some cases, the local political cultures replaced by colonialism were themselves oppressive to most of the people, (Russett et al., 2019 and Goldstein et al., Pevehouse, 2018).

Russett, Starr and Kinsella (2019) further asserted that, if imperialism concentrated the accumulation of wealth in the core and drained economic surplus from the periphery, one might expect that accumulation in the global South would take off once colonialism was overthrown. Generally, however, this was not the case. A few states such as Singapore have accumulated capital successfully since becoming independent. But others, including many African states, seem to be going backward, with little new capital accumulating to replace the old colonial infrastructure. Most former colonies are making only slow progress in accumulation. Political independence has not been a cure all for poor countries. The most significant reason during this period for these problems is that under colonialism, the training and experience needed to manage the economy were often limited to white Europeans, leaving a huge gap in technical and administrative skills after independence.

Again, another problem faced by newly independent states was that as colonies, their economies had been narrowly developed to serve the needs of the European home country. Many of these economies rested on the export or one or two products. For Zambia, it was copper ore; for El Salvador, coffee; for Botswana, diamonds. Such a narrow export economy would seem well suited to use the state's comparative advantage to specialize in one niche of the world economy. But it leaves the state vulnerable to price fluctuations on world markets. The liberal free trade regime based around the WTO corrected only partially for the North's superior bargaining position in North-South trade. And the WTO has allowed agriculture (exported by the periphery) to remain protected in core states, while promoting liberalization of trade in manufactured goods exported by the core.

It is not easy to restructure an economy away from the export of a few commodities. Nor do state leaders generally want to do so, because the leaders benefit from the imports that can be bought with hard currency (including weapons). In any case, coffee plantations and copper mines take time and capital to create, and they represent capital accumulation – they cannot just be abandoned. In addition, local inhabitants' skills and training are likely to be concentrated in the existing industries. Furthermore, infrastructure such as railroads most likely was set up to serve the export economy. For instance, in Angola and Namibia the major railroads, built in colonial times, lead from mining or plantation districts to ports.

According to Aluko (2010), this kind of system is pregnant with inherent contradiction and crisis since wealth is produced by many but monopolized by a few. To neutralized capitalism in Europe and guarantee external markets, sources of raw materials and profitable investment avenue capitalism expanded into developing areas and restructured these developing areas to fit into the European economic system as appendages or satellites (Rodney, 1972). Thus, an international division of labour was created between the North and the South, and rationalized in bourgeois economic theories of comparative advantage (a country has comparative advantage in the production of a commodity in which its absolute advantage is greater or absolute disadvantage is less) and comparative cost (a country should export those commodities which it can produce at relatively low cost and import those commodities which it can produce at relatively high cost) both of which encourage the south to specialized in primary production and reduce their economies (Daniel, 2020).

The management of the World economic system was in the 20th century codified in the Bretton woods system (1944), Amin (2019) which concentrated huge economic and political power in the centre nations of the North enabling them to assume a leadership role in international economic system through the manipulation of the activities of the

Multinational Corporations and International Organizations like the United Nations Organization (UNO), and its subsidiary organs like the world bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). The structure of unequal relations between North and south creates development in the North and simultaneously produce underdevelopment in the south. Development and underdevelopment therefore are two sides of the same coin and aspects of the same historical process (Daniel, 1980).

The reason for the North-South Dialogue

The beginning of the 1970s was seen by the underdeveloped countries in Africa and Asia with a certain sense of hope that the decade would usher in a new era in the relations between the rich and the poor nations of the world. They perceived that the old form of economic and political dependency would fade away and a new age of equality of opportunity would emerge. Emboldened by this belief in the righteousness of their cause and in the inevitability of historical forces, the Third World countries gathered under the formal banner of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) and initiated the North-South dialogue (Nye, 1992). This development came through the 6th and 7th special sessions (1974 & 1975 respectively), of the United Nations General Assembly.

The first major fundamental historical process that culminated in the emergent call for NIEO was the International social and political climate that developed after World War II. This climate encouraged the liquidation of the remaining colonies and brought to the international scene many newly independent nation-states whose status were declared to be sovereign and equal to that of all other independent states including their ex-colonial masters.

The historical process that gave most of the world's population sovereignty and equality left them at the same time in a position of economic dependence and inequality. This triggered the second set of factors configuring the content for the emergence of the NIEO. These factors became known as the "Revolution of rising expectation". This is the urgent and understandable desire of the peoples of the South to liberate them from neo-colonialism.

The third factor was the sudden and unexpected rise of the Third World's economic and political power. This was because of the OPEC; 1973 Middle East Oil embargo and the subsequent fourfold increase in the price of oil that created a world energy crisis. This affected all oil importing countries developed as well as developing. It also exhibited the dependence of the developed countries on the developing ones for several major natural resources and fueled the ability of the Third World to effectively wield economic and

political power not minding the fact that power was grossly eroded over the years (Olaniyan, 2019).

Substantive issues in the demand for NIEO

The Countries of the South believe that the North is responsible for their basic poverty through conducts like slavery, colonialism, and neo-colonialism. Ake (1981) supported the view in his assertion that the ominous debt crisis of Africa lies in the massive pillage of Africa's natural resources caused by years of slavery and colonialism. Rodney (1982) corroborated this position when he averred that colonialism was one of such means of exploitation experienced by third world countries. The Countries of the South further claim that financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and Trans- national Corporations (TNCS) are channels through which the industrial North further pauperized the South.

Having felt that the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) would not assist much in their quest, the countries of the South decided to canvass more vigorously for the following issues, which are at the base of the North-South dialogue.

The South is demanding for an indexation scheme linking the prices of the North's manufactured products with primary products from the South. Mimiko (2017) observes that since the 1960s when most African nations attained independence, earnings on export have progressively diminished. For instance, between 1986 and 1988, he affirms, Africa alone lost $50 billion yearly, that is, about a quarter of its total income mainly because of the fall in commodity prices. Conversely, the prices of manufactured goods are constantly increasing in the World market.

Secondly, the South is demanding for the transfer of appropriate technology from the North to the South. If this request were granted, it would enable the transformation of the South from raw materials and primary producers to manufacturers of finished goods like the North (Mimiko 1997).

Thirdly, the South is requesting for debt relief. They are demanding a review of the debts owed by them with a view to canceling or rescheduling them; and a review of the general conditions of borrowing (Huskey, 2013).

Fourth, the South wants to be represented in the decision-making organs of the United Nations including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and the Security Council.

Finally, many other demands are made by the countries of the South, among which are joint ocean exploration and management; an end to brain drain, international solution to food crisis, a regime of control over the activities of Trans-National Corporations (TNCS), as well as provision of increasing aid and transfer of capital to the Third World.

The major criticism against this phenomenal call as viewed by Western scholars is that it is simply a call for an increasing flow of wealth to the poor countries' ruling elites. Though they agreed with the need for rapid development of the poor countries, they cast doubt on the ability of NIEO to achieve it. It is thus considered that, if there are hierarchical social structures supported by self-centered and powerful elites in the recipient countries, economic benefit accruing to these countries go primarily to the elite and leave the rest of the populace to continue to wallow in abject poverty.

Problems of North-South Dialogue

An examination of some of these demands by the countries of the South will make one to consider it wishful thinking for anyone to expect that most of these demands can be met. This is because the superiority of the North resides in some of these factors, and it would be virtually impossible to let go. The way the international capitalist system operates presupposes that there will always have to be some countries that will provide the raw materials for the development of the North. While there have been concessions in terms of debts relief, debt forgiveness and other forms by the countries in the North the activities of most leaders in the countries of the South have not been too encouraging. A situation whereby money is stashed away by leaders in developed countries' banks does not show that the countries need any major revision of the global economic policies. Most of these countries do not even utilize the grants or loans in profitable ventures and so it is difficult to expect returns. Also owing to the turnover of regimes in these countries, the new leaders pretend as if nothing is wrong with the early borrowings, only for them to also procure new loans.

Transfer of appropriate technology is also wishful thinking because there lays the factor that upholds their superiority. The technology of the North has become so advanced that it would take many decades for some of the countries in the South to catch up. We have seen situations where technology is imported, only for the operation to be faulty because of lack of sustained electric power supply. Take for instance, the GSM base stations in Nigeria, which must run on diesel generators for 24 hours a day instead of being connected to Power Holding Company of Nigeria (former NEPA) grid.

Also, the activities of multinational companies cannot really be curtailed in most of these countries because these companies have collaborators at the top echelon of the ruling class. Therefore, they keep on getting away with nefarious actions in the developing countries. A good example is the activities of MTN and CELTEL before GLOBACOM came into the communication scene in Nigeria. Also, the oil giants always succeeded in dividing nationals of Nigeria against themselves.

On a final note, it can be argued that for as long as the international system remains the way it is, a success of the North-South dialogue occasioned by the various demands will be a mirage. The North will continue to give concessions, but they will never give in to most of the demands of the South. Also, if conditions continue to be deplorable in the countries of the South, their citizens will continue to migrate to places in the North where their services will be better appreciated and rewarded. The problems of the South can thus be summed up as follows:

(a) **Monoculture Economy:** The problem with the North-South dialogue is the monoculture economy of the countries of the South. The nature of the economy will not give it the power to bargain from a position of strength with the North.

(b) **Corruption**: Another major problem of the South is pervasive corruption that has engulfed the countries. For examples, Nigeria officials were discovered to have been involved in shady deals with Halliburton of the USA.

(c) **Capacity Development and Utilization:** The countries of the South should push for capacity development. At present, capacity development and utilization of the South's resources is at very low ebb.

(d) **Nature of Leaders**: The leaderships in most countries of the South are comprador agents. They are merely interested in the gains of their foreign partners as against the interest of their people.

Prospects for the North-South Dialogue

The possibility of creating (NIEO) through the North-South dialogue appears elusive. In other words, it is obvious that the countries of the North will not be willing to commit a sort of class suicide, that of giving away the source of their power and wealth. It is therefore a futile exercise to talk of a New International Economic Order, while the wealthy nations continue to have their club summit amidst growing poverty in the Third World. Hence, Huffman (2016) recommends aptly that, the South should among other things, do the following:

(i) **Self Reliance**: The countries of the South should look inwards for their development. They should move from the level of monoculture economies to economic diversification.

(ii) **South-South Options**: Rather than expecting manna from the countries of the North, the South should explore the South-South option, i.e. improve trade relations with fellow countries in the underdeveloped World.

(iii) **Re-orientation**: Another prospect for the South is for these countries to jettison the idea of relying on the North for their development.

(iv) **Disengaging from the global economy**: If possible, the countries of the South should disengage completely from the present global system that has made their raw products less competitive.

Conclusion

The situation experienced by the underdeveloped countries of the world in economy, politics and social disparity between the developed and the underdeveloped nations has remained a sore point in international politics. The underdeveloped nations believe that its underdevelopment is a result of several years of slavery, colonialism, imperialism, and exploitation. Efforts to move towards development had always been frustrated by the North. This, many claim has been responsible for the threat to world peace and stability in the form of terrorism and the like.

The Western development model, which characterizes global economic relations and political development of the North, continues to thrive at the South's detriment. To complicate the situation, there is no discernible urgency on the part of the developed countries in so far as addressing the predicament of the countries of the South is concerned.

In sum, liberation from colonial control did not change underlying economic realities. The main trading partners of newly independent countries were usually their former colonial masters. The main products were usually those developed under colonialism. The administrative units and territorial borders were those created by Europeans. The state continued to occupy the same peripheral position in the world system after independence as it has before. And in some cases, it continued to rely on its former colonizer for security.

Underdevelopment means the lack of autonomy to act independently. It is a condition in which a society lacks autonomous capacity to control and mobilize socio-economic formation for a sustainable economic growth and development necessary to effect physical, mental, and technological fulfillment without dependence on eternal stimuli. The foundation for underdevelopment of African states was laid during the colonial period.

Within this period valuable humans were taken away to the developed nations to help build their economy, raw materials were extracted from the African continent to the developed nations were there were recycle to Africa and were sold for high cost to the same people that own the resources. The colonial system was designed to extract mineral resources and agricultural products from Africa and import them into Europe (Mbeki, 2009). As a result of the presence and exploitative nature of the colonial system, specifically in Africa, there was a marked lack of industrialization and technological growth, and this had a negative developmental impact (Connell & Smyth, 1998). This condition of underdevelopment continued in the post-colonial dispensation. Foreign aid leads to taste transfer, brain drain, and in essence over dependency.

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