North-South Divide and Contemporary Diplomacy

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Abstract

Global South represents the economically backward countries of Africa, India, China, Brazil, Mexico amongst others. While Global South countries are agrarian based, dependent economically and politically on the Global North, the Global North has continued to dominate and direct the global south in international trade and politics.

Key Words: South- south cooperation economic interpretation in Africa

Introduction

The countries of the South differ enormously with regard to their size, their cultural traditions, their climates and resources, as well as their political constitutions. What many ofthem had in common, however, was the struggle for independence from the former imperial powers. The Bandung-Conference in Indonesia in 1955, where the heads of 29 states from Asia and Africa came together, marked the beginning of the rise of the South in internationalaffairs. It was the first time, that several important leaders of the South (such as Nehru, Nasser, Sukarno) manifested their will to play an independent role in world politics.

The relationship between the Northern countries, especially the dominant East–West conflict, undoubtedly had an enormous impact on the relationships within the South: whereas some developing countries decided to cooperate with the Soviet Union in order to challenge the powerful states in the North, a majority of developing countries chose to be independent from the Western as well as from the Eastern bloc. In 1961, the first conferenceof the nonaligned states was held in Belgrade and within a few years, the Non-Aligned Movement became a strong force within the United Nations General Assembly.

Following the demands of the South for the establishment of a new institution concerned with the regulation of North–South exchange, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was founded in 1964. UNCTAD I marked the beginning of a continuous cooperation of developing countries with the formation of the so-called Group of77 (G77) whose membership rose to 131 developing countries in 1995.

The formal history of South-South Cooperation is tied up with the activities of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) which was established in 1945-55. The initial focus was neutrality from the Cold War politics between the Westernand Eastern blocs (Onimode 1995:222; Ojo1981:28). The defining characteristic of the South- South solidarity is cooperation among the member coun- tries of the South. The original vision was for member countries to promotetrade as well as to demonstrate, through practical examples, how commer- cially viable projects can be implemented using the technology, experience and capital from the South (Obasanjo 2001:274). South South Cooperation as a movement intended to challenge the Northern- dominated political and economic system and, from the 1950s to the present, has been through a series of starts and stops, surges and retreats. As expressed at the Asian–African Conference held in Bandung in 1955, the newly decolonised countries of the global South emphasised economic and cultural cooperation, human rights and the promotion of world peace. This emergent movement of Third World solidarity thereby sought to challenge the vertical relations between colony and metropole that were serving to inhibit relations between countries of the global South. The 'Bandung Spirit' henceforth came to encapsulatepolicies of non-interference and non-alignment, with the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) further developing this solidarity to

challenge the deepening global inequality while lessening the Third World's economic and political dependence on the global North. While Bandung and the NAM embodied the political dimensions of an emergent SSC, the Group of77, named after the number of countries present at the founding of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), called for the establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO). The NIEO was to be achieved through tackling structural unequal exchange through 'a just and equitable relationship' between the goods exported by developing countries and the goods imported, with an emphasis on sovereignty over natural resources and the right to nationalise key industries. These demands wererooted in the failure of the emerging postwar international order to tackle the legacies of colonialism and to provide adequate space for postcolonial states to establish their own national approaches to development.

By the1980s, however, the Third World debt crisis and the rise of neoliberalism had served to eclipse the NIEO project. The retreat of Third World solidarity was given no clearer indication than at the 1992 UNCTAD summit in Cartagena, when UNCTAD dropped its demands for the adjustment of the international patent system to the developmental needs ofthe global South, and adopted a statement expressing the belief that the adoption of adequate and effective International Patent Protections and related efforts in the World Intellectual Property Organization and the General agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) would facilitate technological transfers to developing countries.8 Henceforth, UNCTAD became increasingly eclipsed by GATT, and its successor, the World Trade Organization (WTO). Thus, while UNCTAD had previously acted as a counter-hegemonic organisation resisting the dominance of the Bretton Woods institutions, the restructuring of the organisation gave it a less confrontational role in North–South dialogue.

There is a widespread sense today, however, that the time is ripe for moving SSC once againonto the centre stage of world politics and economics, and a renewed interest in its historic promise to transform world order. The recent economic and diplomatic achievements of several key countries of the global South, and especially of China and the BRICS group more broadly, has given impetus to increasing debate and consideration of the potentialities (and pitfalls) of a new

phase of challenge or construction of alternatives to the hegemonic and neo-colonial politics of the global North. There has been a historically significant global shift in production and manufacturing from global North to global South, altering theeconomic geography of the world. The tendency over the past several decades to greatly intensify the globalisation of production, trade and financial flows was advocated primarily as a systemic solution to underlying structural problems of Northern capital in the global political economy, including growth, productivity and profitability. But these same globalising tendencies have also enhanced the historical potential of economic growth and industrialisation in the global South, and the possibilities for renewed SSC to loosen the strictures imposed during the colonial era and transcend the boundaries of postwar political and economic geography. The (hyper)globalisation policies of the pre-2008 global financial and economic crisis era, which was also the historic high water mark of the ideology of 'neoliberal economic globalisation', reflected a deeply embedded faith in linear material progress, through innovation and the application of modern science and technology, with thepresumed capacity to create unlimited increases in production and consumption. However, this optimistic paradigm of globalised economic development for all has both created, and left yet unresolved numerous severe distributional, socio-political and increasingly ecological and climate change problems and crises that accompany this paradigm of global developmental economic expansionism. In the present era of 'multiple crises', and the overarching context of global climate change and intensifying ecological stress, the debate over 'development' in the global South and the nature and direction of SSC assumes a different character. Elites and citizens alike, the world over, now struggle to manage the tension between global capital expansion, global market competition, competing legal and political orders, and the protection of the rights and welfare of people and the environment. The dawning era of the anthropocene heralds many profound realisations concerning the future of development on a planetary scale. The comprehensiveness of the interventions of humanity upon the web of life, the truly global extent of impacts of our specific historical forms of social, economic and political organisation, now compel deep philosophical reflection on the meaning of development and the search for alternative ways of life and human relations with nature.

Statement of the problem

Economics is essentially the study of a process we find in all human societies - "the" economic problem. The problem is simply the process of providing for the material and well-being of society. Thus, economic history focuses on the central problem of survival and how mankind has solved that problem. Man, generally, is an economic animal who is constantly engaged in activities that would improve his economic situation. The countries of the globe have faced the challenges of improving the economic realities in their domains over time. These challenges have been seen in the development realm.

Development can be understood from the point of continued advancement of man towards good living standards. Modern concept of development has its roots from the emergence of industrialization in Western Europe in the mid-18th century. By 1945, after World War II, scholarly interest in development economics heightened. This made it possible to explore the economic conditions / development levels among nations on the globe. Thus, scholars were able to establish that economic development is not even world over. Other countries or societies are more developed than others. At first, scholars looked at macro-economic issues in determining the development of societies; however, as time went on, in the 1980s, scholars approached in assessing the development level of a society shifted to micro-economic issues. Thus, the human development index, which basically is concerned with individual's poverty levels, became a major concern of development scholars, wishing to determine the level of development of individual societies on the globe.

Through this approach, it became apparent that there exist two major economic worlds on the globe: the wealthy and the poor worlds, respectively. In this essay, it is our desire to draw a distinction between these two economic worlds using few variables to include levels of productivity, population growth and dependency burden, agricultural production, exports, and international relations.

Conceptual Review

The Global South implies the underdeveloped economies. Four broad indicators affect global south cooperation, these include politics, technology, wealth and demography. While Global North are democratic, technologically inventive,

wealthy and aging, as their societies tend towards zero population growth, Global South economies possess the opposite of the above. (Todaro and Smith, 2006) The Global North is made of the USA, UK, Japan, France, Spain, Belgium, Israel, South Africa, Norway, Italy and Sweden. The Global South on the other hand comprises the rest of Africa, India, Mexico, China, Brazil, Indonesia etc. While the Global North is characterized by massive wealth, democratic governance, peace and stability and constantly prone to human progress, the Global South appear to be a zone of turmoil, war, conflict, poverty, anarchy and tyranny. Also institutional structures like democratic reforms are quite at disparity in the Global North and South.

Interpretation of South-South economic cooperation

Levels of economic interpretation

There are low levels of living and deprivations in human development in the Global South countries. In addition to this Global South countries are characterized by low levels of economic of economic cooperation throughout the Global South countries levels of cooperation are extremely low compared with those in the Global North, (Todaro and Smith, 2006) argue that the concept of production function systematically relating outputs to different combinations of factor inputs for a given technology is often used in the way in which societies go about providing for their material needs. But the technical engineering concept of a production function must be supplemented by a broader conceptualization that includes among its other inputs managerial competence, access to information, worker motivation and institutional flexibility and all these are almost lacking in the Global South countries. (Strauss and Thomas, 1988) argue that the workers low productivity may be due largely to physical lethargy and the inability, both physical and emotional to withstand the daily pressures of competitive work. Low productivity leads to low income, which can leads to low capacity forward, and to low productivity, argues (Dasgupta and Ray, 987).

South- South Dependency Burdens

The population of the world in the year 2022 was just over 8.0 billion people, of this number more than five sixths live in the Global South and less than one-sixth in the Global North. Still both birth and death rates are strikingly different between the Global North and Global South. In Global North birth rates are low while in

the Global South birth rates are high. For Global North birth rates are on the order of 15-20 per 1,000 populations where as in the Global South they range from 30-40 per 1,000 populations (World Bank, 2022).

The yearly number of deaths per 1,000 in the Global South is also higher than that found in the Global North. The high birth rate in the global south has far reaching consequences. Children under age 15make up almost 40% of the total population in the Global South as opposed to less than 20% of the total population in the Global North. Thus in the Global South, the active labour force has to support proportionally almost twice as many children as it does in the Global North. By contrast, the proportion of the people over the age of 65 is much greater in the Global North. Both older people and children are often referred to as an economic dependence.

Dependency burden: This refers to the sense that they are non-productive members of society and therefore must be supported. The overall dependency burdens (i.e. both young and old) represents only about one-third of the populations of Global North about almost 45% of the population of the Global South (Dasgupta and Ray, 1987).

Agricultural production: The Global South is characterized with a very high rate of people working in rural areas and according to (Todaro, 2006) over 65% are rurally based, compared to less than 27% in the Global North. Similarly 58 % of the labor force is engaged in agriculture, compared to only 50% in Global North. Agriculture contributes about 14% of the GNI of Global South Nations but only 3% of the GNI of Global North. Todaro further argued that people in the Global South countries concentrate on agricultural production because since their incomes are low their first priorities are food, clothing, and shelter and also due to the primitive nature of technologies, poor organization and limited physical and human capital inputs.

International Relations

The Global South is dependent on and vulnerable to the Global North. There is an unequal strength between the Global North and the Global South. The Global North being stronger than the Global South, the unequal strength between the two

is manifested not only in the dominant power of the Global North to control the pattern of international trade and agreement regulating it but also in their ability often to dictate the terms whereby technology, foreign aid, and private capital are transferred to Global South. This has acted as a factor in contributing to the persistence of low levels of living, rising unemployment, and growing income inequality in the Global South compared to the Global North.

Sustainable Development

Is a pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for future generations. The term was used by the Brundtland Commission which coined what has become the most often-quoted definition of sustainable development as development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Indigenous peoples have argued, through various international forums such as the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Convention on Biological Diversity, that there are *four* pillars of sustainable development, the fourth being cultural. *The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* (UNESCO, 2001) further elaborates the concept by stating that "...cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature"; it becomes "one of the roots of development understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence". In this vision, cultural diversity is the fourth policy area of sustainable development.

It has been clearly identified that information, integration, and participation are key building blocks to help countries achieve development that recognizes these interdependent pillars. It emphasizes that in sustainable development everyone is a user and provider of information. It stresses the need to change from old sector centered ways of doing business to new approaches that involve cross-sectoral co-ordination and the integration of environmental and social concerns into all development processes. Furthermore, evidences emphasizes that broad public participation in decision making is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving sustainable development

Sustainable development is an eclectic concept, as a wide array of views fall under its umbrella. The concept has included notions of weak sustainability, strong sustainability and deep ecology. Different conceptions also reveal a strong tension between ecocentrism and anthropocentrism. Many definitions and images (Visualizing Sustainability) of sustainable development coexist. Broadly defined, the sustainable development mantra enjoins current generations to take a systems approach to growth and development and to manage natural, produced, and social capital for the welfare of their own and future generations. During the last ten years, different organizations have tried to measure and monitor the proximity to what they consider sustainability by implementing what has been called sustainability metrics and indices. (www.wikipediasustainabledevelopment.com).

Sustainable development is said to set limits on the developing world. While current first world countries polluted significantly during their development, the same countries encourage third world countries to reduce pollution, which sometimes impedes growth. Some consider that the implementation of sustainable development would mean a reversion to pre-modern lifestyles

In 1987 the United Nation's World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission), in its report *Our Common Future* suggested that sustainable development was needed to meet human needs while not increasing environmental problems. In 1961 almost all countries in the world had the capacity to meet their own demand but by 2005 the situation had changed and many countries were able to meet their needs only by importing resources from other nations.(www,wkipediasustainabldevelopment.com) A move toward more sustainable living emerged, based on increasing public awareness and adoption of recycling, and renewable energies. The development of renewable sources of energy in the 1970s and 80's, primarily in wind turbines and photovoltaics and increased use of hydroelectricity, presented more sustainable alternatives to fossil fuel and nuclear energy generation.

Sustainability

The word sustainability is derived from the Latin *sustinere* (*tenere*, to hold; *sus*, up). Dictionaries provide more than ten meanings for *sustain*, the main ones being to

“maintain", "support", or "endure”. However, since the 1980s *sustainability* has been used more in the sense of human sustainability on planet Earth and this has resulted in the most widely quoted definition of sustainability and sustainable development, that of the Brundtland Commission of the United Nations on March 20, 1987: “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

The UN definition is not universally accepted and has undergone various interpretations. What sustainability is, what its goals should be, and how these goals are to be achieved is all open to interpretation. For many environmentalists the idea of sustainable development is an oxymoron as development seems to entail environmental degradation. Ecological economist Herman Daly has asked, "what use is a saw-mill without a forest?" From this perspective, the economy is a subsystem of human society, which is itself a subsystem of the biosphere, and a gain in one sector is a loss from another. This can be illustrated as three concentric circles (www.wikipediasustainability.com).

A universally-accepted definition of sustainability is elusive because it is expected to achieve many things. On the one hand it needs to be factual and scientific, a clear statement of a specific “destination”. The simple definition "sustainability is improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting eco-systems" though vague, conveys the idea of sustainability having quantifiable limits. But sustainability is also a call to action, a task in progress or “journey” and therefore a political process, so some definitions set out common goals and values. The Earth Charter speaks of “a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace.”(www.wikipediasustainablilty.com)

In early human history the environmental impacts of small bands of hunter-gatherers would have been relatively small, even though the use of fire and the desire for specific foods may have altered the natural composition of plant and animal communities. The Neolithic Revolution 2,500 to 10,000 years ago marked the emergence of agriculture and settled communities. Societies outgrowing their local food supply or depleting critical resources either moved on or faced collapse.

In contrast, stable communities of shifting cultivators and horticulturists existed in New Guinea and South America, and large agrarian communities in China, India, Polynesia and elsewhere have farmed in the same localities for centuries (www.wikipediasustainability.com).

Technological advances over several millennia gave humans increasing control over the environment. But it was the Western industrial revolution of the 17th to 19th centuries that tapped into the vast growth potential of the energy in fossil fuels to power sophisticated machinery technology. These conditions led to a human population explosion and unprecedented industrial, technological and scientific growth that has continued to this day. From 1650 to 1850 the global population doubled from around 500 million to 1 billion people. By the 20th century, the industrial revolution had resulted in an exponential increase in the human consumption of resources and an increase in health, wealth and population. Ecology as a new scientific discipline was gaining general acceptance and ideas now part and parcel to sustainability were being explored including the recognition of the interconnectedness of living systems, the importance of global natural cycles, the passage of energy through tropic levels of living systems.(www.wikipediasustainability.com)

Conclusion

It has been observed throughout history that many have placed money and prosperity as their first priority. However that value preference has been challenged and this once popular maxim the belief that the world cannot forever increase its productive capacity has been replaced by the maxim of sustainability. Sustainability emphasizes the growth limits in the global ecology. Against this backdrop sustainable development which means learning how to live off the earth's interest without encroaching on its capital in order that the planet can continue to provide the means of life that makes the pursuit of other values such as political freedom and religious principles have remained high and well entrenched in the annals of the Global North against the opposite in the Global South.

Once again, the issues of population growth have adverse effect in the two polemics. Other factors like government policies, the legal system, access to capital

and technology, the efficiency of industrial production inequity in the distribution of land, labor, and resources are some of the characteristics of Global South.

Recommendation

Against all this variables, the Global North while not taking anything for granted, particularly on the assumption that sustainability cannot be realised without dramatic changes in the socio-economic and political fabric of the world as we know it today. The Global South painfully does not even know where this situation lies, not to even contemplate on any way forward as it were.

Efforts in the Global South should be more pragmatic and optimist in approach and concept. Efforts should be genuine with a total commitment and conviction of purpose and intent for while we recognize that there is a wide gap in development between the Global North and Global South economies, while the Global North economies are sustained; the Global South economies are yet to find their feet. Thus living conditions in Global North are far better off than the Global South while the North is wealthy, technologically advanced politically stable and aging as their societies tend toward zero population growth the opposite is found among Global South countries.

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